THE USE OF EZRA-NEHEMIAH IN A QUEST FOR A THEOLOGY OF RENEWAL, TRANSFORMATION AND RECONSTRUCTION IN THE (SOUTH) AFRICAN CONTEXT.

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the School
of Theology
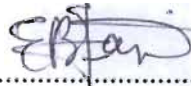University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

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January 2002

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the whole thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my original work, and has not been submitted in any other University.

ELELWANI BETHUEL FARISANI

Signed on this ......15ᵗʰ...... day of March 2002 at...Pietermaritzburg......

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt and sincere gratitude for the wonderful supervisory role of Professor Gerald West. He patiently, caringly and critically guided me throughout this study. Without his valuable comments and guidance, this study would not have been what it is now.

My thanks are also due to the following people for assisting in typing the thesis material: Ms Mbilaelo Rathogwa, Mr Newton Brandt, Ms Nozipho Bhengu, Mrs Tsitsi Mtata and Mrs Beatrice Kayonga, who has typed the lion's share of my thesis.

I also wish to express my gratitude to both my undergraduate students in Biblical studies 331 and honours and masters students of 1998, 2000 and 2001 who helped shape this study.

My thanks are also due to all staff and students who participated in post-graduate seminars at the school of theology, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

I also acknowledge the friendship, support and generosity of Mr Ailwei Mulaudzi, who continued to support me, especially when I went to the University of South Africa's library in Pretoria.

I further acknowledge the dedication and support of Mr Zwodangani Mudau, who helped with bibliographical compilation and editorial work of certain chapters.

I gratefully acknowledge both Prof Jesse Mugambi's and Prof Hendrik Bosman's contributions by offering comments and by also referring me to relevant literature.

My further thanks go to all those who offered valuable comments while I was in Nairobi in 1999, amongst others, Dr Louis Jonker, Dr Joseph Muutuki, Rev Chalton Ochola, Dr Knut Holter, Ms Marta Lavik.

My special gratitude goes to my younger brothers, David, Kenny and Tshililo, who had to carry the burden of my absence from home due to this thesis. A special word of gratitude to David who took

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to reflect on how Ezra-Nehemiah can be used as a new paradigm in a quest for an African theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction.

The particular context of crisis of this study is the (South) African situation of poverty, debt, civil wars, ethnicity, racism, xenophobia, military coups, HIV/AIDS, child and women abuse etc.

The study, then, consists of four related parts. One part consists of a detailed analysis of the philosophies of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. The focus here is on how these two concepts can be a theoretical framework within which the entire thesis rests. The second part consists of an analysis of how Ezra-Nehemiah has been used by African scholars, in a quest for a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction. The focus here is on Charles Villa-Vicencio, Jesse Mugambi and Andre Karamaga. The third part consists of a critical study of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. The focus here is on three related issues. Firstly, we identify the prevalent ideology within the text, and how this ideology is used to sideline the *am haaretz*. Secondly, we analyse the possible author(s) and date(s) of Ezra-Nehemiah. Thirdly, we offer a sociological analysis of the ideology(ies) of the author(s) of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. And the fourth part consists of the relevance of the critical study of the text for the (South) African context. The focus here is on contextualizing selected aspects arising out of the analysis of the study of Ezra-Nehemiah, as a way of making such contextualisation a basis for a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction for the (South) African continent.

The setting for this study is Old Testament biblical studies. While this study begins by analysing both the philosophies of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance as a theoretical framework for the whole thesis, its methodology is biblical sociological analysis.

ABBREVIATIONS

AACC: All Africa Conference of Churches

AACPC: All African Committee for Political Co-ordination

AD: After Death of Christ

AIC: African Independent Churches

AIDC: Alternative Information and Development Centre

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AAPC: All African People's Conferences

AAPO: All African People's Organization

AAPRA: All African People's Revolutionary Army

AAPRP: All African People's Revolution Party

AATUO: All African Trade Union Organisation

ANC: African National Congress

APA: African Platform for Action

AZAPO: Azanian People's Organisation

BC: Before Christ

BCM: Black Consciousness Movement

cf.: Care of

Chr.: Chronicles

COSATU: Congress of South African Trade Unions

Deut.: Deuteronomy

Dn.: Daniel

ECA: Economic Commission for Africa

eds.:editors

Eph.: Ephesians

EKD: Evangelische Kirchen in Deutschland

ELCSA: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa

Exod.: Exodus

Ezek.: Ezekiel

Hag.:Haggai

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IAS: Institute of African Studies

Isa.: Isaiah

Jer.: Jeremiah

Lam.: Lamentations

LBH: Late Biblical Hebrew

Lv.: Leviticus

LXX: Septuagint

Mal.: Malachi

MDM: Mass Democratic Movement

Neh.: Nehemiah

NGO: Non-governmental Organisation

OAU: Organisation of African Unity

PAC: Pan-African Congress

PAM: Pan-African Movement

PAWLO: Pan-African Women's Liberation Organisation

Ps.: Psalm

Pss.: Psalms

RSA: Republic of South Africa

SAP: Structural Adjustment Programmes

SACP: South African Communist Party

SRB: Special RICSA Bulletin

TANU: Tanzanian African National Union *Tanganyika?*

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UAR: United Arab Republic

UNC: Ugandan National Congress

UNIA: Universal Negro Improvement Association

USA: United States of America

VELKD: Vereinigte Evangelische Lutherische Kirchen in Deutshland

Vol.: Volume

WCCC: World Council of Churches Conference

ZANU: Zimbabwe African National Union

ZAPU: Zimbabwe African People's Union

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ABBREVIATIONS

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0 INTRODUCTION

0.1 Framing the problem

The particular context of crisis of this study is current socio-economic conditions in Africa. Africa has for many years been devastated by institutionalised racism, colonialism and the cold war legacy. Africa is also facing the AIDS epidemic which is so high. Poverty continues to hit most women and children, wars and genocides are the order of the day. A theology of reconstruction is necessary under these and other conditions to renew, transform and reconstruct Africa (Mugambi,1995). Thus, the purpose of this study is to reflect on how Ezra-Nehemiah can be used as a new paradigm in a quest for an African theology of renewal, transformation, reconciliation and reconstruction.

The concepts renewal, reconstruction, transformation and reconciliation are very popular nowadays in line with the wind of change blowing in Africa. Politicians and cultural leaders have invented such renewal concepts as Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. Theologians are talking about such concepts as reconstruction theology (Mugambi,1995; Villa-Vicencio,1992; Karamaga,1997; Chipenda, Karamaga, Mugambi, and Omari,1991; Getui and Obeng,1999), reconciliation theology (Bosch,1986:159-171; Domeris,1987:77-80; Bosman, Gous and Spangenberg,1991; Turner,1998:8) etc. All these different concepts tell us of a quest by theologians to design a new or appropriate theological paradigm relevant to current socio-economic, cultural, and religious changes in Africa. In their quest for a renewal theology different biblical paradigms (cf Mugambi,1995; Villa-Vicencio, 1992) are being suggested. The most popular one is Ezra-Nehemiah. This is certainly because the Ezra-Nehemiah text may contribute considerably to the current ongoing and crucial debate on the theology of renewal, reconstruction, transformation and reconciliation in Africa. Certain scholars (Mugambi,1995; Villa-Vicencio,1992; Karamaga,1997) have used Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for a theology of reconstruction. However, their use of Ezra-Nehemiah "lacks clear and direct biblical pointers for useful and contextual discussion on reconciliation, reform, reconstruction, redress and transformation, because it is not based on solid exegesis" (Turner,1998:9) of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah and "does not serve the community as a whole" (cf De Gruchy,1997:450-451; Turner, 1998:9).

The above discussion takes us to our hypothesis, to which we now turn.

0.2 Hypothesis

The above readings of Ezra-Nehemiah have direct consequences for our interpretation not only of the roles of both Ezra and Nehemiah in reconstruction, but also of our reading of the entire Ezra-Nehemiah text. When one carefully reads the text of Ezra-Nehemiah, one clearly detects that there is a conflict between two groups, namely the *am haaretz*[1] i.e "people of the land" and the returning exiles[2]. A straight forward reading of Ezra-Nehemiah tends to uncritically portray the returning exiles from Babylon as the only pious, legitimate and godfearing Israelites who should lead the reconstruction, rebuilding, renewal and transformation process in Judah and Jerusalem at the expense and exclusion of those Israelites who remained in the land i.e the *am haaretz*. This research seeks to demonstrate that the *am haaretz* who were poor and in the majority, were also pious, legitimate and godfearing Israelites, and that in reading Ezra-Nehemiah, their voice should also be heard. Thus, it is the contention of this study that any meaningful reading of Ezra-Nehemiah which has to be taken seriously, has to take into account the dynamics and complexities of both the returning exiles and the *am haaretz*. Such a reading, we believe, would demonstrate a spirit of inclusivity and sensitivity to the needs and fears of both groups.

0.3 Methodology

The setting for this study is Old Testament biblical studies. The methodology of this study is biblical sociological analysis. Accordingly, this study's main focus is on the sociological analysis of the conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*, with a view to appropriating such an

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[1] The *am haaretz* were a Jewish community which remained in Judah when the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah in 586 B.C. and took a few members of the royal family to Babylonian Exile. Despite the fact that scholars do not seem to agree on the number of people taken to Babylon, for purposes of this study it will be accepted that only a small number of people were taken to Babylon.

[2] These were the Jews who were taken to Babylon in 586 B.C by Nebuchadnezzar.

analysis in a quest for a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction in (South) Africa. This will be done in six stages.

In chapter 1 we discuss renewal concepts such as Pan-Africanism and African Renaisance. This chapter becomes a theoretical framework for renewal concepts such as reconstruction, reconciliation and transformation. Though both the concepts of Pan-Africanism and African Renaisance cannot be attributed to a single individual, we will only focus in this section on two people, namely Kwame Nkrumah (Pan-Africanism) and Thabo Mbeki (African Renaisance).

Having taken seriously the call for the renewal of Africa (stated in chapter 1), chapter 2 gives an overview of how Ezra-Nehemiah has been used by African scholars in their quest for a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction. The three scholars are Charles Villa-Vicencio, Jesse Mugambi and André Karamaga. The focus here is on the three scholars's definition of reconstruction theology and on how they use Ezra-Nehemiah in their quest for an African theology of reconstruction.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 will attempt a critical study of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. Chapter 3 identifies the prevalent ideology within the text of Ezra-Nehemiah, and how this ideology is used by the authors of Ezra-Nehemiah to sideline the *am haaretz*. The focus will be on demonstrating that the Ezra-Nehemiah text is coloured with an exclusivist ideology, an ideology which tends to be biased in favour of the returned exiles, whilst being biased against the *am haaretz*.

Chapter 4 looks at the composition and date of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. The focus here is on the possible authors of Ezra-Nehemiah and the possible dates of several stages of the composition of this book. This chapter is a preliminary historical analysis in order to prepare for chapter 5.

Chapter 5, then, offers a critical sociological analysis of the ideology identified in chapter 3. Ezra-Nehemiah, like any other biblical text should be read against its background, if it is to be properly understood. This chapter moves from the premise that the Ezra-Nehemiah text "was written in and for a specific political, religious, and socio-economical context" (Turner,1998:28), and that this

context codetermines our understanding of the entire text. Thus, the focus of this chapter is to examine the socio-historical analysis of the world that produced the text of Ezra-Nehemiah as a way of getting behind the ideology(ies) of the authors of Ezra-Nehemiah. It is hoped that such an analysis would throw some welcome light on the nature of the contestation between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz.*

Finally, chapter 6 spells out the significance of a critical analysis of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah for a theology of renewal, transformation, reconciliation and reconstruction. The focus here is on contextualizing selected aspects arising out of the analysis of the study of Ezra-Nehemiah, as a way of making such a contextualisation a strong basis for a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction for the African continent. As a way of concluding, this chapter tests the validity of the hypothesis. The findings of the study will be summarised and certain suggestions would be made on "some useful perspectives that could possibly encourage and stimulate the current theological debate" (Turner,1998:36) on a theology of reconstruction.

CHAPTER 1: RENEWAL, TRANSFORMATION & RECONSTRUCTION CONCEPTS IN AFRICA

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In our introduction it was made clear that the African continent needs, economic and political renewal. We are fully aware that different concepts such as Africanism (Sankara,1970), Pan-Africanism (Nkrumah,1961; 1962; 1963a; 1963b; 1963c; 1964; 1965; Nasser,1955), cultural renewal (Diop,1956), African socialism (Senghor,1961; 1958), decolonisation (Fannon,1965) and African Renaissance (Mbeki,1997; 1998) have been used in a quest for the renewal of Africa. Chapter 1 is an attempt at an analysis of selected concepts used by those who have called for the renewal of the African continent. However, in this chapter we will only concentrate on the concepts Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a sufficient historically detailed account of the emergence of both Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. These two concepts will then be used as a theoretical framework within which the entire thesis rests. Since both the concepts of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance call for the renewal of Africa in the spheres of politics, social life, economics, culture and religion, this chapter would form the basis on which the entire thesis, which attempts to investigate the use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for a theology of renewal, transformation, reconciliation and reconstruction is based. We start with Pan-Africanism.

1.1 PAN-AFRICANISM

1.1.1 Definition and origin

What is Pan-Africanism? Pan is a Greek word meaning *"all"*; so Pan-African means "all-African". But the first form of the Pan-African Movement was not directly concerned with Africa. It was concerned with the black communities, of African ancestry, who lived in North America and the Caribbean (West Indies) (Davidson,1994:32). So the roots of the Pan-African Movement can be traced right back to the first European slave ships to touch the African coast, some five hundred

years back (Abdul-Raheem,1996:1; Thompson,1969:xxi). In this connection, it is not at all surprising that the founders of Pan-Africanism, as well as some of its leading warriors, have been Africans from the diaspora, who are descendants of the millions of Africans captured in the transatlantic slave trade (Abdul-Raheem,1996:1). Although these black people had come from many African peoples and cultures, they had however lost their languages and cultures during the time of slavery. Liberated from American slavery, they were united by remaining the victims of American and colonial racism. Thus, we can say that they were united by their colour and by their sufferings (Davidson,1994:32).

So the desire to cease being slaves was accompanied by the desire to go back home to Africa (Abdul-Raheem,1996:1; Davidson,1994:32). The precursors of Pan-Africanism are all the "Back to Africa" movements that sprung up in the USA, Brazil and the Caribbean during the early nineteenth century (Abdul-Raheem,1996:1). The "Back to Africa" movement had for the first time conceived of Africa as a "nation" having socioeconomic and political problems that needed to be confronted on the basis of a Pan-African strategy (Abdul-Raheem,1996:1-2; Davidson,1994:32; Thompson,1969:xxi). At the same time, the "Back to Africa" movement made it imperative for the diasporan Africans to focus their attention on the problems of the continent (Abdul-Raheem,1996:2). In this regard apart from protesting the conditions of slavery under which they were living, the "Back to Africa" movement also called for the abolition of colonialism in Africa. Marcus Moziah Garvey (1887-1940) is the most famous of the pioneers of the return to Africa movement. He was the Jamaican, who in 1914, founded an organisation in New York, called the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and whose influence was felt widely across Africa. Thus Pan-Africanism can be said to have "its origin in the struggles of the African people against the enslavement and colonization of their people by extra-African forces" (Abdul-Raheem,1996:2).

In summary, Thompson (1969) identifies the three factors that led to the emergence of Pan-Africanism as: (1) Slave trade, (2) European imperialism (often called colonialism), and (3) racism and race consciousness (resulting from the first two combined) (Thompson,1969:3). He explains,

> resistance to enslavement...created the basis for the formation of organisations and concepts out of which was born the idea of Pan-Africanism (currently meaning African unity in political, economic and social senses) (Thompson,1969:19).

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Having briefly defined the term Pan-Africanism and outlined its origin, we now go on to discuss the roles played by the Pan-African gatherings, in giving practical meaning to the idea of Pan-Africanism from 1900 up to1994.

1.1.2 The Pan-African gatherings 1900-1994

1.1.2.1 The Pan-African Conference of 1900

The word Pan-Africanism first entered the political sphere in 1900, through the Trinidadian lawyer, Henry Sylvester Williams (Abdul-Raheem,1996:1; Woronoff,1970:18), then based in London (Abdul-Raheem,1996:1). He was a member of the English bar and specialised in land suits, acting as advisor for the Bantus of South Africa and the Fantis of the Gold Coast to protect their customary tribal land from the greed of white settlers. He brought together a number of similarly minded Caribbean Negroes and American Negroes and Africans at a conference held in Westminster Hall, London in 1900 (Woronoff,1970:18). That conference was attended by 32 delegates. Of these, eleven were from the USA and ten from the West Indies, but only four directly from Africa (Davidson,1994:32-3). The purpose of the conference was to "protest stealing of lands in the colonies, racial discrimination and deal with all other issues of interest to blacks" (Du Bois,1993 quoted by Abdul-Raheem,1996:1).

William Burghardt DuBois (1868-1963) played a significant role in this conference. DuBois is an African-American, a great student of African history who eventually became a citizen of Ghana (Davidson,1994:33). He drafted a letter, which was endorsed by the conference delegates, to Queen Victoria of England and other rulers of Europe which contained:

> an appeal to struggle against racism, to grant the Black colonies in Africa and the West Indies the right to responsible government; and demanded political and other rights for the Blacks in the United States (Woronoff,1970:18; Davidson,1994:32).

The letter went further to assert that "the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the colour bar" (Abdul-Raheem,1996:2). Queen Victoria replied to the letter by stating that Her Majesty's Government "will not overlook the interests and welfare of the native races" (Woronoff,1970:18).

Du Bois continued to maintain that the main problem of the twentieth century was the problem of the colour line (Davidson,1973:41-2; Abdul-Raheem,1996:2), though he later came to see that he had been wrong in thinking in this way (Davidson,1973:42). Davidson (1973) has been critical of Dubois`s contention:

> The colour problem was important, and would remain important; but it was not, as he later argued, the main problem. The main problem was the problem that made the colour line important; and this was the problem of economic and political system, the problem of historical development (Davidson,1973:42).

C.L.R. James, expressing the same conviction, argues that "the race question is subsidiary to the class question in politics, and to think of imperialism in terms of race is disastrous", although "neglect of the racial factor as merely incidental", James added, "is an error only less grave than to make it fundamental" (Quoted by Davidson,1973:42).

So we need to note here that though the first form of this movement was, really, a "Pan-Black" or Pan-Negro movement which took shape outside Africa, it also stood for the defence of Africans in Africa (Davidson,1994:32). In fact this conference raised high the claims of African equality and achievement (Davidson,1994:32-3). The Nigerian *Lagos Standard*, a newspaper that was owned as well as edited by Africans, described the congress of 1900 as "an event in the history of race movements which, for its importance and probable results, is perhaps without parallel" (Davidson,1994:32-3).

The Pan-African conference of 1900 gave rise to several congresses which covered the period from 1919-1994. In the next section we briefly look at the significance of these congresses for the emergence of Pan-Africanism.

1.1.2.2 The First Pan-African Congress of 1919

What we now know as the Pan-African Congress series was first organised by Du Bois from 17-21 February 1919 (Abdul-Raheem,1996:3; Davidson,1994:33; Woronoff,1970:18). This meeting which took place in Paris, France, demanded that,

> The land (in the colonies) must be reserved, with its natural resources, for the natives; their working conditions must be regarded by the law, and slavery and corporal punishment abolished, as well as forced labour, except for criminals...the natives of Africa must have the right to participate in government as rapidly as their development will permit...with the goal that in due time, Africa will be governed with the consent of Africans (Abdul-Raheem,1996:3; Woronoff,1970:19).

This congress was the Negro-Americans and the Africans's continuation of the African conference of 1900 in trying to influence world politics in favour of those in the colonised countries. DuBois and his fellow delegates, while speaking on behalf of the hundred thousand Negroes who served in the ranks of the American forces in Europe, tried to get the Allies to act upon one of the main principles for the peace settlement-the right of self-determination of peoples. However, this appeal was ignored (Woronoff,1970:18).

1.1.2.3 The Second Pan-African Congress of 1921

The second Pan-African Congress of 1921 was held in September 1921, with successive sessions in London, Brussels and Paris (Abdul-Raheem,1996:3; Davidson,1994:33). There DuBois drafted and adopted a moderate "Declaration of the World" (Woronoff,1970:19; Abdul-Raheem,1996:3), or simply the "London Manifesto" (Abdul-Raheem,1996:3), in which he called for recognition of civilised nations as civilised, whatever their race or colour. But the initiative taken in Brussels, somewhat later, of handing in a petition to the Mandates Commission stressing the equality of the human races was an important precedent. It was indeed the first attempt to use an international lever (Woronoff,1970:19).

The Congresses that followed the first could not achieve much, instead they became acts of faith, in that, realising they could not achieve their stated goals, they just reported what has already been

said in previous resolutions. Perhaps the period was not conducive for action. Moreover, the Congresses had no real means of acting. The only valid effort, and this effort was made by DuBois, could be to keep the "flame burning" (Woronoff,1970:19).

1.1.2.4 The Third Pan-African Congress of 1923

The third Pan-African Congress was held in November and December, 1923 (Abdul-Raheem, 1996:3; Davidson,1994:33; Woronoff,1970:19-20). The first session which took place in London lasted from 7-8 November 1923 (Abdul-Raheem,1996:3). It issued a manifesto stressing that equal treatment of Negroes was the only path to peace and progress (Woronoff,1970:19-20). The second session was held in Lisbon from 1-2 December 1923. As with the previous Congresses its main demands were "The Rights of Black Peoples to speak for themselves to their respective Governments; and the Rights to Land and its Produces" (Abdul-Raheem,1996:3).

1.1.2.5 The Fourth Pan-African Congress of 1927

The fourth Pan-African Congress was held in August 1927 in New York (Abdul-Raheem,1996:3; Woronoff,1970:20). This congress was able to attain a record participation, with two hundred delegates from twelve countries, although less than a quarter of the total delegates came from Africa. It also made doctrinal headway, sponsoring more proposals on issues like self-government, education, labour and world peace (Woronoff,1970:20).

In actual fact the fourth Congress mirrored the previous congress in that,

> The Resolutions adopted were similar to those passed by the third Congress. Notwithstanding, there were two remarkable developments: the presence of radical Black personalities and the tribute paid by Dr. Du Bois to the Soviet Union regarding the policy followed with its various nationalities in sharp contrast with imperialism's colonial policy (Abdul-Raheem,1996:3).

However, the Pan-African movement could do nothing to change the colonial systems, for it had no power. It played a useful part in informing the world about Africa's problems under colonial rule. It spoke up for colonised Africans at walls of silence (Davidson,1994:33). Though numerous

resolutions were passed at conferences there was just no means to obtain implementation of them and, in 1929, the Congresses ceased (Woronoff,1970:20).

1.1.2.6 Progress through communism

During the period from 1929 to the end of the Second World War, when even the dim light of Pan-Negroism lit by DuBois' Congresses went out, a glimmer of hope came from another quarter. When the Pan-African Congresses produced appeals and statements only, people turned to communism. This was probably because communism "proclaimed colonialism its enemy and swore to overthrow it" (Woronoff,1970:20).

During the twenties, and particularly the thirties, a number of Pan-Negroists had joined the communist party. They were attracted by the Marxist doctrine, which condemned the capitalist powers as enemies of the proletariat and also as exploiters of the minorities and colonial peoples. By joining hands with the working class, these Americans and Africans hoped to destroy the capitalist-colonialist forces that oppressed them both. In this regard, Lenin paved the way and Stalin was also interested in this cooperation (Woronoff,1970:21).

Until the mid-thirties, Marxism was well recognised, and Negroes as members of the communist party of the Soviet Union or of nation branches, adhered to this movement. George Padmore, played an important role. Many others in diaspora, in the United States and Caribbean, or in London and Paris, joined local parties. The communist party also became a channel for dissatisfaction in South Africa (Woronoff,1970:21).

Initially, the alliance with the colonial peoples was a sincere attempt at cooperation, but differences arose as to whether capitalism or colonialism should be undone first. Moreover, as Nazi and Fascist regimes formed along the Soviet frontiers, Stalin's fears for the "Russian motherland" and the "home of socialism," had to be given precedence over all else. From this point on the Soviet Union sought allies among the Western colonial powers. There was a growing feeling that Moscow was no longer assisting the minorities and colonial peoples or, worse, was only using them for its own

ends (Woronoff, 1970:21).

The Negroes and Africans who had flirted with communism or honestly hoped for cooperation with the communist party turned back to the specific interests of Pan-Negroism. Although many of them remained scientific socialists and used Marxist terminology, most of them left the communist parties. With the resignation of men like George Padmore, Richard Wright, Yergan, Franz Fanon, Paul Robeson and Aime Cesaire, the break with communism was quite spectacular (Woronoff, 1970:21). The reason was pointed out most clearly by Aime Cesaire, a long standing member of the French communist party and a representative to the National Assembly, in his letter to Maurice Thorez: "What I want is that Marxism and Communism be placed at the service of black peoples and not black peoples at the service of Marxism and Communism" (Woronoff, 1970:21-22). Padmore and others felt that Pan-Africanism should not be an adjunct to world communism but rather an ideological alternative. And, in the younger generation of Pan-Africanists, people such as Kwame Nkrumah and Sékou Touré tried to use Soviet aid and communist tactics to their own advantage without being drawn into the movement (Woronoff, 1970:22).

The basic lesson was that real cooperation between two revolutionary forces was difficult. Not only was priority in the Soviet Union given to the destruction of capitalism and not colonialism, but more essentially both capitalism and communism were expressions of white and Western thought. The only movement that could serve the Negroes or Africans exclusively was one of their own conception and making. All other movements were only fair weather companions. It was not possible to hitch the wagon of Pan-Africanism to liberalism or communism or anything else. This was the beginning of a new independence and self-reliance, of "African socialism" and a non-alignment with the East as well as the West (Woronoff, 1970:22).

Thompson explains Pan-Africanism's ideological basis during this period, when he says,

> In the decade between 1935 and 1945 the growth of Pan Africanism was profoundly influenced by Marxist-Socialism, the Ghandian policy of passive resistance and peaceful protest, the growth in the assertation of, and the appreciation of, traditional African culture and eclecticism applied to ideology, culture, and institutions (Thompson, 1969:33).

1.1.2.7 The Fifth Pan-African Congress of 1945

1.1.2.7.1 Background to Congress and delegates

The fifth Pan-African Congress took place in the Charlton Town Hall, Manchester, from 15-19 October 1945. There were some two hundred delegates including many trade unionists and students. Two of the most prominent were Kwame Nkrumah, an organising secretary, and Jomo Kenyatta as chairman (Woronoff,1970:23). For the first time a large number of Africans from the African continent were in attendance, among them leading personalities like Wallace Johnson (Sierra Leone), Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Hastings Banda (Malawi), Peter Abrahams (South Africa), Ako Adjei (Ghana), Jaja Wachukwu (Nigeria), and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana (Abdul-Raheem,1996:4; Agyeman,1993:152-3). Key figures who participated in that Congress were to later play a prominent role in the decolonisation process in Africa. They included Kwame Nkrumah who became Ghana's first president; president Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya 1963-78; the prominent political leader Obafemi Awolowo in Nigeria's first and second republics; Jaja Wachukwu, Nigeria's first African Foreign Minister; Hastings Kamuzu Banda, Malawi's first president, and others (Abdul-Raheem,1996:5).

This Congress became, for Africans on the continent, the most important Congress ever, considering the manner in which it addressed the question of colonialism and set the independence movement in first gear (Abdul-Raheem,1996:4). At this Manchester Congress, in October 1945, Africans finally took the lead (Woronoff,1970:23).

1.1.2.7.2 Resolutions of the Congress

The Congress resolutions put emphasis on the need for speedy decolonisation on the African continent. The Congress document entitled "The Challenge to the Colonial Powers" stated that,

> The delegates to the Fifth Pan African Congress believe in peace...nevertheless, if the western world continues determined to rule humanity by force, then the Africans, as their last resort, may have to resort to force, in the effort to achieve liberty, even if that force destroys them, themselves and the world (Abdul-Raheem,1996:4).

As this is obvious from the above, the fifth Pan-African Congress was a radical departure from the petitions of the past that appealed to the reasonableness of the colonialists instead of proffering a direct political challenge. The result is that a little over a decade after the Manchester Congress, Africa was on the way to regaining its independence (Abdul-Raheem,1996:4).

The Congress unanimously approved and adopted the "Declaration to Colonial Peoples" of the World written by Kwame Nkrumah, which stated that,

> We believe in the rights of all peoples to govern themselves. We affirm the right of all colonials peoples to control their own destiny. All colonies must be free from foreign imperialist control, whether political or economic. The peoples of the colonies must have a right to elect their own government without restrictions from a foreign power. We say to the peoples of the colonies that they must strive for these ends by all means at their disposal. The object of imperialist powers is to exploit. By granting the right to the colonial peoples to govern themselves, they are defeating that objective. Therefore the struggle for political power by colonial peoples is a first attempt towards, and the necessary pre-requisite to complete social, economic and political emancipation.The fifth Pan African Congress, therefore, calls on the workers and farmers of the colonies to organise effectively. Colonial workers must be in the front lines of the battle against imperialism. The fifth Pan African Congress calls on the intellectual and professional classes of the colonies to awaken to their responsibilities. The long, long night is over. By fight-operatives, freedom to print and read literature which is necessary for education of the masses, you will be using the only means by which your liberties will be won and maintained. Today there is only one road to effective action-the organisation of the masses (Abdul-Raheem,1996:4-5).

In addition, the delegates laid down certain demands. The main goals were expressed simply and compellingly,

> We are determined to be free. We want education. We want the right to earn a decent living; the right to express our thoughts and emotions, to adopt and create forms of beauty. We demand for Black Africa autonomy and independence, so far and no further than it is possible in this One World for groups and peoples to rule themselves subject to inevitable world unity and federation (Woronoff,1970:23).

The Congress delegates also made broader economic demands: "We condemn the monopoly of capital and the rule of private wealth and industry for private profit alone. We welcome economic democracy as the only real democracy" (Woronoff,1970:23-24).

Furthermore, Afari-Gyan (Afari-Gyan,1993:162) lists four of the conclusions that emerged from this

congress. Firstly, colonialism could be eradicated only through the concerted action of the colonial peoples themselves; secondly, the job of ending colonialism could not be done by a few intellectuals alone, but through a mass movement and the creation of institutions responsive to the needs of the people; thirdly, Pan-Africanism should be seen as an independent ideological system, a counterpoint to capitalism and communism (Afari-Gyan,1993:162); and lastly, peaceful civil disobedience in the form of strikes and boycotts should be used in the struggle against colonialism. Violence was not to be resorted to unless circumstances made it the only viable option (Afari-Gyan,1993:162-3).

The resolutions of the Congress included a list of grievances against the colonial powers and an indictment of their policy. Even the supposed reforms were condemned as "half-hearted or ineffectual". Both the political and economic situations were labelled "systematic exploitation" and the conditions regarded as worsening rather than improving. For this reason the colonial powers were summoned to practice their own principles, those of the Atlantic Charter and democracy (one person, one vote) and to redress the situation for the benefit of the peoples (Woronoff,1970:23).

1.1.2.7.3 Analysis of the Congress

Though the Manchester meeting was partially a continuation of the preceding Congresses it nevertheless struck a new note doctrinally. The demands of preceding congresses were replaced by an analysis and condemnation of colonialism. This first awkward attempt at drawing up a "scientific" program was often ambiguous or contradictory, but there was no mistaking its general import (Woronoff,1970:23).

But the means to these ends (goals set at the Congress) were rather confused, for although the resolutions were bold, the conclusions were a strange mixture of patience and despair. This confusion is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the final decision of the Congress was to use "positive action," based on Ghandi's non-violent teachings, while the declaration concluded: "We shall complain, appeal and arraign. We will make the world listen to the facts of our condition" (Woronoff,1970:24). But, as a last resort, "we will fight in every way we can for freedom, democracy and social betterment" (Woronoff,1970:24).

Although this Congress had gone furthest along the path opened half a century earlier by Sylvester-Williams and DuBois, the solidarity of the Pan-Negro movement was fundamentally altered by the Africans. DuBois' vision of African had been clearly Pan-Negro (Woronoff,1970:24). All this was changed at this Congress. By analysing their condition and problems solely as a result of colonialism and by launching a struggle against colonial exploitation, the Africans set aside the Negroes in the world and turned to the other colonial peoples (Woronoff,1970:24).

The fifth Pan-African Congress led to the All African Peoples's conferences which gave birth to the Organisation of African Unity. In the next subsection we analyse the emergence of the Organisation of African Unity.

1.1.2.8 The All-African People's Conferences: Towards the OAU

These conferences began in 1958 under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah and independent Ghana. They had two aims: to support the anti-colonial struggle in every part of the continent, and to strengthen the ideas of Pan-African unity (Davidson,1994:250).

The first conference organised by Nkrumah was a meeting at Accra, in 1958, between the eight states which were independent: Egypt (United Arab Republic:UAR), Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia (Davidson,1994:250; Abdul-Raheem,1996:5; Hadjor,1988:92). This became the first Pan-African conference to be held on the African continent (Abdul-Raheem,1996:5; Hadjor,1988:92). This made Nkrumah to observe then that "Pan-Africanism has finally returned home" (Abdul-Raheem,1996:5), that is, it ceased to be a diaspora-inspired and led movement. The resolution at this conference reclaimed the central demands of the 1945 Congress in relation to self-determination for all African peoples with the added boost that there are now independent states that could offer support (Abdul-Raheem,1996:5). Thompson later echoed the same sentiments about this conference in his comments, when he states that,

> For the first time in the modern world leaders of independent African states met to discuss common problems, with a view to working out common policies concerning political, economic, cultural and social matters (Davidson,1994:250).

A second Accra conference followed in December 1958. This was a meeting not of governments but of nationalist parties (Davidson,1994:250; Abdul-Raheem,1996:6). At this meeting, 62 nationalist and liberation movements / groups were represented (Abdul-Raheem,1996:6). Delegates came from all parts of Africa, whether or not these were independent countries, except from French Africa and Northern Nigeria (Davidson,1994:250). The conference pledged political, moral and diplomatic support for all liberation movements and endorsed the principle of "freedom by any means necessary, including armed struggle" (Abdul-Raheem,1996:6). It also sensitised the groups to the need for continental union as the goal of national independence (Abdul-Raheem,1996:6). An All-African People's Organisation (AAPO) was formed with headquarters in Accra. It called for all-African liberation and steps towards an eventual Commonwealth of Free African States. Anti-colonial and anti-racist, AAPO was a channel through which the old ideas of Pan-African unity might develop in new forms and with new force (Davidson,1994:250).

Other AAPO conferences were held in Tunis in 1960, and at Cairo in 1961. An All-African Trade Union Organisation was launched. Referring to this in 1963, Nkrumah argued that,

> the development of a united African trade union movement will give our working classes a new African consciousness and the right to express themselves in the councils of world labour, unfettered by any foreign view (Davidson,1994:251).

These AAPO conferences, and other meetings of that time (including a second conference of independent states, then numbering twelve, at Addis Ababa in June 1960), were, in fact, useful steps towards a continent-wide organisation. Finally, this took shape at Addis Ababa in May 1963. Out of the 32 then independent African states 31 agreed to form the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (with only Morocco failing to attend) (Davidson,1994:251).

The 31 heads of state who signed the Charter of Unity at Addis Ababa pledged that amongst others the OAU would do five things. Firstly, work for unity and solidarity among Africa's nations; secondly, plan and act together for a better life for Africa's peoples; thirdly, defend the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Africa's states; fourthly, get rid of all forms of colonialism in Africa; and fifthly, work for common action with nations outside Africa, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and its Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Davidson,1994:253).

1.1.2.8.1 Critique of OAU

It has been argued that the OAU became nothing more than an "irrelevant talking shop" (Hadjor, 1988:93) or a "toothless bull-dog" (Abdul-Raheem,1996:6). This irrelevant talking shop frustrated Nkrumah in such a way that he decided to "suspend his campaign for a union government of Africa and sought to influence the OAU in a Pan-Africanist direction" (Hadjor,1988:93).

Nkrumah's frustrations with the "inactivity" of the OAU was clearly visible at the second conference of the OAU in 1964, when he did some plain talking,

> Every day we delay the establishment of a Union Government of Africa, we subject ourselves to outside economic domination. And our political independence as separate states becomes more and more meaningless (Hadjor,1988:94).

According to Nkrumah a divided Africa had made it possible for imperialism to do what it wished (Hadjor,1988:94). In his reassessment of tactics and strategy, Nkrumah developed his perspective on the achievement of Pan-African unity. He further warned that the OAU was fast becoming an obstacle to African unity instead of a force for change,

> An examination of recent weeks exposes serious weaknesses within the OAU. The organisation failed to solve the crisis in the Congo and Rhodesia: both of them test cases... In fact the OAU is in danger of developing into a useful river for the confused sterile action of conflicting interests, the only difference being that in the context of one big brotherly organisation, reactionary tactics are camouflaged and applied through the negotiations (Hadjor,1988:102).

According to Nkrumah the OAU had become a face-saving device for many African governments who were hostile to the objectives of Pan-Africanism. Such governments, argues Nkrumah, could then use the inaction of the OAU as an excuse for their own lack of action on issues such as apartheid (Hadjor,1988:102). From his review of the OAU, Nkrumah drew the conclusion that the struggle for African unity would not get very far through reliance on diplomacy and government-to-government negotiations (Hadjor,1988:102-3). He then proposed that in the future the struggle should be conducted through a unified command, co-ordinating progressive forces. In other words, Nkrumah saw the unity of like-minded forces as the point of departure for the liberation of Africa. In 1968 he argued for the establishment of the All-African People's Revolutionary Party (AAPRP)

and the creation of an All-African People's Revolutionary Army. He argues that,

> The formation of a political party linking all liberated territories and struggling parties under a common ideology will smooth the way for eventual unity, and will at the same time greatly assist the prosecution of the All-African people's war. To assist the process of its formation, an All-African Committee for Political Co-ordination (AACPC) should be established to act as a liaison between all parties which recognised the urgent necessity of conducting an organised and unified struggle against colonisation and neo-colonialism. This committee would be created at the level of the central committees of the ruling parties and struggling parties, and would consolidate their integrated political consciousness (Hadjor,1988:103).

With this shift in forces, Nkrumah attempted to revitalise Pan-Africanism by basing it firmly on mass movements. Nkrumah believed that through the unification of like-minded progressive forces drawn from across the continent, an effective liberation movement could emerge (Hadjor,1988:103).

The above analysis shows Nkrumah's role in shaping Pan-Africanism in Africa. In order for us to fully understand his contribution to Pan-Africanism, we will, in the next subsection focus on his ideology.

1.1.2.9 Nkrumah's ideology

Though there are several crucial leaders[3] in the contemporary Pan-African movement, we will only

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[3] We are here referring to among others President Sengor of Senegal, President Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast, President Sékou Touré of Guinea and Kwame Nkrumah, president of Ghana (Thompson,1969:248). We are also aware that these leaders had different views and emphases in their understanding of the Pan-African philosophy. However, they had common views. Firstly, they all support the idea of the United Nations and have continued to affirm this. By implication, it means that they subscribe to the idea of a world community and world order. Pan-Africanism is viewed as a prerequisite for the attainment of world order. Secondly, they are all conscious of culture-both European and African, and they are dedicated to some features of African culture. These ideas are expressed, for example, in Ghana's effort to produce an *Encyclopedia Africana*, and the principles underlying the African Cultural Institute at Dakar in Senegal. Thirdly, they are passionately anti-colonial. Fourthly, with the exception of Houphouët-Boigny, they all advocate socialism and assert that socialism is humanism-and humanism is a feature of traditional African culture. Fifthly, with the exception of Houphouët-Boigny, they all assert African dignity in terms such as "Negritude" (Senghor) and the "African Personality" (Touré and Nkrumah) (Thompson,1969:278).

concentrate on the philosophy of one such figure, namely Nkrumah, for two primary reasons. Firstly, simply because a detailed study of the philosophy of each and every Pan-African leader would be beyond the scope of this chapter. Secondly, not only because of the prominent role he played, but Nkrumah's views also contributed considerably to produce Pan-Africanism and "African Personality" since the time of Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912) (Thompson,1969:278). Blyden was one of the leading spokespersons for the liberating ideas of Pan-Africanism. He was the West Indian and later, the Liberian diplomat.

It is worth noting, however, that Nkrumah's views were influenced by Marcus Garvey's ideas. In contrast to the Marxist-Leninist influence, the Garveyist influence on Nkrumah was largely inspirational. Garvey's basic concern was with the relations between black and white peoples in America: and he saw the only alternative to perpetual white domination in blacks building a strong nation of their own in Africa (Afari-Gyan,1993:162). Nkrumah appears to have drawn great inspiration from Garvey's idea of Africa for Africans, his glorification of Africa's past and optimistic visions of her future grandeur, his emphasis on the need for unity, organization and self-reliance as necessary for the liberation of a subject people, and his very success in attracting large scale support to his movement in America (Afari-Gyan,1993:162). In the following subsection, we will discuss Nkrumah's views on the following issues: colonialism and unity.

1.1.2.9.1 Colonialism

Nkrumah reiterates the Leninist view that colonialism arose from the need for raw materials to feed European industries. According to this view, at the onset of colonialism, capitalism in Europe had reached a stage where the lure of greater profits impelled the capitalist to export investment capital abroad. So for the colonialist to be free to repatriate the immense profits he made on his investments, it was necessary for him to take control of the economy and the politics of the colony (Afari-Gyan,1993:163). Once in firm control, the colonialist proceeded consciously to exploit the resources of the colony, while wilfully neglecting the needs of the people. For everywhere the colonialist exploited and oppressed the subject people; he placed his interests above theirs, circumscribed their rights and liberties and degraded them (Afari-Gyan,1993:163).

In sum, then, according to Nkrumah, at the time of independence colonialism left behind immense obstacles to development. The physical and social infrastructure necessary for progress were absent. That aside, the people were either uneducated or had been miseducated; they had been taught no skills relevant to nation-building; their economic initiative had been stifled; and they suffered a general feeling of inadequacy and helplessness (Afari-Gyan,1993:164). Against the foregoing background, Nkrumah saw the one major task which faces an ex-colonial country to be the removal of the obstacles to progress left behind by colonialism. Unless this was done, an atmosphere congenial to development could not be created (Afari-Gyan,1993:164).

Thus, one of the greatest obstacles to the development of Africa, according to Nkrumah was neo-colonialism.

> The essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside (Quoted by Hadjor,1988:96).

He defines a neo-colonial country as one that has all the outward trappings of independence, but whose major policies are in reality controlled from outside (Afari-Gyan,1993:164). He sees neo-colonialism as a device by which the developed world seeks to retain the new nations in essentially the same status as during the colonial period (Afari-Gyan,1993:164-5). Thus Nkrumah saw neo-colonialism as the most dangerous obstacle to the true development of an ex-colonial country (Afari-Gyan,1993:165). It was this understanding of realities that led Nkrumah to realise that African unity could not be achieved without a struggle against the more subtle forms of domination and influence (Hadjor,1988:96).

How then can neo-colonialism be resisted? According to Nkrumah, the first step is for the peoples of the new nations to become knowledgeable about neo-colonialism and to realise that it is hindering their progress. Secondly, they must also realize that the forces of neo-colonialism are too strong for any one nation to defeat alone. Thirdly, in the final analysis, the only way to ward off neo-colonialism is to create a socialist system (Afari-Gyan,1993:165). It was the belief that a socialist system is the best suitable vehicle to eradicate the legacy of neo-colonialism, that led him to advance socialist views. In the next subsections we will discuss Nkrumah's views on socialism.

1.1.2.9.1.1 Socialism

Nkrumah (1965) had defined the aims of African socialism in these words,

> our aims embrace the creation of a welfare state based on African Socialist principles, adapted to suit Ghanaian conditions, in which all citizens, regardless of class, tribe, colour or creed, shall have equal opportunities...we aim to create in Ghana a Socialist society in which each will give according to his ability and receive according to his needs (Quoted by Bankole,1981:188-9).

Nkrumah saw capitalism and socialism as the two competing models of development. He rejected the capitalist model for several reasons. In the first place, the problems that the new nations had to solve had been created by capitalism. Secondly, he considered socialism as the only way to defeat neo-colonialism. Thirdly, capitalism is characterised by "unfeeling competition and pursuit of supremacy" plus unfair distribution of the fruits of national growth (Afari-Gyan,1993:165). Fourthly, he considered government initiative and active involvement in the development process to be necessary (Afari-Gyan,1993:165-6).

But equally important as Nkrumah's rejection of capitalism was his caution against an uncritical adoption of socialist measures used elsewhere. The caution was necessary because even though "there is only one true socialism, and that is scientific socialism" (Afari-Gyan,1993:166), there are different paths to socialism, dictated by the "specific circumstances and conditions of a particular country at a definite historical period" (Afari-Gyan,1993:166). The crucial thing is that every socialist experiment should aim at creating a society in which all citizens have equal opportunity, where there is no exploitation, and where "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Afari-Gyan,1993:166). For Nkrumah such a society has four essential features. Firstly, the common ownership of the means of production and exchange; the second is the production for use rather than for profit; thirdly, it should have planned industrial and agricultural development; and fourthly, political power should be in the hands of the people (Afari-Gyan,1993:166). With this conviction, Nkrumah set out to give the universal principles of socialism "the institutional forms that take into account our African background and heritage" (Afari-Gyan,1993:166). This task entailed the analysis of contemporary African society (Afari-

Gyan,1993:166). For this purpose, Nkrumah proposed philosophical consciencism[4]. There is a popular tendency to regard consciencism as an ideology. But it is not. Rather, it is a "philosophical statement which gives the theoretical basis for an ideology" (Afari-Gyan,1993:169). The ideology of philosophical consciencism is socialism, for consciencism seeks to end exploitation and the solidifying of class divisions, and to promote planned, egalitarian development and social justice (Afari-Gyan,1993:169). What does Nkrumah mean by social justice? We try to answer this question in our next subsection.

1.1.2.9.1.2 Social justice

For Nkrumah the goal of the reconstruction of post-colonial society is to achieve social justice.

> A socially just society is one in which, at the minimum, the general run of the people have access to the basic need of life. Creating such a society requires the removal of the obstacles to progress left behind by colonialism and the rapid expansion of education, health, and other social infrastructure and services. To make all these possible, the economy must be planned, rapid industrialization must be achieved, agriculture must be modernized, and investments must be directed into desired channels. Moreover, the problems of low productivity must be solved, and economic surplus must be created (Afari-Gyan,1993:172).

Nkrumah maintained that in the drive to achieve social justice particular attention ought to be paid to developing the rural areas. Thus, he argues that the

> 'vestiges of rural feudalism' must be destroyed; industries must be built in the rural areas to provide employment and to arrest the drift of the population to the towns; and co-opertive [sic] banks must be established to give easy credit to rural dwellers. In addition, the people must be taught preventive medicine and sanitation, and health facilities, good drinking water and feeder roads must be provided (Afari-Gyan,1993:172).

Nkrumah then goes on to argue that the initiative and major responsibility for achieving social justice must fall on the government, because it requires government control of national production and a conscious effort to distribute the fruits of growth and social progress more evenly. However, he believes that the people through self-help projects can play an important role. He further

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[4] Nkrumah's philosophical consciencism is comparable to Latin American liberation theology's "conscientization" or feminist theology's "consciousness raising".

maintains that institutions like the trade unions also have an important role to play. In this regard, he argues that unlike their counterparts in the west, African trade unions must do much more than "safeguard the conditions and wages of their members" (Afari-Gyan,1993:172). He further believes that trade unions need to be an integral part of the attempt to solve the problems of productivity and to create economic surplus (Afari-Gyan,1993:172).

And, Nkrumah then goes on to argue that in creating the new democratic institutions four things were to be borne in mind. Firstly, democracy consists essentially in universal adult suffrage and free regular general elections. Secondly, social justice can be achieved only in a socialist state. Thirdly, a socialist democracy is based on the principles of democratic centralism (Afari-Gyan,1993:173). He explains that principle as follows,

> All are free to express their views. But once a majority decision is taken, we expect such decision to be loyally executed, even by those who might have opposed that decision (Afari-Gyan,1993:173).

The fourth thing to bear in mind is that the multiparty system is a "ruse for carrying out the struggle between the haves and the have-nots" (Afari-Gyan,1993:173). On the other hand, a one-party non-socialist system is an instrument used by the few to suppress the many (Afari-Gyan,1993:173). Thus, Nkrumah's new institutional framework for achieving social justice was a one-party socialist system based on the principles of universal adult suffrage and democratic centralism (Afari-Gyan,1993:173).

Nkrumah was fully aware that in order to achieve the development and reconstruction of Africa after colonialism, as much as socialism was important, unity among the colonised and ex-colonised countries was equally important. We will, therefore, in the next section, discuss his views on the concept of unity.

1.1.2.9.2 Unity

In this section we analyse Nkrumah's views on both national and continental (Pan- African) unity.

1.1.2.9.2.1 National unity

Nkrumah was firm in his belief that national unity is essential for stability and purposeful development. But what kind of unity? (Afari-Gyan,1993:169). He argued that in a post-colonial setting the exigencies of national development amount to a national emergency requiring overall central planning and united action. In the circumstances, any diffusion of governmental power in such a way that bodies are created with powers "wide enough to impinge on those of the central government"(Afari-Gyan,1993:169) makes the central government less sovereign than it should be,

> Thus, centralization of power and authority is necessary for the exercise of "positive leadership," meaning the ability of the central government to initiate and carry through its programmes without any hindrance whatsoever (Afari-Gyan,1993:169).

Linked to national unity is continental unity.

1.1.2.9.2.2 Continental unity

Nkrumah considered Pan-Africanism to be a higher level of ideological development than nationalism. He argued that while nationalism is necessary for gaining independence, it cannot be a final solution, because genuine decolonisation cannot be achieved within the existing national boundaries. He stressed that only a united Africa can effectively resist the pressures of neo-colonialism, and so continental interests must take priority over the interests of any one country (Afari-Gyan,1993:170-1). One of the striking provisions in the constitution of Ghana was that Ghana was prepared at any time to surrender her sovereignty in the interests of African unity (Bankole,1981:171).

However, Nkrumah was very much critical of regionalism or balkanisation. He argued that regional blocs provide a framework for imperialist domination, as they represent a new mechanism for

partitioning Africa. According to Nkrumah, the balkanisation of Africa not only meant foreign domination but also invited tension and conflict between the people of the continent. Artificial boundaries necessarily breed suspicion and tension, providing the foundation for perpetual conflict among Africans (Hadjor,1988:90). Hence balkanisation also meant permanent strife within Africa. A geographical division which did not correspond to real historical development would necessarily fuel conflict and wars. Such a political map, argues Nkrumah, represented permanent instability for the people of Africa (Hadjor,1988:90).

Nkrumah also portrayed Balkanisation as an instrument that facilitated Africa's economic enslavement. As Nkrumah explains,

> In Africa, most of the independent states are economically unviable, and still have the artificial frontiers of colonialism. They are easy prey for the voracious appetites of neo-colonialist empire-builders. Where political Balkanisation has not been successful for the imperialists, economic Balkanisation has been pursued. A single productive process is divided between states...The regional economic groupings in Africa have been encouraged, controlled by neo-colonialists, which therefore further strengthen international finance capital (Hadjor,1988:91).

From his grasp of the dangers presented by the balkanisation of the continent, Nkrumah concluded that the struggle for freedom could only be conducted from a Pan-Africanist perspective. As a collection of artificially created states, Africa is doomed to stagnation and poverty. Accordingly, Pan-African unity is not a policy option but a question of survival. Only a continent-wide division of labour can create the conditions for the qualitative transformation of life (Hadjor,1988:91).

Thus, Nkrumah understood that independence could not mean very much in economic terms within the context of an isolated African nation. Accordingly he remarked thus,

> No independent African State today has a chance to follow an independent course of economic development by itself, and many of us who have tried to do this have been almost ruined or have had to return to the fold of the former colonial rulers (Hadjor,1988:91).

In addition, the focus of Nkrumah's foreign policy was the establishment of a unitary African state (Hadjor,1988:93). In January 1963, Nkrumah worked out a four-point positive programme for African unity. An examination of this programme shows that it is probably even more relevant today

than when it was written[5]. The first point of the programme advocated a common foreign policy and diplomacy for Africa as a whole (Hadjor,1988:96). As Nkrumah argues, an Africa divided into a collection of small states can never influence international events. On the contrary, such fragmented small nations will necessarily become the objects rather than the subjects of global diplomacy. The large industrial powers could easily dominate a divided Africa. As Nkrumah wrote,

> The desirability of a common foreign policy which will enable us to speak with one voice in the councils of the world is so obvious, vital and imperative that comment is hardly necessary (Hadjor,1988:96).

The second point of Nkrumah's programme calls for "common continental planning for economic and industrial development in Africa" (Hadjor,1988:97). Nkrumah observed that in natural resources Africa is rich and yet in economic terms it is poor. Only a division of labour established on a continent-wide basis could reverse this state of affairs. The profound economic crisis that faces Africa shows the importance of Nkrumah's analysis. Since Nkrumah's death, the deterioration of Africa's fabric puts an all-African economic perspective firmly on the agenda (Hadjor,1988:97).

The third point of Nkrumah's programme demands "a common currency, a monetary zone and a central bank of issue" (Hadjor,1988:97). Control over Africa's economy, argues Nkrumah, demands co-ordination of its finance. Otherwise it will be foreign banks that will dominate Africa's resources. In recent times Africa's decline has been vividly shown by its indebtedness to foreign banks. Indeed, the proportion of Africa's resources which is devoted to the payment of interest on foreign loans is so high that there is virtually nothing left for productive investment. As long as it is foreign banks that control Africa's finance there can be no real economic development (Hadjor,1988:97).

The fourth point calls for a common defence and security system with an African high command in order to ensure the stability and security of Africa. According to Nkrumah, a united military force

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[5] Its relevance today is shown by the African leaders's efforts in attempting to establish an African Union, which is the successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The view of these African leaders, in establishing such a new organisation, is perhaps the realisation that we are in a new and different context today than we were, when the OAU was established, and that the new context, with new challenges, dictates that a new structure which will promptly and adequately address the current socio-economic conditions in Africa be designed.

is essential for the preservation of Africa's integrity (Hadjor,1988:97).

It is worth noting that Nkrumah's warnings about what would happen to a divided African have proved all too true. It was his merit that he understood that national independence did not constitute liberation. As he himself stated, the "independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa" (Hadjor,1988:98). This is a message that will simply not go away. Ghana's own experience serves as its living proof. Nkrumah's perspectives for African unity are the distillation of vital historical lessons. It is the only road that holds out a future for the continent. It is a choice that all Africans have to make. Nkrumah's example provides them with the inspiration to do what is necessary (Hadjor,1988:98).

Thus, he appeared quite impatient with those who did not see the basis for African unity in African cultures. Accordingly, he argues that,

> Critics of African unity often refer to the wide differences in culture, language and ideas in various part of Africa. This is true, but the essential fact remains that we are all Africans, and have a common interest in the independence of Africa. The difficulties presented by questions of language, culture and different political systems are not inseparable. If the union is agreed upon by us all, then the will to create it is born; and where there is a will there is a way (Hagan,1993:19).

It follows therefore, that Nkrumah formulated a strategy that would also take seriously African culture. In the next section we discuss this strategy, namely African personality.

1.1.2.9.2.3 African personality and African genius

Nkrumah's major political objectives were national unity and continental unity. The national objective would be irrelevant if continental unity could not be achieved. Because of this, though it was virtually the same issues that plagued him at home that confronted him on a continental scale when he contemplated African unity, he fashioned a cultural philosophy and strategy more suited to Africa than to Ghana (Hagan,1993:23). For this strategy he fashioned a concept of African personality, and defined it as the creative expression of the African genius, the common reality behind the diversities and complexities of African cultures (Hagan,1993:23).

1.1.2.9.2.3.1 Definition of African personality

The ultimate aim of Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism was to delimit what is African from the non-African and thus free the African from all forms of colonialism and neo-colonialism. It was this goal of distinguishing the "Africanness" from the "non-Africanness" that led Nkrumah to pursue the concept of the African personality. The African personality, according to him, is "defined by the cluster of humanist principles which underlie the traditional African society" (Agyeman,1993:154).

Nkrumah conceived of the African personality in terms of the total African continent because, on the one hand, he did not recognise the legitimacy of the Republic of South Africa, on the other, he saw both the Arabic and the negroid parts of Africa as constituting one total culture; and his aim was to revive and revolutionise this total culture which has a long history and which is as old as other great cultures. One characteristic feature of the African personality is the non-exploitative, co-operative communalistic life of the traditional African. Nkrumah saw this as compatible with scientific socialism and argued that the African personality should be conceived as the true culture of the African peasantry which is characterised by the non-exploitative and co-operative relationship that existed between members of the peasant society. He also argued that if the cultural revolution of the African personality was to succeed, and it should succeed, then the African revolution should be brought to its rightful place, i.e. to the peasantry (Agyeman,1993:155).

On the surface Nkrumah's conception of the African personality does not differ from Senghor's views of Negritude. Senghor defines Negritude as "the whole complex of civilized values-cultural, economic, social and political-which characterize the black peoples, or more precisely, the Negro-African world" (Agyeman,1993:154). However, according to Senghor, Negritude does not include Arabite. Geographically, Negritude covers only that part of Africa between south of the Sahara and north of the Republic of South Africa (Agyeman,1993:154-5). Senghor therefore derives his view of Pan-Africanism from Negritude and this distinguishes his Pan-Africanism from Nkrumah's continental Pan-Africanism (Agyeman,1993:155). In contrast, though Nkrumah's concept of Pan-Africanism derives from the African personality, it embraces geographically the whole of the continent of Africa and therefore has a broader frame of reference than Senghor's Negritude

(Agyeman,1993:155).

Having defined Nkrumah's African Personality, we go on, in the next subsection, to examine the relationship between African Personality and African Genius.

1.1.2.9.2.3.2 Relation between African personality and African genius

Nkrumah delivered a speech entitled "The African genius" at the launch of the Institute of African Studies, which was meant to stand as a major policy statement on the issue of African culture (Hagan,1993:17). Seeking the permanent and universal in the changing patterns of African culture, Nkrumah postulated the concept of African personality (Hagan,1993:18-19). Nkrumah believed that African personality and African unity should determine the strategy of cultural institutions (Hagan,1993:17).

If there is any reality or "substratum" to African personality, it is the African genius, and Nkrumah defined the African genius as a step towards determining the strategy which a cultural establishment like the Institute of African Studies could use to restore the African glory and bring about African unity (Hagan,1993:20). Thus, Nkrumah states,

> When I speak of the African genius, I mean something different from Negritude, something not apologetic, but dynamic. Negritude consists in a mere literary affectation and style which piles up word upon word and image upon image with occasional reference to African and things African. I do not mean a vague brotherhood based on criterion of colour, or on the idea that Africans have not reasoning but only a sensitivity. By the African genius I mean something positive, our socialist conception of society, the efficiency and validity of our traditional statecraft, our highly developed code of morals, our hospitality and our purposeful energy (Hagan,1993:20).

So, Nkrumah identified African personality with the African genius, and the African genius with certain cultural characteristics: communalistic social values, efficient institutional structures, and a humane attitude to all humans. Upon this basis Nkrumah proceeded to explain his development strategy with reference to culture (Hagan,1993:20).

In order to obtain a genuine African personality, Nkrumah could posit an educational system that had only African cultural content and sought to create awareness of Africa's needs (Hagan,1993:23). Such an educational system had to regard as its frame of reference (1) relationships between all major aspects of people's culture; (2) the specificity of one nation's experiences in the context of Africa as a whole; and (3) the particularity of African experience as a major part and not "a mere appendage of world culture" (Hagan,1993:23). This had also to be the framework of the African creative endeavour that should flow from the educational programme (Hagan,1993:23). As the mind is dynamic, the culture of the African cannot be seen in static models; and the way of nurturing the African genius is to infuse the educational system with the right cultural content (Hagan,1993:20). The educational system that would take into consideration African culture and seek to bridge the African continental context, the two poles of time and space are here evident, must have as its objective the inculturation of the creative genius of the individual (Hagan,1993:20-21).

This prescription or yardstick would be applicable to education in any milieu. What Nkrumah does, therefore, is to assert by implication that a consciousness not fashioned by education to relate directly to the African environment, not seized of the pressing needs of Africa, and not attuned to African values, cannot give rise to original contributions for the improvement of the life and culture of the peoples of Africa while preserving the African's sense of cultural identity. And this makes the proper cultural education of the African the most important factor in the strategy of African cultural development (Hagan,1993:21).

Because Nkrumah perceived education as an essential element of his politico-cultural policy for Africa, it was in respect of the learning process that he demonstrated his thinking on the strategy for preserving and interpreting and creating African culture (Hagan,1993:21). Thus Nkrumah's strategy for cultural development is to use education to obtain knowledge which would be used in an effort to contribute the creative output of the African genius to the wealth of world culture. In this strategy, all facets of culture would be given equal attention, and the inter-relationship between all facets examined in each society in the wider context of Africa and, in turn, in the still wider context of world culture (Hagan,1993:22).

Having examined the relationship between African personality and African genius, we move on to critique, in the next subsection, Nkrumah's cultural policy.

1.1.2.9.2.3.3 Critique of Nkrumah's cultural policy

Nkrumah's cultural policy had three major failings. First, for a great leader who saw the masses and their need as a major factor in culture, Nkrumah failed to project any active role by the workers and people of Africa though they constituted the creative source and vitality and guarantors of Africa's heritage. Where Nkrumah mentioned the people, he saw them as recipients rather than as cultural innovators or creators, with the new intelligentsia, of African culture. And this attitude arose out of a second fault in his strategy (Hagan,1993:23-24).

Secondly, Nkrumah saw cultural education in terms of classroom or academic activity instead of a learning process carried out in life and spanning each person's life from birth to death. The strategy he put forward therefore neglected the learning and creative experience which is informal and occurs in the general area of African life outside the classroom. Thirdly, his strategy neglects to give serious place to the preservation of the African cultural traditions in the process of developments that are likely to change the African way of life (Hagan,1993:24).

Whatever its failing, however, Nkrumah's strategy would quite likely influence the thinking of policy makers for a very long time to come. Clearly, Nkrumah's views have either explicitly or implicitly, influenced notions of an African Renaissance and also theologies of reconstruction. This influence is demonstrated by both the advocates of an African Renaissance and those of theologies of reconstruction's apparent reference to the concept of Pan-Africanism in general, and Nkrumah's views in particular. His cultural philosophy and strategy would be judged as a very important and necessary stimulus to the examination of how Africa would preserve and develop its cultures in a Pan-African framework (Hagan,1993:24).

1.1.2.9.3 Conclusion

Nkrumah's ideology must be seen against the background of his analysis of colonialism. He considered colonialism to have literally battered African society, and he sought to provide an ideology suitable for its reconstruction (Afari-Gyan,1993:173). He maintained that political independence is crucial to reconstruction, because without it reconstruction is a non-starter. But he emphasised that political independence is only the first stage of the victory to be won. He realised fully well that post-independence reconstruction would present more difficult problems than did the struggle for independence. Thus, he maintained that the thrust at this stage should be placed on achieving economic self-sufficiency (Afari-Gyan,1993:173).

Nkrumah emphasised that the ultimate goal of reconstruction should be the realisation of social justice (Afari-Gyan,1993:173-4). To achieve this, he adopted four main positions to guide the reconstruction exercise. Firstly, it is essential for the government to take the initiative and become actively involved in the development process; secondly, new institutions suitable to the African environment ought to be created, because the solutions to Africa's problems will be different from those adopted elsewhere; thirdly, a socialist, one-party system is the best framework for achieving social justice; and fourthly, continental unity is essential to development, because no one African country can succeed all by itself (Afari-Gyan,1993:174).

In the main, the above stated positions formed the basis of Nkrumah's ideology (Afari-Gyan,1993:174). Thus, we need to acknowledge Nkrumah's contribution to the actualisation of Pan-Africanism, as Hadjor does when he states that,

> Pan-Africanism as an ideal did not originate with Nkrumah. But it is only with Nkrumah that Pan-Africanism ceased to be a dream and became a practical possibility. Until Nkrumah, Pan-Africanism had the character of a worthwhile ideal. Pan-Africanists such as DuBois and Padmore advocated African unity as a political response to racial oppression and colonial domination. In their hands, Pan-Africanism developed into a coherent ideological perspective. Since they were removed by circumstance from involvement in mass politics they were not able to take Pan-Africanism beyond an ideology and give it a practical and organisational shape. It is only with Nkrumah that Pan-Africanism ceases to be merely ideology and acquires the dimension of practical action (Hadjor,1988:88).

Nkrumah's dreams of Pan-Africanism did not die with him, in 1972. Both the sixth (1974) and the seventh (1994) Congresses kept it alive. In the next section we discuss the sixth Pan-African Congress.

1.1.2.10 The Sixth Pan-African Congress of 1974

The sixth Pan-African Congress was held in June 1974 at the University of Dar-es-Salaam and was attended by 52 delegations from African and Caribbean states, liberation movements, communities of Africans in North America, South America, Britain and the Pacific (Abdul-Raheem,1996:8). The sixth Pan-African Congress was seen as a way to revive the Pan-African Movement and the Pan-Africa Congress series. It was not surprising then, that

> The initiative for organising the sixth Pan African Congress came from a small group of Afro-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans who met in Bermuda and the United States in 1971 and 1972 (Abdul-Raheem,1996:7).

The ideological orientation of the group ranged from "African Liberationists", those whose primary aim is the political, economic, social and cultural liberation of people of African descent all over the world, to "African Avengers", those who are consumed by anger against and hatred for white people even though they try to concentrate on black pride and development. A number of the former were independent leftists in the tradition of the organisers of the earlier Pan-African Congresses while the latter came from some spin-off groups from the Garvey and student non-violent co-ordinating committee movements (Abdul-Raheem,1996:7).

Accordingly, the theme of the sixth Pan-African Congress was self-reliance, self-determination and unity of black people throughout the world (Abdul-Raheem,1996:7). The objectives of the organisers were that there was to be a progressive thrust to the Congress and emphasis would be placed on people's organisations as opposed to governments. The early 1970s represented the decade of a renewed onslaught by liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Zimbabwe and South Africa against colonisation and settler minority racist rule. Therefore, the organizers wanted to provide concrete support for the liberation efforts (Abdul-Raheem,1996:7). The organisers met with sympathetic response from the Tanzania African National Union (TANU)

government of President Julius Nyerere and from their first meeting in May 1972 the government and the ruling party of Tanzania threw their weight behind the initiative (Abdul-Raheem,1996:7-8). This political support had both negative and positive elements in it. One of the negative aspects was that some of the initial mobilisers for the effort, such as the late C.L.R. James who wrote "The Call" for the Congress and other Pan-Africanists in the Caribbean, could not attend the Congress due to the participation of governments they were fighting against from the Caribbean. However, individuals from the Caribbean who were then based in Africa, such as the late Walter Rodney, Horace Campbell and others, played crucial roles in the Congress (Abdul-Raheem,1996:8).

As to be expected, the Congress mirrored the global ideological and political struggles of the period and their manifestation within the Pan-African world (Abdul-Raheem,1996:8). Issues of the right to self-determination through armed struggle, and questions of imperialism and neo-colonialism, underdevelopment, Third Worldism, self-reliance in education and culture, continuing colonialism in the Caribbean, and the role of African women were addressed and analysed; and resolutions were adopted in spite of the different views and perspectives of the participants (Abdul-Raheem,1996:8). Abdul-Raheem has this to say about this Congress,

> The documents...resolutions...record both the disparity of views under played at the 6th Pan-African Congress and the relative strength which came to be exercised-despite predictions to the contrary-by the progressive forces. The lead, in many cases, was fittingly taken by the liberation movements (Abdul-Raheem,1996:8).

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the sixth Pan-African Congress was the inability to transform all the good resolutions into a concrete organisational and institutional framework of action. It is a mistake which the seventh Pan-African Congress sought to rectify by agreeing to set up a permanent secretariat in order to reverse the initiatives of the past (Abdul-Raheem,1996:8).

1.1.2.11 The Seventh Pan-African Congress of 1994

The seventh Pan-African Congress, held in Kampala, Uganda, from 3-8 April 1994 was organised to keep alive a tradition that has been around for about a century (Abdul-Raheem,1996:1). The Congress was to respond to and intervene in the rapidly unfolding global events; it was to be an all-

inclusive gathering, on the basis of "come one, come all", including opponents of the initiative; all African and Caribbean governments were to be invited but on the basis of equality with non-governmental groups, and finally, all delegates were to be equal and limited to a maximum of two per organisation (governments were considered as individual organisations) (Abdul-Raheem,1996:10).

In reality only 17 African governments were represented either by their diplomats accredited to Uganda or official ministerial delegations (Abdul-Raheem,1996:10). Yet more than 30 African countries were represented by different political forces and groups, especially opposition and pro-democracy groups and youth and women activists (Abdul-Raheem,1996:10-11). There was disagreement within Congress about the place of North Africa in the Pan-African Movement (Abdul-Raheem,1996:11). Certain delegates held the view that Africa is black, which is not a new current in the movement but is as old as the movement itself. However, the Congress in Kampala rejected as reactionary "blackism" this attempt to balkanise Africa behind the so-called Saharan and Sub-Saharan divide. It accepted as African any citizen (by whatever means acquired) of any of the countries of Africa, from Cape Town to Cairo and all her islands (Madagascar, Mauritius, Cape Verde, etc.) and also recognise anybody of African descent in the diaspora. While a majority of Africans are of Negroid origin, it is not true historically, factually or even politically that blackness is the only condition of Africanness. The Congress also reasoned that every government or organisation that was invited had asked and answered for themselves the question, "Who is a citizen?" (Abdul-Raheem,1996:11). Thus, Abdul-Raheem captures succinctly this congress' decision on who is a *bonafide* citizen of Africa, when he states that,

> Therefore it was not our responsibility to decide who was more African than who. In fact being African alone (including being black) does not make one a Pan-Africanist. The Buthelezis, Mobutus, Abachas, Bokassas, Idi Amins, are as black as you can get but can we truly infer any Pan-African commitment from their ignominious acts? It is one's commitment and willingness to sacrifice for the unity and progress of Africa at home and abroad that is crucial; it is a question of consciousness and action. This is a progressive line within the movement that had been illuminated by Du Bois, James, George Padmore, Kwame Nkrumah, Walter Rodney and many others. We believed that is the correct position but did not shut the door to others who believed otherwise and they were represented adequately at the Congress (Abdul-Raheem,1996:11).

The success of the Congress in April 1994 answered some of the issues raised while some other issues are continuing points of discussion, debate and confrontation in the movement as it gropes for a renewed relevance and clarity in these times (Abdul-Raheem,1996:13).

The broad theme of the Congress was Pan-Africanism: Facing the future in unity, social progress and democracy (Campbell,1996:212). The Congress offered both analysis and practical solutions on how Africa can get out of its current crisis, reclaim the march of its history which was interrupted by slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism and the contemporary threat of recolonisation through International Monetary Fund/World Bank structural adjustment policies imposed on our peoples, the debt crisis and the domination of our civil society by northern Non-Governmental Organisations to whom our African governments have only been too happy to surrender social welfare activities like education, health and even rural development (Abdul-Raheem,1996:13-14).

Neo-colonialism (political independence without economic independence) was also discussed at this Congress, and it was seen as threatening to give way to recolonisation,

> More than ever in the past, Pan Africanism as a counter-force to imperialism is a necessary tool of analysis and organizational format for the whole Pan African world. That is why its general declaration, the Kampala Declaration, called on Africans to resist recolonization by organizing instead of agonizing, on the many fronts in which we are struggling to make true the libertarian and freedom-loving spirit that made our forebears to proclaim 'Africa for Africans' (Abdul-Raheem,1996:2).

The role of women was also tackled at this Congress. Indeed what was significant about the seventh Pan-African Congress and that which makes it distinct from all previous Congresses is that African women did not only participate fully in the Congress, but they also formed the Pan-African Women's Liberation Organisation (PAWLO). In all previous Pan-African Conferences and Congresses, if there is a mention of women, they would have been there as subordinates (wives, lovers, secretaries, ushers, hostesses, etc.), but the seventh Pan-African Congress changed this. To ensure that this is permanent the women formed PAWLO, not as a rival to the global movement but as an equal partner, fighting together, while striking separately, in our joint struggle (Abdul-Raheem,1996:25).

This conference, being fully aware that the Pan-African movement is today faced with a number of responsibilities, went on to spell out the usual catastrophes of debt, war, food crisis, refugees, structural adjustment, the rise of racism internationally, with the question of recolonisation figuring prominently. Similarly, Horrace Campbell points to three of the tasks of the Pan-African Movement today. The first task, he believes, is to make an impact on the African people in the process of transforming the nationalist consciousness of the twentieth century. Second, Africans must make a decisive impact on world opinion with respect to Africans at home and abroad. And third, African people want to be able to realize the spirit of dignity for the renewal of the human spirit (Campbell,1996:213). Accordingly, he reminds us that death tendencies are manifest in wars, poverty, AIDS, racism, destruction of the environment and the devaluation of the lives of women and deforming the lives of the youth in Africa. He therefore argues that the objective of this period is to be able to discourage and isolate death tendencies and encourage life tendencies (Campbell,1996:213-4). Abdul-Raheem too argues that if Pan-Africanism is to have any future it must connect itself with the various struggles of today. Thus, he elaborates further that,

> the deepening of the democratization processes, participatory development, women and gender, youth, students, workers, the poor, peasants, patriotic intelligentsia and other manifestations of social and other mass struggles and also the global anti-imperialist and popular struggles (Abdul-Raheem,1996:22).

Having analysed the Pan-African congresses from the first to the seventh, we move on to highlight a few aspects, before discussing the next renewal concept, namely an African Renaissance.

1.1.2.13 Conclusion

The aim of Pan-Africanism is to unite African countries in their struggle against the socio-economic conditions in their countries, with the goal of bringing about the renewal of the African continent. Having dealt with Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism, we now need to examine Mbeki's African Renaissance, which also talks of ways of addressing the current socio-economic conditions as a way of renewing the African continent.

1.2 AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

1.2.0 Introduction

In the previous subsection we discussed the emergence of Pan-Africanism from its early inception up to today. Its main goals of uniting all Africans in a concerted effort to address the socio-economic challenges of the African continent in the twenty first century is also shared by the advocates of the African Renaissance. In this subsection we discuss the concept African Renaissance, as a logical follow up of Pan-Africanism, with the primary aim of making these two concepts a theoretical framework for this thesis which explores a theology of reconstruction, transformation and renewal as new paradigms in African theology. Though Thabo Mbeki seems to be the most vocal advocate of the African Renaissance at the moment, many intellectuals have also written volumes on the African Renaissance. While our primary focus in this section will be on Mbeki's African Renaissance, we need to note that the term was not coined by Mbeki, and in order to have a broader picture of this concept, we will also pay attention to contributions by several intellectuals on this concept.

1.2.1 Definition

Mbeki has recently been consistently talking about the African Renaissance. By the African Renaissance he refers to the rebirth or renewal of an entire African continent (Mbeki,1998:226). So for Mbeki "the African Renaissance addresses the improvement of the conditions of life of the peoples of Africa" (Mbeki,1998:250). How do other scholars define the African Renaissance?

Bernard Magubane traces the origins of the word Renaissance in the context of the European Renaissance. He notes that the word Renaissance was first used in Europe to describe, the "revival of art and letters under influence of classical models in the 14th-16th century" (Magubane,1999:12-13). The noun Renaissance means rebirth and/or renewal, and the concept of Renaissance first received its name from those who thought of the Middle Ages "as a dark, trance-like period", from which, according to Robert Palmer, "the human spirit had been awakened" (Palmer quoted by

Magubane,1999:12-13). It was called a rebirth in the belief that Europe in the fifteenth century, after a long interruption, took up and resumed the civilisation of the Greco-Romans. It was at the same time, during the Renaissance itself, that the Middle Ages began to be thought of as in the "middle" (Magubane,1999:12-13). Hence, the Renaissance, in a more fundamental sense, is the birth of the modern era or "modernity" (Magubane,1999:12-13).

Thus, scholars of the African Renaissance have used the concept to refer to the awakening, rebirth and renewal, not of Europe, but of the African continent. Scholars have noted that every society experiences a renaissance to varying degrees from time to time,

> It is a process of rebirth, renewal, revival, revitalisation, reawakening, self-reinvention, even rededication, characterised by a surge of interest in learning and value reorientation (Khoza, 1999:279; Makgoba, Shope & Mazwai,1999:vii-viii).

For Sémou Guéye, Renaissance implies positive transformations in all spheres of our existence: culture (which includes mentalities and patterns of thought and behaviour), economic, social and political structures, and so forth (Guéye,1999:243). Reuel Khoza's definition is similar to Guéye. He argues that,

> At the core of the African renaissance vision is, or should be, the acceptance that Africa's people and their institutions have a capacity and the responsibility to create, foster and maintain economic, political, social and moral processes and practices that define Africans as competent, proud citizens of the world, on a par with the best in the world (Khoza,1999:279-280).

For some scholars, the African Renaissance is not only about the rebirth or renewal, but it is also about hope to the people of Africa. Kwesi Kwaa Prah argues that the African Renaissance is a message of "hope; it also represents a direct challenge to the ingenuity and determination of Africans to pull ourselves up by the bootstraps" (Prah,1999:43; cf Mosia,1998:10). According to John Stremlau, calls for an African Renaissance "are intended to encourage all Africans to confront these realities and to take greater responsibility for reversing them" (Stremlau,1999:101).

Having briefly described the concept of an African Renaissance, we need to explore the relationship between Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance.

1.2.1.1 The relationship between Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance

Mahmood Mamdani asks the question:When did the African Renaissance begin, in 1994 or earlier? (Mamdani,1999:125). In other words, did the African renaissance begin with Mbeki or it is an age old concept? Mamdani argues that we need to acknowledge "the large idea of which the call for an African Renaissance is a child - the idea of Pan-Africanism- and to recognise that it has been pushed forward more through debates than through a chorus" (Mamdani,1999:125).

Prah also reminds us that the idea of a "renewal, an awakening, a reawakening, a *resorgimento*, a renaissance for Africa is hardly new" (Prah,1999:43). He argues that each generation of African leadership has attempted in its own fashion to give it meaning. He maintains that its origins go back to the nineteenth century. "It emerged out of the spirit of westernised anti-colonialism; as a reaction of the westernised African élite freshly brought into the international capitalist order during the era of free trade which followed the end of slavery" (Prah,1999:43). It is suggested in different ways, by all the principal African nationalist thinkers of the nineteenth century, including Edward Blyden. In the twentieth century it includes Pixley Isaka Seme, a founder member of the African National Congress in 1912 and later president of the organisation who in 1905 spoke of a "regeneration of Africa" (Prah,1999:43). In that presentation, Seme remarked,

> I have chosen to speak on this occasion upon The Regeneration of Africa. I am an African, and set my pride in my race over against a hostile public opinion...The African recognises his anomalous position and desires a change. The brighter day is rising upon Africa. Already I seem to see her chains dissolved, her desert plains red with harvest, her Abyssinia and her Zululand the seats of science and of religion, reflecting the glory of the rising sun from the spires of their churches and universities. Her Congo and her Gambia whitened with commerce...Yes, the regeneration of Africa belongs to this new and powerful period. By this term regeneration, I wish to be understood to mean the entrance into a new life, embracing the diverse phases of a higher, complex existence (Quoted by Prah,1999:43-44).

Thus, the concept of an African Renaissance has deep and diverse historical roots that can be traced from W.E.B. Du Bois, who constantly alluded to an expected resurgence of Africa (Prah,1999:44), and Marcus Garvey's attempts to rally the African diaspora (Khoza,1999:279; Magubane,1999:11). Marcus Garvey spoke of an "awakened Africa which will not go back to sleep" (Prah,1999:44). Even Kwame Nkrumah conceptualised it as the emergence of "the African Personality" and offered

Pan-Africanist solutions (Prah,1999:44). Likewise Julius Nyerere views on the renaissance is captured by his words, when he says, "Total African liberation and total African unity are basic objectives of our party" (Prah,1999:44). Also, Steve Biko's renaissance dream was expressed through the Black Consciousness Movement (Khoza,1999:279). For her part, Nnamdi Azikiwe a Nigerian, pursued the idea of the Renaissance, and evoked the term "renaissant" (Vil-Nkomo and Myburgh,1999:266; Prah,1999:44). Finally, Léopold Sédar Senghor, espoused the notion of the Renaissance using the concept of "negritude" (Vil-Nkomo and Myburgh,1999:267), a reawakening of the African spirit (Nzongola-Ntalaja,1999:69).

In addition, other images have been invoked to convey the same idea. Semakula Kiwanuka, who was president of the Uganda National Congress, remarked on 8 January 1959 that "the slumbering lion is now awake. This is due to the new spirit of nationalism which is gaining momentum in Africa" (Prah,1999:44). Felix Roland Moumie said, "Every African wants to be free, but the people can only show their strength when they are organised...The rising in the Congo is a sign of the awakening of the African lion" (Quoted by Prah,1999:44). Smith Hempstone (1961) referred to "the new Africa", J.H. Oldham (1955) wrote about "new hope in Africa" and Basil Davidson (1955) described the prospective emergence of independent Africa as "the African awakening" (Prah,1999:44).

And finally, today's most visible protagonists, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda who speaks about the "reawakening of Africa" (Khoza,1999:279) and Thabo Mbeki (Khoza,1999:279; Magubane,1999:11) of South Africa (Khoza,1999:279), who talks of an "African Renaissance". All these figures are in different ways trying to convey the idea of an African historical and social renewal (Prah,1999:44).

From the above analysis we can deduce that the history of the idea of an African awakening dating from the middle of the nineteenth century can be conveniently structured into three phases (Prah,1999:44). During the first phase, thinkers like Edward Blyden, and Henry Sylvester Williams saw it as an ideal which must end in an accommodative arrangement under Western aegis (Prah,1999:44). This accommodative approach largely died with the end of the First World War (Prah,1999:45). From that time onwards, during the second phase, colonial freedom increasingly

assumed centrality in the formulation of the idea of an African awakening (Prah,1999:45). The third phase, the post-colonial phase, carries contemporary formulations of the idea and seeks equality and achievement with the rest of humanity in all areas of human endeavour (Prah,1999:45). Thabo Mbeki belongs to this third category.

So we see here that though Mbeki may be in the forefront today calling for the renewal, rebirth, reconstruction of Africa, the concept itself has been there long before, being expressed in different ways. In a way this makes us realise that the African Renaissance evolved out of the Pan-Africanist ideal. The African Renaissance should not be seen as an alternative concept to Pan-Africanism, rather it should be seen as a continuation of it under new circumstances, where the challenges to be faced are no longer slave trade and colonialism, but the new strategies that will help African people, after independence, to meaningfully address social, political, religious and cultural challenges facing them today. The above analysis of the relationship between the Pan-African congress and an African Renaissance lays the scene, for a brief examination, in the next subsection, of Mbeki's call for the African Renaissance.

1.2.2 The timing of Mbeki's call for an African Renaissance

Mbeki's call for an African Renaissance follows the election of the first democratic government in South Africa. Mbeki sees the democracy of South Africa as a clear sign that the peoples of Africa have achieved their emancipation from colonial and white minority domination (Mbeki,1998:206-207). Thus, he argues that,

> Surely, the historic victory of our continent over colonialism and apartheid has something to do with this. Without that victory an African Renaissance was impossible. Having achieved that success we created the possibility to confront the challenge of the reconstruction and development of our continent anew (Mbeki,1999:xix).

Barney Pityana agrees that Mbeki's call of the African Renaissance has been made possible by the political changes in South Africa,

> It has come at a time when the political environment has been conducive to its development in South Africa. The events of 1994 and the democratic transition that was ushered in by the release of President Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990 simply confirmed, popularised and

rendered 'acceptable' what was already widely accepted. African renaissance gave philosophical shape and direction to a way of life that was struggling for recognition (Pityana,1999:138).

The call for the African Renaissance by Mbeki and others today comes from an observation and analysis of the conditions in African countries. In the next section we look at some of these conditions.

1.2.3 The context of the African Renaissance

Apart from the positiveness of the democratic process which is emerging all around us in Africa (Prah,1999:54), we also need to examine some of the issues which the African Renaissance aims to address. So we may ask the following questions: What is the context of the call for the renewal or rebirth of Africa. Or rather, why bother about the African Renaissance?

Mbeki's call for an African Renaissance is a response to the socio-economic and the political conditions of the African continent. Among others we list the following. First, he identifies war[6] and violent strife (Mbeki,1998:47). The second issue identified is hunger and poverty (Mbeki,1998:47; cf also Luhabe,1999:290; Prah,1999:56; Guéye,1999:244; Diop,1999:3; Mazwai,1999:421). Thirdly, he mentions such concepts as racism, ethnicity[7], discrimination on the basis of gender and geographic imbalances in terms of distribution of wealth, income and opportunity (Mbeki,1998:60-61). Fourthly, he identifies Africa's weak economies (Prah,1999:56). Mbeki sees these economies as stagnant and malformed, with a national budget locked into minimal capital outlays, being swallowed up mainly by consumption expenditure (Mbeki,1998:60-61). Fifthly, he observes the lack of democracy, which reveals itself through military rule (Prah,1999:52-3), the establishments of one-party state dictators (Mbeki,1998:206-207; Mbeki,1999:vx; See Diop,1999:5; Vil-Nkomo and Myburgh,1999:273; Makgoba, Shope & Mazwai,1999:vi-vii), gross

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[6] The following scholars (Prah,1999:45-46; Khoza,1999:281; Diop,1999:3) agree that war is one of the challenges facing the African Renaissance.

[7] Guéye (1999:246) identifies tribalism, ethnicism and regionalism.

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violations of human rights, and intolerance (Mbeki,1998:233). Mbeki is also concerned about the political instability in Africa which results in the refugee populations and population migration (Mbeki,1998:179).

Some of the post-colonial challenges are the scourge of AIDS (Prah,1999:56; Khoza,1999:281); incompetence (Gueye,1999:246; Khoza,1999:281; Diop,1999:5); corruption (Gueye,1999:246; Mbeki,1999:xv-xvi; Khoza,1999:281; Diop,1999:5; Mazwai,1999:421; Makgoba, Shope & Mazwai, 1999:vi-vii); debt burden (Luhabe,1999:297; Mazwai,1999:421), "which keeps us trapped in exorbitant interest payments, high inflation, cost of capital, flight of capital, underutilisation of our human capital, massive social and income inequalities, government over-expenditure which leads to budget deficits, and the vast unemployment and poverty in the continent" (Luhabe,1999:297); a large-scale illiteracy, a lack of skilled people, and a poor infrastructure (Mazwai,1999:421).

Having listed some of the crises that the African Renaissance has to deal with, we may want to briefly address the causes of these issues. What then are the causes of the crises in Africa? Walter Rodney elucidates the African development crisis,

> The question as to who, and what, is responsible for African underdevelopment can be answered at two levels. Firstly, the answer is that the operation of the imperialist system bears major responsibility for African retardation by draining African wealth and making it impossible to develop more rapidly the resources of the continent. Secondly, one has to deal with those who manipulated the system and those who are either agents or unwilling accomplices of the said system (Quoted by Vil-Nkomo and Myburgh,1999:269).

Walter Rodney further concluded that the above is not intended to exonerate Africans from their crisis because the ultimate responsibility to advance Africa still depends on them. Thus, Africans do not have much of a choice "but to pull their own weight by meeting the most exacting standards in domestic governance and economic competitiveness" (Vil-Nkomo and Myburgh,1999:269).

However, the question is whether in his two reasons given above, Rodney does not exonerate Africans from these crises? Khoza correctly argues that as a prerequisite to tackling problems in Africa, as Africans, we must unconditionally acknowledge and admit her problems, then go on to develop a sufficient understanding of the problems, and ultimately express a desire and exhibit an

unwavering will to solve the problem (Khoza,1999:281). Though we cannot deny that colonialism can be blamed for Africa's woes (Breytenbach,1999:91), we however also need to acknowledge the role played by African dictators in this mess. Guéye could not agree more when he says,

> So let us stop the comfortable but infantile attitude of always blaming others for our irresponsibility and inability to face the objective demands of the historical situation of our continent (Guéye,1999:263).

Khoza also maintains that Africa's major problems are by and large of our making. "It does not benefit us to externalise the causes of our problems. We are a sick continent and we are largely to blame for it" (Khoza,1999:281). He then goes on to identify the root causes of our problems as forms of government in Africa. For him, we compound this problem by "conflating the three key institutions of government, namely the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, wherein all these become the manifest expression of one man's [sic] will, either the President for Life or the Redeemer, hitherto known as a second-rate general in the army" (Khoza,1999:281-2).

Similarly, Laurie Nathan of the Centre for Conflict Resolution in Cape Town argues convincingly that Africa's current crises arise from four structural conditions, namely authoritarian rule; exclusion of minority or majority groups from governance; socio-economic deprivation combined with inequity; and weak states which lack the institutional capacity to manage political and social conflict (Stremlau,1999:104). Mbeki's identification of issues which the African Renaissance has to address seems to acknowledge the role played by our own dictators in compounding the current socio-ecomic crisis in Africa.

Having outlined the crises and its causes we now examine the components of the African Renaissance. This we do in the next section.

1.2.4 Components of the African Renaissance

1.2.4.1 Introduction

We need to note here that though Mbeki talks of economic, political and cultural Renaissance (Mbeki,1998:38), his clearly formulated views are more on the political and economic Renaissance. Certain scholars have written a lot in the area of cultural, moral renewal and the role of the African intelligentsia in the realisation of the African Renaissance. In order to gain a broader understanding of the renewal of Africa, we will incorporate their views in this discussion. The issues to be discussed in this section are political, economic, cultural, moral renaissance and the role of the African intelligentsia in the renewal process of Africa. Let us discuss all these matters raised in turn, starting with the economic Renaissance.

1.2.4.2 Economic Renaissance

Mbeki calls for the revival of Africa's economies. He acknowledges that Africa has been characterized by economic regression. Thus he argues that,

> The lowest rates of growth are in African countries. African countries have the highest rates of poverty, they are the least developed. And when you talk about international flows of capital, Africa is at the bottom of the list (Mbeki,1997:1).

Mbeki further argues, as part of his vision for the renewal of the continent, that there has to be a social transformation of the economy. "Any form of development which is not accompanied by the transformation of the fabric of life would only help to entrench and widen distortions and disparities created by apartheid" (Mbeki,1998:48).

He believes that with regard to economic reform, there are many issues which are of common concern, including the liberalisation of trade, the reform of financial commodity and other markets, the functioning of multilateral institutions, development assistance and resource transfers from the developed to the developing world. Accordingly, he elaborates that,

> We are interested that these matters be discussed in an atmosphere which recognises the

legitimate interests of the poor. In this context, we also recognise the importance of our own African business sector, which has a critical role in continuing the African renaissance into the twenty-first century, capable of both acting on its own and in partnership with international investors (Mbeki,1998:203).

Luhabe echoes Mbeki's above concern, when he states that,

> We must develop investment policies for development aid to promote trade, economic self-determination and revenue generation initiatives for local people, not donor countries as has been the case. We must create labour-intensive industries, expand African export capacity and increase our ability to access foreign markets with our products and intellectual capital. We must identify areas of production where the continent can promote free trade, for example in organic farming (Luhabe,1999:296-7).

Mbeki further believes that closely related to the transformation of the economy is economic growth. Mbeki admits that a thoroughgoing transformation and a complete democratisation process can only succeed if the economy of our country grows on a sustainable basis. He notes that we need an economy which can locate itself within the world economy, adapt to its positive major trends and benefit from its dynamism (Mbeki,1998:48). So, according to Mbeki, economic growth is a necessity for the realisation of the African Renaissance.

Mbeki then goes on to warn against building and anchoring the economy on what he calls "potentially volatile commodity markets" (Mbeki,1998:49). He suggests that Africans should be committed to shifting their resources steadily from the extraction and processing of primary products towards the production of competitive manufactured goods and service as a basis for their economy (Mbeki,1998:49).

However, Guéye has been very much critical of economic growth which does not address the conditions of the poor,

> But in our situation, what is the meaning of the phrase 'strong and efficient economy'? Is it only an economy which can reach a sustainable and consistent gross national product, without any attention to the necessity of ameliorating the quality of life of the majority of the people? (Guéye,1999:252-3)

Similarly, Luhabe does not seem to be very much impressed with a mere suggestion of an economic growth and a vibrant economy, she argues that we need structural mechanisms in place to ensure

that we reach our aims and goals.

> What are the structural conditions needed for sustainable socio-economic advancement in Africa to make this renaissance survive and succeed? Simply stated, we must move from policy framework to practical realities that translate into the creation of sustainable livelihoods (Luhabe,1999:292).

Mbeki elaborates that in order for the economic growth to be realised, the economy would have to include

> a diversified economy, a very good physical infrastructure, a sophisticated financial sector, potentially high levels of domestic investment and growth which we are beginning to demonstrate, access to markets in the region and beyond, and abundant supplies of labour, some of which is highly skilled and most of which is competitively priced. In line with the need to empower the majority of our people and to redress racial and gender imbalances created by apartheid rule, we give special attention to the development of small, medium and micro enterprises. We believe that this is one of the effective ways in the war against underdevelopment, poverty, underemployment and joblessness among disadvantaged communities (Mbeki,1998:49-50).

Mbeki continues by outlining what he believes to be the main objectives of the economic system within the context of the African Renaissance.

> The objectives of the economy must result in the elimination of poverty, the establishment of modern multi-sector economies and the growth of Africa's share of world economic activity, are an essential part of the African renaissance (Mbeki,1998:248).

Accordingly, Mbeki argues that a strong economic base will assist in addressing the socio-economic conditions of our continent.

> We must succeed to rebuild and reconstruct our economies, achieve high and sustained rates of growth, reduce unemployment and provide a better life for the people, a path on which we have embarked. We must succeed to meet the needs of the people so as to end poverty and improve the quality of life by ensuring access to good education, adequate health care, decent homes, clean water and modern sanitation and so on, again a process on which we have embarked (Mbeki,1998:249).

However, Mbeki is very critical of the notion of "the market". He argues that it has been portrayed "as the modern god, a supernatural phenomenon to whose dictates everything human must bow in a spirit of powerlessness" (Mbeki,1999:xvi-xviii).

For her part, Luhabe identifies regional coordination and cooperation as fundamental to addressing the financial crisis in Africa. She argues that,

> Greater regional co-ordination in tackling financial crises or conflicts, as well as developing dynamic leadership in all spheres of our lives, has to be considered. We should consider the integration of capital markets, harmonising of the listing regulations and sharing of technology to improve co-operation with other African stock exchanges. Finally, we must master the accumulation, management and deployment of capital. Africans must create new financial industries in their own countries to be able to direct social reconstruction objectives (Luhabe,1999:297).

Thus, for development to take place, Mbeki believes that we need to attract into the African economy the capital without which development will not happen. He is here referring to both domestic and foreign investors, and also to both private and public sector sources of capital (Mbeki,1999:xvi-xviii).

Furthermore, Khoza maintains that the African Renaissance is a concept that insists that technical and economic efficiency and processes are not ends in themselves but are only important for the goals they seek to achieve. In this instance, the goal is the development and prosperity of Africa as a geo-economic space, and of its people, defined not by race, but by psychic identity (Khoza,1999:280).

Likewise, Guéye critiques the notion of development, when he argues that

> When dealing with the problem of development, the following questions seem to require special attention: What real chance for a genuine development can small and poor countries like ours have, in the current global system of exchange and trade, without a radical change of the inequitable laws and rules which govern the system? A lot is said today about 'human, sustainable' development. Africa is also concerned about that issue. But for countries like ours whose peoples, due to their misery and poverty, are generally forced by their day-to-day struggle to neglect the future and to take from nature all she can give them today, and for whom some ecological restrictions can look like an extravagant luxury allowed only to rich countries, how does one combine the demands of a rational and efficient ecological management with what sometimes appears as objective imperatives to survival? Similarly, given the continuous decrease in the income from our agricultural products and raw materials in the international system of trade and exchange, and the high prices offered for narcotic agriculture, how do we prevent people from engaging in such an agriculture in order to face their misery and poverty? (Guéye,1999:251).

However, Emmanuel Katongole has been very critical of Mbeki's economic Renaissance. He argues that Mbeki sees this "reawakening" primarily in terms of industrialization, regional trade and the building of a strong African economic block.

> For Mbeki this integrated and vibrant market will not only lead to economic prosperity, it will promote political stability on the continent. Africa's problems, Mbeki contends, are largely due to Africa's underdevelopment and poverty. Thus, industrialization and a strong market economics in Africa will not only solve a great many of Africa's problems, it will give rise to a radically new and positive African image and identity (Katongole,1998:2).

Katongole believes that what leads Mbeki to see the African Renaissance in terms of economics and trade is because he has "accepted IMF and World Bank's vision of development and policies of economic liberalization" (Katongole,1998:2).

Though Katongole seems to offer a critical analysis of Mbeki's African Renaissance, it is clear that Katongole's critique is only based on the economic renewal, not having taken into consideration the other components (such as moral renewal, cultural renewal, political renewal etc) of the African Renaissance.

Economic Renaissance cannot take place within a vacuum, it has to be done within a political scenario. In the next section we discuss the political Renaissance.

1.2.4.3 Political Renaissance

According to Mbeki, to correct the crises in our continent the establishment of democratic systems is essential: "we are saying that democratic systems are necessary to give the political framework to discuss and resolve whatever conflicts there are in the society" (Mbeki,1997:1). Mbeki argues for the establishment of genuine and stable democracies in Africa (Mbeki,1998:201).

Guéye also highlights the significance of democracy, maintaining that democracy seems to be another demand of a sustainable Renaissance (Guéye,1999:255). Democracy would "help to mobilise our peoples by giving them the true feeling that they are really those who decide" (Guéye,1999:251).

Mbeki then continues to argue that as part of our democracy, we must not only have regular elections in Africa, but these elections must be democratic, resulting in governments which would be acceptable to the people (Mbeki,1999:vx). Thus he explains that,

> I believe that a similar challenge faces the people of Nigeria, whose advance towards a democratic order has created the possibility for this important African country to set an agenda for itself against the repetition of military rule, against corruption and the abuse of power, for a system of governance that successfully addresses the challenges of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society and an equitable system of sharing resources, for a path of economic growth and development which benefits the people and reinforces the independence of Nigeria (Mbeki,1999:xx).

Obviously Mbeki is aware that a mere installation of a democratic government would not necessarily bring about democracy nor an end to corruption and abuse of power etc. Guéye too noting that a mere installation of a democratic government is not sufficient to address abuse of power, corruption etc, correctly argues that the democratic process needs to be

> preserved from forms of perversion which, in the name of pluralism, tend to turn the rights and freedoms it necessarily implies against the stability, the cohesion and the internal peace of our societies though centrifugal tendencies like ethnicism, tribalism, separatism, regionalism, civil wars, and so on. Without stability, cohesion and internal peace no fruitful work is possible, which means that no development will take place. That aspect must therefore be seriously taken into consideration by all political players (Guéye,1999:255).

Mbeki then sees respect for human rights as a related matter to the democratization process in order "to establish in political and constitutional terms the necessary conditions for the respect of human rights" (Mbeki,1997:1). Mbeki maintains that we need to put in place institutions of a democratic order that will further entrench and strengthen the democratic system. These include historically new institutions such as a Constitutional Court, a Human Rights Commission and the office of the Public Protector (Mbeki,1998:64). These institutions would, argues Mbeki, help to strengthen and further entrench democracy in Africa and inculcate a culture of human rights in Africa (Mbeki,1998:249).

Stremlau makes a similar point, and argues that as an integral part of a Renaissance in African international relations, there should be the "development of an institutional capacity to monitor, warn and respond to threats to the rights of endangered minorities, or to the freedom for individual creativity that defines a renaissance" (Stremlau,1999:110). Luhabe also attaches human rights issues

to democracy. She maintains that we must facilitate a culture of social democracy which is underpinned by human rights values. All African governments must subscribe to and practise a culture of accountability, transparency, integrity and dynamic, representative leadership (Luhabe,1999:296; Guéye,1999:249).

As part of respecting human rights in Africa, Guéye believes that there is a need for

> The separation of legislature, executive and judiciary bodies, their mutual independence and equilibrium, freedom of opinion and association, regular free and fair elections which enable citizens to remove bad rulers are well-known institutional conditions for improving the political, economic and social performance of the state (Guéye,1999:258).

And, Stremlau believes that National governments will remain the principal guarantors of the security and well-being of Africa's people, but that increasingly these governments must hold each other accountable for good conduct in both domestic and foreign affairs (Stremlau,1999:101).

Thus, Mbeki spells out the responsibilities of democratic government and institutions, when he says,

> The democratic institutions and governments have to confront the enormous challenge of uprooting corruption in African life. In order to properly do that they need to insist on such notions as transparency and accountability (Mbeki,1998:202).

Mbeki assumes here that it is only democratic governments which can contribute to the realisation of the African Renaissance. In other words, democracy is a prerequisite for governments' participation in the renewal of Africa. Guéye could not agree more, arguing that

> Such a state could win its legitimacy and authority neither by force and repression nor by the purely formal procedures which define the content of liberal bourgeois democracy (these are important and necessary but not yet enough). It will do it by proving its ability to govern the society with competence, transparency and accountability; to conceive and implement sound economic policies; to promote solidarity and social justice in society (giving particular attention to the weakest sectors of the population but also to women, youth and workers who are the more dynamic forces of our societies); to continuously struggle against any kind of exclusion and discrimination (especially sexual discrimination); to apply the same law to all citizens, and to give equal opportunities to all individuals to assert themselves socially, such that only personal aptitudes and capacities become the essential basis of promoting individuals, instead of riches or social origin (Guéye,1999:258).

Accordingly, Mbeki sees it as one of the priorities of the renewal of our continent to eradicate

issues such as tribalism, ethnicity, racism etc. He says there is a need to deracialise South Africa, to ensure the emancipation of women, to uplift the youth, to free the people from poverty, and to guarantee democracy and peace (Mbeki,1998:38). He goes on to state that we need a democracy where neither race, tribalism, ethnicity, gender, religion nor creed performs any discriminatory role in the individual or collective pursuit of human fulfilment" (Mbeki,1998:39). For Prah the eradication of such ills as tribalism, ethnicity, racism etc have to give way to the celebration of unity in diversity,

> Africans need to create the basis for the institutionalisation of their aspiration to unity. The celebration of diversity under a common African unitary institution appears to be the realistic approach to ethnic, regionalist and localist conflicts in Africa (Prah,1999:53).

The other component of the renewal of Africa is, according to Mbeki, to bring peace and stability to the entire African continent. He believes that peaceful resolutions to political and social conflicts should be encouraged in the continent,

> We therefore have to strive to banish war and the use or threat of force in the settlement of international disputes. We must work to abolish the use of fear against individuals and communities as an instrument of policy, and therefore uphold and fight for the right of all people to true self-determination, for friendship and mutually advantageous co-operation among the peoples of the world (Mbeki,1998:25).

Breytenbach agrees that stability is the first step towards solving the political problems in Africa

> But we can confidently say that if there is no strategy, there will be no result, and if states are not more stable, societies and economies will still suffer from these stresses and strains (Breytenbach,1999:98-99).

Thus, Mbeki acknowledges that for the African Renaissance to succeed, there has to be concerted and unified action from all Africans in the continent. Guéye captures this belief when he says,

> Not a single African country, regardless of its geographic and demographic size of economic potential, could on its own reach a genuine and sustainable development on the basis of its own forces, resources and capacities, or even successfully resist the various and subtle attempts at reconciliation which are perpetrated under the disguise of globalisation (Guéye,1999:262; cf Prah,1999:60).

Having discussed the political Renaissance, we now move on to examine the cultural Renaissance.

1.2.4.4 Cultural Renaissance

Though Mbeki lists cultural renewal together with economic and political renewal, he does not offer clearly formulated views on cultural renewal, as he does with both economic and political renewal. We will however in this section discuss what other people have described as the cultural renewal.

The African Renaissance is about our identity as Africans. The Renaissance of our Africanness is not about rediscovering, but about reiterating who we are and what we as Africans are all about (Shope,1999:xii). So the Renaissance is about African reflection and African definition (Mazwai,1999:xii). Makgoba explains it thus,

> The African Renaissance is a unique opportunity for Africans to define ourselves and our agenda according to our own realities and taking into account the realities of the world around us. It is about Africans being agents of our own history and masters of our own destiny (Makgoba,1999:xii; Makgoba, Shope & Mazwai,1999:vii).

This means that Africanness is neither a pure matter of pigmentation nor a question of geographical or ethnic belonging. Its essence is to be found beyond such purely phenomenal, superficial dimensions. And it is not something which exists by nature and forever. It is a cultural choice and commitment, something which is acquired, gained, a matter of a deep feeling and concrete behaviour. Everybody who feels so deeply African that he or she lives and is ready to die for Africa, everybody who feels our continent in the depths of her or his soul and in each beat of her or his heart, can legitimately be regarded as an African (Guéye,1999:247).

Guéye then explains the significance of Africa's identity as part of the renewal of our continent,

> This concept of Africanness is a factor of continuous enrichment, because it offers scope for the cultural diversity and to ethnic or racial minorities that were brought by history to live with original Africans. It provides them with the opportunity to assert themselves and contribute to the 'rainbow identity' which can be considered as one of the trump cards of our continent in its confrontation with the challenges of globalisation. But it is also a big challenge for our national policies, which are to be conducted in such a way that they will never absolutise internal cultural differences. In the socio-economic field, as well as in culture and politics, any kind of discrimination is intolerable and anything which could legitimately make one component feel disadvantaged to the interests of another is to be banned as a potential source of internal conflict which can endanger the existence of the nation as a whole (Guéye,1999:247).

Guéye further maintains that to renew, assert and promote Africanness as an open and dynamic identity which considers otherness neither as alteration nor as alienation, nor as threat, Africans need to restore the balance of their cultural trade and exchange with the rest of the world. Africans require a cultural self-adjustment policy that would reinforce our ability to create and spread, more than they borrow and consume, original ideas, concepts, values and cultural goods which can be appreciated and exported all around the world. Guéye believes that would be impossible to do without mobilising the tremendous but insufficiently exploited resources Africans have accumulated in that field, both within and outside the continent. In addition, Africans would need to build the necessary autonomous material basis of production and propagation of their cultural riches and values, such as institutes, research and study centres, journals and reviews, exhibition galleries and theatres, printing and recording houses, and so on. Finally, Africans also need to weave a strong worldwide network to promote and sell their intellectual and cultural goods efficiently (Guéye,1999:247-8). Guéye explains further, when he says,

> Favourable conditions for that already exist, because African genius is little by little conquering the planet in science and technology, art, literature and fashion. We need to encourage this by conceiving and implementing policies that will stimulate and motivate those who are working in such fields (Guéye,1999:247-8).

Guéye then goes on to argue that Africa needs, as Europe did for her own Renaissance, to look at her past as well and to reappropriate its greatest cultural achievements,

> because it is vital to know exactly who we were, where we come from and what we were able to do. That can help us to reach a better understanding of what we are today and what we can do and become tomorrow. When studying our history and our original cultures, our scholars must be able to communicate with what the common, ordinary women and men did in their daily struggle to exist and assert themselves as human beings, and not to focus only on the deeds of our heroes and "great figures" (Guéye,1999:245).

Furthermore, Guéye maintains that Africans also have to make consistent efforts in our schools and media, as well as in the family education of our children, to achieve a better and wider knowledge of our past, which must be freed of all the tendentious distortions and misinterpretations through which the enemies of African liberation have tried, over centuries, to negate or underplay our contribution to the history of humankind (Guéye,1999:245).

Thus, Guéye continues to argue that in order to properly promote the cultural renewal, particular attention must be paid to our native languages, which are used by the great majority of the peoples (Guéye,1999:245). Language, he suggests, is not simply a means of communication or expression, but a corpus of knowledge of a people. Moreover, language is culture and in language we carry our identity and our culture. Through language we carry science and technology, education, political systems and economic developments. The majority of African people, about whom the rebirth or re-awakening is about, live in their indigenous languages throughout their lives (Makgoba, Shope & Mazwai,1999:xi). Our languages have to be revitalised by officialising their use, not only in our educational and training systems but also in our public offices and official activities. We must collect and record our native tales, legends, myths, symbols and epics and communicate them, especially to the younger generation (Guéye,1999:245). Diop too argues that,

> The resort to African languages in institutional life is not only the condition for an efficient promotion of those languages, but also for rapid and massive development of literacy, which would allow the widespread dissemination of basic education and the re-entrenchment of science to take place in Africa (Diop,1999:6).

1.2.4.5 Moral renewal and African values

We need to state, though, that while Mbeki supports the concept of moral renewal, he has not as yet clearly formulated his views on this concept. The former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, has on several occassions called for a moral renewal of Africa.

John Mbiti, the Kenyan scholar of religions, has made famous the assertion that Africans were notoriously religious. What he meant was that the lives of Africans centred around belief systems, rituals and practices that made life meaningful and purposeful for them (Pityana,1999:138).

Accordingly, scholars and politicians have correctly acknowledged that economic and political renewal alone without moral values will not bring development.

> South Africa is also grappling with issues of how to bring about a stable and sustainable transition to political democracy. However, political democracy alone will not automatically create healthy economic conditions for development and growth in the country. History has shown that there are different routes to development. In Africa political liberation has not changed the plight of the poor. In fact, the continent is today poorer and more marginalised

than before (Teffo,1999:149).

Thus, politics and economics undoubtedly have a role to play, however without a moral conscience, "society is soulless" (Teffo,1999:168; Vil-Nkomo and Myburgh,1999:269).

For that matter, Pityana has noted that our societies are riddled with the decay in moral values and the withering away of a sense of responsibility (Pityana,1999:140). Thus Pityana states that,

> This [respect for human rights and the rule of law], however, has a national as well as a personal dimension. As South Africans, we would do well to ponder on why crime is so rife, especially crime against the defenceless and vulnerable: children, women and refugees. Crimes against women have reached epidemic proportions. Why is there still such prevalence of mindless and gratuitous violence? Why is corruption so rife, especially against the vulnerable? Old-age pensioners have their pay packets robbed at times by the officials who are supposed to assist; children are raped by men whom they should trust; workers and teachers do not put in an honest day's work to earn their living; those who are supposed to prepare food for the hungry and homeless end up robbing them of their daily bread. None of this behaviour can be attributed to culture or tradition or any form of morality (Pityana,1999:147; cf Teffo,1999:149).

However, Pityana believes that the harshest moral indictment, is reserved for those of us who fold our arms and do nothing (Pityana,1999:147-148).

And, Khoza argues that in Africa our worries are not only about personal morality; they are, perhaps more importantly, about public morality.

> We have reached a point where we have institutionalised public immorality as reflected in the political and economic policies and decisions made by many a leadership, which are obscene not only because their consequences are unjust but because those consequences are fully intended by a corrupt and cynical leadership (Khoza,1999:285).

Thus, it has been argued that moral values, if they are to have any value for modern South Africa, must be transformative. There is a sense that the development of an African ethical standard, drawing as it does from the reservoirs of tradition that were suppressed under the weight of Western cultural hegemony, has had the quality of subversion in South Africa. Now that it is emerging from subversion, care must be taken that it does not become the new oppressive orthodoxy. Hopefully, African moral values will help situate this new search for African identity and spur efforts towards

social renewal (Pityana,1999:148; Teffo,1999:149).

1.2.5 Critique of African Renaissance

Several critiques have been advanced by the critics of the African Renaissance. Let us consider some of them here.

The first concern has been that while much has been articulated about the African Renaissance, more scholarly, philosophical and scientific research still needs to be pursued to articulate and activate the economic revival of Africa (Vil-Nkomo and Myburgh,1999:267). Secondly, it has been argued that the African Renaissance remains a buzz-term. It has been argued that ways must be found to put the ideals of the African Renaissance into practice (Stremlau,1999:104). Prah captures this concern, when he argues that,

> It has become a buzz-term for all and sundry and its prerequisites are often poorly defined. Content has been thin, if not absent. This opens the idea up for insidious obfuscation and, I dare say, opportunism. Making it a political slogan is the surest way of ensuring a jaded future for the idea (Prah,1999:43).

So the concern here has been that if the African Renaissance movement is to succeed, it must have some kind of programme that succinctly articulates its aims and objectives, and how they are to be realised (Teffo,1999:169). Thirdly, an impression has been created that the African Renaissance is only the concern of continental leadership and governmental institutions, with little relevance to individual effort and application in our personal, occupational and civic responsibilities (Khoza,1999:286; Katongole,1998:3). Fourthly, it has also been argued that the African Renaissance has not as yet had any impact or effect on transforming the lives of the poor (Katongole,1998:3; Khoza,1999:286).

Notwithstanding the above critiques, the African Renaissance remains a realisable goal which is necessary for the Africans themselves to face the socio-economic, political, cultural crisis facing the continent. What remains to be seen however, is the actualisation of this goal by actively involving all peoples of the African continent.

1.3 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to examine both Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance, with a view to making these concepts the theoretical framework within which this research will be based. Our analysis of the two concepts in this chapter demonstrate that the stated aim has been achieved. Let me briefly summarise my argument.

We need to note that this research aims to develop an African theological paradigm relevant for our African context today. The theological paradigm proposed is reconstruction, renewal and transformation. The ultimate goal of this theology in the post-colonial and post-liberation era is to equip us theologically to face the socio-economic, political, moral etc challenges facing our continent today. Our analysis of both Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance show that despite the fact that the former emerged out of a context of colonialism and slave trade, whilst the latter has been more canvassed during the post-colonial era, they both share a common goal in that, the major concern of both concepts is to address, transform and renew the socio-economic and political challenges in Africa. In other words, they both call for the renewal of Africa. This renewal involves reconstruction and transformation of our continent with the ultimate goal of making Africa a reborn or renewed continent, free from slavery, tribalism, racism, economic and political exploitation.

Both Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance are not theological terms. Rather, they are concepts coined by politicians to emphasise the need for Africans to stand together in addressing cultural and socio-economic challenges facing Africa. Pan-Africanism, as we observed, was coined as a result of colonialism and slave trade in Africa. Its main aim was to mobilize Africans to be united against the oppression taking place in Africa then. Several African political leaders believed that Africa had to be rid of colonialism and slave trade. They thus believed that, in order to do so, Africans have to stand together, united, in order to confront the socio-economic conditions brought to Africa by colonialism and slave trade. Advocates of Pan-Africanism further aimed to renew and reconstruct the African continent, in view of the plundering and destruction caused by colonialism and the slave trade.

Furthermore, we have argued that African Renaissance, though championed by Mbeki at the moment, is not a new concept in Africa. African Renaissance is the realisation that, in the wake of the damage caused by colonialism and apartheid in Africa, Africans themselves should take the lead in designing strategies and programmes, that will best address the current socio-economic conditions of civil war, poverty, foreign debt, AIDS, refugees, women abuse etc, in Africa. Accordingly, the African Renaissance is about the renewal, transformation and reconstruction of the African continent, with a view to effectively addressing the above mentioned conditions.

It is within this theoretical framework of renewal, transformation and reconstruction, provided by both Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance, that reconstruction theology fits in. As, we will observe in chapter 2, reconstruction theology's aim, as championed by its pioneer, Jesse Mugambi, is to address the current religious, cultural, and socio-economic conditions facing the African continent. Conditions, such as refugees, lack of democracy, poverty, illiteracy, the AIDS pandemic, etc. Accordingly, reconstruction theology, talks of the renewal or renaissance of Africa, from a theological perspective. This is an attempt, by theologians, to give a theological backing to the process of reconstruction and transformation of the African continent, especially after the end of Apartheid and colonialism in Africa. Thus, we may sum up, by declaring that reconstruction theology is the specifically theological articulation of the ideals of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance.

Accordingly, this call for a renewal of Africa becomes the basis on which we investigate in our thesis, the use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction in (South) Africa.

CHAPTER 2 : EZRA-NEHEMIAH AND THE QUEST FOR AN AFRICAN THEOLOGY OF RECONSTRUCTION

2. 0 INTRODUCTION

2.0.1 Purpose

Our discussion in chapter 1 has shown that the African continent needs renewal, reconstruction, reconciliation, and transformation. The message of renewal has been preached by both theologians and politicians. We have seen in chapter 1 how the concepts of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance have been used by politicians to strengthen their call for a process of the renewal, reconstruction and transformation of the African continent.

Both Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance call for unity among Africans in order to address socio-economic, political, religious and cultural / moral renewal of the African continent. Advocates of these two concepts seem to agree that the best vehicle to address the crises in Africa is a democratic government which respects the human rights of its citizens. This chapter analyses reconstruction, transformation, and renewal *theology*. The aim of this theology is to address the socio-economic, political, religious, cultural / moral crises facing Africa today. So while Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance advocate the renewal and rebirth from the secular philosophical point of view, reconstruction theology explores the renewal paradigm relevant for our African context from the African Christian theological point of view.

Thus chapter 2 then takes seriously the call made in chapter 1 for the renewal, rebirth, reawakening of Africa. While this chapter does discuss theologies of reconstruction in general terms, its specific focus is to examine how Ezra-Nehemiah has been used by certain theologians in a quest for a theology of reconstruction, and furthermore, how these theologians's use of Ezra-Nehemiah could be strengthened in a quest for a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction.

2.0.2 Methodology

This chapter reviews the research done on the use of Ezra-Nehemiah in the African continent. As already stated above, we will examine how Ezra-Nehemiah has been used, by three scholars, to bolster the quest for a theology of reconstruction in the African context. The three scholars are: Charles Villa-Vicencio, Jesse Mugambi and André Karamaga. A discussion of these scholars's views will take the following order. First, we will discuss Villa-Vicencio. Mugambi will be discussed second and Karamaga will be the last to be discussed. This follows the order of the dates in which their books and article were published. However, we need to note that Mugambi is the first to canvass the idea of reconstruction theology, long before Villa-Vicencio published his book in 1995. Let us then, start our discussion of these three scholars's views with Villa-Vicencio's.

2.1 VILLA-VICENCIO, C 1992: A THEOLOGY OF RECONSTRUCTION

Villa-Vicencio was prompted by the changing situation in South Africa (before the democratic elections of 1994) and Eastern Europe to investigate the implications of transforming liberation theology into a theology of reconstruction and nation-building (Villa-Vicencio,1992:i). Explaining the changes that were taking place in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and South Africa, Villa-Vicencio declared that "the old is dying even though the new is not yet born, and there is no clear indication what form the new society might take" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:2). Villa-Vicencio believes, then, that the new "is likely to be manifest in situations of genuine crisis, where the context *demands* creativity and change as the only reasonable basis for just and peaceful co-existence. Renewal occurs, not where empires endure and power reigns, but where ideologies crumble and failure is acknowledged" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:2).

Thus, as part of the "old" giving way to the "new", Villa-Vicencio argues that liberation theology has to be transformed into reconstruction theology. Before we give a detailed analysis of his understanding of reconstruction theology, we need to briefly discuss how he understands liberation theology. This we do in the next section.

2.1.1 Liberation theology

According to Villa-Vicencio liberation theology in South Africa has been essentially a theology of saying "No". He says that liberation theology had to say "No" to apartheid, racism, sexism, exploitation and all phoney forms of reform. Though he believes that theology's role today must continue to say "No" to all forms of exploitation and injustice wherever and whenever it occurs, he however, maintains that it must at the same time be concerned about how to share in the process of nation building, by saying "Yes" to meaningful political socio-economic and cultural changes such as one person one vote, economic justice, ecological renewal, gender sensitivity and so on (Villa-Vicencio,1993:24).

Villa-Vicencio is of the opinion that liberation theology has not as yet contributed fully to the process of nation building. While acknowledging liberation theology's role in fuelling "resistance and revolution" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:23) during colonialism and apartheid, he however believes that liberation theology has rarely "contributed seriously to the difficult programme of nation-building and political reconstruction" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:23).

Villa-Vicencio, then, goes on to explain that liberation theology was grounded almost exclusively in the biblical theme of the Exodus (Villa-Vicencio,1992:6). By the biblical theme of the Exodus, he means that liberation theology has always drawn both from the experiences of Israelites slavery in Egyptian bondage and the theme of their liberation from the Egyptian slavery.

While acknowledging the role played by liberation theology during the exile, Villa-Vicencio calls for a paradigm shift to reconstruction theology,

> The response of liberation theology to a church on the side of oppressive regimes has been part of the hope and the promise of people and a church in exile. It must now be translated into a theology of home-coming and nation-building (Villa-Vicencio,1992:32).

We need to note, however, that Villa-Vicencio does not, in his discussion of liberation theology, give a detailed analysis of it. Nevertheless, the above discussion sets the scene for an analysis of Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology, to which we now turn, in the next section.

2.1.2 Components of a theology of reconstruction

Villa-Vicencio believes that the challenge now facing the church in South Africa is different from the challenge before 2 February 1990. Before 2 Febraury 1990[8], Villa-Vicencio argues, theology had to respond in a resistant manner. Today, after 2 February 1990, in a different context, Villa-Vicencio argues that theology "is obliged to begin the difficult task of saying 'Yes' to the unfolding process of what could culminate in a democratic, just and kinder social order" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:7). Thus, he proposes reconstruction theology as a new theology which will best address the challenges of post 2 February 1990.

While acknowledging that the task of liberation theologians has essentially been to say 'No' to all forms of oppression, Villa-Vicencio maintains that the prophetic 'No' must continue to be part of a reconstruction theology's role (Villa-Vicencio,1992:1). Hence it should continue to say no to all forms of exploitation and injustice wherever and whenever it occurs (Villa-Vicencio,1993:24; 1992:1). However, reconstruction theology, according to Villa-Vicencio, will have to do more than saying 'No', it will have to be more than a theology of resistance (Villa-Vicencio,1992:274). So Villa-Vicencio believes that in the new context, the task of reconstruction theology must include "a thoughtful and creative 'Yes'" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:1), to meaningful political socio-economic and cultural changes such as one person one vote, economic justice, ecological renewal, gender sensitivity and so on (Villa-Vicencio,1993:24; 1992:1).

Villa-Vicencio's concern though, is that theology has perhaps never got the relationship between saying "No" and saying "Yes" correct. He argues that it tends either to be part of the resistance process (saying "No") or to provide religious legitimation of the status quo (saying "Yes"). His suggestion is that by combining both the 'No' and the 'Yes', reconstruction theology will be

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[8] On 2 February 1990, the last white president to rule South Africa, Mr F W de Klerk, delivered a speech in Parliament, in which he unbanned the previously banned liberation movements (namely the ANC, PAC, AZAPO, SACP, COSATU, MDM etc) and their leaders. Furthermore, de Klerk also announced the possible release of Nelson Mandela from 27 years imprisonment. de Klerk's speech was seen by many South Africans as the beginning of the new era in South African politics.

demonstrating its "critical solidarity with a democratically elected government of the people" (Villa-Vicencio,1993:25).

And, Villa-Vicencio says that a theology of reconstruction is about facilitating, promoting and supporting actions which make and sustain human life. Thus, he calls it "a positive and constructive theology, concerned with social, economic and political structures" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:274). Moreover, a theology of reconstruction involves the task of breaking-down prejudices of race, class and sexism, and also the task of creating an all-inclusive (non-racial and democratic) society, built on the values denied the majority of people under apartheid (Villa-Vicencio,1992:7-8).

Villa-Vicencio identifies key components of a theology of reconstruction. Let us look at them in turn.

2.1.2.1 Analysis

Villa-Vicencio argues that for a theology to be contextually grounded it must emerge from, and be in relation to, the actual, prevailing situation which it seeks to address. Thus he argues that,

> For this to happen an ethic which is seriously committed to concrete forms of social renewal must necessarily be committed to social analysis. Its concern is to discover, clarify and explain 'what is going on' in a given context. It is to engage in critical, non-ideological analysis, given to uncovering the power relations, socio-economic structures and cultural values which are responsible for suffering, exploitation and social conflict. While concerned to deal with and heal the painful symptoms responsible for these social maladies, an ethic of renewal is obliged to help identify the underlying *causes* of suffering (Villa-Vicencio,1992:275ff).

Villa-Vicencio then maintains that theology's first task is to probe and understand 'the meaning of the time' (Luke12:56) at any particular point in history (Villa-Vicencio,1992:40). He further believes that closely related to this primary task of theology is social analysis, which he describes as

> the separating of the different components of a policy or political programme, with a view to uncovering its true intent and actual consequences. It involves uncovering the causes of suffering and exploitation in society, as well as identifying the signs of new birth that reside within the community-as a basis for both confronting the state and encouraging programmes of hope and renewal (Villa-Vicencio,1992:40).

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It follows, therefore, that Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology does not only engage in social analysis for the sake of analysis, but it goes beyond such an analysis, by engaging the state and encouraging Africans to be involved in programmes of social renewal.

In addition, Villa-Vicencio sees the critical analysis of past and present structures as an essential component of the theological task.

> Nation-building theology must emerge in relation to posing tough and uncomfortable questions about the economy, international alliances, national development programmes and such local issues that affect the lives of ordinary people at a material and spiritual level. For this to happen, church leaders and theologians continually need to be exposed to the insights of critical economists, social scientists and political analysts. Theology and ministry outside of this encounter is at best simply irrelevant. At worst, wittingly or unwittingly, it can become part of a national lie (Villa-Vicencio,1992:41).

The question to be asked here is how does one guard against "the lie"? Does social analysis ensure this? Thus, Villa-Vicencio argues that as part of guarding against the "national lie" the most important task of reconstruction theology is "to tell the truth" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:41). Telling the truth, then, argues Villa-Vicencio, will require reconstruction theology to analyse political policy, to expose its consequences for the poor and anticipate its long term effects on society as a whole (Villa-Vicencio,1992:41).

The above discussion of the first component of reconstruction theology, namely analysis, sets the scene for a discussion of the second component, namely theory.

2.1.2.2 Theory

The second component is theory. Villa-Vicencio sees a clear relationship between theory and praxis, when he states that

> Theological work, grounded in *praxis* is, at the same time, by definition the creation of a conceptual framework within which political struggle, ethical endeavour and social renewal can and ought to be promoted. Without a *praxiological* foundation, theology is no more than abstract idealism. Without a theoretical framework for reflective critique and conceptualisation (grounded in the struggle for justice) *praxis* can be no more than thoughtless, reflexive and goalless activism-a kind of frantic running around in circles (Villa-

Vicencio,1992:276).

So a theology of reconstruction as a way of having a strong praxis oriented foundation needs a strong theoretical framework, which will critically analyse the socio-economic conditions of the poor, as a way of formulating a theology which will be relevant to the poor's living conditions and challenges.

Social theory, whether of political, legal, theological or economic ilk, removed from a renewing context which gives passion and life to the 'pale horse', can be little more than a form of escapism from the realities of injustice, loneliness and conflict which destroy the human spirit. To the extent that theory, on the other hand, emerges from the context of struggle and is developed in relation to struggle, it is part of the struggle for renewal (Villa-Vicencio,1992:6).

2.1.2.3 Interdisciplinary

The third element of Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology is its interdisciplinary nature. Villa-Vicencio argues that reconstruction theology, in order to be effective in renewing and transforming society, would need to be of a radically interdisciplinary nature, emerging at the interface between theology and law, economics, political science and related disciplines (Villa-Vicencio,1992:7-8). Accordingly, Villa-Vicencio believes that a process of nation building is a challenge that requires reconstruction theology to grapple with the tough questions posed by constitutional lawyers, human rights activists, economists and others who struggle to translate the vision of justice into structural reality (Villa-Vicencio,1993:25).

Villa-Vicencio goes on to argue that social analysis and a theoretical framework of reflection necessarily involves interdisciplinary work.

> A theology of reconstruction, required to address legal, political and economic concerns must be undertaken at the interface of the social sciences. As such a theology of reconstruction is by definition an interdisciplinary exercise (Villa-Vicencio,1992:276).

Thus, Villa-Vicencio maintains that a theology of reconstruction necessarily requires an encounter

between theologians and proponents of other disciplines (Villa-Vicencio,1992:276). However, Villa-Vicencio acknowledges that,

> there is no intent to become engaged in all the specialised academic problems encountered *en route*, nor to follow each ethical problem to its logical conclusion. It is rather to use the existing philosophical, economic and legal debates as a basis for setting a limited current interdisciplinary agenda for a theological consideration of human rights (Villa-Vicencio,1992:5).

Moreover, he believes that if reconstruction theology is no more than an encounter between theologians on the one hand, and economists, lawyers, politicians etc on the other,

> it cannot give expression to the pathos, insights and creativity that come from those whose poverty and marginality have denied them expert theoretical learning, while empowering them with a level of experience for which no amount of academic learning can substitute (Villa-Vicencio,1992:276).

It follows, therefore, that he sees the interdisciplinary nature of reconstruction theology as not only requiring contributions from different disciplines, but also taking seriously the contributions of those who suffered most (Villa-Vicencio,1992:279). Though he does not seem to spell out how reconstruction theology should "take seriously the contributions of those who suffered most", he is clearly concerned that in most cases the anger and enthusiasm of those who have suffered most from the injustices of society is usually greeted with suspicion, and sometimes disdain, by theoreticians and scholars (Villa-Vicencio,1992:278). Thus, Villa-Vicencio argues that reconstruction theology, while being committed to the well-being of people in society, needs to be a communal exercise that incorporates the perceptions of those who it has a special obligation to serve, namely the poor and the oppressed (Villa-Vicencio,1992:279).

Accordingly, Villa-Vicencio maintains that the essential challenge facing socially engaged theologians is how to assist in the creation of a framework within which this broad interdisciplinary and corporate work can happen,

> To do so theology is obliged to take the challenges and insights of other disciplines seriously, while making its own contribution to this process in a language that makes sense to, and is understood by, other disciplines (Villa-Vicencio,1992:277).

And, Villa-Vicencio argues that the South African debate on human rights, constitutes an integral

element of a theology of reconstruction, given the demographic, racist, sexist, economic and political contradictions within which it is located (Villa-Vicencio,1992:2). Villa-Vicencio believes that the interface between "theology and law stands at the centre of the interdisciplinary encounter, providing a framework within which the debate on human rights, economics and culture building is to be pursued" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:277).

In the next subsection, we want to explore the relationship between human rights and theology.

2.1.2.3.1 Human rights and theology

Villa-Vicencio argues that theology has a role in promoting human rights in Africa and in the world (Villa-Vicencio,1992:123). He warns, however, that the primary task of theology in the human rights debate and promotion, is not "to reinvent the wheel, in reworking the list of human rights already defined and defended by countless human rights agencies around the world" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:123). On the contrary, he believes that there is consensus within the major Christian traditions that the rights identified in most human rights declarations are worthy of theological support. This consensus, he argues, emphasises the need for support to be given to socio-economic as well as developmental and ecological human rights (Villa-Vicencio,1992:123). Villa-Vicencio, then, goes on to identify some of the rights that theology needs to support. These are the rights to life, to cultural identity, democracy, the right to dissent, personal dignity and freedom of religion (Villa-Vicencio,1992:123).

Villa-Vicencio argues that the church is obliged to engage in what he calls "a deepened theological reflection in order to work out the 'specifically Christian contribution' to the further development of the human rights issue" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:125). However, Villa-Vicencio is quick to warn that the primary task of the church here is not to promote what he calls a "specifically Christian contribution" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:126). On the contrary, he suggests that the church should work with other faiths in "establishing a popular cultural, spiritual and theoretical basis which defines and promotes human rights" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:126).

Nevertheless, Villa-Vicencio believes that the church's primary role is to encourage Christians to promote and appropriate the values of a human rights culture

> It is understandable (and correct) therefore that it is essentially the identifying of a Christian theological basis for human rights that has become the focus of most ecumenical and denominational human rights studies (Villa-Vicencio,1992:126).

Villa-Vicencio follows Jurgen Moltmann (1988:32) in warning that reconstruction theology's task is not some idealistic or abstract way simply to promote more sensitivity and awareness of human rights. He argues that it is rather a *revolutionary* task. He sees it as unleashing "'the dangerous power of liberation', which is inherent to a theological understanding of what it means to be human, into the socio-political and economic structure of society" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:128-9).

Villa-Vicencio sums it up this way,

> In other words, it is in the struggle for human rights that theology has its best chance to be materially grounded in the political and socio-economic struggle for a world that conforms more closely to the demands of the gospel (Villa-Vicencio,1992:129).

It follows, therefore, that Villa-Vicencio sees "the gospel" as playing a significant role in promoting human rights. Let us then examine the relationship between human rights and the gospel.

2.1.2.3.2 Human rights and the gospel

Villa-Vicencio sees a close relation between human rights and the gospel,

> The call of the gospel is for people to live lives transformed by the power of God, to love one another and to grow in social and spiritual holiness. In addition to all else (and there is more to Christian holiness) it involves treating one another in the very best way. This requires Christians to affirm human rights. To fail here is for Christians to fail in the most rudimentary dimensions of the Christian faith. Above all it is to fail as a decent human being (Villa-Vicencio,1992:155).

It follows, from the above, that according to Villa-Vicencio, the gospel calls upon people to exercise love toward each other. This love then, it would seem, requires that the Christians should treat one another in a fair and just way, thereby respecting the other person's human rights.

Villa-Vicencio further sees the love of one another as a basis for human dignity in reconstruction,

> A pastoral programme designed to teach people to love one another, respect the human dignity of all people and accept the claim of God on the lives of all people, requiring all people to participate in the shaping of society on a basis of equality and mutual respect must be a priority for the church in the period of reconstruction (Villa-Vicencio,1992:182).

Accordingly, Villa-Vicencio maintains that human rights are theologically seen to be "a specific and concrete response to the gospel message which offers life in the midst of suffering and death" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:162). Thus, he contrasts 'sin' with 'gospel'. The word sin, he argues, is used in the Bible to "identify a perversion of people's relationships with God, with one another and with the natural world of which they are an inherent part. It involves living a life of enmity, of violation and inhumanity. It is the incapacity to be truly human" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:162). He sees the gospel message of redemption, restoration and renewal, in turn, as affirming what he calls "the essential values which constitute true humanity" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:162). Because of sin, there is a need for reconciliation with God, which involves accepting the claim of God on one's life (Villa-Vicencio,1992:162-3). However, Villa-Vicencio warns that this reconciliation has to be translated into cultural, legal and structural controls and incentives designed to order our lives (Villa-Vicencio,1992:163). Talking about reconciliation between human beings, Villa-Vicencio says that,

> From the point of view of the oppressed, theological talk of reconciliation can only be understood in the context of self-empowerment. It is in removing the barriers that divide people (cultural, social and material) that reconciliation can realistically take place between the former oppressed and former oppressor (Villa-Vicencio,1992:185).

He furthermore argues that the gospel has to continue challenging social structures in order that they (structures) become part of the process of renewing, transforming and redirecting personal and social goals (Villa-Vicencio,1992:163).

Thus, Villa-Vicencio sees the role of the gospel as a commitment and critique to social structures.

> The gospel is good news in a concrete situation. This requires theology to focus human endeavour on the specific needs of a particular society. Its task does not, however, end here. It is relentlessly to discern within the context of the struggle for human rights what the gospel of love means beyond these rights. It is this that makes the gospel an ally of any regime which promotes the interests of the poor, while at the same time being the harbinger of critique that keeps alive the highest ideals of the revolution of the poor (Villa-Vicencio,1992:164).

2.1.2.3.3 Human rights and democracy

According to Villa-Vicencio, a nation-building theology should support and promote democracy at every level of society (Villa-Vicencio,1992:46). He states that,

> It [nation-building theology] operates from the assumption that the best and most effective way to ensure human rights and to promote the eradication of racism, sexism and classism in society is to enable the full and unqualified participation of people of all races, all sexes and all classes in all aspects of society (Villa-Vicencio,1992:46-7).

Then, Villa-Vicencio asks, "can theology be in critical solidarity with a democratically elected government of the people?" (Villa-Vicencio,1993:25). Thus, Villa-Vicencio sees the task of the church as being in critical solidarity with the government, when he states that,

> At the most practical level of nation-building, the church, possibly in co-operation with the state, will need to re-activate its work through clinics, hospitals, schools, creches, feeding schemes and related social initiatives-while at the same time never allowing the state to abdicate responsibility for such concerns. In so doing it will again be confronted with a new sense of urgency by the challenge of the gospel to feed the poor and minister to those in need (Villa-Vicencio,1992:190).

So, Villa-Vicencio believes that, for the church to authentically promote democracy, it is obliged to democratise its own structures as well. Thus, he argues,

> Indeed, in many situations the church is today more authoritarian, more hierarchical, more oppressive and less democratic, less participatory and less liberating than the state (Villa-Vicencio,1992:47).

The challenge as Villa-Vicencio sees it is that a new theological vision of the church's place in society is emerging from among "ordinary, often oppressed and frequently alienated Christians" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:47). He contends then that, church leadership and theologians should listen and learn afresh from such people, who are "challenging ecclesial sexism, racism and classism" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:47).

He then concludes by declaring that, "it is not only society, but also the church that requires renewal if in the post-exilic age we are not going to recreate the same monster all over again" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:47).

In summing up the discussion on human rights and theology, we highlight the following points. Reconstruction theology must, according to Villa-Vicencio, play an important role in promoting human rights in Africa. Amongst others, he identifies the following rights that reconstruction theology must support: rights to life, to cultural identity, democracy, to dissent, personal dignity and freedom of religion. As part of its support to the promotion of human rights in Africa, Villa-Vicencio believes that reconstruction theology must also challenge social structures which undermine human rights.

Having briefly examined human rights and democracy, we then, move on to analyse, in the next subsection, the interfaith dialogue.

2.1.2.4 Inter-faith dialogue

The fourth component is interfaith dialogue. Villa-Vicencio believes that since theology is required to build a nation within which people of different faiths share, the inter-faith dimension of theology and social renewal needs increasingly to concern Christians as much as it is required to concern people of other faiths (Villa-Vicencio,1992:277). Accordingly, Villa-Vicencio argues that,

> In so doing Christians (and others) are driven to rediscover the essentials of their own faith, leaving aside the many accretions which have been imposed on their faith as a result of it being used as a tool of conquest and imperial domination (Villa-Vicencio,1992:277).

Although Villa-Vicencio does not explain how Christians are to rediscover the essentials of their faith, he warns against undermining interfaith dialogue. "Without inter-faith dialogue", declares Villa-Vicencio, "grounded in the separation of religion and state, the chance of cultural tolerance and mutual trust is simply not a possibility in a pluralistic state" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:276).

2.1.2.5 Open-ended

The fifth element is open-endedness. Villa-Vicencio believes that reconstruction theology should be open-ended. Thus, he believes that reconstruction theology will have to involve ongoing reflection, re-evaluation and self-critique. Thus, he elaborates,

> Its major concern is not to make pronouncements which are securely defined or nailed down

for the security of generations to come. It is open-ended, ready to secure compromises which provide the best solutions at the time to complex problems, while always insisting that any such solution is open to critique, new challenges and continuing transformation. This, ultimately, is perhaps the most significant contribution which theology can make to the process of social renewal. It involves an ethic that is both immediately relevant to society's needs and yet committed to transcending the limitations of the immediate time and place (Villa-Vicencio,1992:278).

For Villa-Vicencio, reconstruction theology offers no final answer to the complex problems with which society is confronted. Social renewal must be a continuing revolution within which the concerns of the poor are continually employed as a lever to transform the structures of society to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged (Villa-Vicencio,1992:278). What seems to inform or guide Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology is the context of the poor. So reconstruction theology becomes open ended in that its aims and goals are determined by the socio-economic conditions of the poor. In this case one may argue that Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology will always become relevant to the context it addresses.

2.1.2.6 Constructive

Sixth, Villa-Vicencio maintains that reconstruction theology must be constructive in its critique of the existing structures,

> It is proposal oriented, seeking realistic solutions, sharing in the nation-building process. It is to be the servant of the poor in promoting their particular interests, while seeking the common good of all people. It is required to be a source of creative and imaginative solutions, seeking to translate into constructive proposals the implicit and latent ideals of the gospel (Villa-Vicencio,1992:278).

As already indicated, Villa-Vicencio argues that reconstruction theology's primary interlocutors are the poor, whose interests it should promote. However, the poor are not the only interlocutor, reconstruction theology also has to address the needs of what he calls "all people". So we see here that his theology aims to serve the needs of everyone within the context of renewing and transforming the material conditions of the poor.

Having described reconstruction theology and analysing its components, we need to explore certain

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tasks of this theology. This we do in the next section.

2.1.3 The tasks of reconstruction theology

Villa-Vicencio sees the tasks of reconstruction theology as addressing such issues as inequality, racism, sexism and class division (Villa-Vicencio,1992:2). Accordingly, Villa-Vicencio explores the role of reconstruction theology with respect to gender and race.

2.1.3.1 Gender and race

Villa-Vicencio sees reconstruction theology as essentially a "remedial and compensatory theology" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:15). He argues that, "It [reconstruction theology] has a special responsibility to put right past wrongs and old abuses" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:15). Thus, he sees affirmative action as a central ingredient to a constructive nation-building process. He believes that issues such as constitutionalism, human rights, questions of political economy and the freedom of conscience should be assessed and promoted with a view to showing a priority concern for those marginalised by past discriminatory laws and practices. This in the South African situation "requires affirmative action regarding blacks and women" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:15).

Explaining why preferential treatment should be given to both women and blacks, Villa-Vicencio states,

> The plight of women, black people and other exploited groups, forming the overwhelming majority of people on earth and discriminated against by successive ruling-classes in most societies (not least South Africa), ought to inform *every* aspect of planning for a new era. Differently stated, exploited people should form the *norm*, not the exception to a human rights agenda. [Reconstruction] Theology, compelled by a biblical imperative to show a special preference for the poor, oppressed, marginalised and excluded sections of society, has a special obligation never to lose sight of this requirement (Villa-Vicencio,1992:16).

Quoting from the United Nations's Women's Charter, Villa-Vicencio sees the role of reconstruction theology as urging states to take "all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women"

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(Villa-Vicencio,1992:16). Thus, he does not see the role of the state as simply to prevent discrimination, but to "ensure the full development and achievement of women and...in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields...guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:16).

Further, Villa-Vicencio explains what a theology of reconstruction's role is all about,

> For the dreams of the oppressed to become a reality they are to be translated into political programmes and law-making that benefit those who have longed for, and fought for, the new age, while protecting the new society against the abuses which marked past oppression (Villa-Vicencio,1992:29).

Having briefly analysed the role of reconstruction theology within gender and race terms, we then move on to explore, in the next subsection, reconstruction theology's role within cultural empowerment.

2.1.3.2 Cultural empowerment

Villa-Vicencio believes that social values are located at the heart of constitutional debate and law-making. He then goes on to argue that given the level of ideological diversity and social turmoil in South Africa, there is a need to establish "a genuine democratic culture which respects the dignity of people, the right to dissent and meaningful political participation" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:42). The church has a role, according to Villa-Vicencio, to facilitate and enable people "to live together in mutual respect" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:42). He argues thus,

> Theologically, it is a community within which people are taught to love one another, to forgive one another and to bear one another's burdens. Specifically it is a culture which elevates those who have been previously marginalised or excluded from the fullest participation in the community. As such it is obliged to address the specific challenge of racial and sexual discrimination (Villa-Vicencio,1992:42).

In order to effectively address the above concerns, Villa-Vicencio believes that social prejudices have to be challenged, and that furthermore, black people have to be empowered to demand their rights. He also believes that women have to be enabled to claim their rightful place in society (Villa-Vicencio,1992:42).

Villa-Vicencio continues to argue that cultural empowerment involves the participation of the year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19) "within which injustices will be reversed, and to celebrate jubilee year within the land taken from peasants by landowners will be restored (Lev. 25). As such it is a theology with a special bias in favour of a form of economic reconstruction which benefits the most impoverished sections of the community" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:43). Thus, Villa-Vicencio, sees the role of Nation-building theology as "to facilitate the emergence of a social force that specifically empowers the poor and marginalised people of society" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:43). However, "for this to happen", argues Villa-Vicencio, "those who are oppressed are, without being parochial or isolationist, obliged to look to their own resources and discern the Spirit of the Lord within their own culture, history and identity" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:43).

Villa-Vicencio argues further that in order to empower women and the marginalised, there has to be an integration of indigenous values into the dominant culture of the nation (Villa-Vicencio,1992:43). Thus, he elaborates,

> Theologically this has implications for the continuing debate between African cultural theology (dominant in many parts of Africa), South African black theology and other forms of contextual thought (Villa-Vicencio,1992:43).

Villa-Vicencio then raises a question as to whether the "empowering and liberating resources being sought as a basis for renewal are to be found in mining cultural resources hidden within native or pre-colonial traditions, or within the more contemporary culture of struggle for socio-economic and political change" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:43). As a way of addressing the above raised question, Villa-Vicencio quotes from Desmond Tutu (1975:32-3) when he says,

> African theology has failed to produce a sufficiently sharp cutting edge...very little has been offered that is pertinent to the theology of power in the face of the epidemic of coups and military rule, about development, about poverty and disease and other equally urgent present-day issues. I believe this is where the abrasive black theology may have a few lessons for African theology (Villa-Vicencio,1992:44).

Accordingly, Villa-Vicencio correctly observes that symbols continue to be powerful "ingredients in African and similar cultures" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:44). He then goes on to say that Black and other liberation theologies do recognise that human identity embraces more than culture. He states that it also embraces both political and economic identity (Villa-Vicencio,1992:44). Thus, he believes that indigenous theologies should address these sources of alienation, in order to deal with deprivation and oppression (Villa-Vicencio,1992:44).

Villa-Vicencio then maintains that there is need for a theologically liberating African spirituality to be born,

> African culture refuses to separate the sacred and the secular and it is here that a theology which empowers the poor must begin. When Africans celebrate their religion, says John Mbiti, 'they dance it, they sing it, they act it' (Villa-Vicencio,1992:44).

Villa-Vicencio sees the task of the church within the nation-building scenario as to "heal and restore as a contribution to national unity" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:44). Accordingly, Villa-Vicencio believes that in order to effectively share in the process of reconstruction of culture, the church should successfully engage in the cultural struggle against oppression (Villa-Vicencio,1992:45). Thus he states,

> The creation of a culture which motivates and enables people to realise their highest moral ideals and sense of communal duty is perhaps the most important function awaiting the church in the period of reconstruction (Villa-Vicencio,1992:45).

Villa-Vicencio then concludes that "for the church to fail to share in the creation of a new culture is for the church to fail to address its liberating obligation to society. It is to marginalise itself from the task of reconstruction (Villa-Vicencio,1992:45). Clearly Villa-Vicencio sees liberation as a function of reconstruction theology.

Villa-Vicencio also envisions the liberating culture emerging only when "existing culture is brought into creative tension with the gospel" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:46). Accordingly, Villa-Vicencio observes that the "*gospel* or *Christ*" has never been separate from culture or been above culture. The gospel, he argues, "was first dressed in Hebrew and Greco-Roman garb, and for the past few centuries has worn the clothing of every colonial nation to wander through Africa" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:46). He is thus concerned that the "liberating message of Jesus" is so entrapped within these cultures that some have come to mistake cultural impositions for the gospel itself (Villa-Vicencio,1992:46). Thus he believes that these "impositions" are to be eradicated from society and the Christian tradition. This eradications is seen as the task of a nation-building theology (Villa-Vicencio,1992:46). He then argues that,

> The task of the church in political transition and the emerging new society is to promote the destruction of all forms of cultural oppression and exploitation, whether located in the church or in society (Villa-Vicencio,1992:46).

Believing that there is no place for racism, sexism or classism in the gospel of Jesus Christ, Villa-Vicencio further argues that the church cannot rest until all "structural and residual forms, of these basic violations of the rights of people created in the image of God, are eradicated from the statute books, as well as from the basic fabric of society" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:46).

Having discussed the components of Villa-Vicencio's theology of reconstruction, we now need to examine how he uses the new "biblical metaphor" as a basis for his reconstruction theology. This we do in the next section, to which we now turn.

2.1.4 Post-exilic metaphor

Thus, Villa-Vicencio argues that reconstruction theology must be based on a post-exilic metaphor, as opposed to liberation theology's Exodus metaphor. However, Villa-Vicencio seems to be aware that, "not all in the Bible and Christian tradition is 'of God' in the sense of being liberatory and redemptive. A clear distinction needs to be made between the residue of oppression within the Christian tradition and that part which points to, and symbolises, the true message of liberation" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:26).

Moreover, Villa-Vicencio points out that not all within the exilic and post-exilic period and literature immediately offers itself for appropriation in a theology of reconstruction. The homecoming for the Jews was largely a restrictive and oppressive event, resulting in isolation from other nations. And yet, "metaphor" is "pure and adventure" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:27). The "post-exilic metaphor" is used as a tentative, open-ended "symbol" which draws on the liberative spirit of hope located alongside all else within the exilic period and the return of the exiles (Villa-Vicencio,1992:27).

Furthermore, Villa-Vicencio believes that a post-exilic biblical theology has not been fully developed by biblical scholars. He charges that,

> The dichotomy suggested by some scholars between doom, judgement and law in the pre-exilic period over against hope, salvation and grace in the post-exilic period is an oversimplification of the more complex biblical shift in emphasis at the time of the return from exile (Villa-Vicencio,1992:27).

As a way of explaining this shift, Villa-Vicencio goes on to explain that prior to the pre-exilic time in the history of Israel the prophets and poets looked back to the former times and old traditions.

> Then come the exilic poets, no longer appealing to the continuing power of the old tradition, but enunciating new actions of God that are discontinuous with the old traditions. The promise of the old tends to give way to the new. It is this shifting emphasis that is employed in what follows in the "metaphorical" use of post-exilic theology as a theology of reconstruction and nation-building (Villa-Vicencio,1992:29).

Thus, in summing up, Villa-Vicencio states,

> there are resources within the biblical literature which give credence to the use of the post-exilic metaphor as a basis for a theology of prophetic reconstruction and political stability rather than revolution (Villa-Vicencio,1992:28).

Villa-Vicencio identifies Ezra-Nehemiah together with several other texts that could be used as a basis for a reconstruction theology. Before we discuss the Ezra-Nehemiah text, we will analyse the other texts mentioned.

2.1.4.1 Other texts

In this subsection we consider other texts listed by Villa-Vicencio, in order to see what Villa-Vicencio does with his metaphors so that we can understand his use of Ezra-Nehemiah. Villa-Vicencio then goes on to show that the prophetic and priestly themes tended towards "a closer synthesis, with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah calling for the rebuilding of the temple, while in the third Isaiah, especially chapter 56, there is a blend of cultic and ethical concerns" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:27-8). Villa-Vicencio's argument here is that there is renewed emphasis on worship and social justice (Villa-Vicencio,1992:27-8).

Villa-Vicencio explains his use of this post-exilic metaphor when he states,

> The post-exilic metaphor as used here is built on the emphasis of Gerhard von Rad who identifies the poetry of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah as an important turning point in the traditions of the Old Testament. It is this that causes him to make Isaiah 43:18-19 the hinge between the two volumes of his Old Testament Theology: "Do not remember former things. Behold, I am doing a new thing" (Villa-Vicencio,1992:28-9).

Villa-Vicencio then goes on to state that inherent to the metaphor of a post-exilic theology is the expectation of the emergence of something new.

> Biblically the renewing poems of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah constitute a reorientation of prophetic literature within which God's promise is not found by looking back, but by anticipating the future. The exilic prophets also knew, however, that the new age is born in present struggle. It was in obedience to God and in solidarity with one another that the new society would be born. The kind of society that will prevail in different parts of the world tomorrow is being forged on the anvil of struggle today. The church of tomorrow is also in the process of being born today (Villa-Vicencio,1992:48).

Having discussed how he sees other texts as being used in a reconstruction theology, we will discuss how he uses Ezra-Nehemiah.

2.1.4.2 Ezra-Nehemiah

As indicated, according to Villa-Vicencio liberation was built largely around the biblical symbol of 'Exodus'. A theology of reconstruction, then, will have to look for additional symbols within the post-exilic period. In other words, a paradigm shift from liberation theology to reconstruction theology means a shift of emphasis from the Exodus (pre-exilic) to Ezra-Nehemiah and other texts (post-exilic) (Villa-Vicencio,1993:25).

Villa-Vicencio, however, does not use Ezra-Nehemiah alone, as a basis for a theology of prophetic reconstruction and political stability (Villa-Vicencio,1992:27). Rather, he sees it as part of these other texts mentioned above,

> Post-exilic theology at the same time incorporates the contradictions and conflicts inherent to most theologies. It includes the moralisms of Deuteronomy, the passionate rebellion of Job against these impositions, the prophetic judgement and suffering of Jeremiah, Ezekiel's theology of renewal and the hope and anticipated home-coming of Deutero-Isaiah. After the return these contradictions continued in the ideological conflicts inherent to Nehemiah, Ezra and other reconstructionists, counter-balanced against the apocalyptic dreams of Zechariah and Joel (Villa-Vicencio,1992:28).

It is worth noting here, and I will discuss this in detail later, that though Villa-Vicencio does talk of "ideological conflicts" in Ezra-Nehemiah, his use of this text neither indicates that he identifies nor analyses such ideological conflicts. But before I do analyse this absence of an ideological interpretation of Ezra-Nehemiah, I will briefly discuss the critiques of others of Villa-Vicencio's

theology of reconstruction.

2.1.5 Maluleke and Pityana's critique of Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology

Both Tinyiko Maluleke and Barney Pityana have critiqued Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology. While their critiques tend to deal with issues that are not directly related to the purpose of this study, whose main focus is on how Villa-Vicencio uses Ezra-Nehemiah for a theology of reconstruction, it is useful to highlight certain important aspects of the two scholars's critique of Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology.

Maluleke (1994;1996) has been very critical of reconstruction theology as a new theological paradigm in African Christian theology, as propagated by **both** Villa-Vicencio and Mugambi. He argues that there is nothing new that reconstruction theology **is pro**posing that has not been proposed by other theologies (liberation, inculturation etc) before. Furthermore, Maluleke has argued that the bulk of the material of Villa-Vicencio's book seems to be dealing with non-theological matters. He argues that "large sections of the book are simply non-theological as opposed to interdisciplinary" (Maluleke,1994:187).

Unlike Maluleke, Pityana welcomes reconstruction theology as a theology that recognises that the context has changed. He lists reconstruction theology as one of the contextual theologies, alongside liberation, Black, and inculturation theologies. He notes that Maluleke (1994; 245-258) has seriously engaged with the issues raised by Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology (Pityana,1995:226). However, Pityana does not seem to share Maluleke's concerns about reconstruction theology. He correctly observes that Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology can "hardly be interpreted as hostile to the liberation project" (Pityana,1995:227). "In fact", continues Pityana, Villa-Vicencio's "theology of reconstruction is set within the genre of liberation theology" (Pityana,1995:227). Pityana correctly notes that the significant thing about Villa-Vicencio's proposal for a theology of reconstruction is that something significant has happened in South Africa in such a way as to alter radically the context in which contextual theologies are undertaken. He charges that Maluleke should take note of this new context. Thus, he argues,

Maluleke cannot deny that objective reality requires a theology for the new context. In any event this realisation is important for strategic reasons. Commenting on the recent wave of militant demonstration in demand for transformation in tertiary institutions, Neville Alexander (1995) commented that if one refuses to accept that something has changed one will be tempted to use inappropriate and reactionary methods in support of one's legitimate demands. Maluleke is in danger of such a charge being levelled against him (Pityana,1995:227).

Pityana also notes Maluleke's objections that reconstruction theology is a project in nation-building.

> He [Maluleke] raises concerns about this on the basis that the concept of nation is ambiguous and ill-defined. His unstated objection, which may have some validity, is that theology may be getting entangled once again in being the mouthpiece of the new dispensation. While the point may be valid, it fails to understand Villa-Vicencio's arguments. In the changing political context, the structure of theology must change. That structure must be determined and that is what Villa-Vicencio explores. The concept of 'critical solidarity' is one which gives theologians the handle on which this new exploration must take. That theology will be as prophetic in the new circumstances as any that went before (Pityana,1995:228).

Maluleke charges that Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology has ignored African theories and experiences. Maluleke further argues that Villa-Vicencio is dialoguing with Western philosophical and liberal democratic ideas in law, economics and human rights. He also notes that Villa-Vicencio makes no mention of African culture and philosophy and that he has not debated with African theology and makes no mention of African Independent Churches (Maluleke,1994:187; Pityana,1995:228).

While agreeing that Villa-Vicencio's theories might have been appropriated in an uncritical manner, Pityana is quick to point out that that is not to say that Africa should ignore what is under debate in Western scholarship nor should this be an invitation to what he calls "an uncritical, sentimental Africanism" (Pityana,1995:229).

Pityana further notes that reconstruction, as a theological paradigm has gained momentum among African Christian theologians and institutions. Thus he argues that,

> The truth is that theologians from Africa are engaging with the concept of reconstruction as they look beyond following the devastation of repressive regimes, corruption and the pauperisation of the continent. They are looking to this as they survey the scene and note how weak the witness of the churches was in Africa because church leaders were coopted to this

version of the African ideal which was self-enriching, authoritarian and autocratic. They are seeking a theological basis for the church's engagement in human rights and development. They seek a language to talk about nation-building in a creative manner without the negative connotations Maluleke attaches to it:...It appears that Villa-Vicencio has sparked a continent-wide theological debate and a reconstruction of theological strategies:...I would argue that he has already advanced the challenge posed by the likes of Tinyiko Maluleke. Since the publication of A THEOLOGY OF RECONSTRUCTION (1992) he has explored the issues of culture and pluralism as elements in nation-building in South Africa. He has been reaching out for a concept of being a nation in a plural society (Pityana,1995:229-230).

To show that reconstruction theology has been received in a positive light among certain quarters, Pityana cites several scholars and organisations that advocate the reconstruction ideal: The work of leading African social scientists like Ali Mazrui and Archie Mafeje; the work of J.N.K. Mugambi (1995) (we will discuss his work in the following section); André Karamanga (we will discuss his work in the following section). He notes that both the World Council of Churches[73] and the All Africa Conference of Churches[74] have also been very active in promoting a reconstruction or renewal theology. He also refers to his own paper (1994) which was first read at the Windhoek conference. Pityana then concludes: "This is evidence to prove that the paradigm of Reconstruction has come into currency in theological discourse in Africa" (Pityana,1995:230).

Pityana's critique of Maluleke is valid, in that when questioning Villa-Vicencio's commitment to liberation, we also need to take into account his contribution in other books and articles, which shows that he is indeed concerned about liberation and the cause of the poor, and that his reconstruction theology is not hostile to liberation or inculturation theology.

Having briefly analysed the two scholars's critique of Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology, we move on to make our own critique of both Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology and how he uses Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for his reconstruction theology.

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[73] World Council of Churches Conference on "Peace, Democracy and Violence: The Church's Mission Today" held in Windhoek, Namibia, 4-8 December 1993.

[74] The All Africa Conference of Churches Consultation on "Democratisation and Development" held in Nairobi, 1-5 August 1994 was part of the same development.

2.1.6 My critique of Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology and his use of Ezra-Nehemiah

My main critique is that Villa-Vicencio's use of Ezra-Nehemiah does not examine critically the ideology behind the conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. A careful reading of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah demonstrates that there is a contestation between at least two groups, namely the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. In chapter 3 we will show that the Ezra-Nehemiah text has a particularly bias or ideology which tends to promote the view of the returned exiles rather than of the *am haaretz*.

It follows therefore that if Ezra-Nehemiah is to be used in a theology of reconstruction, it should not be read as representing the voice of only one group i.e. that of the returned exiles. The suppressed voices of the *am haaretz* have to be heard as well. Unfortunately, Villa-Vicencio's use of Ezra-Nehemiah suppresses the voice of the *am haaretz*, in that he neither identifies nor analyses critically the ideology within the text, an ideology which is biased against the *am haaretz*.

Though Villa-Vicencio does mention that there is an ideological conflict inherent in Ezra-Nehemiah, his use of Ezra-Nehemiah does not seriously take into consideration the fact that the Ezra-Nehemiah text is not neutral, when setting forth a theology of reconstruction based on Ezra-Nehemiah and other reconstructionists.

In fact, Villa-Vicencio does not read the text carefully. He has spoken of reconstruction theology as being based on, among other texts, Ezra-Nehemiah. By using the reconstruction theme in Ezra-Nehemiah without isolating the ideological agenda of the text and identifying the group which is dominant in the text, Villa-Vicencio has inadvertently identified reconstruction as that which is driven by the returned exiles at the exclusion of the *am haaretz*. Such a reading of the text is insensitive to the plight of the *am haaretz*. Our study of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah, in chapter 3, takes seriously the fact that this text is not neutral, it is embedded within an ideological world of its author, which suppresses and oppresses the voice of the marginalised group, namely the *am haaretz*.

If African biblical hermeneutics is to have an impact in our continent, it cannot only relate the text

as is to the African context, without de-ideologising that particular text in the first place. For such a reading may be counterproductive, in that instead of supporting and advancing the cause of the poor and marginalised, such a reading may further marginalise the poor by continuing to enslave them with the "revealed word of God" (Mosala,1989:6).

Moreover, though Villa-Vicencio argues for a post-exilic metaphor as a basis for his reconstruction theology, he hardly develops or unpacks what and how these metaphors could be used effectively. Villa-Vicencio includes in his post-exilic metaphors different texts from different socio-political contexts without doing a sociological analysis of any of them.

Having dealt with Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology and his use of Ezra-Nehemiah let us now conclude by summarising our analysis.

2.1.7 Summary

Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction theology correctly points out that we are in a different context in South Africa today than we were before the unbanning of the liberation movements in 1990 with the subsequent election of the democratic government in 1994. This new or different context requires, for Villa-Vicencio, a theology which in the first instance acknowledges that the context has changed, and then goes on to analyse the new context with a view to proposing creative solutions to the socio-economic conditions of this new context. This theology he calls reconstruction. Accordingly, reconstruction theology should be based not on the old liberation theology's Exodus metaphor, rather it will have to use post-exilic metaphors, ranging from Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, Isaiah, to Ezra-Nehemiah. My main concern with Villa-Vicencio is not with the concept of reconstruction, which is relevant not only for South Africa but for the rest of our continent as well. My concern though is with the manner in which he uses Ezra-Nehemiah in his reconstruction theology. He lists Ezra-Nehemiah together with other post-exilic texts as having the same reconstructive theme. But he does not go on to read the text carefully in order to isolate certain ideological agendas which are prevalent in the text. By not so doing, he tends to succumb to the ideology of the author, which tends to be biased against the *am haaretz*, the very poor and marginalised that his reconstruction theology is

designed to support.

Having critically examined Villa-Vicencio's concept of reconstruction theology and his use of Ezra-Nehemiah, we will go on, in the next section, to analyse Mugambi's reconstruction theology and his use of Ezra-Nehemiah in his quest for a theology of reconstruction.

2.2 MUGAMBI, J N K 1995: FROM LIBERATION TO RECONSTRUCTION

2.2.0 Introduction

As indicated earlier, Mugambi's reflection on the reconstruction theme precedes Villa-Vicencio's, though his published work is later. Jesse Mugambi introduces reconstruction as a new paradigm for African Christian theology in Africa. He explores the role of Christian theology in the social reconstruction of Africa. He argues that the reconstruction theme is evoked partly by the changes that have taken place during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and partly by the emergence of the "New World Order" after the end of colonialism, apartheid and the cold war (Mugambi,1995:x).

Mugambi sees the 1990s as a very difficult decade for peoples in all nations of the world. The Old Secular Order has passed away suddenly, he argues, and the new World Order is hardly here with us. Mugambi views the arrival of the New World Order as posing a challenge for us to be very creative and innovative (Mugambi,1995:18). Thus he argues,

> Theologically, Christians are challenged to look at the Gospel anew all the time, and re-discover the freshness of its message for every generation in every culture (Mugambi,1995:18).

Mugambi, like Villa-Vicencio before him, argues for a shift of paradigms from liberation to reconstruction theology.

His concern is that in the recent past, *liberation* and *inculturation* have been taken as the most "basic concepts for innovative African Christian theology" (Mugambi,1995:2). Before we do a detailed analysis of Mugambi's reconstruction theology, we will discuss these two theologies he is suggesting

a paradigm shift from, namely liberation and inculturation.

2.2.1 Liberation theology

Mugambi says that liberation has been the dominant theme in African Christian theology during the past twenty years (Mugambi,1995:23). He sees "inculturation" as a variation of that theme (Mugambi,1995:23).

He sees the Exodus as having been "the dominant biblical motif" in African Christian theology (Mugambi,1995:23). Moses, he argues, has been viewed as the exemplary leader who leads his own people from bondage to freedom (Mugambi,1995:23). Thus, African leaders in the transition from colonial domination have been likened to Moses, as African messiahs fulfilling the same role as the liberators of the Hebrew community (Mugambi,1995:24).

Accordingly, Mugambi argues,

> Until now, the majority of renowned African Christian theologians have highlighted the *Exodus* metaphor and emphasized the theme of *liberation*. Metaphorically, African people have been likened to the people of Israel on their way from the land of bondage in Egypt to the promised land in Canaan. In this metaphor, the Egyptian regime is the colonial regime, whereas the promised land is the liberated nation (Mugambi,1995:165).

So Mugambi further argues that the "Exodus motif was so dominant that there were hardly any other biblical texts that could be associated with African Christian theology. In the New Testament, Luke 4:16-22, which echoes Isaiah 61:1-2, was the passage most frequently associated with African Christian theology" (Mugambi,1995:39).

What, according to Mugambi, led to the emergence of liberation theology? Mugambi explains that as a response to the dictatorial regimes of the 1960s and 1970s, the Catholic theologians and social scientists mobilized Christians for liberation, and the "Exodus motif" was used in their mobilization (Mugambi,1995:2). Gustavo Gutiérrez (1973), a Latin American, has been regarded as the "father" of liberation theology, became the leading theologian to articulate this approach to social change in Latin America (Mugambi,1995:2-3). Mugambi elaborates,

By 1968, Theology of Liberation had become associated with progressive church leadership in Latin America. Throughout the 1970s, leading Latin American theologians were very articulate in shifting international campaigns for social transformation from developmentalism to liberationism (Mugambi,1995:3).

Shifting his focus from Latin America to North America, Mugambi also traces the origins of liberation theology here. He says that civil rights activists, in 1950s and 1960s, led by the fact that a century after the American Civil War, African-Americans still did not enjoy social equality, discerned "theological motifs" that would help them to mobilize the community for change (Mugambi,1995:3). "Again", argues Mugambi, the "Exodus motif" was employed. He explains that leaders such as Martin Luther King were likened to Moses, "whose task was to lead the people to the promised land" (Mugambi,1995:3). James Cone, an African American, also became the leading advocate of liberation theology in the United States of America (Mugambi,1995:3).

Mugambi's analysis of the emergence of liberation then moves from a focus on North-America to Africa. He explains that by the time the World Council of Churches held its Fifth Assembly at Nairobi, Kenya, in 1975, the theme of *liberation* had become commonplace in Africa. Mugambi sketches out two important developments following the 1975 World Council of Churches's Assembly in Nairobi. First, in September, 1975, the World Council Churches sponsored a consultation in Geneva on "Racism in Theology and Theology Against Racism" (Mugambi,1995:4). Second, in August, 1976, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians was launched at Dar es Salaam (Mugambi,1995:4). The conference was attended by theologians from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

> At the conference in Dar es Salaam it become increasingly clear that there was a difference of emphases and perspectives between African, Asian and Latin American theologians. African theologians wanted to highlight cultural and racial domination, and liberation was viewed particularly in these terms. At the same time, Asian theologians emphasized the burden of castes and vedic traditions, and interpreted liberation in terms of the quest to be free from the bondage of oriental heritage. Latin American theologians, on the other hand, were emphatic on liberation as the process of social transformation through class struggle, with the oppressed as the 'subjects' rather than 'objects' of history. Race and culture were peripheral to their concerns. These differences in perspective and emphasis were evident in the Communique issued by the conference (Mugambi,1995:4).

Mugambi notes that the Exodus motif continued to be dominant in most African theological imagery

until the late 1980s (Mugambi,1995:5).

2.2.1.1 Liberation and salvation

Mugambi raises a concern about a tendency among Christian theologians to polarise themselves in support of *either* liberation or salvation (Mugambi,1995:5). He sees the polarisation as a result of differences over the Christian theologians's appreciation of the role of the "gospel" in social transformation. Mugambi sketches this polarisations in the following manner (Mugambi,1995:5). "On the one extreme", argues Mugambi, are those theologians who prefer the concept of salvation, suggesting that the "gospel" is primarily focussed on spiritual conversion (John 3:1-3) (Mugambi,1995:6).

> Only after such conversion, according to this view, can social action follow. The Church, such theologians continue, should concentrate on preparing its converts for life after death-for God's kingdom in heaven, in the future (Mugambi,1995:6).

According to Mugambi, the salvationists consider their liberationist counterparts to be advocates of the 'social gospel' which, in salvationist terms, is a deviation from the biblical message (Mugambi,1995:6).

On the opposite extreme, argues Mugambi, are other theologians who

> insist that the Gospel challenges all its followers to become involved in the process of liberation, as 'salt of the earth' and 'light of the world' (Matt. 5:13-16). This challenge, they argue, involves direct involvement in social transformation. It is not possible for a person to separate spiritual conversion from actual witness in society. What one does in society ought to be consistent with one's inner convictions (Mugambi,1995:6).

Moreover, Mugambi observes that theologians who hold the liberationist view tend to consider their counterparts on the opposite extreme to be hypocritical in their proclamations, "because of the holier than thou stance taken by the salvationists" (Mugambi,1995:6). Mugambi notes that, according to the liberationist perspective, theology is at its best when it takes serious account of anthropological reality (Mugambi,1995:6).

Mugambi has been very critical of the above stated polarization between salvation and liberation.

His critique of such a polarization could not here been captured more concisely than when he argues that,

> The polarization indicated above presupposes that *liberation* and *salvation* are mutually exclusive, or mutually incompatible. However, it is quite clear that Jesus, in His public ministry, was actively and simultaneously involved in both personal and social reconstruction. He mobilized His followers to become involved in social change, having convinced them of the necessity and urgency to change their attitudes towards themselves and the world. The logical implication of this integral approach to evangelization is that liberation and salvation are theologically complementary (Mugambi,1995:6).

Furthermore, quoting from his earlier writing, Mugambi (1989) declares that,

> In the African context and in the Bible salvation, as a socio-political concept, cannot be complete without liberation as a socio-political concept. Thus Jesus, proclaiming his mission, quoted from the book of Isaiah to indicate the correctness and relevance of his concern (Isaiah 61:1-2) (Mugambi,1995:7).

Thus, in sum, Mugambi argues that,

> It is not necessary to opt for either the liberation or the salvation approaches. Rather, African theologians ought to discern an approach which integrates liberation with salvation, *vice versa* (Mugambi,1995:7).

Having offered some analysis of Mugambi's understanding of liberation theology's role, we will briefly highlight Mugambi's critique of liberation theology.

2.2.1.2 Mugambi critiques liberation theology

Mugambi explains why the liberation paradigm has been attractive to some theologians in Africa. He says it became attractive because of the historical experience of colonial and neo-colonial domination (Mugambi,1995:14). Mugambi says that the main reservation against liberation as a central theme of Christian theology has been that the process of liberation is historical, whereas the gospel's ultimate promise is eschatological (Mugambi,1995:24). Mugambi is quick to point out that the transposition of the liberation theme from the Old Testament to the African experience has led to what he calls "some distortions of the theological message contained therein" (Mugambi,1995:14). He argues that the "distortions" came about as there are what he calls "remarkable differences" between the Israelite experience under the Pharaohs and the African colonial experience under North

Atlantic powers four millennia later (Mugambi,1995:14). He outlines five of these "remarkable differences" as follows. First, he mentions historical differences between the Israelite bondage and the African colonialism. He elaborates that the Israelites were in bondage in the second millennium before the Christian era. He then goes on to state that in contrast, the African colonial experience has been in the second millennium within the Christian era (Mugambi,1995:14). "This historical distance", argues Mugambi, "implies also, considerable differences in historical circumstances" (Mugambi,1995:14). Second, he mentions the cultural distance. He begins by stating that the Israelites had great affinity with the peoples of the Mediterranean region. Then he argues that because of this "great affinity", the Israelites's cosmopolitan experience is much more evident than that of Africans in the twentieth century under European colonial domination (Mugambi,1995:14). The third difference is what he calls the religious heritage. Mugambi argues that in the Old Testament, the charismatic leadership of heroes such as Moses derives inspiration from the religious heritage of the Israelites, whereas the association of messianic leadership in contemporary Africa is greatly influenced by biblical idioms (Mugambi,1995:14). The fourth one is the ideological difference. Mugambi says that the ideological configuration of the Mediterranean region during the Exodus period is very different from that of Africa in the twentieth century (Mugambi,1995:14). It is worth noting here that Mugambi does not explain further this fourth difference, rather he just mentions it. Lastly, he mentions the religious plurality. He argues that whereas in the Old Testament the Israelites claim to have the *only* true religion, in contemporary Africa several religions vie for recognition as heralds of divine and universal truth (Christianity; Islam; Judaism) (Mugambi,1995:14).

Having mentioned the above five differences between the Israelites bondage and the African bondage, Mugambi then concludes that the parallels drawn between the Exodus and the process of decolonisation have been rather contrived and far-fetched (Mugambi,1995:14).

> Moreover, the analogy between the Exodus and the struggle against colonialism does not fit very well, considering that in the Old Testament the Israelites move physically over time and space, from Egypt across the Sinai to Canaan, whereas African [Africans] remain in the same geographical space. Thus the Exodus, when transposed to the African situation, is over time, without any geographical movement (Mugambi,1995:14-15).

Having described Mugambi's critique of liberation theology, we now move on to analyse Mugambi's views on inculturation theology before we move on to discuss reconstruction theology.

2.2.2 Inculturation theology

Mugambi has also called for a paradigm shift from inculturation to reconstruction. The purpose of this subsection is not to give a detailed discussuion of inculturation theology, rather we will briefly explain it as a way of understanding Mugambi's critique of it.

Mugambi says that some Catholic theologians, as a way of trying to avoid the polarisation between salvation and liberation categories, introduced "another set of polarized concepts", namely, *acculturation*, which is derived from the social sciences, and *inculturation*, which is derived from theology (Mugambi,1995:7).

Mugambi, then goes on to explain what he means by acculturation. He argues that as a sociological concept, acculturation refers "to the process through which the people of one culture absorb and internalize the norms of another culture during the period of encounter between the two cultures" (Mugambi,1995:7). Furthermore, Mugambi explains that,

> This process of internalization may be spontaneous or forced. The diffusion of cultural norms amongst African peoples in pre-colonial Africa has been spontaneous, whereas colonization forced African peoples to *either* adopt the norms of their masters *or*,[sic] perish. Anti-colonial struggles throughout Africa have also necessitated spontaneous acculturation, creating bonds between peoples who previously lived in isolation. In the post-colonial era African peoples have been compelled by ideological and market forces to become synchronized with the dominant culture in the world, through the mass media, advertising and propaganda (Mugambi,1995:7).

Following Cees Hamelink (1983), Mugambi further concludes that,

> If cultural expression is to contribute to the development of autonomy in a society, it must be an expression of internal equality as well as resistance to imperialist synchronizing forces. Furthermore, if it is to respect the cultural autonomies of other societies, it must also avoid the temptation that as a result of its success as an adequate cultural solution within its own national social systems, it becomes an expansionist, imperialistic force (Mugambi,1995:7-8).

Acculturation, argues Mugambi, when imposed, can have "disastrous consequences for the cultural integrity of the vanquished people. Conversely, it gives the peddlers of the dominant culture a sense of success and pride which, in moral terms, is undeserved" (Mugambi,1995:8).

Having analysed acculturation, Mugambi moves on to discuss inculturation. He explains that inculturation theology has been associated with some African Catholic theologians, having been first popularized by Catholic missionary scholars, notably Aylward Shorter (1988) (Mugambi,1995:2). He further states that inculturation has been coined by Catholic theologians to explain the process by which the Catholic Church becomes rooted in every culture, without destroying Catholic ecclesiastical identity, tradition and history. Hence in 1962 the French missiologist L. Masson called for a "Catholicism that is inculturated in a variety of forms" (Ott,1998:1; Mugambi,1995:8).

Moreover, Mugambi (1995:8) says that the semantic inspiration of inculturation is *incarnation*. Thus he explains,

> In theological terms, incarnation is the manifestation of the divine in human corporeality. God becomes manifest in Jesus of Nazareth. Likewise, inculturation is the manifestation of the Church in various cultures where it has been introduced and established.

Mugambi then notes that the linking of the theological concept of incarnation with the socio-ecclesiological concept of inculturation creates a semantic tension. He goes on to elaborate that the tension can only be resolved if one assumes "that the Church (as a divine institution) is supernatural and 'empties' itself into every culture just as God is 'emptied' into Jesus of Nazareth (Philippians 2:1-11)" (Mugambi,1995:8). Having said this, Mugambi is quick to warn that the Church evolves within history, and therefore, as a human institution is subject to the limitations of human achievement and weakness as it strives to emulate the ideals of its founder, Christ (Mugambi,1995:8).

Mugambi follows Aylward Shorter (1988) in his description of inculturation theology. Shorter, tracing the history of the term inculturation to Jesuit theologians in the early 1960s, quotes a definition from the Jesuit priest Pedro Arrupe. He defines inculturation as: "the on-going dialogue between faith and culture or cultures" (Mugambi,1995:2). For a longer definition Shorter (1988) refers to Arrupe whose definition of inculturation is:

> The incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation) but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a "new creation" (Quoted by Mugambi,1995:9).

Several scholars[75] have since written a vast number of books and articles on inculturation. However, Mugambi seems concerned about those who categorise African Christologies into two types, namely Christologies of *inculturation* and Christologies of *liberation*. Thus Mugambi contends that this categorization is too sharp, as the African theologians who advocate for Inculturation-Incarnation are not necessarily against liberation-salvation and vice-versa (Mugambi,1995:9).

Mugambi illustrates the fact that liberation and inculturation are not necessarily exclusive of each other, following the work of Jean-Marc Ela, the Camerounian Catholic theologian to whom Alyward Shorter refers when discussing the relationship between inculturation and liberation . Thus, Mugambi points out that Jean-Marc Ela emphasizes that inculturation is not possible in Africa as long as Africans are not in control of their own lives and destinies, both outside and within the Church (Mugambi,1995:10). Accordingly, Mugambi sees Jean-Marc Ela's analysis as bringing about a synthesis between inculturation and liberation (Mugambi,1995:10). In response to Jean-Marc Ela, Shorter could not agree more, when he says,

> It is true that the structures of ecclesial communion are culturally biased in favour of Europe, and it is true that authority in the church is in no hurry to put the theology of inculturation into pastoral practice. It is also true that African cultural identity is by no means clear-cut, and that there are still far too many traces of colonial, cultural domination in Africa. This are even reinforced by neo-colonial structures of dependence. It is not only cultural liberation of which Africa stands in need, but a real political, social and economic liberation (Quoted by Mugambi,1995:10).

Mugambi has critiqued indigenisation or inculturation. He says that indigenisation and inculturation have cropped up in recent Christian missionary literature, referring to the "process of making the Christian faith acceptable and internalized by African converts in the context of their cultures" (Mugambi,1995:67). Mugambi elaborates that both indigenisation and inculturation suggest that there is a body of knowledge and tradition which is to be imparted to prospective converts in order to change them (Mugambi,1995:67). Thus Mugambi explains further,

> The message itself, according to the hidden premise, is not changeable. This unchangeable

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[75] See Bibliography on inculturation in *Theology in Context*-Supplements, Nr . 9, ed. by Missionswissenschatfliches Institut Missio, Aachen 1994; ongoing issues of "Theology in Context", 1980 ff (Ott,1998:1).

message (the Gospel), remains universally valid, and changes converts in all cultures (Mugambi,1995:67).

Mugambi sees the major problem with the process designated by indigenisation and inculturation, as the fact that the message itself, though universally valid, is always received with great variations from individual to individual, culture to culture, and time to time. Thus Mugambi's concern is that there is no guarantee that the acceptance of the message would confirm a definitive understanding of the gospel in any case (Mugambi,1995:67).

In this section we have described both liberation and inculturation theologies, as a way of paving a way for describing Mugambi's reconstruction theology. In the next section we analyse Mugambi's understanding of reconstruction theology.

2.2.3 Reconstruction theology

In view of all the shortcomings of both liberation and inculturation theologies, Mugambi proposes a new theological paradigm, namely reconstruction theology.

Mugambi suggests that as we end the twentieth century and enter the twenty-first, a time has come for African Christians to discern themes other than "liberation and the Exodus" (Mugambi,1995:24). Thus he explains,

> The themes of *reconstruction* and *restoration* are also powerful and relevant as concepts for motivating the Hebrews to transform their own society and culture at different times in their history. There are also the themes of *renewal* and *survival* (Mugambi,1995:24).

It was in March, 1990, says Mugambi, that the process to address the above question was begun, when the Executive Committee of the All Africa Conference of Churches met in Nairobi. Mugambi was invited to reflect on the "Future of the Church and the Church of the Future in Africa" (Mugambi,1995:5). Thus Mugambi elaborates,

> The theme of reconstruction appeared most appropriate in the New World Order. My presentation proposed that we need to shift paradigms from the Post-Exodus to Post-Exilic imagery, with *reconstruction* as the resultant theological axiom. It turns out that the 1990s are a decade of reconstruction in many ways, with calls for national conventions,

constitutional reforms and economic revitalization. The 21ˢᵗ century should be a century for reconstruction in Africa, building on old foundations which, though strong, may have to be renovated (Mugambi,1995:5).

Thus, he introduces *reconstruction* as a new paradigm for African Christian theology in the 'New World Order'(Mugambi,1995:2). Mugambi believes that reconstruction should be of interest to African theologians of all doctrinal persuasions, "considering that the task of social reconstruction after the Cold War cannot be restricted to any religious or denominational confines" (Mugambi,1995:2). Like Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi thinks reconstruction theology has to be interdisciplinary. Thus he argues,

> At the same time, reconstruction is a concept within the social sciences, which should be of interest to sociologists, economists and political scientists. The multi-disciplinary appeal of reconstruction makes the concept functionally useful as a new thematic focus for reflection in Africa during the coming decades (Mugambi,1995:2).

Mugambi argues that the shift from liberation to social transformation and reconstruction begins in the 1990s. Thus he states that,

> This shift involves discerning alternative social structures, symbols, rituals, myths and interpretations of Africa's social reality by Africans themselves, irrespective of what others have to say about the continent and its peoples. The resources for this re-interpretation are multi-disciplinary analyses involving social scientists, philosophers, creative writers and artists, biological and physical scientists (Mugambi,1995:40).

For example, he explains that the terms *construction* and *reconstruction* belong to engineering vocabulary. He elaborates that an engineer "constructs a complex according to specifications in the available designs. Some modifications are made to the designs, in order to ensure that the complex will perform the function for which it is intended. Reconstruction is done when an existing complex becomes dysfunctional, for whatever reason, and the user still requires to use it. New specifications may be made in the new designs, while some aspects of the old complex are retained in the new" (Mugambi,1995:12).

He then goes on to elaborate that social reconstruction belongs to the social sciences, and involves reorganization of some aspects of a society in order to make it more responsive to changed circumstances (Mugambi,1995:13). In this sense, he says, Africa has been undergoing processes of

social reconstruction during the past five hundred years (Mugambi,1995:13).

In summary, Mugambi describes reconstruction theology thus,

> This theology should be reconstructive rather than destructive; inclusive rather than exclusive; proactive rather than reactive; complementary rather than competitive; integrative rather than disintegrative; programme-driven rather than project-driven; people-centred rather than institution-centred; deed-oriented rather than word-oriented; participatory rather than autocratic; regenerative rather than degenerative; future-sensitive rather than past-sensitive; co-operative rather than confrontational; consultative rather than impositional (Mugambi,1995:xv).

Mugambi identifies the several components of his reconstruction theology as personal, cultural, ecclesistical and socio-political reconstructions. In the following sections we analyse them, beginning with personal reconstruction.

2.2.3.1 Personal reconstruction

Mugambi argues that the starting point in social reconstruction should be the individual. He then goes on to state that Jesus teaches that constructive change must start from within the motives and intentions of the individual (Mugambi,1995:15). As a reference to Jesus's teachings on personal reconstruction, Mugambi quotes from several New Testament writings, namely Luke 18:9-14, Matthew 23:1-13 and Luke 12-13 (Mugambi,1995:15). Mugambi says that Luke 18:9-14, which is about the confession of the Publican and the conceit of the Pharisee, is a contrast intended to show the appropriate stance in social change (Mugambi,1995:15). Mugambi says that Matt 23:1-13 and similar instructions such as Luke 12-13 emphasize that the individual must "continually reconstruct oneself in readiness for the tasks and challenges ahead" (Mugambi,1995:15).

Biblical texts are not the only sources Mugambi uses to support his call for a personal reconstruction. He also uses "revivalist hymns". Below we only quote two of these "revivalist hymns". The first one is "Amazing Grace", which runs thus,

> Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
> That saved a wreck like me,
> I once was lost but now I'm found,

Was blind, but now I see.

The second hymn he quotes is "Take my life and let it be", which goes thus,

> Take my life and let it be
> Consecrated Lord, to thee,
> Take my moments and my days,
> Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Mugambi argues that these hymns are reminders that the key to social transformation is an "appropriate disposition of the individual members of the community concerned, especially its leaders" (Mugambi,1995:16).

It seems to me that Mugambi uses these hymns in the same way he uses the biblical texts above, namely in a literal way, without addressing the context out of which they emerged. I will return to this observation in more detail later.

2.2.3.2 Cultural reconstruction

The second element of Mugambi's reconstruction theme is cultural reconstruction. Mugambi argues that as we enter the twenty first century "it now remains the task of African Christians to assert their own cultural heritage just as Christians of other cultures have done" (Mugambi,1995:49).

Mugambi describes culture as the "cumulative product of people's activities in all aspects of life, in their endeavour to cope with their social and natural environment" (Mugambi,1995:16). He identifies politics, economics, ethics, aesthetics and religion, as the components of culture (Mugambi,1995:16). Mugambi believes that in each of these components, reconstruction is necessary from time to time, to ensure that the social structures are finely tuned to the needs of the people (Mugambi,1995:17). He goes on to point out that when some components of culture are not finely adjusted, there is uneasiness which can erupt into unrest (Mugambi,1995:17).

Moreover, Mugambi explains each of the components of culture mentioned above, and goes on to show its relevance in cultural reconstruction. First, he says that economics concentrates on

reconstruction in matters of the management of resources (Mugambi,1995:17). Second, politics, for him, deals with reconstruction in the management of social influence (Mugambi,1995:17). Third, ethics is concerned with reconstruction of the system of values. Mugambi says that when priorities change, the value system also has to be adjusted, either to remind the people of forgotten priorities, or to re-organize the hierarchy of values (Mugambi,1995:17). The fourth aspect is aesthetic, which Mugambi says is concerned with the sense of proportion and symmetry in all aspects of life. He further states that this component of culture also requires adjustment from time to time, depending on changing circumstances within a community (Mugambi,1995:17). The fifth component is religion. Mugambi argues that religion provides the world-view which synthesizes everything that is cherished by individuals as corporate members of the community (Mugambi,1995:17). Mugambi believes that cultural reconstruction should be consciously directed. Thus he argues,

> If it is left to chance, the community risks losing its integrity and identity. Reconstruction of religion is perhaps the most vital project amongst a people undergoing rapid social change. In post-colonial Africa, the transformation of the religious order is indicative of the fundamental change of outlook amongst African peoples, especially south of the Sahara. It is worthwhile to examine this component of culture more closely, with Christianity as a case for illustration (Mugambi,1995:17).

Mugambi then asks whether African churches should continue to rely on theological packages designed for other cultures and historical contexts (Mugambi,1995:1). Assuming that the answer to the above question is negative, he then goes on to suggest that African Christian theologians "must provide theological guidance and leadership for their churches" (Mugambi,1995:2). Such guidance and leadership must, argues Mugambi, show "clearly the contextual relevance of the Christian message to the specific needs of particular African churches within the African cultural and historical settings" (Mugambi,1995:2).

Mugambi says that any brand of Christian theology is tied to the culture in which it was originally articulated (Mugambi,1995:23). Thus, he argues,

> Realistically, it should be emphasized that Christians in each part of the world have a responsibility to raise the questions that are most relevant in their own situations, and seek guidance from the Gospel in their quest for relevant answers (Mugambi,1995:23).

Clearly, Mugambi sees a connection between gospel and culture. Let us briefly explore this

relationship.

Though he does not describe fully what he means by gospel, Mugambi maintains that the relationship between gospel and culture must be clarified for Christian involvement in order for social transformation to be effective (Mugambi,1995:42). In order to clarify such an averment, Mugambi identifies several prevalent views. First, he argues that some Christians find the gospel to be totally discontinuous with culture (Mugambi,1995:42). The logical outcome of this view, argues Mugambi, is that the Christian community is designed to be other-worldly, even though Christians are ordinary individuals who must live and move and have their being (Acts 17:28) within this world, amongst other mortals. Second, Mugambi says that other Christians consider the gospel to be totally identifiable with culture. He notes that this view makes the church irrelevant, because everyone who lives according to the norms of their culture can be regarded as a Christian. Thus, he elaborates,

> It is this view that is embedded in the phrase 'Anonymous Christians'. Christian anonymity may not facilitate such social transformation as we discern, unless the transformers themselves are conscious of their mission as Christians (Mugambi,1995:42).

Mugambi identifies the third view as that articulated by Jesus in John 18:33-38, where the Kingdom of God is shown to be not from this world, though it is now in the world (Mugambi,1995:42). Mugambi sees Saint Paul as the advocate of this view, when he [Paul] declares in Romans 12:2,

> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Mugambi further argues that the appreciation of the gospel as a challenge to every culture will mean that no person has any reason to posit his or her own culture as superior to others (Mugambi,1995:42). Mugambi declares that each culture has its strengths and weaknesses, but qualitative comparisons have no ethical justification (Mugambi,1995:42).

Mugambi argues that African culture has in the past been portrayed as a deficient vehicle for expressing the Christian faith. He elaborates,

> In general, missionaries have expected their African converts to abandon their own cultural and religious heritage, and adopt the cultural norms of Europe and North America in order to be accepted as "good" Christians (Mugambi,1995:42-3).

In contrast, Mugambi believes that conversion should give the convert the courage to affirm his or her own cultural identity, thanking God for the joy of creation, conversion and encouragement (Mugambi,1995:170).

Accordingly, Mugambi says that during the twenty-first century, African Christianity ought to "stabilize culturally, by manifesting a characteristically African outlook in rituals, symbols, vestments, music, liturgy, architecture, metaphors and theological emphases" (Mugambi,1995:43). Mugambi does, however, note that the process of appropriation has already begun, but that there are still many African Christians who "have been conditioned to feel ashamed of their own cultural and religious heritage in favour of the traditions of others" (Mugambi,1995:43). Furthermore, Mugambi warns that no church can survive the challenges of history unless the Gospel is effectively appropriated to the cultural and religious heritage of its members in each generation (Mugambi,1995:43). Thus he declares,

> The acid test for the durability of Christianity in Africa, is the degree to which it has become blended with African culture. It is quite clear that such appropriation is possible, because two of the oldest churches in the world are African-the Coptic Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. These Christian communities trace their history to the Patristic period, and yet they are distinctly African (Mugambi,1995:43).

Moreover, Mugambi believes that the role of the world confessional families in enhancing or hindering what he calls the "appropriation of the Gospel" to the African cultural and religious heritage will come under careful scrutiny in the twenty first century (Mugambi,1995:43). Thus he states,

> The most pertinent question for African Christians with regard to Gospel and culture in the ecumenical context, is whether denominational self-centredness will be of any relevance in the process of social transformation. The emphasis, as Jesus and St. Paul continue to remind us, should be on the unity of all Christians in their witness to the world (John 14-17; I Corinthians 12). A house that is divided against itself cannot stand (Luke11:17) (Mugambi,1995:43).

The above paragraph shows that Mugambi is very concerned about squabbles prevalent amongst churches and Christians in Africa today, squabbles which, Mugambi believes, have often hindered social harmony and cohesion (Mugambi,1995:43).

Instead of being exemplary, following the Gospel, they have become negative models. The

Gospel challenges Christians to be light of the world and salt of the earth (Matthew 5). These are metaphors of positive models in society (see Chapter 14). The Church in Africa will have to put its house in order before it can offer acceptable alternative futures to the world (Mugambi,1995:43).

Mugambi goes on to offer his views on the role of the gospel within cultures, when he says,

> The Gospel becomes rooted when the converts live it in their own lives with full appreciation of their cultural and religious heritage, not when they theorize about it. Thus it is interesting to note that the most outspoken advocates of indigenization and inculturation have been missionaries, not African Christians (Mugambi,1995:67).

How, then, asks Mugambi, ought one to deal with the challenge of effective establishment of the Christian faith in contemporary Africa, in both rural and urban settings? (Mugambi,1995:67). In order to answer this question, Mugambi offers several suggestions (Mugambi,1995:67). Firstly, Mugambi maintains that Jesus encounters every individual and every community, and offers challenges which may be accepted or rejected.

> The role of the missionary enterprise is to facilitate that encounter, not to package the specific response on behalf of the convert. The Gospel respects the intelligence and integrity of every individual, and makes no hurried condemnation of those who do not immediately accept the challenge. There is an interactive relationship between the Gospel and the convert, which makes every response unique. Thus every local community of faith has its unique character, even though all local communities are united as members of the Church Universal (Mugambi,1995:67).

Secondly, Mugambi says that creativity and innovation are much more meaningful in the urban setting than indigenisation and inculturation (Mugambi,1995:68). He explains it thus,

> The wide diversity of the members of urban congregations in terms of cultural, social, racial, educational and economic backgrounds makes it difficult to embark on a process which attempts to package the response to the Gospel for a particular congregation (Mugambi,1995:68).

Thirdly, Mugambi argues that at the present time of rapid transition in Africa, it is more important to welcome a wide variety of creative responses within a particular denomination than to channel all responses to one monolithic pattern. Such openness, argues Mugambi, if properly managed, will invigorate each local congregation and make most members 'feel at home' (Mugambi,1995:68).

2.2.3.3 Ecclesiastical reconstruction

The third component of Mugambi's reconstruction is ecclesiastical. According to Mugambi the reconstruction of the church forms part of the broader picture of the reconstruction of society. He sees the Church as an organisational framework wherein people's world-view is portrayed and celebrated (Mugambi,1995:17). Thus he argues that "its [Church] dimensions include mythological reformulation, doctrinal teaching, social rehabilitation, ethical direction, ritual celebration, and experiential (personal) response" (Mugambi,1995:17). Moreover, Mugambi argues that ecclesiastical reconstruction should include management structures, financial policies, pastoral care, human resources development, research, family education, service and witness (Mugambi,1995:17). Mugambi, showing awareness that each of the issues listed above are deeply complex and that they can be best explored with specialist assistance, goes on to suggest that he has only painted the "mural of reconstruction in broad outline, hoping that others can supply the details with finer brushes and in more varied colours" (Mugambi,1995:17).

Moving from the premise that theology is the means by which the church rationalises its process of ecclesial reconstruction, Mugambi argues that the theologian, at best, should be a catalyst or a facilitator, who makes it possible for the church to adjust itself to the new social demands of the society to which its members belong (Mugambi,1995:17).

Like Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi maintains that the church itself is in need of reconstruction because in a sense, it is a microcosm of society. Thus, Mugambi argues for the structural adjustment of the church. He maintains that the recurrent administrative budget will need trimming, so that more of the available resources may be directed towards programmes and projects. As institutions, the churches will have to identify and develop means of income generation which are consistent with the gospel. They will have to make cost-reduction measures, so that expenditure balances with income (Mugambi,1995:179).

In addition, Mugambi believes that the churches will need to ensure that their lay and ordained workers are at least as well trained as their counterparts in the public and private sectors. As a

beginning to ensure that this happens, believes Mugambi, the minimal recruitment and training requirements will need to be brought to parity with those of the public sectors in each country (Mugambi,1995:179).

Mugambi then believes that as part of reconstruction within the church, women will have to play a bigger role.

> Most importantly, the church of the future will need to be organized in such a way that women take more active roles in ecclesiastical affairs. This involvement will in turn boost self-confidence of women, and help Africa to highlight hope rather than despair (Mugambi,1995:177).

Having discussed ecclesiastical reconstruction, we move on, in the next subsection to analyse socio-political reconstruction.

2.2.3.4 Socio-political reconstruction

In his analysis, Mugambi questions the economic poverty of Africa and its richness in the Christian faith and wonders why other richer and more prosperous nations are impoverished in their Christian faith. Thus he critiques Christianity, when he says that,

> It is paradoxical that those nations in which Christianity is supposedly declining and some in the orient where Christianity has never made a significant impact, are the ones which, at the same time, are economically prosperous...How can we account for the fact that God seems, at least in the twentieth century, to favour those nations that have rejected their theistic religion? (Mugambi,1995:33).

It is precisely this critical analysis which seems to have prompted him to propose to African leaders and theologians the reconstruction theme, bearing in mind that in order to be progressive, theologians should be pro-active instead of being reactive to the challenges facing Africa. He firmly believes that Africa can rise from some of the ruins and rubble if it were to adopt the notion of reconstruction.

Mugambi then goes on to ask, How can Christianity in post-colonial Africa help us to grow out of the excessively publicized crises? While acknowledging the role of churches, organisations and individuals in relief and emergency work, Mugambi argues that a greater challenge lies ahead,

It is necessary to discern the *causes* and *contexts* which generate these crises, then participate actively in long-term pro-active programmes to ensure more secure existence for Africa's peoples. This approach will appreciate the fact that many of the social crises in Africa are causes[sic] more by external conditionalities, than internal disorder. For example, it is significant that the African countries most acutely afflicted with famine, are at the same time afflicted with civil strife. This civil strife is funded and armed by external bodies, which are keen to test new weapons and dump obsolete ones in Africa, with possible exertion of their own policies if the side they support (Mugambi,1995:164).

Mugambi also notes that due to the crises facing Africa, the people of Africa are in greater need of hope than ever before. He then goes on to highlight some of the many crises in Africa.

First, he mentions a political crisis due to the lack of democracy. Mugambi describes this African crisis in this manner,

Thirty years after the achievement of constitutional independence, African nations seem to have returned to 'square one', whereby the former colonial masters have to bail out economies in ruins and political institutions that have collapsed. Just as autocracy was paraded as a magic solution to Africa's problems in the 1960s, so is pluralism championed as the magic formula for reconstruction in the 1990s. It is important to emphasize, however, that human societies defy over-simplification. Democracy has many models, and economic prosperity is the result of a combination of many complex factors. The Christian faith has many inculturations, neither of which is perfect. As human beings we need the humility to accept our limitations, and the courage to continue living even when on the verge of death (Mugambi,1995:50).

The second crisis is economic, manifested through food deficit (Mugambi,1995:160). However, Mugambi argues that the food shortage in Africa need not be a perpetual crisis. Thus, he believes that in order to avoid perpetual hunger, we must understand why there is food shortage. By and large he believes that hunger in Africa has to do with the infrastructure which we ourselves created. In order to avert the hunger crisis, he suggests that we must be committed to reforming our social structures in order to make them more effective, efficient and productive (Mugambi,1995:161).

In addition, Mugambi believes that the church has a major role to play in addressing the economic crisis.

The churches can design alternative strategies to enable the people in the exploited nations to cope with economic marginalisation. These strategies include self-reliant programmes for food production, preservation and storage, education on the international economy,

strengthening and stabilizing of local and national marketing infrastructures, and so on (Mugambi,1995:156).

He mentions debt as the third crisis. Mugambi explains that Africa is next to South America as the most indebted continent in the world (Mugambi,1995:160). Mugambi further explains that during the 1980s the economic situation in Africa deteriorated greatly. He explains thus,

> The balance of trade increased against Africa, and the debt burden weighed very heavily upon African nations and peoples. As the ideological pressure of the Western Bloc against the Eastern Bloc intensified, the marginalization of Africa became more evident (Mugambi,1995:4-5).

It is especially this debt burden and marginalisation of Africa which according to Mugambi "called for review" of the theme of liberation (Mugambi,1995:5). He believes that reconstruction theology should help Africans in addressing their debt crisis.

However, Mugambi maintains that despite all the crises that Africa is undergoing, Africans should not despair. He therefore suggests that the church, at this time of crisis has a responsibility to prepare the people for the task of reconstruction, and to proclaim that with "faith, hope and love, God makes possible what to human beings appears an impossibility" (Mugambi,1995:50-51). He believes that *faith, hope and love* are important aspects which inform or guide the social reconstruction process. How does Mugambi describe this "trilogy without which life is impossible"? (Mugambi,1995:50). He describes it thus,

> Hope is nurtured by the determination of an individual or a community to survive despite any threats to survival. Faith is the conviction that despite all evidence towards despair, yet there is hope for survival. Love is the bond which holds the people together, to enable them survive against all odds (Mugambi,1995:50).

So this "trilogy" serves to encourage Africans to refuse to despair, and empowers them to discern "new creative ways to resiliently ensure our integrity and survival" (Mugambi,1995:50).

Having described and analysed the components of Mugambi's reconstruction theology, we will, in the next section, explore several biblical metaphors Mugambi has suggested could be used in a theology of reconstruction. We will begin by discussing several texts before analysing how he uses

Ezra-Nehemiah.

2.2.3.5 Biblical metaphors

Mugambi believes that after the abolition of apartheid, the "metaphor" of the Exodus has become "inapplicable and irrelevant" (Mugambi,1995:165). He then asks the question: What other metaphors are possible? (Mugambi,1995:165). Mugambi argues that the Bible is replete with illustrations of social reconstruction over a long span of time. He identifies them as follows.

Mugambi takes his first example of the reconstruction metaphor from Deuteronomy.

> Theologically, we need to appreciate that entry into the land of Canaan from Egypt is only the beginning of a long process of human fulfilment. The Exodus is only a prelude to that process. Moses did not enter the promised land, but he provided the bridge for the people to cross the Red Sea, the wilderness and the River Jordan. He established the foundation upon which the new nation was to be built, but later generations would have to build that new society. The Book of Deuteronomy, written perhaps more than six centuries later, recaptures that significant role of Moses, but highlights the necessity of later generations to revise the plans to match new circumstances and resources (Mugambi,1995:166).

Explaining the reconstruction theme in Deuteronomy 1:19-20, Mugambi argues that,

> It is important to note that the book of Deuteronomy was written in the 7th century B. C., long after the settlement in Canaan. The book represents an effort, under the long reign of King Josiah, to formulate a theology of reconstruction based on Mosaic law and highlighting those aspects of society which required further explanation. Thus, Deuteronomy is based on the exodus, but offers an updated version of Mosaic law. How can this text be applied in a relevant manner so as to discern a new ideological emphasis to propel African churches into the future? Quite obviously, Africa today needs a theology of reconstruction, just as King Josiah needed such a theology in 622 B.C. (Mugambi,1995:65).

The second text Mugambi identifies is from the New Testament, namely, Matthew 5-7. Explaining the context of this text, Mugambi states that the critics of Jesus accused him of trying to destroy Judaism and its institutions. In response, Jesus replied that his mission was reconstructive rather than destructive. Thus Mugambi contends that the sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) can be considered as the most basic of all reconstructive theological texts in the synoptic gospels (Mugambi,1995:13).

Having briefly discussed how Mugambi draws on the above texts in a theology of reconstruction, we will, below discuss in more detail how he uses Ezra-Nehemiah for a theology of reconstruction.

Mugambi states that the challenge, as we enter the twenty first century, is to discern other biblical motifs that would be relevant for a theology of transformation and reconstruction. He maintains that such texts might, for example, be the Exilic motif (Jeremiah), the Deuteronomic motif (Josiah), the restorative motif (Isaiah 61:4), the reconstructive motif (Haggai and Nehemiah), and so on (Mugambi,1995:39). Having identified these several motifs, Mugambi goes on to focus, though superficially, on Ezra, Haggai and Nehemiah. He argues that if we were to opt for the Exilic motif, "the logical follow- up would still be social transformation and reconstruction identified with Ezra, Haggai and Nehemiah" (Mugambi,1995:40).

Mugambi focuses specifically on the text of Nehemiah, as a possible exilic text appropriate for reconstruction theology. The book of Nehemiah, says Mugambi, explains the process of reconstruction in Jerusalem and Judah after the exile. The central biblical text for African Christian theology in the twenty first century will, perhaps, be the Book of Nehemiah, rather than the Book of Exodus. The book of course, continues Mugambi, should be read critically, taking into consideration all the hermeneutical, exegetical, theological and ethical limitations associated with the reconstruction project of Nehemiah (Mugambi,1995:166). It is worth noting here, that though Mugambi advocates a critical reading of the book of Nehemiah, he himself does not do it. He does not seem to read the text carefully at all!

Even though, like Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi mentions the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah as part of an array of biblical texts which deal with the theme of reconstruction, unlike Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi seems to put more emphasis on the Ezra-Nehemiah text. Using Ezra-Nehemiah as a model for a reconstruction theology, Mugambi declares that,

> After the Babylonian exile, a new nation was reconstructed under the direction of Ezra and Nehemiah. The role of Nehemiah as the director of the reconstruction project is lucidly explained in the book bearing his name. Nehemiah becomes the central text of the new theological paradigm in African Christian theology, as a logical development from the Exodus motif (Mugambi,1995:13).

Mugambi sees the figure of Nehemiah not only as an exemplary character, but also as a leader who represents the aspiration and contradiction of Africa's social reconstruction at this time in history (Mugambi,1999:iii-iv).

We have so far attempted to outline both Mugambi's theology of reconstruction and how he uses Ezra-Nehemiah in his theology. It is important to note that Mugambi does not say anything more than we have outlined above on the role of Ezra-Nehemiah's text in the reconstruction process. Before coming to my critique of Mugambi's proposal concerning Ezra-Nehemiah, I will discuss Maluleke's critique of Mugambi's reconstruction theology.

2.2.4 Maluleke's critique of Mugambi

Maluleke has critiqued Mugambi's reconstruction theology. While his critique tends to deal with issues that are not directly related to the central purpose of this study, whose main focus is on how Mugambi uses Ezra-Nehemiah for a theology of reconstruction, it is important to highlight certain aspects of Maluleke's critique of Mugambi. Maluleke's critique is not on how Mugambi uses Ezra-Nehemiah in his reconstrution theology, rather he focuses on the theme of reconstruction as a new paradigm in African Christian theological debate.

First, Maluleke correctly observes that though Mugambi offers a few biblical and socio-political justifications for his reconstruction paradigm, these are never fully developed. Thus, Maluleke observes further that Mugambi's socio-political argumentation for the need for social reconstruction in Africa is much stronger than his theological justification of it (Maluleke,1996:473). Second, Maluleke is concerned that Mugambi does not even acknowledge or engage the biblical hermeneutic developed in the liberation paradigm (eg.Itumeleng Mosala's work on biblical hermeneutics) (Maluleke,1996:473).

Third, he argues that theologically, Mugambi's proposals are severely weakened because he appears to acknowledge and tap only two main sources for his theology, namely the Bible and the fate and state of Africa in the new world order (Maluleke,1996:473). Fourth, Maluleke states that Mugambi

does not seriously engage the actual theologies produced by the inculturation and liberation paradigms (Maluleke,1996:473). Fifth, he argues that Mugambi is unable to demonstrate credible and logical connections between many of the issues and themes he touches on and his reconstruction paradigm, seriously undermines the delivery of his central promise (Maluleke,1996:473).

Maluleke's above critique of Mugambi's reconstruction theology sets the scene for our critique of both Mugambi's reconstruction theology and his use of Ezra-Nehemiah.

2.2.5 My critique of Mugambi's reconstruction theology and his use of Ezra-Nehemiah

Let us make some preliminary observations about Mugambi's use of Ezra-Nehemiah for a theology of reconstruction. Firstly, Mugambi, like Villa-Vicencio, does not seem to have read the text of Ezra-Nehemiah carefully. Like Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi does not seem to identify or examine critically the ideology behind the conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. Secondly, like Villa-Vicencio's use of Ezra-Nehemiah, Mugambi's also suppresses the voice of the *am haaretz*, in that he neither identifies nor analyses critically the ideology within the text, an ideology which is biassed against the *am haaretz*. Thirdly, like Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi, by using the reconstruction theme in Ezra-Nehemiah without isolating the ideological agenda of the text and identifying the group which is dominant in the text, has inadvertently identified reconstruction as that which is driven by the returned exiles at the exclusion of the *am haaretz*. Such a reading of the text is insensitive to the plight of the *am haaretz*. Finally, like Villa-Vicencio, though Mugambi argues for a post-exilic metaphor as a basis for his reconstruction theology, he hardly develops or unpacks what and how these metaphors could be used effectively. Rather, he includes in his post-exilic metaphors different texts from different socio-political contexts without doing a sociological analysis of any of them.

Having critiqued Mugambi's use of Ezra-Nehemiah, we briefly critique his reconstruction theology. First, unlike Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi, while calling for a paradigm shift from liberation to reconstruction theology, does discuss in a detailed way what liberation theology is all about, and goes on to advance reasons why a shift of paradigms is necessary. Second, unlike Villa-Vicencio,

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Mugambi's reconstruction theology's immediate context seems to be Africa.

However, there seems to be a contradiction with the place of inculturation within Mugambi's reconstruction theology. To start with, he advocates for a paradigm shift from inculturation to reconstruction theology, but as one of his components of a theology of reconstruction he lists cultural reconstruction alongside personal, social and ecclesiastical reconstruction. Does he see cultural reconstruction as something totally different from inculturation?

Furthermore, we also need to acknowledge the following about Mugambi. In the first place, like Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi is quite tentative at times about his identification of reconstruction as a new metaphor, for he uses the word "perhaps" when suggesting reconstruction theology as a new theological paradigm. In addition we need to note that Mugambi admits that the reconstruction theme needs "further development as a paradigm of Christian theological reflection in Africa" (Mugambi,1995:15). Secondly, both Mugambi and Villa-Vicencio see reconstruction theology as positive and constructive in its nature. Thirdly, unlike Villa-Vicencio and Karamaga (to be discussed later), Mugambi is the only one that identifies metaphors or symbols from both the Old and New Testaments.

2.2.6 Summary

Mugambi, like Villa-Vicencio, observes that we are no longer living in the previous decade of colonialism and Apartheid, but that we have attained political liberation. This presupposes that we are in a different context today than we were before. It is this new context which justifies Mugambi's proposal for shifting theological paradigms from liberation and inculturation to reconstruction. His reconstruction theology addresses challenges facing the African continent on the following levels: socio-economic, personal, ecclesiastical, and cultural. Mugambi uses Ezra-Nehemiah as a possible reconstruction metaphor, together with other biblical metaphors from both the Old and the New Testaments. Like Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi does not do a sociological analysis of the texts he mentions as possible basis for a reconstruction theology. All he does is just to mention them. By so doing he fails to get behind the ideological issues embedded in these texts.

Mugambi's suggestion of shifting paradigms from inculturation to reconstruction, while he still includes cultural reconstruction as part of his reconstruction theology, may underlie the fact that the two theologies should complement each other rather than work exclusively of each other. The need for the two theologies to join hands together has been succinctly expressed by Pityana when he states,

> Theological discourse will continue to predominate in the shaping and construction of a new South Africa. Theology, therefore, must proceed from the social and religious pluralism of South Africa. Social critical tools will be necessary to analyse social dynamics. Culture is a critical element in that understanding of society. A critical and dynamic understanding of culture thus becomes essential for a meaningful theological discourse (Pityana,1995:288).

In the next section we examine Karamaga's use of Ezra-Nehemiah in his quest for a reconstruction theology.

2.3 KARAMAGA, A 1997: THEOLOGY OF RECONSTRUCTION

2.3.0 Definition

Unlike Villa-Vicencio and Mugambi, Karamaga did not write a book on reconstruction theology, rather his is just an article. Nevertheless, in his article he demonstrates how Ezra-Nehemiah (or rather Nehemiah) could be a model for reconstruction theology. Therefore, we have decided to give him the same attention as the other two scholars discussed earlier.

André Karamaga argues that the theology of reconstruction is necessary today in order to face vital challenges (Karamaga,1997:190). However, he does not mention any of those vital challenges. According to Karamaga we need to reconstruct both the church and the nation.

> Some countries in Africa are completely destroyed, pillaged, cultures disorganised. One finds countries where the church is sterilized and characterised by a multitude of divisions (Karamaga,1997:190).

Under these circumstances Karamaga sees human beings as co-creators with God and who need to be active role players in the reconstruction of both the church and the nation (Karamaga,1997:190). Karamaga, like Villa-Vicencio and Mugambi, argues for a shift of paradigms from liberation to reconstruction theology, saying "The liberation theology had become reactionary and we changed to a proactive one of reconstruction" (Karamaga,1997:190). Though Villa-Vicencio calls liberation

theology "resistance" theology, Karamaga sees it as "reactionary". Like Villa-Vicencio and Mugambi, Karamaga sees liberation theology as no longer relevant today, instead he suggests that we shift paradigms to reconstruction, which will be able to address the socio-economic crises or challenges that Africa is faced with.

2.3.1 His use of Nehemiah

What is Karamaga's biblical basis for his reconstruction theology? Karamaga's use of Nehemiah is based on Nehemiah 2:1ff (Karamaga,1997:190). But does Karamaga say anything about this text or any other text of Nehemiah other than just mentioning Neh 2:1ff? Not at all. Rather he seems just to mention this text and then goes on to talk about the reconstructive measures undertaken by Nehemiah. Karamaga argues that the process of reconstruction "has a theme of liberation" (Karamaga,1997:190). Although Karamaga calls liberation theology a reactionary theology, his abovementioned statement of a link between liberation and reconstruction theologies may be undermining his aim of separating the two theologies. Perhaps Karamaga should be suggesting a complementary interaction between the two theologies rather than a total independence from each other.

Like Villa-Vicencio, and Mugambi, Karamaga sees Nehemiah as a proper role model for reconstruction theology

> Nehemiah was able to mobilise masses to do the reconstruction. The Jews did the work with a morale that was unparalleled. Nehemiah was action oriented and his example inspired the reconstruction of the temple, city and nation (Karamaga,1997:190).

Clearly Karamaga sings a praise song to Nehemiah. Karamaga takes the text at face value i.e. literally, and he does not bother to note that most of Nehemiah's actions were done at the exclusion of the people of the land.

While portraying Nehemiah as the role model on reconstruction, Karamaga, unlike Villa-Vicencio and Mugambi, acknowledges certain weaknesses in Nehemiah's reconstructive role: "He was a human being with faults for we learn that he excluded mixed marriages" (Karamaga,1997:190).

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Nonetheless Karamaga maintains that "on the basis of this (Nehemiah's) biblical experience, we should look at our function in reconstruction" (Karamaga,1997:190). So Karamaga's reconstruction theology takes Nehemiah as our role model for our reconstruction purposes today in our African context.

2.3.2 Critiques of Karamaga

Let us make the following observations about Karamaga's use of Ezra-Nehemiah and about his reconstruction theology. We make the following two observations about his reconstruction theology. Firstly, Karamaga does not clearly explain what he means by a theology of reconstruction. Unlike Villa-Vicencio and Mugambi, Karamaga's definition and methodology of his reconstruction theology has not been clearly spelt out.

We now make the following three observations about Karamaga's use of Ezra-Nehemiah. Firstly, we need to observe that though Karamaga feels that Nehemiah has to be a role model, he is the only one, among the three discussed in this chapter, who actually acknowledges what he calls Nehemiah's "weaknesses" in dealing with the intermarriage matter. Furthermore, Karamaga is the only scholar among the above three who focuses only on Nehemiah's reconstruction process, excluding Ezra. The question that needs to be raised is whether this is a deliberate move, and if so why? Does it suggest a lesser role for Ezra in reconstruction? His approach may be narrow as he only concentrates on Nehemiah without taking into consideration the role played by Ezra.

Secondly, unlike Villa-Vicencio and Mugambi, Karamaga uses only one exilic motif (Nehemiah) for his reconstruction theology, whereas both Villa-Vicencio and Mugambi uses Ezra-Nehemiah together with other biblical metaphors.

Thirdly, though his point of departure seems to be Neh 2:1ff, in his discussion of reconstruction theology, he does not seem to refer anywhere to this or any Nehemiah text. Like Villa-Vicencio and Mugambi, Karamaga appropriates the reconstruction metaphor without actually dealing with ideological issues raised in the text of Ezra-Nehemiah.

2.3.3 Summary

Karamaga's definition of reconstruction is not clearly formulated. He seems to take it for granted that we all know what is meant by reconstruction theology. He argues that we need to shift paradigms from liberation to reconstruction. But he does not give any justification for such a move. He argues that reconstruction is the most relevant theology for today as it will address both the religious and the socio-economic challenges facing our continent today. What we have said about Villa-Vicencio and Mugambi about the lack of isolating ideological issues within the text equally applies to Karamaga. He does not read the text carefully to make it a strong basis for his reconstruction theology.

2.4 CONCLUSION

We need to credit Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi and Karamaga in that they have perceived how the African situation has changed over the last few decades; and why this calls for some appropriate theological response from Africa's theologians.

While there are admittedly certain nuances evident in the way these three scholars rationalise the relevance of the new paradigm in African Christian theology, they all, nonetheless, act from an assumption that the liberation motif, which has exerted a kind of monopoly over African Theology in the days of struggle against colonialism and apartheid respectively, has run its course. For this reason, the African scenario requires new theological metaphors in order to rise to the challenge. This suggests that any good theology will always seek to advocate a theological position in response to certain questions being asked by those with whom it seeks to dialogue. For the three African Theologians under scrutiny, the changed situation raises with it a need to review the role played by liberation theology and/or inculturation theologies in Africa. According to these scholars, the questions that are being asked by theology's dialogue partners in Africa, after the end of the Cold War, as well as after the collapse of colonialism and apartheid, have a lot to do with questions of reconstruction and social transformation. Hence the relevance of the suggested new motif.

All of these three scholars agree that there has to be a paradigm shift from liberation theology to reconstruction theology. They argue that reconstruction theology can be based on the post-exilic motif represented by Ezra-Nehemiah and/or other texts. However, we also noted that their approach to reconstruction theology or to the use of Ezra-Nehemiah is not based on a solid literary or socio-historical analysis of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. Perhaps this is solely because all of these theologians are not biblical scholars.

The gist of our argument in this section is not to say that the readings of Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi and Karamaga of the Ezra-Nehemiah text is wrong. Our concern is that they fail to identify the ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah. So one would say their reading of Ezra-Nehemiah is 'different' in that it listens only to the voice and concerns of one particular group within *a conflict* which involves two parties.

Further, the three scholars use scriptures in a particular manner. Scripture is an indispensable source for Christian theology for a number of reasons. The fact that these theologians take the witness of Scripture seriously in their respective work, namely the use of such texts as Ezra-Nehemiah as well as other pertinent texts referred to in the works of these theologians, presupposes that they do not envisage theology, even in the new paradigm, to function without reference to the scriptures. However, it seems to me that the fact that they all do not engage in an extensive reading and exegesis of the scriptures cannot really be regarded as a weakness. These scholars approach the subject of theology from the point of view of Systematic theology. Exegesis remains a primary concern for Biblical scholars. But having said this, Karamaga frankly acknowledges some of the limitations inherent in using Nehemiah as a central text for a theology of reconstruction (Karamaga,1997:190). Mugambi (1995:166) notes with perception that in our use of Nehemiah as a basis for a reconstruction theology, we should read it critically, taking due regard of the hermeneutical, exegetical as well as theological limitations intrinsic to the nature of the book. So, although these scholars do not themselves engage with the Ezra-Nehemiah text in any depth, some of their comments invite a more in-depth analysis.

Having highlighted certain aspects of the three scholars's use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a theology of

reconstruction, we now want to explore some similarities and differences between reconstruction and liberation/inculturation theologies. First, we explore the differences between reconstruction theology and liberation/inculturation theology. The major difference between reconstruction theology and liberation theology/inculturation theology is that the latter emerged within the context of oppression and exploitation during colonialism and apartheid, whilst the former is emerging within the context of post-colonial social reconstruction. The different contexts out of which these theologies emerged also determine their different methodologies and focusses, to a certain extent. On the one hand, inculturation theology's focus would be on making the gospel relevant to the Africans within their respective cultures, which were undermined and demonised by missionaries during colonialism and apartheid. Likewise liberation theology's focus would be to make the word of God address the plight of the poor in the context of oppression and exploitation. Reconstruction theology, on the other hand, suggests proactive actions that would not only denounce poverty, but that would also remove it from society.

Second, we discuss the similarities. A rather *prima faciae* look into the reconstruction theologies of these theologians, and the vehemency with which the new motif is advocated, tends to give an impression that their respective stances espouse a complete break with the theme of liberation and inculturation in the African theological enterprise. Do we really need to jettison the subject of liberation in the pursuit of the ideal of reconstruction in Africa? A second look into the theologies of the said scholars reveals an amazing oscillation between liberation and reconstruction. For an example, Villa-Vicencio (1992:7ff) sees the attempt to break down the prejudices occasioned by race, class and sexism, as part of the task of a theology of reconstruction. As a matter of fact, Villa-Vicencio himself is quite frank about the mutual inclusiveness of the two motives in African theology. We need to note here that although Villa-Vicencio calls for a paradigm shift in theologising in Africa, methodologically, he still functions within the actual design of liberation theology. In a sense, for Villa-Vicencio (1992:275), there is a sense in which reconstruction theology is a "new" type of liberation theology. Hence the emphasis on such things as praxis, the priority of social analysis in, an inter-disciplinary approach to the task, as well as the relevance of contextuality in his theological method (Villa-Vicencio,1992:276).

Similarly, while Mugambi acknowledges the fact that both liberation and inculturation are now exhausted motifs for theologising in Africa, it has been argued that his methodological approach still functions to some extent within the precincts of the old motifs. Both reconstruction theology and liberation / inculturation theologies take theory and practice seriously. Moreover, they both stand within the basic liberation methodological frameworks. They both analyse the context and are creative and active.

Furthermore, we observed the same aversion of the continued hegemony of the liberation motif in African theology with Karamaga (1997:190). However, when one reflects on the feasibility of such a clean break from the old metaphor, one is likely to conclude that a complete jettisoning of the theme of liberation is not possible. It seems to me that Karamaga in this respect can be indicted, that he proposes a rather reductionist approach to the complex and often enigmatic problems facing Africa. It is doubtful in my view whether an exclusive option for the reconstruction motif can offer a comprehensive solution to the social ills of Africa even in the New World Order ushered in by the changes in the political situation of the continent.

Having analysed how Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi and Karamaga use Ezra-Nehemiah in their quest for an African theology of reconstruction, and noting that these scholars fail to identify and analyse the ideology within the Ezra-Nehemiah text, chapter 3 seeks to demonstrate that there is an ideology in the text, and then goes further to suggest that in order to properly use this text in a quest for an African theology of reconstruction, this ideology should be carefully analysed.

CHAPTER 3: A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE TEXT

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 2 we have dealt with the three African's scholars's use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for a theology of reconstruction. Chapter 3, then, is an attempt at reading the text critically ourselves. This is necessary not only to enable us to evaluate the three scholars's use of Ezra-Nehemiah's text over against what the text itself says, but also that we read the text critically with a view to making such a critical reading of the text a solid basis or foundation on which a theology of transformation, renewal, and reconstruction can be laid.

Chapter 3, then, offers a back to the text approach in order to examine critically the ideology behind the conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. This step would enable us to spell out the relevance of the Ezra-Nehemiah text for our African context in a quest for a rebirth and renewal paradigm.

3.0.1 Methodology

In order to achieve the above stated goal of chapter 3, three steps will be followed. The first step is to briefly argue that Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi and Karamaga do not, in their reading of Ezra-Nehemiah, identify the authors's ideology(ies) embedded within the text.

Secondly, we will go on to show that there is an ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah. This analysis will start off by identifying the parties involved in the conflict. Moreover, we will also isolate and highlight certain ideological matters within the text. Such an isolation of ideological agenda of the authors of the text will set a stage for a socio-historical analysis of these ideologies in later chapters.

The third step would be to use Mosala's historical-sociological ideological analysis of biblical texts as a bridge to connect to chapter 4, which begins a process of analysing the ideology of Ezra-Nehemiah in its socio-historical context.

In the next subsection we argue that the three African scholars discussed in chapter 2 do not identify the ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah.

3.1 VILLA-VICENCIO, MUGAMBI AND KARAMAGA HAVE NOT IDENTIFIED THE IDEOLOGY OF THE TEXT OF EZRA-NEHEMIAH

Our analysis of Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi and Karamaga's use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for an African theology of reconstruction has revealed that they do not identify the ideology prevalent in the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. We have noted, in chapter 2, that while Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi and Karamaga give a detailed analysis (although Karamaga to a limited extent) of their own understanding of what reconstruction theology is all about, and go on to suggest that the reconstruction metaphor in Ezra-Nehemiah should be employed in a quest for an African theology of reconstruction, they do so without taking into consideration the fact that Ezra-Nehemiah is coloured with an ideology which is biased against the *am haaretz*. Furthermore, they fail to detect and analyse a contestation between the *am haaretz* and the returned exiles.

The three scholars's failure to identify and engage the ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah has certain consequences. In the first place the three scholars tend to be biased in their use of the text, as the authors of the text are, against the *am haaretz*. Secondly, such a bias in favour of the returned exiles is exclusive of the *am haaretz*, and it furthermore suppresses the *am haaretz*'s voice. Lastly, their exclusive use of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah raise questions whether such a use is ever transformative or reconstructive at all.

Our contention, therefore, is that for Ezra-Nehemiah to be properly appropriated for an African theology of reconstruction, two steps should be followed. Firstly, we need to identify this ideology which tends to favour one group over against another, in a conflict over who should lead the reconstruction process in Jerusalem after the return of exiles from Babylon, in 539 B.C. Secondly, having identified such an ideology, we will have to engage in an analysis of this ideology. However, in this chapter, we will only identify the ideology in the Ezra-Nehemiah text, leaving the analysis of it to chapters 4 and 5.

Having briefly stated that Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi and Karamaga do not, in their use of Ezra-Nehemiah, identify the prevalent ideology embedded within this text, we will demonstrate, in the next section, that the Ezra-Nehemiah text is ideology biased in favour of the returned exiles, whilst it is against the *am haaretz*.

3.2 THE EZRA-NEHEMIAH TEXT IS IDEOLOGY BIASED AGAINST THE *AM HAARETZ*

3.2.0 Introduction

The aim of this subsection is to begin a process of unearthing the author's ideological agenda embedded within the text. Such a reading of the text is necessary in that it will hopefully throw some light on the text's contribution to the analysis of the possible causes and solutions of this conflict, and thereby consolidate our quest for the text's contribution to a theology of renewal, reconstruction and transformation.

When one reads Ezra-Nehemiah, one immediately detects a contestation between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. By the returned exiles here we are referring to all the Jews who were taken into exile by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., and returned back home with the assistance of the Persian king Cyrus in 539 B.C. The *am haaretz* are those Jews who did not go into Babylonian exile but stayed in Palestine. Before we delve into an endeavour to identify an ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah, we need to examine how these two contending parties are viewed by the authors of Ezra-Nehemiah, beginning with the returned exiles.

3.2.1 The returned exiles

The term "returned exiles" גולה in Ezra-Nehemiah is used to refer to Babylonian Israelites who returned to Palestine from 539 B.C. This term does not only mean the deportation and captivity, but also and even more than that the community of the deported and returned exiles (Ezra 1:11; Ezra 4:1; Ezra 6:16, 19, 20, 21; Ezra 8:35; Ezra 9:4; Ezra 10:6,7,8,16; Neh. 7:6) (Gunneweg,1984:438). These returned exiles are referred to, by the authors of Ezra-Nehemiah, as 'Jews', 'Judah and Benjamin',

'Israel', 'nobles and officers' and 'a holy race'. Let us, then, briefly look at each of this usage.

3.2.1.1 Jews

The returned exiles are referred to as 'the Jews' יהודיא, Ezra 4:12, 23; 5:1, 5; 6:7-8,14), 'the people of Judah' עם יהודה (Ezra 4:4), or the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem (Ezra 4:6) (Blenkinsopp,1988:130). The term 'the Jews' יהודיא (Ezra 4:12, Neh. 2:16) is used in Ezra-Nehemiah to refer to the returned exiles. This term had been originally used of the Southern Kingdom (2 Kings 16:6, 25:25; Ryle,1917:30). So the term 'the Jews' יהודיא, applies in the first instance to the inhabitants of the province of Judah יהודה. This name (*Ioudaioi*), by which they have been called from the time when they went up from Babylon, is derived from the tribe of Judah; as this tribe was the first to come to those parts, both the people themselves and the country have taken their name from it. The territorial connotation is, however, attested before the exile in certain biblical texts. In these instances (2 Kings 16:6; 25:25; Jer. 32:12) 'Judean' would be a more appropriate translation than 'Jew'. The same usage continues after the return (Ezra 6:7; Neh. 1:2; 13:23), together with the practically synonymous 'Judah' יהודה, 'house of Judah' בית יהודה, 'children of Judah' בני יהודה (Neh. 4:4, 10 [10,16]; 13:12,16). Although Sanballat was a devotee of *Yahweh*, he refers to Nehemiah and his associates as יהודים while at the same time dissociating himself from them (3:33-34 [4:1-2]; 6:6). But we also detect a shift from the purely territorial to the ethnic sense with religious overtones, especially with reference to people of Judean origin living outside the province (Neh. 4:6 [12]; 5:8). And even members of the Elephantine colony, not descended from Judeans, refer to themselves as יהודין (Blenkinsopp,1988:223-224).

3.2.1.2 Judah and Benjamin

'Judah and Benjamin' יהודה ובנימן is also used here to refer to the returned exiles (Ezra 1:5; Ezra 10:9). The use of the term 'Judah and Benjamin' יהודה ובנימן (Ezra 1:5) here and elsewhere in Ezra-Nehemiah reflects the author's view that the true people is regarded as consisting of these two tribes. The attention is focussed on the return of the Judean diaspora of which Benjaminites formed the substantial part (Ezra 2:20-35; Blenkinsopp,1988:78; Ryle,1917:26-27). The focus on these two

tribes does imply denial of authentic Israelite status to descendants of the ten tribes, including the 'people of the land' עם הארץ (Von Rad,1930; Ackroyd,1973:215).

3.2.1.3 Israel

The returned exiles are also regarded as 'the Israelites' ישראל. They are depicted as the new Israel. This is evident in Nehemiah's prayer in 1:6; Neh.9, Neh. 2:7, Neh. 13:3 (Dumbrell,1976:45). In Ezra 6:16-18, the term 'children of Israel' בני ישראל is used, consisting in priests, Levites and the rest of the גולה community (Ezra 1:4-5, Blenkinsopp,1988:130).

In Ezra 6:16, with the use of the expression, 'children of Israel' בני ישראל, the all-Israelite character of Ezra gains point. It is also worth noting that within the narratives concerning Ezra personally, the term 'Israel' ישראל is used some twenty-four times while the mention of 'Judah' יהודה occurs only four times, all of them in geographical references (Ezra 7:14; 9:9; 10:7, 9; Dumbrell,1984:259-260). 'Israel' ישראל is the key term of the edict of Artaxerxes with which Ezra is armed (cf. Ezra 7:13). Likewise emphasized is the term 'God of Israel' אלהי ישראל throughout the Ezra material. The emphasis in Ezra 6:17 on the tribes of Israel is again a reminder that the contemporary community is to be seen as the true successor of all Israel (Ackroyd,1973:237-238).

So the term 'Israel' ישראל is used in Ezra-Nehemiah to refer only to the returned exiles who are portrayed as the real representative of the real and pure Israelite community.

3.2.1.4 The nobles and officers

It appears that the terms 'nobles' החרים and 'officers' הסגנים refer to certain groups within the returned exiles. Nehemiah (Neh. 4:14) encourages the 'nobles' החרים, 'officers' הסגנים, and the general people not to be afraid of 'our enemies' אויבינו. Who are these nobles and officers? 'Nobles' החרים and 'officers' הסגנים are often mentioned together in the book of Nehemiah (Neh. 2:6; 4:8, 13 [14, 19]; 5:7; 7:5). The former were the hereditary Judean nobility (e.g., Jer. 27:20; 39:6; Isa. 34:!2; see Vogt,1966:107-111). The function of the latter never emerges clearly. In prophetic texts

from the sixth century they are almost invariably linked with provincial governors, which would suggest regional administration (cf. Jer. 51:23, 28, 57; Ezek. 23:6, 12, 23). Both classes come in for considerable censure in Ezra-Nehemiah. The הסגנים were among the worst offenders in the matter of foreign marriages (Ezra 9:2). Both were charged by Nehemiah with economic exploitation (Neh. 5:7). It is interesting to note here that though these two groups were part of the returned exiles, several of the nobles maintained close contacts with Nehemiah's 'enemies' אויבינו (Neh. 6:17), and that neither class seemed particularly zealous in the specifics of religious observance (Neh.13:7,11; Blenkinsopp,1988:252-253).

3.2.1.5 Holy race

The returned exiles are also regarded as 'the holy race' זרע הקדש (Ezra 9:2) or 'seed of Israel' זרע ישראל Neh 9:2. Johanna van Wijk-Bos points out that the term 'holy seed / race' points to a desire by the returned exiles "for keeping an ethnic purity, presumably because this would guarantee religious purity" (Wijk-Bos,1998:41). So the returned exiles see themselves as the "chosen people, set apart and consecrated to God"(Ryle,1917:55; see Ex19:5; Is.6:13;)

From the above analysis, we conclude that the terms 'Jews', 'Judah and Benjamin', 'Israel', 'nobles and officers', and 'holy race' are exclusively used in Ezra-Nehemiah to refer to the returned exiles. Our next step is to examine how the other group involved in the conflict, namely the *am haaretz*, is depicted in the text.

3.2.2 The *am haaretz*

The words 'adversaries' or 'our enemies' צרינו (Ezra 4:1; Neh 4:11, 15) and 'people of the land' עם הארץ, 'peoples of the lands' עמי הארצות (Ezra 3:3; Ezra 4:4; Ezra 9:1,2,11; Ezra 10:2,11; Ezra 6:21; Neh. 9:24,30; Neh.10:29,31,32; Neh.13:3) refer to the people of the land, namely the Israelites who did not go to Babylonian exile, but remained in Palestine. Throughout the text the 'adversaries' צרינו are introduced as opposing the returned exiles.

Coggins (1975) has correctly argued that the 'enemies' צרינו should not be regarded as Samaritans, but as Jewish nationalistic groups who were against the building of the temple (Fensham,1982:68). As we will show later, the עם הארץ were not merely opposed to the rebuilding of the temple, rather, they were opposed to their exclusion from the rebuilding process.

Having shown how both the returned exiles and the עם הארץ are portrayed by the authors in the text of Ezra-Nehemiah, we want to demonstrate that Ezra-Nehemiah has a particularly bias or ideology, in that it tends to promote the view of the returned exiles than of the עם הארץ.

3.2.3 Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah

In this subsection, we will demonstrate that Ezra-Nehemiah favours the returned exiles, whilst it is biased against the *am haaretz*. We will begin by demonstrating that first, there is a contestation, in the text, between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*, and that, second, the authors of the text support and promote the exclusion of the *am haaretz* by the returned exiles, from the rebuilding projects embarked upon, just after the return of the exiles.

3.2.3.1 Exclusion of the *am haaretz* from the rebuilding projects

Now having observed that the text of Ezra-Nehemiah depicts the returned exiles as Jews, Israelites, holy race, nobles and, as belonging to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, while referring to the *am haaretz* as enemies, we want to examine, in the next section, the authors's views concerning the causes of the conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*.

We begin our discussion by analysing the story of the exiles's return to Palestine. The book of Ezra (Ezra1:2) opens with Cyrus 's decree (a Persian ruler), which claimed that Yahweh had charged him with the return of the Israelites and to rebuild the temple (Cave,1993:47). The Cyrus decree (Ezra1:2-4) encourages the people to rebuild the temple, but it does not go into the details of specifying who should, who should not, and how it should be done. Cyrus encourages the returning exiles to ask for assistance by or from 'the peoples around them' (Ezra1:4) or more literally 'the

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people of the land' (Ezra 3:3; Cave,1993:47). Contrary to what certain scholars believe[76], based on this decree the returned exiles cannot claim, as they actually do later (Ezra 4:3), that Cyrus forbade other groups to help them in the rebuilding process.

Once the Babylonian exiles have returned back home, they started the projects of rebuilding both the temple and the city walls. In both cases the *am haaretz's* request to join the rebuilding is rejected by the returned exiles. Let us briefly examine circumstances around these exclusions of the *am haaretz* by the returned exiles.

Let us begin with the temple rebuilding. On hearing that the returned exiles were busy with the process of rebuilding the temple of Yahweh, which was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C, the *am haaretz* approached the returned exiles and asked to participate in the rebuilding process. "Let us build with you; for we worship your God, as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him..." (Ezra 4:2). Clearly the *am haaretz* want to be part of the rebuilding process. They see no reason why they should not be part of the rebuilding as they have been worshipping and sacrificing to Yahweh long before the returned exiles went to Babylon, and they have also continued to worship Yahweh in Palestine when the returned exiles were still in exile.

Apparently, Zerubbabel and Jeshua, leaders of the returned exiles at the time and the elders (Ezra 4:3), rejected the offer by the people of the land to participate in the rebuilding process

> You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us (Ezra 4:3).

The stance reflected in the statement "We, ourselves will build..." (Ezra 4:3), is the attitude of the returned exiles that the hope for the future lay only with themselves, not with the residue of Israel who had remained in the land (Dumbrell,1986:66).

So the people of the land were excluded from rebuilding, on two grounds. Firstly, it is asserted that

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[76] See Ryle (1917:26-27) who believes that the refusal was protected by the terms of Cyrus' decree.

"they have nothing to do with the building of the house of our God" (v.3). It seems that implicit in this statement is the claim that the God of the returned exiles is not the same as the God of the people of the land. Secondly, though intertwined with the first reason, the people of the land were not included in Cyrus's decree. I think the returned exiles led by Zerrubabel and Jeshua misinterpret Cyrus's decree to justify their exclusion of the people of the land. As already stated earlier, the decree does not prescribe who should be part of the building project.

We see here that the Exiles named the authority of both the king and God in dismissing their 'enemies', appealing to both civil and religious authority (Ezra 1:7; Cave, 1993:47). Roberts correctly points out that "the harsh rejection in verse 3 seems to be an overreaction" (Roberts, 1993:80). Naturally, this refusal creates resentment and hostility on the part of those who are turned away. Such treatment almost guarantees that the people of the land will henceforth have an adversarial attitude, even if they did not have one before (Van Wijk-Bos, 1998:27). When the Exiles rejected the people of the land's offer to join in the rebuilding process, they thus created an exclusive group who are allowed to be a part of the rebuilding project.

So we can see that the people of the land are not adversaries in the first instance, it is only when they are excluded that they display an adversarial attitude (Ezra 4:4).

Second, we discuss circumstances surrounding the next rebuilding project, namely the wall rebuilding. When the three leaders of the *am haaretz*, namely Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem realised that Nehemiah was to embark on the rebuilding of the wall, they asked him the question, "What is this thing that you are doing?" (Neh. 2:19). Nehemiah replied by stating that the three, including the whole *am haaretz,* have no part in the rebuilding process:

> The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build; but you have no portion or right or memorial in Jerusalem (Neh. 2:20).

Clearly the words "us" and "we his servants" used in the above quotation are exclusive. We see here that the returned exiles see themselves as an exclusive group from the *am haaretz,* and that they are the only ones who should be involved in the rebuilding process.

From Nehemiah's above reply to Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, we note that this reply is in terms of divine support, and the refutation of any claim that his opponents may believe they have in Jerusalem (Ackroyd,1973:271-4). Firstly, he argues that they have no portion, a term appropriately used for territorial allocation (Ackroyd,1973:271-4). Secondly, he states that they have no legal right, the word used more often to indicate "righteousness" (Fensham,1982:169), but here denoting a legal claim (Fensham,1982:169). Jerusalem was the city of the 'Jews' and the 'enemies' had no legal authority over it. 'Legal share' חלק refers to a share in the constellation of the Jewish nation. If somebody said that he had no share in a certain nation, he was declaring a revolt (cf. 2 Sam. 20:1; 1K. 12:16). This term with the negative thus means that the *am haaretz* had no legal right over Jerusalem (Fensham,1982:169). Thirdly, they have no memorial, in the sense of "no established rights from the past", no traditional hold (Neh. 2:20; Ackroyd,1973:271-4). 'A cultic memorial' זכרון is a difficult term. It quite probably refers to the cult in Jerusalem. So the implication is that the opponents had no right over the cultic practices (cf. Ezra 4:3). According to Nehemiah, both Sanballat and Tobiah had no jurisdiction over the "pure" religion of the exiles. With this reply Nehemiah clearly drew the dividing line between himself and his opponents (Fensham,1982:169).

We need to state, however, that the above analysed exclusion of the *am haaretz* by the returned exiles is not a mere coincidence, rather, it is part of the authors' exclusivist ideology prevalent in Ezra-Nehemiah. Richards (1994), following Smith (1996), has ably identified the ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah. Let us briefly consider their identification of this ideology.

Smith (1996) shows how the key term 'make a separation' בדל is used in Ezra-Nehemiah, when he says that,

> In Ezra-Nehemiah it applies always to the separation of the "holy community" (Neh 13:3) - from foreign wives (Ezra 10:11), the *am haaretz* [people of the land] (Ezra 9:1; Neh. 10:31) and the *goye haaretz* [peoples of the land] (Ezra 6:21) (Smith,1996:547).

Accordingly, the authors, true to this ideology, support the returned exiles's measures, in excluding or separating themselves from the *am haaretz*.

Likewise, Richards argues that Ezra-Nehemiah has an ideology of separatism,

While this theme is most pronounced in the compulsory divorcing of those who have married unclean and impure foreign women (Ezr 9-10) the entire Ezra-Nehemiah narrative complex is premised on this kind of ideology (Richards,1994:293).

Richards argues that the language of exclusion in the text unites the three structural units of Ezra-Nehemiah narrative, namely Ezra 1-6, Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah 1-1,10-13 (Richards,1994:293). He recognises that there is a difference between the exclusivist orientation of Ezra 1-6, Ezra 7-10 and the Nehemiah material. He also notes that the Nehemiah literature "is not as exclusivistically oriented as the two literary units that precede it" (Richards,1994:294).

He further argues that in the first literary unit (Ezra 1-6) the completion of the temple-building is crowned with the high point of celebrating the Passover lamb.

> It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by all those who had separated themselves from the pollutions of the nations of the land to worship the Lord (Ezra 6:21).

He goes on to observe that in the second literary unit (Ezra7-10/Neh. 8,9) there is no 'religious festival' high point, such as a Passover celebration. He is quick to caution however that this does not mean that the Ezra literary unit does not celebrate its success. He maintains that the high point of the Ezra mission is the dissolution of those unholy marriages.

> This high point is celebrated in the form of a political-type ceremony comparable to the Passover, namely the compilation of a new population register. The Ezra community celebrates their success by compiling and preserving a record of those names and persons who no longer qualify for membership (Ezra 10:18ff). In other words, the list is a crowning ceremony of successful separation of clean from unclean, and holy from unholy citizens in the Jerusalem (Richards,1994:294).

The Nehemiah unit (Neh. 1-7, 10-13), while similar in terms of exclusivist orientation, is different in that the completion of his mission, as described in the text, lacks a clear and immediate ceremonial act to celebrate the success of his mission. Initially, in the face of opposition, Nehemiah radically excludes his rivals from legitimate access to God (Richards,1994:295).

The wall-rebuilding project was subsequently completed (Neh. 7:1) but the details of its inaugural ceremony are given only much later, in Nehemiah 12:27ff. (Richards,1994:295). Richards notes that

here there is no ceremony accompanying the completion of the wall, rather, what follows is the repetition of returnees as described in Ezra 2 (Richards,1994:295).

The above stated exclusivist ideology shown by the total exclusion of the *am haaretz* by the returned exiles from the rebuilding of both the temple and the city wall pushed the *am haaretz* into an opposition camp. Below we discuss the *am haaretz*'s opposition to the rebuilding projects.

3.2.3.2 The *am haaretz's* opposition to their exclusion

Leading the opposition were Sanballat and Tobiah. Who were these figures? We need to note here that though Sanballat (Neh. 2:19) is a Babylonian name, and that he was a "governor of Samaria" (Ackroyd,1973:271-4), he was a worshipper of Yahweh, as indicated by the *-yah* element in the names of his sons (Blenkinsopp,1988:216-217; Grabbe,1992:132-136; Ackroyd,1973:271-4).

Closely associated with Sanballat in his opposition to Nehemiah, here and throughout the narrative (Neh. 2:10,19; Neh. 3:35[4:3]; Neh. 4:1[4:7]; Neh. 6:1, 12, 14), was Tobiah (Blenkinsopp,1988:217-218), another Yahwist name (Ackroyd,1973:271-4). Tobiah belonged to a distinguished Jerusalemite family with close ties to the high priesthood and the aristocracy (Blenkinsopp,1988:219). He had close ties with the Judean nobility and the Jerusalem priesthood (Neh. 6:17-19; Neh. 13:4), and even managed to obtain accommodation in the temple precincts-probably in connection with a commercial venture-during Nehemiah's temporary absence (Neh.13:4-9; Blenkinsopp,1988:217-218). Therefore, the cooperation between Sanballat and Tobiah was not unusual, because they shared the same basic religious outlook. The outlook of Ezra and Nehemiah is therefore not one of true worshippers of Yahweh against surrounding pagans, but rather of one sort of Yahwist against another sort (Grabbe,1992:132-136)[77].

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[77] In this area, at least, Smith's model of exclusivists versus assimilationists has merit (Grabbe,1992:132-136).

Moreover, it appears from the text (Ezra 4:1) that the *am haaretz* were called adversaries because they protested and opposed their exclusion by the returned exiles from the reconstruction process. It is important to note here that the term "adversaries" reflects the ideological interests of the author of Ezra-Nehemiah. Would the opponents of the returned exiles still be regarded as the 'adversaries' if they happily accepted their exclusion from the building programme? That the *am haaretz*, by merely offering their assistance to the rebuilding process in Jerusalem, are designated adversaries from the outset implies that the author understood their offer to be interested and disingenuous (Blenkinsopp,1988:106-107; Ackroyd,1973:228-9).

The author of Ezra-Nehemiah justifies Nehemiah's exclusion of the *am haaretz* and for arming the returned exiles, by portraying the "enemies" as a serious threat to the returned exiles's efforts in rebuilding. In Neh. 4:7 these two (Sanballat and Tobiah) have swelled into a crowd, so that it sounds as if enemies surround Jerusalem and Nehemiah on all sides: "all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem" (Neh. 4:8; Van Wijk-Bos,1998:61; Ackroyd,1973:278). But there is no report of an approach by these 'enemies,' nor of an actual assault. The enemy never came! Is Nehemiah taking measures in view of a real threat, or is the threat actual but minimal and blown out of proportion both by Nehemiah, for his own reasons, and by the community, out of fear? (Van Wijk-Bos,1998:61).

We, therefore, need to see the *am haaretz's* opposition against the rebuilding measures as the only legitimate means left for them to protest against their exclusion.

We also further observe that the opposition to Nehemiah's exclusion of the *am haaretz* is also joined by the prophetess Noadiah (Neh. 6:1-14). It is worth noting that while in Ezra 5 we hear about prophets who supported the rebuilding project and by implication sided with the returned exiles, here (Neh. 6:1-14) we have prophets who protest against Nehemiah's rebuilding programme. It is important to note here that the opposition to Nehemiah's rebuilding project is not only waged by lay people such as Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, rather it was also waged by a prophetess such as Noadiah.

In Ezra-Nehemiah there are prophets on both sides of the conflict between the *am haaretz* and the

returned exiles. There are, on the one hand, those prophets who support the actions of the returned exiles in rebuilding projects, and, on the other hand, prophets who support the *am haaretz* in their opposition to the rebuilding projects. Carroll (1993) has argued convincingly to show that these two categories of prophets in Ezra-Nehemiah is a testimony to the author's ideology. Below we will briefly outline Carroll's arguments on this matter.

Carroll argues that in Ezra-Nehemiah there are two categories of prophets. The first consists of those prophets who are assessed positively (Ezra 5:1-2 and 6:14), where the prophets Haggai and Zechariah are represented as supporting the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem (Carroll,1993:88-89).

> As the Temple rebuilding project is described as an enterprise having the official backing of the God of Israel *and* three notable Persian emperors (Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes), Haggai and Zechariah must be seen as positive prophets and ideologically sound. They stand for what the writer(s) of Ezra-Nehemiah stood for and the shared ideology of text and task indicates the truth of the claim that they were 'the prophets of God' (Ezra 5:2) (Carroll,1993:88-89)

The second category is what Carroll calls negative prophets, with Noadiah (Neh. 6.1-14) as the prime example. Indeed the text does view them negatively. According to Carroll, Noadiah is the representative of prophetic groups who failed to side with temple or city building or who opposed Ezra or Nehemiah (Carroll,1993:89).

For Carroll these different sets of prophets may be characterized as pro-building and anti-building figures in the text. Thus he argues,

> What seems to differentiate them is whether the writer of the text regards them as supporting the ideological projects defended in the text or as opposing such projects. In other words, there is cooption of prophets and a refusal of prophets (Carroll,1993:90).

Carroll observes that in Ezra-Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah are portrayed as good and acceptable prophets because they support the project of temple building which reflects the ideological values of the producers of Ezra-Nehemiah, while Shemaiah and Noadiah are condemned because they are associated with the people who oppose Nehemiah's building enterprise (Carroll,1993:91), namely the *am haaretz*.

> To have opposed the Temple would be to have silenced oneself. Prophets who support the right causes will become canonical prophets, all others will be spoken against and

marginalized...Noadiah the prophetess will stand for negative prophets. That is, she will be the representative of prophetic groups who failed to side with Temple or city building or who opposed Ezra or Nehemiah (Carroll,1993:89).

Carroll argues that the author of Ezra-Nehemiah silenced Noadiah in the text because she is not allowed to talk, it is Nehemiah who talks on her behalf.

> I see a deconstructive moment here in the text. In what I think of as 'opposing Noadiah'-Noadiah opposes Nehemiah who opposes her opposition, although only Nehemiah's opposition is stated in the text (Carroll,1993:92-93).

Carroll then goes on to argue that Ezra-Nehemiah displays a sense of hostility towards women in general and Noadiah in particular,

> Noadiah is a woman. That in itself speaks volumes. That she is a woman who appears in the Ezra-Nehemiah material speaks further volumes. This is because there are elements of hostility towards women in Ezra-Nehemiah (e.g. Ezra 10.1-44; Neh. 10.28-31). It is not so much a generalized disparagement of women as a denigration of foreign women. Where women in general (always 'in general') are prepared to listen to and follow the ideological instructions associated with Ezra-Nehemiah there is no problem with women (e.g. Ezra 8.3; Neh. 12.43). But where foreignness or opposition is concerned, then the Ezra-Nehemiah literature is opposed to women. In this sense Noadiah must be numbered among the women to be opposed for ideological reasons. She is an ideological enemy. Her existence and her activities (if we knew what they were) are in opposition to Nehemiah (Carroll,1993:93-94).

Carroll maintains that in general, prophetesses whose work supports the central authorities (e.g. Deborah, Huldah) are never condemned. Carroll sees Noadiah's opposition to the rebuilding embarked upon by the returned exiles as fitting the pattern of women prophets who opposed the (male) leadership:

> If Nehemiah is telling the story then Noadiah's opposition to Nehemiah speaks against Noadiah. That is Nehemiah's story and we are reading it. But what if Noadiah had told her story? What if we were not reading the Bible but an alternative bible? (Carroll,1993:94).

Carroll continues to argue that one of the main reasons why the Nehemiah text is so negative about Noadiah is probably because "Nehemiah could not coopt her as a prophet supporting him" (Carroll,1993:96). Carroll states that Noadiah's opposition was such as to warrant Nehemiah naming her in one of his many prayers seeking vengeance from God (Carroll,1993:96). Thus, Carroll concludes,

Opposing Noadiah is all we know about her. To the modern reader of Ezra-Nehemiah the opposition of Noadiah to Nehemiah is decidedly a mark in her favour (Carroll,1993:96).

Accordingly, Carroll correctly observes that Noadiah will always live on in the text as the 'Opposing Noadiah'. He does observe, however, that unfortunately Noadiah's voice cannot be heard because "Nehemiah chose not to let her speak" (Carroll,1993:97). Carroll, then, urges others to "reimagine" Noadiah's voice and give it words (Carroll,1993:97).

Carroll goes on to warn against, as we do, reading the Ezra-Nehemiah text and accepting the negative ideology biased against Noadiah. Thus he argues,

> For Noadiah will always be a 'false' prophet to those who read the canon of the Hebrew Bible with an insistence on canon consciousness. To read the Bible with the canon in mind-whatever the canon used-is to run the risk of complicity in the ideological values enforced by the canon. Those who insist that 'canon matters' will tend to take Nehemiah at face value and share his opposition to opposing Noadiah (Carroll,1993:98).

Having considered the opposition of the *am haaretz* against the exclusive measures of the returned exiles, we need to state that the crisis created by the returned exile's rejection of the *am haaretz's* request to rebuild was never resolved in a satisfactory way. At the end of that crisis, the *am haaretz* are losers in that they remain outside the *golah* community, while the returned exiles are victorious because they succeed in excluding the *am haaretz*, not only from all rebuilding projects, but also from the post-exilic *golah* community. Both Ezra and Nehemiah sided with the returned exiles in excluding the *am haaretz* from both the rebuilding and the *golah* community.

Accordingly, Richards asks the question: "What mechanisms or strategies enabled or guaranteed the success and dominance of the returnees?" (Richards,1994:291). He believes that this success is made possible by Persian legitimation through decrees. Let us then briefly examine this Persian legitimation of the success of the returned exiles' efforts.

Richards further argues that each of the defined literary units seem to have as its central core an imperial (Persian) edict (Richards,1994:291). Richards notices that the Cyrus Edict (Ezra 1:1-4 [Hebrew] parallel Ezra 6:3-5 [Aramaic]) facilitates the initial return to Jerusalem. The Darius Edict

(Ezra 6:6-12 [Aramaic]) later permits these initial exiles to resume and complete the temple-building project. The Edict of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11-26 [Aramaic]) provides the basis and legitimation for Ezra's mission and grants Ezra far-reaching political, juridical and religious power (Richards,1994:291). Artaxerxes is also said to have granted Nehemiah permission to return (Neh. 2:7-9), although in this instance we are not given the explicit details of the decree. Nevertheless, Nehemiah's return is legitimated by the royal colonial crown (Richards,1994:291).

And, Richards continues to state that in Ezra-Nehemiah, it is the returnees (former exiles) who ultimately emerge victoriously and it is they, alone, who enjoy legitimacy from the imperial crown. It is they who now have the exclusive power and political power to interpret the law and tradition and enforce such interpretations (Richards,1994:2912).

Thus, Richards concludes that,

> The imperial edicts of Persia therefore provide the basis of-and an explanation for-the success of the temple rebuilding project, the people's obedience to Ezra's exegesis of the law concerning mixed marriages and the successful completion of the wall-building programme and economic restructuring supervised by Nehemiah. There is no doubt that the local opposition to the agenda of the returnees was strong and to a limited extent successful. But ultimately the opposition collapsed and suffered radical exclusion from this newly defined community centred in Jerusalem (Richards,1994:292).

In this subsection we have shown that Ezra-Nehemiah is coloured with an exclusivist ideology which is biased in favour of the returned exiles but against the *am haaretz*. In the next subsection we use Mosala's ideological analysis as a way of leading us into the process of analysing the ideology of Ezra-Nehemiah in chapters 4 and 5 more fully.

3.3 MOSALA'S ANALYSIS OF IDEOLOGY

How does Mosala describe ideology? He sees ideology thus:

> It is rather a harmonization of contradictions in such a way that the class interests of one group are universalized and made acceptable to other classes (Mosala,1989:118-9).

Mosala goes on to argue that making scientific sense of the ideological condition of a text means

knowing the text in a way in which it is incapable of knowing itself. In this regard Eagleton argues that,

> The task of criticism, then, is not to situate itself within the same space as the text, allowing it to speak or completing what it necessarily leaves unsaid. On the contrary, its function is to install itself in the very incompleteness of the work in order to *theorise* it-to explain the ideological necessity of those "not-saids" which constitute the very principle of its identity. Its objects is the *unconsciousness* of the work-that of which is not, and cannot be, aware (Quoted by Mosala,1989:119).

Moreover, Mosala critiques both the historical-critical method, the social scientific method and black theology's uncritical exegetical starting point, which expresses itself in the notion that the Bible is the revealed "word of God" (Mosala,1989:6). Accordingly, Mosala argues that the notion of the Bible as "the revealed Word of God" leads to a false notion of the Bible as nonideological. He maintains that such a notion can cause political paralysis in the oppressed people who read it:

> An approach to the study or appropriation of the Bible that begins with the theological notion of the Bible as the Word of God, therefore, presupposes a hermeneutical epistemology for which truth is not historical, cultural, or economic. For such an epistemology the Word of God is pre-established. The political, cultural, economic, or historical relevance of this Word of God comes out of its capacity to be applied to the various facets of human life, and in this case of black human life. Its relevance does not issue out of its very character as a historical, cultural, political, or economic product (Mosala,1989:19-20).

Mosala argues that the historical-critical method, the social scientific method, and black theology,

> have failed to recognize the ideological character in the texts. These methods have not been able to sufficiently address issues of ideology, race, gender, class, and politics in their application to the Bible (Mosala,1989:7).

Thus, Mosala proposes a new exegetical starting point, since "The social, cultural, political, and economic world of the black working class and peasantry constitutes the only valid hermeneutical starting point for a black theology of liberation" (Mosala,1986:181; 1989:21). He bases his hermeneutics on the key concept of *struggle*:

> I argue that the category of struggle provides the lens for reading the text in a liberating fashion as well as the codes for unlocking the possibilities and limitation of the biblical texts (Mosala,1989:8).

So Mosala sees the category of "the black struggle, from precolonial times to the present, as

representing an important hermeneutical factor" (Mosala,1989:123).

> I propose that, in this appropriation of black history and culture for purposes of appropriating biblical texts, the category of struggle will serve as a critical grid (Mosala,1989:12).

> The category of struggle becomes an important hermeneutical factor not only in one's reading of his or her history and culture but also in one's understanding of the history, nature, ideology, and agenda of the biblical texts (Mosala,1989:9).

> Consequently, a biblical hermeneutics of liberation, using the same tool of struggle as was used to interrogate the readers' history, culture, and ideology, must now address the question of the material conditions that constitute the sites of the struggles that produced the biblical texts (Mosala,1989:9).

The above analysis of Mosala does not mean that he rejects totally the biblical text. He gives the reason for his appropriation of the biblical tradition in another article in which he identifies two sources of black theology as "the biblical and the African roots" (Mosala,1986:119; Burden,1993:222).

However we must, Mosala argues, employ a socio-historical materialist method of interpretation to identify the ideology of the text. Explaining his materialistic reading of the Bible, he further argues

> I used a materialist method to delineate the struggles inherent in black history and culture; I will use a similar method to connect us with the struggles behind and in the text of the Bible (Mosala,1989:103).

In order to unearth the ideology of the text, Mosala believes that the exegete must identify the social, cultural, class, gender and racial issues that are at work in the biblical text:

> What historical point is reflected by the discursive practice this text represents? What are the social, cultural, class, gender, and racial issues at work in this text? What is the ideological-spiritual agenda of the text, that is, how does the text itself seek to be understood? (Mosala,1989:34-5).

Mosala sees a two-way dialogue between black history and the Bible:

> Thus black culture and history as hermeneutical factors in black theology in South Africa ask questions of the biblical text that seek to establish ties with struggles for liberation in the biblical communities. Similarly, the liberating aspects of the biblical discourses interrogate black culture and history in the light of the values and goals of struggling classes in biblical communities (Mosala,1989:152)

Therefore, the task of biblical hermeneutics of liberation is as follows,

> to go behind the dominant discourses to the discourse of oppressed communities in order to

link up with kindred struggles. The task now facing a black theology of liberation is to enable black people to use the Bible to get the land back and to get the land back without losing the Bible. In order for this to happen, black theology must employ the progressive aspects of black history and culture to liberate the Bible so that the Bible may liberate black people. That is the hermeneutical dialectic (Mosala,1989:153).

Gerald West has provided a summary of Mosala's methodology:
Mosala articulates a clear methodology which underlies his mode of reading. His interpretive procedures are clear. His initial procedure as far as the text is concerned is to use historical-critical methods to determine the text and its context. For Mosala the important consequence of applying these methods is that they place the text in its socio-historical setting...With the identification of this setting Mosala then moves into a historical-materialist analysis of the text (West,1995:72).

Mosala's work is important, in that it helps us to see that the biblical text is ideological. This is also our view with reference to Ezra-Nehemiah. We have shown earlier that the Ezra-Nehemiah text has a particular ideological bias in favour of the returned exiles, but against the *am haaretz*. The observation by Mosala, that the biblical text is not neutral, but has a particular ideology, is something Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi and Karamaga have failed to identify and have not seriously taken into consideration when setting forth a theology of reconstruction based on Ezra-Nehemiah.

Furthermore, Mosala's hermeneutic, like the hermeneutic proposed by our study of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah, is African, in that it takes seriously the African experience (culture, history etc) of colonial exploitation and the role of capitalism in our context.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Let us briefly summarise our findings in this chapter.

We observed that the text of Ezra-Nehemiah demonstrates that there is a contestation between at least two groups, namely the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. We also observed that the Ezra-Nehemiah text has a particularly bias or ideology which tends to promote the view of the returned exiles rather than of the *am haaretz*. Accordingly, we spell out two implications. The first one is that Ezra-Nehemiah should not be read as representing the voice of only one group i.e. that of the returned exiles. The suppressed voices of the *am haaretz* have to be heard as well. Secondly, the three African

scholars (Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi and Karamaga) have not read the text carefully. They have all spoken of reconstruction theology based on, among other texts, Ezra-Nehemiah. By identifying Ezra-Nehemiah as a symbol or metaphor that could be used in reconstruction without isolating the ideological agenda of the text and identifying the group which is dominant in the text, the three scholars have inadvertently identified reconstruction as that which is driven by the returned exiles at the exclusion of the *am haaretz*. Such a reading of the text is insensitive to the plight of the *am haaretz* and dangerous for our appropriation of this text.

Mosala's critique of Black theology and other theologies raises several issues which are relevant to our study. Firstly, there is a need for an African reading of the Bible, which will take seriously the African context in its theologising. Mosala uses two sources for his hermeneutics, namely the Bible and the African experience.

Secondly, Mosala recognises that not every text in the Bible is liberatory, or neutral. Rather it is coloured with the ideology of the author. This observation by Mosala is something the three African scholars (Villa-Vicencio, Mugambi and Karamaga) have not seriously taken into consideration when setting forth a theology of reconstruction based on Ezra-Nehemiah and other reconstructionists. Our study of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah takes seriously the fact that this text is not neutral, it is embedded within an ideological world of its author, which suppresses and oppresses the voice of the marginalised group, namely the *am haaretz*. Having isolated the ideology of Ezra-Nehemiah, this study will propose an inclusive reading of this text as opposed to an exclusive reading. Linked to this is the third point, namely, if African biblical hermeneutics has to have an impact in our continent, it does not only have to relate the text as is to the African context, it must also de-ideologise that particular text in the first place. For an unideologised reading may be counterproductive, in that instead of supporting and advancing the cause of the poor and marginalised, such a reading may further marginalise the poor by further enslaving them with the "revealed word of God".

Having identified and begun to analyse the ideology of Ezra-Nehemiah, we want to get behind such an ideology, by doing a sociological analysis of the world that produced the Ezra-Nehemiah text (chapter 5). But before embarking on such a project we want to identify the authors of Ezra-

Nehemiah and the possible compilation of the entire text (chapter 4), as this would become the basis for such a sociological analysis. This we do in the next chapter, to which we now turn.

CHAPTER 4: COMPOSITION AND DATE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 Aim

Having dealt with the literary analysis of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah in chapter 3, chapter 4 explores different theories concerning the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah, the possible date of the composition, and the date of the arrival of Ezra and Nehemiah in Judah. In this regard we will then explore possibilities as to who may have composed the text of Ezra-Nehemiah and we will then look at some possible dates for the missions of both Ezra and Nehemiah, which will then make it better for us to date the composition of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah. Thus, chapter 4 is a preliminary historical analysis in order to prepare for chapter 5, which analyses the ideology embedded within the Ezra-Nehemiah text.

Our hypothesis in this chapter is that Ezra-Nehemiah belong together as one text and that it has been produced by a different compiler to that of Chronicles. It is necessary that this hypothesis be tested for the following two reasons. Firstly, in order for us to clarify from the onset the text(s) that we are dealing with here. Is it the text of Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles or all of them, or some of them? So there is a need to be specific and focused. Secondly, we need (as we indeed do in chapter 5) to locate the conflict between the *am haaretz* and the returned exiles within its proper socio-historical context / time frame. In order for us to properly do that we need to be clear about the possible dates of the arrivals of both Ezra and Nehemiah in Jerusalem, for their missions among the Israelites.

4.1.2 Methodology

In order to realise our goal or aim as stated above, chapter 4 takes two steps. First, we examine the compositional relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. It is necessary to examine Chronicles here because based on some similarities between Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, the traditional view maintained that these books were written or compiled by the same author. If the

traditional view is accepted, it may have implications for our focus in this study.

Second, we will concentrate on the question of the possible dates of both Ezra and Nehemiah's arrival in Palestine. Once possible dates of both Ezra and Nehemiah's arrival have been suggested, we would then be in a better position to suggest some possible dates for the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah.

Let us deal with the composition of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah.

4.2 COMPOSITION / AUTHORSHIP

4.2.0 Introduction

There are currently two opposing views concerning the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah. The first one is the traditional view, which maintains that the Chronicler was the author of both Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. The second view separates Chronicles from Ezra-Nehemiah, and goes on to maintain that the primary authors of Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs are Ezra and Nehemiah respectively, while the final editor is an unknown Jew.

We will start our discussion by examining the traditional view, to which we now turn.

4.2.1 The Chronicler was the author of both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah

For so long now scholars have commonly believed that Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles were compiled by the same author, namely the Chronicler (Grabbe,1992:51; Eskenazi,1986:42-43; Clines,1984:9,14; Blenkinsopp,1988:47ff; McConville,1985). This position is summed up by Hayden, when he states that,

> The author of Chronicles is the primary author of the Ezra-Nehemiah narrative in more or less its present form, and his work was completed within a few decades of the historical events of Ezra and Nehemiah (Hayden,1985:490).

Let us then briefly look at four main arguments that have been used as evidence for common authorship.

The first argument is about the parallel between the beginning of Ezra and the end of Chronicles. They argue that the final verses of 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 are almost identical with Ezra 1:1-3. Scholars also show the common interests and parallels between the work of the Chronicler and the content of Ezra-Nehemiah (Eskenazi,1986:42; Blenkinsopp,1988:47ff). Certainly there is a lot of common ground between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Cave,1993:14; Fensham,1982:3; Throntveit,1989:9).

Secondly, a linguistic argument has been employed, which claims that the Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah share distinct literary characteristics in language, style and interests (Eskenazi,1986:42; Clines,1984:3ff; Hayden,1985:490; Throntveit,1989:9; Ryle,1917:10). Furthermore, advocates of this view argue that both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah show a great deal of interest in sacred vessels of the Temple (1Ch.28:13-19; 2Ch.5:1 and Ezr.1:7; 7:19; 8:25-30, 33-34) (Cave,1993:14). Similarly, Ryle argues that

> In Chronicles we find extracts from other sources, genealogical and other lists, careful descriptions of religious festivals and rites, prominence given to Levites and the Temple staff generally, and all these points are characteristics also of Ezra and Nehemiah; while such phrases as 'heads of fathers' houses,' 'people of the countries,' 'the house of God,' etc., only occur in the Bible in Ezra-Nehemiah and in Chronicles (Ryle,1917:10).

It has also been argued that the order of sacrifices and sacrificial materials are almost identical in both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (2 Ch.2:3; 8:13 and Ezr.3:4-6; 1 Ch.29:21; 2 Ch.29:21, 32 and Ezr.6:9, 17; 7:17-18, 22; 8:35-36) (Cave,1993:14). Advocates of this view have pointed out the fact that in both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, liturgical music and instruments, as well as those who are involved in the liturgy, are very much the same (1 Ch.15:19; 16:5-6; 25:1, 6; 2 Ch.5:12-13 and Ezr.3:10; Neh.12:35) (Cave,1993:14).

Thirdly, a theological and ideological argument has been advanced, which claims that Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah share a distinctive ideology (Eskenazi,1986:42; cf also Blenkinsopp1988). The major theme of Chronicles is renewal and reform based on return to religious faithfulness after years of

impurity. The pattern of Ezra-Nehemiah is very similar (Cave,1993:14; Throntveit,1989:9). Bracy argues that there is a similar theological theme that runs through Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, namely: that God desires and uses a righteous (purified) people (Bracy,1988:136-7). He says that in the case of Chronicles, this theme is shown by God's election of the Southern Kingdom (House of David) rather than the Northern Kingdom as the means to preserve the faithful remnant. In Ezra-Nehemiah, this common theme is projected by the emphasis upon a purified and separated people (see Ezra 1-6; Ezra 7-10; Neh. 8,9; Neh. 1-7, 10-13) (Bracy,1988:136-7).

Fourthly, there is the evidence of 1 Esdras, which begins with 2 Chronicles 35-36 and continues through Ezra (Throntveit,1989:9). At this juncture theories about 1 Esdras become linked with theories about common authorship for Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Eskenazi,1986:42).

In sum, we note that it has been the prevailing assumption that Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah, in that order, were written by the same author, namely the Chronicler, and formed originally a single work, which later became separated for some reason (Eskenazi,1986:42; Batten,1913).

Having dealt with the traditional view, let us now briefly examine the views of those who are very critical of it.

4.2.1.1 Critique of Chronicler as the common author

The above stated traditional assumption of common authorship and of the unity of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah has been challenged in recent decades by the works of Segal (1977), Japhet (1968), Williamson (1977), and others (Eskenazi,1986:42-43; Grabbe,1992:50; Dillard,1990:106; VanderKam,1992:58-62; Breneman,1993; Throntveit,1992; Holmgren,1987; Kidner,1979).

These scholars advanced the following four major arguments. Firstly, it has been argued that the linguistic usage of the books of Chronicles is sufficiently different from Ezra-Nehemiah to rule out common authorship (Grabbe,1992:50-51; Eskenazi,1986:42-43). Two of the major scholars who rule out linguistic argument as evidence for common authorship of both Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles

are Sara Japhet (1968) and Hugh Williamson (1977) (Japhet,1968:332-3; Throntveit,1982:201).

Let us briefly examine their arguments, starting with Japhet. Japhet (1968:330-71) initiated the recent discussion of linguistic analysis as a means of approaching the question of authorship in Chronicles. What is of importance with regard to her investigation is that, methodologically, Japhet focuses her attention upon the differences between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, while acknowledging that general linguistic similarities between them do exist (Japhet,1968:332-3; Throntveit,1982:201).

In examining Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, Japhet uncovers three categories of evidence that reveal the differences between the two works: (1) Linguistic opposition; (2) Technical terms; (3) Stylistic peculiarities (Throntveit,1982:201-2). We will focus our discussion here to the linguistic opposition and stylistic peculiarities, as this is the major argument of those who believe in common authorship of both works. We shall begin with Japhet's linguistic analysis and save the stylistic peculiarities for our later discussions on Williamson (1977), who supports Japhet (Throntveit,1982:202).

With regards to the linguistic opposition, Japhet cited as evidence a common argument in explanation of three linguistic phenomena. She argues that the "actual linguistic reality"[78] is reflected in Ezra-Nehehemiah, while Chronicles stands alone as an exception and even as opposition to this same reality (Japhet,1968:341). Thus, she maintains that the phenomena themselves divide into two groups: (1) the formation of the imperfect consecutive and the lengthened imperfect consecutive; and (2) the formation of theophoric names ending in *yhw* (Thronveit,1982:202).

Japhet starts by showing a tendency in Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) of employing the full forms in the formation of the imperfect consecutive i.e. the writers of LBH simply prefix the *waw* consecutive to the imperfect of the verb instead of following the earlier practice of prefixing the *waw* consecutive to the jussive (Japhet,1968:334) and the lengthened imperfect consecutive i.e. lengthened by the frequent addition of *-āh* to the imperfect consecutive (Japhet,1968:334). With regard to the

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[78] This refers to the most typical features of post-exilic Hebrew.

prevalence of these forms in LBH, Japhet (1968) argues that the main feature is the absence of uniformity in linguistic usage in Ezra-Nehemiah. So for Japhet, both long and short forms occur in the Ezra-Nehemiah complex with no evidence of adherence to any linguistic principle. Japhet further argues that within this linguistic setting, the author of Chronicles established an order by consistently applying three rules. Firstly, full forms in the 1 c.s. imperfect consecutive. Secondly, short forms everywhere else (Japhet,1968:334-5). Thirdly, complete avoidance of the lengthened imperfect consecutive 1.c.s. (Japhet,1968:338; Throntveit,1982:202).

As part of the second group of evidence, Japhet investigates theophoric names ending in -*yhw* and discovers that a mirror image of the previous evidence occurs (Japhet,1968:338-41). Ezra-Nehemiah, this time, displays uniformity by consistently using the short ending, -*yh*, while Chronicles displays a plurality of usage with a tendency to employ the long ending, -*yhw* (Throntveit,1982:202-3).

Japhet concludes her analysis on linguistic opposition by summarising the divergent practices of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah and suggests that Ezra-Nehemiah reflects the actual practice of LBH while Chronicles stands alone in opposition (Japhet,1968:341; Throntveit,1982:203). Thus, for Japhet, linguistic opposition such as she has demonstrated argues against the common authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Japhet,1968:371; Throntveit,1982:203).

Having examined Japhet's arguments against common authorship, we now analyse Williamson's. While the re-opening of the question of common authorship in Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah is attributed to Japheta, Williamson (1977) is responsible for mounting the most vigorous assault on the hypothesis of common authorship (Throntveit,1982:204). In a careful manner he systematically unravels the four basic arguments offered in support of common authorship (Williamson,1977:331-2). As it falls beyond the scope of this study, we will not discuss all the issues raised by Williamson's attack, rather we will limit ourselves to a brief examination of the methodological criteria he establishes on the vocabulary and style of both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Williamson,1977:39-41; Throntveit,1982:205).

Williamson follows Japhet's theory, however, whereas Japhet concentrates exclusively on the

differences between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, Williamson (1977:39) focuses on an investigation of the alleged similarities between the two works. In an attempt to meet this objection to Japhet's work, Williamson also refutes arguments made along those lines (Throntveit,1982:205).

Thus, Williamson develops a set of criteria by which to determine unity of authorship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. These criteria are not only the strongest part of Williamson's argument, but also comprise his greatest contribution to the debate (Throntveit,1982:205). They are as follows. In the first instance a substantial number of peculiarities must be produced. According to Williamson (1977:39), since our knowledge of LBH is limited, we cannot clearly distinguish between LBH and Classical Hebrew as well as LBH and Mishnaic Hebrew, therefore, care must be taken that we do not attribute to a single author peculiarities that belong to a period or stratum in the development of the language (Throntveit,1982:205-6). Secondly, these peculiarities must come from both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Williamson,1977:39-40; Throntveit,1982:205-6). Thirdly, the evidence must be confined to Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Williamson,1977:40). This is Williamson's most useful criterion. Its value lies in assuring us that the peculiarity is indeed that of a single author and not due to a characteristic of LBH in general (Throntveit,1982:205-6). Fourthly, peculiarities should, if possible, be expressed differently in other LBH works (Williamson,1977:40; Throntveit,1982:205-6). Finally, peculiarities must be used with the same meaning in both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Williamson,1977:40; Throntveit,1982:205-6).

Employing these criteria, Williamson investigates the lists of alleged similarities between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. He eliminates 47 of the 140 entries on the basis of the second criterion since they occur only in Chronicles or Ezra-Nehemiah (Williamson,1977:41-3), and 27 of the remaining entries on the basis of criterion three (Williamson,1977:43-4), as they enjoy a wide distribution. 32 entries are discussed but proved to be inconclusive for a variety of reasons (Williamson,1977:45-52). Upon closer examination (Williamson,1977:52-8), all but 6 of the 34 remaining entries are argued to favor diversity of authorship (Throntveit,1982:206).

Williamson then goes on to conclude that Polzin's statement that we have an "extremely strong case for similarity in authorship of Chr. and Ezr." (1977:71) needs to be modified to read, "an extremely

strong case for similarity in *language"* (Williamson,1968:71).

Clearly, Williamson has convincingly and persuasively argued that the terms cited as evidence for common authorship are at best irrelevant or inconclusive for determining the common authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Williamson,1977:59; Throntveit,1982:206). Williamson has also convincingly shown that,

> as far as the argument from style is concerned, the onus now rests on those who favour unity of authorship to produce more compelling new arguments to support their position (Williamson,1977:59; Throntveit,1982:206).

The above analysis shows that both Japhet and Williamson share basic presuppositions and methodological stances as well as conclusions reached as to common authorship (Throntveit,1982:206). Now that we have discussed the views of both Japhet and Williamson against linguistic use as evidence for common authorship, we shall now turn to the next argument used to support common authorship, namely the evidence of 1 Esdras.

Grabbe believes that the argument that 1 Esdras represents a portion of the original work of the Chronicler has not been strongly argued and well substantiated (Grabbe,1992:50-51). Williamson views Ezra and Nehemiah as two parts of a single work which was intended to be complete as it now stands. According to him, Esdras is not a source for Ezra-Nehemiah but in fact a later compilation (Motyer,1986:249). Similarly, Eskenazi proposes what she calls a distinct composition of Chronicles, Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah. She argues that 1 Esdras is a distinct composition by the Chronicler i.e, by the persons, circle, or school responsible for the Book of Chronicles,

> This "author", who used Samuel/Kings as his major source for the history of preexilic Israel in the Book of Chronicles, used Ezra-Nehemiah as his major source for the history of post-exilic Israel in 1 Esdras. As such, 1 Esdras is indeed compiled from Ezra-Nehemiah, but by the Chronicler. It is not, however, a fragment out of the large unity; it is rather a discrete book by the Chronicler, reflecting the same point of view that Chronicles does (Eskenazi,1986:39-40).

After a thorough analysis of the relationship between Chronicles and 1 Esdras, as well as their common contrast with Ezra-Nehemiah, Eskenazi, maintains that,

> 1 Esdras corresponds to Chronicles in ideology and literary features which distinguish them from all other books in the Bible and, at the same time, differs in these aspects from Ezra-Nehemiah (Eskenazi,1986:60).

Thus, Eskenazi concludes that major ideological themes link Chronicles and 1 Esdras and so point to common authorship, only between these two works. Accordingly, she maintains that "this leads us to suppose that 1 Esdras was composed by the same person or circle responsible for Chronicles" (Eskenazi,1986:43).

Having analysed the argument against the view that 1 Esdras represents a portion of the original work of the Chronicler, we now move on to analyse arguments against common ideology between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah.

Grabbe has shown that the ideology of Chronicles differs from that of Ezra-Nehemiah on significant points of interest to the post-exilic community (Grabbe,1992:50-51). Hoglund also argues for the independence of Ezra-Nehemiah from 1 and 2 Chronicles, basing his argument on the studies regarding "the ideological and historiographical differences prevalent" (Hoglund,1992:37-38).

Thronveit spells out these ideological and historiographical differences as follows. First, the Chronicler's emphasis on David and the Davidic Covenant, so prominent in Chronicles, is totally lacking in Ezra-Nehemiah (Throntveit,1989:9; Wright,1946:11). Second, similarly, the exodus traditions prominent in Ezra-Nehemiah are virtually ignored by Chronicles (Throntveit,1989:9). Third, Ezra-Nehemiah's abhorrence of marriages with foreigners is difficult to explain in light of the tolerant attitude expressed toward Solomon's mixed marriages in Chronicles (Throntveit,1989:9). Fourth, the Chronicler's frequent use of immediate retribution as a theological lodestone is absent in Ezra-Nehemiah (Throntveit,1989:9).

The last argument to be presented here is against the concept of the Chronicler. Kapelrud points out that the very concept of the Chronicler has undergone changes, in that instead of denoting an individual, the term came to be applied to a group or to a circle (Kapelrud,1944:97). Complexity increased when scholars postulated several editions of the Chronicler's work, which Cross (1975) labels Chronicles 1, Chronicles 2, and Chronicles 3. Eskenazi also reminds us that the nature of authorship itself has been modified and re-evaluated with Willi (1972) and Ackroyd (1977) speaking of the Chronicler as an "exegete" (Eskenazi,1986:42-43).

It has to be stated that it is not the purpose of this subsection to dwell much on the arguments presented above, either for or against common authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. We however, make the following observations. As of now there is no consensus, opinions remain uncertain and divided (Eskenazi,1986:42-43). It also has to be acknowledged that the assumption of a common author / editor of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah "can no longer be taken for granted and must be justified" (Grabbe,1992:50-51). It is noteworthy that the majority of recent monographs on Chronicles separate the two works Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah and, directly or indirectly, argue against their unity (Eskenazi,1986:42-43).

We need to state, however, that after examining arguments for and against common authorship for Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, and having noted the demonstrably clear differences between 1 Esdras and Ezra on the one hand, and the stated similarities between 1 Esdras and Chronicles on the other hand, we now come to the conclusion that Ezra-Nehemiah is distinct from Chronicles and 1 Esdras. We further believe that common authorship for both Chronicles and 1 Esdras may be a possibility.

For the purpose of our study we will maintain that in view of the visibly undeniable differences between these books, Chronicles may not necessarily have been composed by the author of Ezra-Nehemiah. We are therefore throughout our discussions in our research working with Ezra-Nehemiah as distinct from Chronicles.

In the aforementioned discussions we concluded that Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles are not works of the same author. In the next section we argue that Ezra and Nehemiah were written by the same author.

4.2.2 Ezra-Nehemiah by the same author

We have, in the previous section argued that Ezra-Nehemiah is separate from Chronicles. In this section we want to argue that Ezra-Nehemiah was written by the same author. We will advance four arguments to support our position. The first argument in support of the common authorship of Ezra-

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Nehemiah is that Ezra and Nehemiah originally formed one book in the Hebrew Bible with the title "Ezra" (Cave,1993:14; Wright,1946:5; Ryle,1917:7). It was therefore known as the book of Ezra. Pre-fifteenth-century A.D., Hebrew manuscripts, as well as the Greek LXX, viewed Ezra-Nehemiah as a single book. Evidence of the unity of the two books, which would suggest a single author, is provided in the Masoretic Text. There one finds at the end of each Hebrew Bible book, certain notes which give the number of verses and the middle point of each book. No such notes are found at the end of Ezra, but the notes are found at the end of Nehemiah. Furthermore, the middle point is stated to be Neh. 3:32 which would require that Ezra and Nehemiah be considered as one book (Harrison,1969:211ff; Bracy,1988:21; Fensham,1982:1; Keil,1950:1, Williamson,1985:xxi).

The unity of Ezra-Nehemiah is also supported by extra-biblical writings. Vestiges of this unity can be seen in rabbinic writings (T.B. *Baba Bathra* 15a) where the two books were regarded as a unity with Ezra as author. The same view occurs in the writings of Josephus and in Eusebius, who ascribed this position to Melito of Sardis (second century A.D.) (Fensham,1982:1, Williamson, 1985:xxi).

It is commonly believed that Origen (A.D. 185-254) was the first to divide Ezra-Nehemiah into two books (Cave,1993:14; Fensham,1982:1). Jerome acknowledged the division of Ezra and Nehemiah; he used the same division in the Vulgate (Fensham,1982:1). It was not until A.D. 1448 that the division into two books in the Hebrew Bible became completely official (Cave,1993:14). A Hebrew manuscript dating to 1448 has the division of the two books, and it was likewise taken up in the Bomberg Bible in 1525 (Fensham,1982:1; Williamson,1985:xxii).

The second argument is based on common sources used in both Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra records a list of those returning to Jerusalem with him (Ezr.8:1-14), and the section on mixing with foreigners (Ezr.10:18-43; Cave,1993:14). Nehemiah also records the home-comers (Neh.7:6-73), and the issue of mixed marriages (Cave,1993:14). Both Ezra and Nehemiah record registers of signatories, names and places (Ezr.2:2-61; 8:2-20; 10:18-43; Ne.3:1-31; 7:7-63; 10:1-27; 11:4-36; 12:1-26, 32-35, 41-42; Cave,1993:15).

The third argument is about the characteristics of style of Ezra-Nehemiah. Firstly, there are abrupt

transitions in narrative and subject in both Ezra and Nehemiah. Secondly, both Ezra and Nehemiah's writings are characterised by the use of 1st person singular (Neh. 1:1-2:20; 3:33 [4:1]-7:5; 12:31-43; 13:4-31; Ezra 7:27-9:15) (Ryle,1917:9; Blenkinsopp,1988:46). Thirdly, both works include lists introduced without apparent reference to context and names inserted without explanation, as if they had already occurred (Ryle,1917:9).

The fourth argument is about common theme in Ezra-Nehemiah. The dominant theme of both books is restoration or rebuilding (Cave,1993:15). The text of Ezra-Nehemiah is about the return to Jerusalem of the exiles from Babylonian captivity. With the return follows the process of rebuilding and reconstructing the temple and city walls. This process is done at the exclusion of the *am haaretz*. Clearly, the reconstruction / restoration theme runs through the Ezra-Nehemiah text.

In view of the above four arguments, we will conclude that Ezra-Nehemiah were compiled by the same author. In the next subsection we go on to discuss several possibilities of who the author of Ezra-Nehemiah could be. Thus, we begin by discussing the primary layers which the final editors used to produce the Ezra-Nehemiah text.

4.2.3 Layers of composition

Here we will start off by discussing the primary sources, and their authors, of the first layers of Ezra-Nehemiah, and then move on to identify the person(s) who compiled the final book.

There is consensus among scholars that the final author of Ezra-Nehemiah used both the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs as primary sources in his final composition of the text. Let us briefly examine these sources in turn, beginning with the Ezra memoirs.

The Ezra memoirs are material in which Ezra plays a dominant role, and are to be found in Ezra 7-10 and Neh.8 (Williamson,1985:xxviii; Fensham,1982:4; Blenkinsopp,1988:44). The account of Ezra's memoirs combines narrative in the third person (Ezra 7:1-11; 10:1-44) and the first person

(7:27-9:15), which in places are closely parallel (especially 9:1-5; 10:1-6) (Rudolph,1949; Noth,1943; Blenkinsopp,1988:44).

A great variety of opinion has been expressed on the origin of the Ezra first-person narrative (Blenkinsopp,1988:45). On the one hand, Mowinckel does not regard this source as composed by Ezra; he is unable to find any reason why Ezra should have written it. Rather, he sees it as being the work of someone who had been a young man during Ezra's activity and who, years later (370 B.C.), wrote up his idealized version of the events, not as an historical account, but as an edifying narrative (*"erbauliche Geschichtserzählung"*) (Mowinckel,1961; Williamson,1985:xxix–xxx). On the other hand, a majority of scholars believe that it was written by Ezra in the form of a report addressed to the Persian court (Schaeder,1930a; Noth,1943; Koch,1974), mandated after the lapse of one year (Williamson,1985:xxxi; Blenkinsopp,1988:45).Williamson too argued that we must clearly think of Ezra himself (or somebody working at his behest), as the author of the first-person account of the Ezra memoirs, unless strong arguments can be brought to the contrary (Williamson,1985:xxxi).

There is agreement, however, that the third-person narrative either derives from an independent source known to the editor or it represents a selective paraphrase of a personal memoir authored by Ezra (Rudolph,1949; Noth,1943; Blenkinsopp,1988:44).

The most plausible position is to accept with certain scholars that the "I-passages" are a verbal transmission of the Ezra memoir and that the "He-passages" are a rendering of the memoir in the words of the final author (Fensham,1982:4; Williamson,1985:xxx; Oesterley,1955:125). In sum, we accept that Ezra was the author of the first-person account of the Ezra memoirs, and that the third person account was probably added by the final editor.

Having briefly examined the Ezra memoirs, we want to move on to look at the Nehemiah memoirs. Broadly speaking, the Nehemiah memoirs material is to be found in Neh. 1-7 (Williamson,1985:xxiv; Fensham,1982:4-5; Widengren,1977:491-92); parts of 12:27-43, and 13:4-31 (Williamson,1985:xxiv). It has long been recognized (and is today universally agreed) that substantial parts of the book of Nehemiah go back to a first-person account by Nehemiah himself (or

someone writing under his immediate direction) (Williamson,1985:xxiv; Brown,1998:16-17; Bright,1974:396). Brown elaborates that,

> It has been suggested that originally the first-person narrative may have formed the substance of Nehemiah's report to the Persian king, later presented afresh for a wider audience and with a different purpose, either by the writer, a colleague or successor. The supplementary lists may have been added to provide a rich sense of continuity, an important theme in the book (Brown,1998:15).

Unlike with Ezra, scholars have accepted, without much debate, that Nehemiah himself wrote the first-person accounts of the Nehemiah memoirs. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we also accept that the Nehemiah memoirs were written by Nehemiah himself.

Having concluded, in this subsection, that both Ezra and Nehemiah were primary writers of the first-person Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs respectively, we move on, in the next subsection, to discuss the final composition of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah.

4.2.4 Final composition

From what sources did the editor draw his material? Williamson contends that various sources lay in front of the writer in their original, unedited form; "we find no evidence to favor the opinion that parts (such as the Aramaic source) had already been joined together by a narrative framework before they reached his hand. Indeed, there are some hints that he was working directly from the original documents" (Williamson,1985:xxiii).

It is clear, that the author had at his disposal the different documents or sources from which he quotes (Fensham,1982:4; Ryle,1917:10). Accordingly, Fensham argues that the final author of Ezra-Nehemiah had at his disposal

> certain sources, such as the edict of Cyrus and the receipt of the temple vessels in Ezra 1. Ezra 1 (=Neh. 7) contains a list of returnees, which could have been in the archives. Ezra 3-4:5 might have been derived from an oral source of the early history of the exiles after their return from Babylon. It is clear, however, that the author had at his disposal the different documents from which he quotes (Fensham,1982:4).

The reliability of these documents is accepted by a growing number of modern scholars

(Fensham,1982:4; Ryle,1917:10).

The following sources have been isolated, as having been used by the final editor. Firstly, he used both the Ezra and Nehemiah first person memoirs, to which he added the third person narratives.

Secondly, he added Ezra 1-6, which scholars agree comes from his hand. The following sources were combined to form Ezra 1-6: (1) the decree of Cyrus (1:2-4 cf. 6:3-5, the Aramaic version, and 5:13-15, a paraphrase) (Williamson,1985: xxiv; Blenkinsopp,1988:42); (2) the inventory of temple vessels (1:9-11) (Williamson,1985: xxiv; Blenkinsopp,1988:42); (3) the list of those returning (chap. 2, a compilation of those who returned during the first twenty years or so of Achaemenid rule) (Williamson,1985:xxiv; Blenkinsopp,1988:42; Fensham,1982:4), which could have been in the archives (Fensham,1982:4); (4) Ezra 3-4:5 might have been derived from an oral source of the early history of the exiles after their return from Babylon (Fensham,1982:4); (5) two letters which the editor summarizes at 4:6 and 7 (Williamson,1985: xxiv). He may have used part of the information contained in these letters in his writing of 4:1-3 (Williamson,1985: xxiv); (6) a letter in Aramaic from Rehum and others to Artaxerxes (4:8-16) (Williamson,1985:xxiv; Blenkinsopp,1988:42); (7) Artaxerxes' reply (4:17-22) (Williamson,1985:xxiv; Blenkinsopp,1988:42); (8) a letter from Tattenai to Darius (5:6-17) (Williamson,1985:xxiv; Blenkinsopp,1988:42) and (9) Darius' reply (6:3-12), which included a transcript of a separate decree of Cyrus (vv 3-5) (Williamson,1985:xxiv; Blenkinsopp,1988:42).

Thirdly, in addition to the above stated sources, the editor would, of course, have been familiar with such relevant biblical material as is found, for instance, in Haggai and Zech 1-8 (Williamson,1985:xxiv; Blenkinsopp,1988:42). It is suggested that nearly all the narrative framework that links these sources together was derived by common sense from the information that the documents would themselves have included in their original form. Naturally, they were read in the light of the editor's prevailing ideology and purpose, such as his desire to present the return from exile as a second Exodus (Williamson,1985:xxiv). Likewise, Brockington states that,

> In the Temple (or state) archives he would probably find some record of the decree of Cyrus and a list of the Temple vessels that were returned. From the Aramaic document used by him he would learn that Sheshbazzar was a leading figure at the beginning of the return period,

and from the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah he would know something of the work of Zerubbabel and Joshua, and above all he could draw freely on the memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was from these sources, some official and some not, that he drew his material and welded it into a story, shaping it according to his own interests and convictions (Brockington,1971:13).

Accordingly, Williamson (1983,1-30) has argued that Ezra 1-6 was composed subsequently to the combination of the Ezra and Nehemiah records, and that therefore it represents the final stage in the formation of the book (Blenkinsopp,1988:43;Williamson,1985:xxxiv). Thus, in sum, Williamson states that "only after the composition of Ezra 7-Neh 13 was complete was Ezra 1-6 added" (Williamson,1985:xxxiv).

Furthermore, Williamson explains the history of the final composition as follows. The process, he argues, must start with

> the combination of the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs. The same process demands, however, the inclusion of most of the rest of the material in Neh 9-12: chaps.8-10 are a carefully constructed compilation around the theme of covenant renewal; 11:1-2 and its dependent list are clearly intended as a narrative continuation of 7:4-5; the splicing of other material into Nehemiah's account of the dedication of the wall (12:27-43) is most reasonably to be taken as apart of this same editorial activity, and 12:44-13:3 is consciously placed to introduce the remainder of the Nehemiah Memoirs. In fact, only 11:21-12:26 cannot be regarded as part of this major phase in the book's composition (Williamson,1985:xxxiv).

Consequently, the editor was careful to arrange his material in a panel fashion (Ezra 7-10; Neh 1-7; Neh 8-10; Neh 11-13) in order to suggest that the work of reform was a unity theologically, even if it was separated and carried through by two men historically. Furthermore, in giving new direction to his contemporaries, he showed that physical restoration and even separation from "enemies" and "foreigners" were but the prerequisite for the reception of the Law and response to it (Williamson,1985:xxxiv).

Let us now summarise the process of final editing of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. Two basic stages are to be identified in the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah. First, the writing of the various primary sources. Second, the combination of the Ezra Memoirs, Nehemiah Memoirs, and other sources to form Ezra 7:1-Neh 11:20. Nehemiah 12:27-13:31 (11:21-12:26 were added separately), and the later

addition of the introduction in Ezra 1-6.

Having argued that Ezra and Nehemiah are the authors of the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs respectively, and that the final editor used these memoirs and other material to form the final Ezra-Nehemiah text, we then move on, in the next subsection, to try to establish who the final editor of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah could have been.

4.2.5 Author(s) of final document

In this section we will analyse two possibilities on who the final editor of the Ezra-Nehemiah text could be. The first possibility is that Ezra is the final editor. Secondly, it has been suggested that an unknown Jew is in fact the final redactor. Below we examine each of these possibilities, beginning with the first.

4.2.5.1 Ezra is the author of Ezra-Nehemiah

In regard to the authorship of Ezra and Nehemiah, several scholars (Keil,1950; Albright,1921; Torrey, 1970; Kidner,1979; Breneman,1993) believe that Ezra was the compiler of the Ezra-Nehemiah text (Van Groningen,1980:175; Constable,1995:114; Cave,1993:14). The view that Ezra is the author of Ezra-Nehemiah was originally stated in extra-biblical material, *Baba Bathra* 15a (We hinted at this when we discussed the unity of Ezra-Nehemiah). Chief advocates of this view are Albright (1921) and Torrey (1970). Both Albright (1921) and Torrey (1970) accepted that the style of the Ezra memoirs and their viewpoint are identical with those of the Chronicler (Fensham,1982:2). Thus Albright presumed that the Jewish tradition in the Babylonian Talmud was in principle correct (Fensham,1982:2). It seems to me that the advocates of this view see both Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles as one book written by the same person, namely Ezra. For us to accept this argument would be to reopen the already concluded debate that Ezra-Nehemiah is distinct from Chronicles.

C F Keil sees Ezra as the author. He argues that,

> If this book is a single one, *i.e.* the work of one author, there can be no reasonable doubt that

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that author was Ezra, the priest and scribe, who in chapters 7-10 narrates his return from Babylon to Jerusalem, and the circumstances of his ministry there, neither its language nor contents exhibiting any traces of a later date. Its historical character is accurate (Keil,1950:14).

Keil's statement above raises several issues. Firstly, he does not seem to offer evidence for his claims that Ezra is the author. Secondly, he seems to assume that since Ezra-Nehemiah is a single book, then it follows that its author should be Ezra. The fact that Ezra's name is attached to the book as its author in both the Masoretic and Septuagint texts does not necessarily mean that Ezra was indeed the author of Ezra-Nehemiah. Thirdly, he takes the historicity (though we know that historicity and authorship are separate issues) of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah at face value, i.e. as "accurate". Scholars have recently challenged the "accuracy" of this text, based on both biblical and extra-biblical arguments.

The advocates of the view that Ezra is the final author of Ezra-Nehemiah do not take into consideration the fact that though the book of Ezra-Nehemiah is a unity, compiled by the same author, there are visible stylistic differences within the text of Ezra-Nehemiah (Vanderkam,1993:64-5). Schrader has argued that the change of the person in the Ezra memoirs, from first person to the third person points to later editing of certain parts of the book of Ezra. They argue that this shows that the second part of the book was not composed by Ezra himself, but that some other historian merely made use of a record by Ezra, giving it verbally in chapter 8 and 9, and in chapter 7 and 10 relating Ezra's return from Babylon, and the conclusion of the transaction concerning the unlawful marriages, in his own words, but with careful employment of the said record (Keil,1950:11-12).

We need to state here that the view that Ezra was the author has not been followed by many modern scholars. At the moment those who argue that Ezra is the author of Ezra-Nehemiah have not presented convincing enough evidence to compel us to join them in their belief. We conclude therefore that Ezra may have contributed to the writing of certain sections of the book of Ezra, but he was certainly not the compiler or author or editor of the entire Ezra-Nehemiah text. If Ezra was not the compiler of Ezra-Nehemiah, who then was the author? We offer some clues in the next section.

4.2.5.2 Unknown author

In this subsection we discuss the possibility that the final text of Ezra-Nehemiah was compiled by an unknown Jew, who used the memoirs of both Ezra and Nehemiah, and also added his own section. Thus, Fensham argues that "it is not improbable that an unknown Jew, perhaps from the Priestly or Levitical circle, other than the Chronicler could have had the final word in Ezra-Nehemiah" (Fensham,1982:3; cf Ryle,1917:10). Anderson too states that the author's identity is unknown, and further that the final author must have been a "member of the temple staff, probably one of the priestly order known as Levites" (Anderson,1984:475).

Keil captures the views of those who argue that an unknown author wrote Ezra-Nehemiah, when he says,

> The Ezra-Nehemiah text is said to have been composed and edited by some unknown author about 200 years after Ezra, partly from an older Chaldee history of the building of the temple and of the walls of Jerusalem, partly from a record drawn up by Ezra himself of his agency in Jerusalem, and from certain other public documents. The evidence in favour of this hypothesis is derived, first, from the fact that not only the official letters to the Persian kings, and their decrees (iv. 8-22, v. 6-17, vi. 6-12, vii. 12-26), but also a still longer section on the building of the temple (v. 23-vi. 18), are written in the Chaldee, and the remaining portions in the Hebrew language; next, from the diversity of its style, its lack of internal unity, and its want of finish and, finally, from the circumstance that the book of Ezra had from of old been combined with that of Nehemiah as one book (Keil,1950:6).

The view that Ezra-Nehemiah was written by an unknown Jew has not so far been seriously challenged. I personally think that this view, if accepted, could possibly explain some stylistic differences between Ezra and Nehemiah, without questioning the unity of the text. We therefore accept this view as our working position throughout this research. Thus, in chapter 5, we analyse the ideologies, not only of the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs, but also of the final editor.

4.2.6 Conclusion

The unknown Jew who wrote Ezra-Nehemiah may have been a returnee himself or he may have had close associations with the returned exiles. When he wrote Ezra-Nehemiah, he probably used these two figures (Ezra and Nehemiah) as they were regarded in very high esteem by the returned exiles, in view of their responsibilities in leading the Babylonian exiles back home to Palestine. Ezra and Nehemiah would not only be respected by later generations for the rebuilding projects they led, but also for other reconstruction measures they undertook.

Our discussions in this section set the stage for exploring several theories about both Ezra and Nehemiah's possible dates of arrival in Jerusalem, and about the possible date(s) of the writing of various stages of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah.

4.3 DATE

4.3.0 Introduction

In the previous subsection we have argued that Ezra-Nehemiah was compiled by the same author, and that the author was an unknown Jew, who used several sources, including the memoirs of both Ezra and Nehemiah in his composition. In this subsection we attempt to suggest possible dates for the compilation or composition of the Ezra-Nehemiah text. However, in order to achieve the above stated goal, we will have first of all, to suggest possible dates for the arrival in Jerusalem of both Ezra and Nehemiah.

4.3.1 The historical arrival of Ezra and Nehemiah in Jerusalem

The question in this section is: When historically did Ezra and Nehemiah arrive in Jerusalem? In order to answer this question, we explore three possibilities. The first is a traditional one, namely that Ezra arrived in 458 B.C., while Nehemiah arrived in 445 B.C. The second possibility is the reversal order, in that it holds that Nehemiah arrived in 445 B.C., while Ezra arrived in 398 B.C., while the

third possibility is the intermediate order, in that it maintains that Nehemiah arrived in 445 B.C., while Ezra arrived in 438 B.C. We will start with the first possibility.

4.3.1.1 Ezra arrived in 458 B.C., before Nehemiah (445 B.C.)

The first view to be considered is the traditional order. The traditional view holds that Ezra arrived in Jerusalem from Babylon in "the seventh year of King Artaxerxes" (Ezra 7:7-8). If this ruler was indeed Artaxerxes I (465-424 B.C.), this would be 458 B.C. Then Nehemiah's return, which is reasonably secure, occurred some thirteen years latter in 445 B.C. (Throntveit,1989:1; Fensham,1982:6; Wright,1946:6; Bracy,1988:47). It is clear therefore that the traditional order presents a chronological sequence of events which its proponents, both internally within the canonical accounts and externally with known historical facts, have held to be accurate and consistent (Bracy,1988:47). Two basic presuppositions support the traditional view. The first one, is a theological presupposition; and the second one is an historical presupposition. They are both dependent upon each other (Bracy,1988:47).

The theological presupposition held by the proponents of this school of thought is that the canonical account is inherently and unequivocally accurate. In other words, what is stated in the canonical text is true and must be accepted as the truth. Therefore, since the text states that Ezra came to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes and Nehemiah came in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, Ezra must have preceded Nehemiah to Jerusalem. Ezra and Nehemiah also must have worked together in their efforts to reform Jewish society since the text links their names together in several passages. For the proponents of the "traditional order" any other interpretation of the canonical text at these two points violates a basic theological doctrine of scripture: that the Word of God is without error (Bracy,1988:47-8).

The historical presupposition of the "traditional order" focuses on the identity of the Persian king Artaxerxes who is mentioned in both Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Artaxerxes I Longimanus is unanimously identified as this Persian king by those scholars who hold this view (Bracy,1988:48).

In addition this, three major areas of the "traditional order" need to be examined, namely (1) the person and role of Ezra; (2) the person and role of Nehemiah; and, (3) the identity of the king Artaxerxes. It must be remembered that the basic starting point for this school of thought is the veracity of the canonical record. As stated by J. Carl Laney:

> The bottom line in this chronological issue is whether or not the Bible is to be accepted as it stands, for it communicates quite clearly that Ezra began his career in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:7) and that Nehemiah arrived on the scene in the twentieth year of the same king (Neh.1:1; 2:1) (Laney,1982:11; Bracy,1988:48-9).

Firstly, the traditional order holds that Ezra "was a scribe in the law of Moses" who "came to Jerusalem in the fifth month which was in the seventh year of the king [Artaxerxes]". It was Ezra's desire "to teach [God's] statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). The king granted this task in an official decree. Contrary to those who deny the historicity of Ezra, the proponents of the "traditional order" view Ezra as a "real" historical person (Bracy,1988:49).

Secondly, with the account of the successful reforms of Ezra completed, the canonical writer proceeded to relate the account of Nehemiah's mission to Jerusalem. As recorded in the canonical text, the "traditional order" holds that the story of Nehemiah begins "in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year" (Bracy,1988:58). The exact time when Nehemiah "came to Jerusalem" is, however uncertain as no specific date is given (see Neh. 2:11). Two efforts have been made by scholars who accept the "traditional order" to clarify when Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem (Bracy,1988:61). The first is by the ancient Jewish historian Josephus who states that "when he [Nehemiah] was come to Babylon, and had taken with him many of his countrymen, who voluntarily followed him, he came to Jerusalem in the twentieth and fifth year of the reign of Xerxes" (Bracy,1988:61). Fensham argues that Nehemiah would not have delayed his trip to Jerusalem (Fensham,1982:163). A second possibility, suggested by Kidner (1979), is that Nehemiah made two trips to Jerusalem within a year of his petition of the king. Kidner further states that during the first trip, the king's letters were delivered to the various governors and the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt and dedicated. Nehemiah then returned to Susa, made his report to the king, and had his appointment as governor renewed. Thereafter he returned to Jerusalem. Thus, the "twelve years" of Neh. 5:14 incorporates both trips (Bracy,1988:61). It is clear that Kidner (1979:81) means that Nehemiah made three trips to Jerusalem

since Neh. 13:6-7 indicates that "in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon [Nehemiah] had gone to the king [and] after some time [had returned] to Jerusalem". While this is possible, we are not aware of any other scholars who hold such a view.

While both possibilities of Josephus and Kidner are feasible, it appears that Josephus' account is more accurate. Archaeological findings have provided increasing confirmation of Josephus' writings. Tuland (1974,1966) also argues that "a critical study of the 11th book of Antiquities shows the credibility of several details which he [Josephus] reports" (Tuland,1974:52; Tuland,1966:176-92). Josephus' account seems to be consistent with the canonical record, while Kidner's position is primarily based upon arguments of silence (Bracy,1988:62).

The third issue is the identity of Artaxerxes. According to the records of the Persian kings three rulers are listed as being : (1) Artaxerxes I Longimanus, 465-424 B.C.; (2) Artaxerxes II Mnemon, 404-358 B.C.; and, (3) Artaxerxes III, 358-338 B.C. It is unlikely that Artaxerxes III could have been the king referred to in the canonical text since he did not rule for a period of thirty-two years which is necessary to account for Nehemiah's second mission (cf.Neh.5:14; 13:6; Bracy,1988:77-8).

Those scholars who hold the "traditional order" identify this Artaxerxes as Artaxerxes I Longimanus (Bracy,1988:78). However, nowadays scholars who hold the "traditional order" have found it necessary to expand their arguments. Even though they do not disregard the canonical record, it is still their starting point. They have used extra-canonical evidences to buttress their arguments (Bracy,1988:78).

Edward Young, for example, uses the Elephantine papyri as the basis of his arguments and works backwards in time to identify Artaxerxes I Longimanus as the king of Ezra and Nehemiah (Bracy,1988:78-79). This is based on the fact that during the latter years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, a collection of papyri was purchased in Egypt. It has since emerged that all of these papyri, some of which have been well preserved, came from a Jewish military colony which existed on Elephantine, an island in the Nile opposite the Egyptian city of Assuan (Aswan). Legal documents, marriage certificates, deeds of property, and even religious letters

are found in these papyri. Written in Aramaic and Hebrew, these papyri date from 495 B.C. to the end of the fifth century. From the papyri, it was learned that a temple of Yahu, a variation of the God-name Yahweh, stood in Elephantine during the fifth century. The destruction of this temple in 410 B.C., by the Egyptians is revealed in a letter sent to a certain "Bagoas, governor of Judaea". This particular papyrus has since come to hold a significant position in Ezra-Nehemiah studies. This papyrus dated 407 B.C. is a well-preserved copy with writing on both sides (Cook,1915:346-82; Cowley,1923; Pritchard,1955; Rowley,1958:256-69; Bracy,1988:79-80).

In the Elephantine papyri there is mention of a certain "Johanan, the High Priest" (Bracy,1988:79-80). The Papyrus text reads:

> We have also sent a letter before now, when this evil [the destruction of the temple] was done to us, to our lord and to the high priest Johanan and his colleagues the priests in Jerusalem and to Ostanes the brother of Anani and the nobles of the Jews.

This letter is dated "on the 20th of Marheshwan, year 17 of King Darius" (i.e., 407 B.C.). It should be noted that a previous letter had been sent before this particular one, to Jahana, the high priest, but no reply had been received (Pritchard,1955:491-92). In Ezra 10:6, the name, "Jehohanan, the son of Eliashib," is recorded; then, in Neh, 3:1, "Eliashib the high priest" is mentioned. Young argues that this Jehohanan (Johanan) was a grandson of Eliashib and that Nehemiah was a contemporary of Eliashib (Bracy,1988:78-9). Using the date of the Elephantine Papyri (407 B.C.) as his basis, Young works backwards from Johanan to Eliashib and then from Nehemiah to Ezra. Since according to the Ezra-Nehemiah text, Ezra preceded Nehemiah, his mission to Jerusalem must have been in 458 B.C. and the mission of Nehemiah in 445 B.C. (Young,1956:384; Bracy,1988:79-80).

Cross (1975) also uses extra-canonical evidence to identify the Persian king in question as Artaxerxes I Longimanus. His chronology is based on a fourth-century papyrus from Daliyeh which was discovered in 1962 (Daliyeh,1969:41-62). This papyrus refers to a certain "Sanballat, governor of Samariah" whom Cross identifies as the one mentioned in the canonical record (Neh. 4:1; 6:1) as a contemporary of Nehemiah (Daliyeh,1969:41-62). Cross uses the practice of "papponymy, the naming of a child after his grandfather, to reconstruct the sequence of both the Samaritan governors and the Jewish high priests of this period" (Cross,1975:10-11). He concludes, "This reconstruction

solves all chronological problems..., it places the mission of Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I, 458 B.C., and the mission of Nehemiah in 445 B.C., the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I" (Cross,1975:10-11; Bracy,1988:80).

To sum up, we want to state that the past quarter of a century has seen the validity of the "traditional order" increase in favour among biblical scholars. As Tadmor (1976) notes, "A more optimistic appreciation of the biblical presentation seems to be gaining ground" (Tadmor,1976:174). Recent archaeological findings and textual studies have strengthened the arguments of the "traditional order" that Ezra preceded Nehemiah to Jerusalem. LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush summarise this positive approach to the Ezra-Nehemiah story as presented in the canonical text:

> None of the facts presented nor the problems alleged present either compelling reasons for doubting the contemporaneity of Ezra and Nehemiah or valid objections to the order clearly presupposed by the biblical text...No tangible evidence necessitates dating Ezra after Nehemiah (LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush,1982:651; Bracy,1988:82-3).

Although admittedly certain problems remain with the traditional view, it is by far the more satisfactory solution because the text as transmitted is kept intact and the sequence of the different chapters is accepted as a reliable guide to the chronology (Fensham,1982:9).

We now move on to explore the second possibility.

4.3.1.2 Nehemiah arrived in 445 B.C., while Ezra arrived in 398 B.C.

The second view has been duped the "reversal order" (Bracy,1988:84). As the name suggests, this school of thought reverses the traditional chronological order of Ezra and Nehemiah. Scholars of this school still date the mission of Nehemiah as having occured in 445 B.C. during the reign of Artaxerxes I Longimanus. The mission of Ezra is however, dated by them as being 398 B.C. during the reign of Artaxerxes II Mnemon (Throntveit,1989:1-2; Bracy,1988:84).

During the years of study of this issue, an impressive array of arguments were compiled by scholars to support the "reversal order." Albin van Hoonacker's initial work is the basic foundation of these

arguments (Bracy,1988:87-8). Below, we consider six of these arguments to support the "reversal order".

The first of these arguments is the textual rearrangement. The basic argument of Van Hoonacker is that the text has been rearranged by the Chronicler in such a manner that it only appears that Ezra preceded Nehemiah. Van Hoonacker lists five factors which attest to this arrangement: (1) the books of Ezra and Nehemiah have been relocated in the [Hebrew] canon from their original place at the end of Chronicles; (2) insertions or changes in the order of the texts are easy to recognize in such chapters as Nehemiah 1-3 and 7-13, and particularly in Ezra 4 where difficulties during the reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes I are inserted in the story of the reconstruction of the temple during the times of Cyrus and Darius I; (3) Ezra 7-10 has no points of reference to either Ezra 1-6 or the Book of Nehemiah; (4) there is a close analogy between Ezra 1-6 and 7-10; and, (5) the statement that the events of Ezra 7-10 occurred in the seventh year of Artaxerxes while the activities of Nehemiah 1-12 occurred in the twentieth year appears to indicate the prior presence of Ezra although there is no clarity as to whether it was the same Artaxerxes who reigned during these two periods (Hoonacker,1923:486; Bracy,1988:88).

The second argument is the contemporary roles of Ezra and Nehemiah. The absence of Ezra in Nehemiah 10 led Van Hoonacker to an interesting conclusion. Contrary to the fairly common view that Ezra was dead by the time of Nehemiah's second mission to Jerusalem, Van Hoonacker believes that Ezra was still alive and aware of Nehemia's second attempt to reform the mixed marriage issue (Neh. 13:23-30). Later, in 398 B.C., Ezra returned to Jerusalem and carried out his reforms (Ezra 9,10). He had laid the groundwork for this many years earlier in the initial reforms which are recorded in Nehemiah 8 (Bracy,1988:90).

According to Van Hoonacker, the great fame of Ezra in Jewish tradition can be understood only if he came in 398 B.C. after Nehemiah. It was Nehemiah who had done such mighty deeds as rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and overcoming the enemies of the Jews. It is understood that for Ezra to have been remembered, Nehemiah must have already passed from the scene (Bracy,1988:90).

The third argument is the population of Jerusalem. Those scholars who believe that Nehemiah preceded Ezra base their argument on the population of Jerusalem within the post-exilic Jewish community. Upon reading the text it becomes evident that they were very distinct differences, both in composition and size, in the population during the times of Nehemiah and Ezra (Bracy,1988:95). Wright explains what the text says about the population size:

> in Ezra 10:1 we read of 'a very great congregation' that assembled in Jerusalem. Yet in the time of Nehemiah, Nehemiah himself records that there were only a few people living in the city (Ne.vii.4). A sudden drop in the population between the time of Ezra and that of Nehemiah is unlikely. If, on the other hand, Ezra lived after Nehemiah had induced the people to settle in Jerusalem, then Ezra's great congregation is perfectly understandable (Wright,1946:7).

Similarly, in his arguments, Van Hoonacker contends that the population of Jerusalem during the missions of Nehemiah and Ezra affirms the priority of Nehemiah. The text of Neh. 7:4 states: "Now the city was large and spacious but the people in it were few and the houses were not built". Then, in Neh. 11:1-2, the text reveals how Nehemiah resolved this situation by repopulating Jerusalem (Bracy,1988:95). Contrary to this shortage of people living in Jerusalem in Nehemiah's time, Van Hoonacker notes that the text apparently indicates that the city was heavily populated in the days of Ezra. Although Ezra 9:4 is rather general, Ezra 10:1 states that "a very large assembly, men, women, and children, gathered to him [Ezra] from Israel;..." According to Van Hoonacker, this "very large assembly" was the result of Nehemiah's successful effort to repopulate Jerusalem. He also points out that the repopulation of the city could not have occurred until after the walls had been rebuilt (Hoonacker,1923:45; Bracy,1988:95)

The fourth argument is about the wall of Jerusalem. When Nehemiah was first visited in Susa by the envoy of messengers from Jerusalem, he was told that "the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire" (Neh. 1:3); his subsequent inspection of the wall confirmed the report (Neh. 2:13). Nehemiah's successful efforts to rebuild the wall secured a place of honor for himself in Jewish annals (Sir. 49:13; Bracy,1988:97). However, "Ezra's Memoirs" indicate that the wall of Jerusalem had existed since the time of Ezra. In his prayer, Ezra recalls the goodness of God and gives thanks that God had revived a remnant "to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins, and to give us a wall ['gader'] in Judah and Jerusalem" (Ezra 9:9; Wright,1946:7; Hoonacker,1923:

56). Van Hoonacker notes that in his prayer Ezra expressed the idea that a safe place to live had been given to the people. On the contrary, the text indicates that such a peaceful condition did not exist in 458 B.C., because at that time the Jews were forcefully prevented from rebuilding Jerusalem (Ezra 4:7-24). Therefore, to Van Hoonacker, this incongruity is further evidence that Nehemiah preceded Ezra to Jerusalem. How else could there be a "wall" in Jerusalem in the time of Ezra? (Hoonacker, 1923:56; Bracy,1988:97).

Van Hoonacker also questions the seeming lack of concern by Ezra about the deplorable conditions in Jerusalem if the city was still in ruins at the times of his mission. Since "the king [had] granted him [Ezra] all he requested" (Ezra 7:6), surely Ezra would have requested the authority to rebuild the city walls! However, the edict of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11-26) dealt only with the temple and the laws of God: there is not a single reference to the restitution of the city walls or the houses of the people (Bracy,1988:98).

The fifth argument concerns the marital reforms. According to the canonical text, Ezra was confronted by the princes of Jerusalem after he had completed the deliverance of the king's edicts to the governors of the surrounding provinces. They informed Ezra,

> ...the people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the land, according to their abominations, those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the land; indeed, the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness (Ezra 9:1-2.).

Extremely shocked by their report, Ezra did not waste any time in correcting this blatant violation of God's law (Bracy,1988:100-1). Nehemiah also dealt with the same issue during both his first and second missions to Jerusalem (Bracy,1988:100-1). Van Hoonacker disagrees with this sequence of events. He could not reconcile the harsh actions of Ezra with the subsequent reoccurrence of the same situation only thirteen years later, at the time of Nehemiah's first mission (Bracy,1988:101).

The final argument is about the historical points of reference. Proponents of the reversal order also point to several "facts" of history as proof of their view. They correlate various historical events and

persons to provide a logical sequence for the priority of Nehemiah's mission in 445 B.C (Bracy,1988: 104-5). One of these historical proofs was the political situation which existed within the Persian Empire in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (458 B.C.). Led by Inaros, Egypt had revolted against Persian control and had gained control of the entire Delta region. Supported by their Athenian allies, the Egyptians maintained their freedom until 454 B.C. However, Artaxerxes I's defeat of the Athenian fleet at Mendesian forced the Athenians to end their support of Egypt, without which the Egyptians were soon defeated (Bracy,1988:105-6). Van Hoonacker argues that this period of warfare would have precluded the support of Artaxerxes I for Ezra's mission in 458 B.C. Instead of granting Ezra "all the silver and gold which you shall find in the whole province of Babylon" (Ezra 7:16), Van Hoonacker believes that all the resources and attention would have been absorbed by the wars with Egypt and Persia (Bracy,1988:105-6). Edwin Yamauchi (1980:12), however, argues that the situation in Egypt would have made it desirable for the Persians to have a friendly ally (i.e. Ezra) in Palestine at this time (Yamauchi,1980:12). Only after peace was achieved by the Treaty of Callias (448 B.C.) would Artaxerxes I have been free to support any type of mission to Jerusalem. It is therefore understandable why Artaxerxes I readily supported Nehemiah in 445 B.C. (Hoonacker,1924:46). A rebuilt and reorganized Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah, the royal cupbearer, would have strengthened the position of the Persians in the western part of their Empire (Bracy,1988:105-6). Such a policy by the Persians was widespread. Historical records have revealed that there were several military garrisons manned by Jewish soldiers in the services of the Persians. One of them was the fortress of Daphnae ("Tapanes" cf. Jer. 44:1) which was located in Egypt's Delta region. Another Jewish garrison in Egypt was at Elephantine near the southern border of Egypt (Bracy,1988:105-6).

Furthermore, Van Hoonacker points to the succession list of high priests (Neh.12:10-11, 12) as further historical evidence that supports his chronology. If the Eliashib of Neh. 12:10, 22 is the same Eliashib who is the high priest of Neh. 3:1, then he was a contemporary of Nehemiah. Eliashib was succeeded by Joiada who in turn was succeeded by Johanan (Bracy,1988:106). So Van Hoonacker was to identify Jehonanan the son of Eliaship (Ezra 10:6). He believes that Jonathan (Neh. 12:11), Johanan (Neh. 12:22), and Johanan the son of Eliashib (Neh. 12: 23) were the same as Johanan the son of Eliashib (Neh. 12:23) (Hoonacker,1924:51-53). Rowley (1952 :45-50) also argues that the Jehohanan of Ezra 10:6 is the same person as the Jonathan of Neh. 12:11. Rowley states that "it is

simplest to regard Jonathan of verse 11 as a scribal slip for Johanan [since] the difference in the Hebrew is very slight" (Rowley,1952:45-50). Since Jehohanan and Johanan are forms of the same name, and as *ben* can refer to either "son" or "grandson", this correlation of names may be valid (Rowley,1952:45-50). For Van Hoonacker, the absence of the title, "high priest," in Ezra 10:6 indicates that this Jehohanan was sufficiently known to tradition that the author (Chronicler) did not consider it necessary to use the formal title (Bracy,1988:106).

Van Hoonacker next identifies the Jehohanan of Ezra 10:6 as the same high priest Johanan who is mentioned in the Elephantine Papyrus. Since this papyrus document is dated about 407 B.C., Ezra must be in Jerusalem about the same time. Van Hoonacker also identifies "Bagoas, governor of Judah," who is mentioned in the Elephantine Papyri as the same "Bagoses, the general of another Artaxerxes' army," referred to by Josephus (Josephus, 1960:243). Hoonacker (1924:52) believes that this reference to "another Artaxerxes" refers to Artaxerxes II (Hoonacker,1924:52). This dual identification of Johanan and Bagoas thus confirms, at least for Van Hoonacker, Ezra's date in Jerusalem as 398 B.C. (Bracy,1988:107)

Rowley also uses Josephus's evidence as supportive evidence of the "reversal order". Josephus (1960) identifies a certain Jaddua as high priest in Jerusalem during the time of Alexander the Great, 330 B.C. (Josephus,1960:243). Hoonacker (1924:52) also believes that it was Ezra who had put an end to the penalty imposed on the Jews by Bagoses since Artaxerxes had granted him an exemption from any cultic tax (Ezra 7:24; Hoonacker,1924:52). Rowley believes this Jaddua to be the same as the one referred to in Neh. 12:22 (Rowley, 1952:150). He then works backward to date Nehemiah and Ezra in 444 B.C. and 358 B.C., respectively (Rowley,1952:150).

We therefore note that individually, the arguments of Van Hoonacker and other scholars of the "reversal order" school of thought can be, and have been, attacked as invalid. However, the cumulative evidence is strong, and "in the balance of probabilities the scales still seem to come down on the side of Van Hoonacker's view" (Rowley,1952:159). The correlation of the high priests, the enemies of Nehemiah, and the use of the Elephantines Papyri as a chronological base line, provide strong support for the validity of the "reversal order" (Bracy,1988:110).

4.3.1.3 Nehemiah arrived in 445 B.C., with Ezra arriving in 438 B.C.

Some scholars have proposed a third alternative called the "intermediate order." There are three main tenets of this school of thought: Firstly, it holds that both Ezra and Nehemiah came to Jerusalem during the reign of Artaxerxes I (465-405 B.C.) (Bracy,1988:111-2). Secondly, it has been maintained that Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 445 B.C., "the twentieth year of Artaxerxes"; however, Ezra did not come to Jerusalem until either 438 B.C., "the twenty-seventh year", or 428 B.C., the "thirty-seventh year" (Bracy,1988:111-2). Kosters (1895:95-116) assigned a third date, 432 B.C., to the mission of Ezra. He held that Ezra came to Jerusalem two years after Nehemiah had returned to Artaxerxes on his second trip in 434 B.C. (cf. Neh. 5:14, 13: 6). This view was shared by Bertholet (1902:30). Albright briefly ascribed to this date, but later rejected it (see Abright,1932:219). Thirdly, this view holds that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries in their work during part of their respective missions to Jerusalem (Bracy,1988:111-2).

It is to be noted that those scholars who hold this view have attempted to retain the contemporaneity of Ezra and Nehemiah as is recorded in the canonical text (Bracy,1988:111)[79]. However, in their efforts to correlate extracanonical sources, such as the Elephantine Papyri, with canonical passages, such as the lists of priests (Neh. 12:23-26) or the temple treasures (Neh. 11:6; 13:13; Ezra 8:33), the proponents of the "intermediate order" have not been able to accept the priority of Ezra (Bracy,1988:111-2).

Although there are several arguments set forth by the proponents of this school of thought, the central pillar of the "intermediate order" is textual emendation (Bracy,1988:112). Textual emendation is the alteration of a text with the purpose to correct or improve the text. As a methodology of textual criticism it is an attempt to reconstruct the original wording of a text. This is accomplished through

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[79] In most cases, this has caused these scholars to reject the late date of 398 B.C. for Ezra. Albright, for example, initially accepted Van Hoonacker's date of 398 B.C. for Ezra (See Albright,1921:104-24; also Albright,1940:248). However, Albright was not dogmatic about Van Hoonacker's date. He allowed that a date for Ezra at a time near the end of Artaxerxes I's reign was possible (See Albright,1940:335).

the comparison of existing manuscripts (Soulen,1976:161-63). Julius Wellhausen was the first to propose that Ezra might have come to Jerusalem between the two missions of Nehemiah. He noted that the "seventh year" of Ezra 7:7, 8 might have read originally as the "twenty-seventh year"; i.e.,438 B.C. (Wellhausen,1970:166-86; Torrey,1970:15-16; Fensham,1982:8; Bracy,1988:112).

Several other scholars have accepted Wellhausen's date of 438 B.C. for Ezra. Thomas Cheyne argues that Ezra did not precede Nehemiah to Jerusalem since Nehemiah found no Babylonian element in the population of Judah (Cheyne and Black, eds.,1902). Robert Kennett believes that Ezra came to Jerusalem through the influence of Nehemiah who had realised during his first mission that there was a dire need for a purified priesthood in Jerusalem. Therefore, when he returned to the king at Susa (443 B.C.) Nehemiah persuaded Artaxerxes I to allow Ezra to lead a second company of Jewish exiles back to Jerusalem (438 B.C.). This group included a number of the Levites (cf. Ezra 8:15-20) which were required to help bring about the necessary religious reforms[80] (Kennett,1901:122-24; Bracy,1988:112-3).

Albright assumes that the "seventh year" of Ezra 7:7 was haplography of the "thirty-seventh year." Since three consecutive words in the assumed text begin with the Hebrew letter *shin* (שׁ), an error by a copyist may have occurred (Albright,1949:112; Bracy,1988:113-4)[81]. In addition to his argument based on haplography[82], Albright believes that indirect evidences based on archaeological discoveries, particularly the Elephantine Papyri and the Jehoiachin Tablets, support the "intermediate order". Albright leans heavily upon the Elephantine Papyri documents in his discussion of the identity and dating of the Chronicler, as well as the Aramaic portions of the Ezra-Nehemiah text

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[80] See also, Kennett (1928:85,107). It should be noted that Kennett believes Nehemiah's first mission (445 B.C.) to the city of Jerusalem was a short one and only the rebuilding of the city walls occurred during it.

[81] Leeseberg (1962:86) notes that "there is at least one such loss of a part of a number known in the Bible (I Sam. 13:1)" (Leeseberg,1962:86).

[82] "Haplography" is the name of an error in manuscript copying in which a syllable, word, or line is omitted by accidental oversight because of the identity of similarity of adjacent material (Soulen,1976:72).

(Albright, 1921:104-24). From the Jehoiachin Tablets, Albright attempts to ascertain the dates of the births of the sons of King Jehoiachin. These dates are significant to Albright as he tries to correlate the identity of the Davidide Hattush who returned to Jerusalem with Ezra (Ezra 8:2) with the Hattush who is a descendant of Jehoiachin (I Chron.3:22). Albright uses the Jehoiachin Tablets to identify Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:8, 11; 5:14, 16) and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel (Ezra3:1, 2; 5:2; Neh.12:1; Hag.1:1,12,14;2:2,21,23;Zech.4:6,7,10) (Albright,1942:49-55; Albright,1946:6-9; Bracy,1988:114-5).

Albright further points to supposed contradictions in the canonical text to support the view that Nehemiah preceded Ezra to Jerusalem. The ruins of the city, as well as the social and religious reforms of Nehemiah, presuppose Nehemiah's priority. Utilizing the Elephantine Papyri, Albright identifies Jehohanan the son of Eliashib (Ezra 10: 6) as the son of the high priest Eliashib in the days of Nehemiah. Therefore, Nehemiah must have preceded Ezra since Ezra stayed in the "chamber of Jehohanan" (Ezra 10: 6)(Albright,1921:121-22). Albright relies heavily on the passage of Neh. 12:22-26 which lists in succession the names of the high-priests from the reign of Darius the Persian up to the "days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priest and scribe", as conclusive proof (Bracy,1988:115)[83].

Bright also questions the merits of dating Ezra in 398 B.C. as held by the proponents of the "reversal order." His arguments focus on several considerations: (1) the practice of certain Jewish cultic rituals in Elephantine (ca. 419 B.C.) before Ezra established such practices in Jerusalem; (2) the identity of Jehohanan be Eliashib (Ezra 10: 6) who Bright assumes to be the Johanan who murdered his brother in the Temple (Josephus, Ant., XI. 7.1.); and, (3) the identity and age of the Davidide Hattush who returned with Ezra (Ezra 8:2), the Shemaiah ben Shecaniah who was one of Nehemiah's builders (Neh. 3:29), and the Anani of 1 Chr. 3:24 who may be the Anani of the Elephantine letter of 407 B.C. These difficulties lead Bright to conclude that "a date for Ezra's coming in 398 seems, therefore, too

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[83] Albright (1921) makes the assumption that the *terminus ad quem* of the "high priest list" is during the reign of Artaxerxes Mnemon II.

late" (Bright,1981:400)[84].

After this exploration of the three possible explanations of the possible arrivals of both Ezra and Nehemiah in Jerusalem, we will offer a brief evaluation of each theory and then take a decision about which one we shall follow for our discussion throughout the research.

4.3.1.4 Evaluation of three possibilities

The complexity of the issue is evident. A brief evaluation of the three primary theories is necessary to lay the foundation for our decision (Bracy,1988:123).

4.3.1.4.1 The traditional order

This theory holds that Ezra came to Jerusalem in 458 B.C. and Nehemiah came in 445 B.C. Held by biblical scholars until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this theory has three major strong points: firstly, it follows the canonical text's sequence of events which sets forth the priority of Ezra; secondly, it acknowledges the historical existence of Ezra and Nehemiah; and, thirdly, it accepts the predominant roles that Ezra and Nehemiah played in the establishment of Judaism as historical fact. Overall, this theory holds to the veracity of the canonical text (Bracy,1988:124).

However, there are some weaknesses in the theory. The first weakness is the tacit assumption that the Persian king named in the text is Artaxerxes I Longimanus. Only in recent times have the proponents of the "traditional order" attempted to establish this identification as a fact. This was done by both Young (1956:384) and Cross (1969:41-62). Of course we acknowledge that Cross (1975:4-18) has been the major proponent of the "traditional order" to attempt this. A second weakness, at least until recent studies, has been this theory's failure to account satisfactorily for evidences gleaned from archaeology. Bracy urges those who seek to resolve this issue to consider all recent archaeological evidences (Bracy,1988:124).

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[84] Every point of Bright's view is challenged by Emerton (1966:1-19).

4.3.1.4.2 The reversal order

The first major strength of the reversal order is the emphasis placed upon an in-depth study of the text. Its aim here was to let the text provide its own answers to questions which scholars had. The second strength has been the attempt by the proponents of the "reversal order" to understand the roles of Nehemiah and Ezra more in theological terms rather than merely in historical terms. This has resulted in a greater recognition being given to their missions. Another strength of this theory is its usage of archaeological findings to substantiate its arguments (Bracy,1988:125-6).

There are, however, some weaknesses in the theory. Firstly, as part of its hypothesis is built on a textual error, this view does not provide textual-critical evidence at all to support it (Ackroyd,1970: 194; Fensham,1982:8). The outgrowth of the previously mentioned strength of viewing Nehemiah's and Ezra's roles in theological terms is another weakness of this theory. This had led some proponents to deny as historical fact certain figures and events which generally had been accepted as historical. This has been seen by critics of the reversal order as a major weakness of this theory (Bracy,1988:125-6). A similar weakness is that the proponents of the reversal order find it necessary to rearrange the text in order to make the theory plausible (Bracy,1988:125-6). The problem is that it presupposes a total reorganisation of the material of Ezra 7-10 and the whole of Nehemiah (Fensham,1982:8). Wright has argued that far too much has been read into the passages that are thought to support the predominance of Nehemiah over Ezra by the advocates of the reversal order (Wright,1946:9).

4.3.1.4.3 The intermediate order

The "intermediate order" is strengthened by the fact that its proponents try to correlate modern archaeological findings with the canonical text. Such efforts have forced present-day biblical scholars to search for more concrete answers to some of the issues raised by a careful study of the text. It is no longer sufficient just to assume an answer. For this, Albright, Bright, and others of this school are to be commended (Bracy,1988:37).

Here we need to note, however, that the strengths and weaknesses of this theory resembles those of the "reversal order". It appears though that the proponents of the "intermediate order" have a tendency to rely more on archaeological findings than methodologies of textual studies. It was their efforts to correlate the archaeological findings with the canonical text which led the proponents of this theory to date Nehemiah in 445 B.C and Ezra in 428 B.C (Bracy,1988:127).

Many scholars are of the opinion that the major weakness of this theory is its dependency upon textual emendation of Ezra 7:7 to support its arguments. Those who oppose of the "intermediate order" deny that there is any textual support for the supposed emendation (Bracy,1988:126). Although this hypothesis is very popular in modern research (Eissfeldt,1965:552-53), it is built on a very shaky foundation (Fensham,1982: 8-9). In the first place, no proof whatsoever exists that the Johanan mentioned in Ezra 10:6 is the same person as the grandson of Eliashib. Indeed, Eliashib could have had more than one son, and one of them could have been called Johanan, for this was a fairly common name in the fifth century (Fensham,1982:8).

Secondly, this hypothesis is build on the assumption that the mentioning of Nehemiah in the Ezra memoir and the reference to Ezra in the Nehemiah memoir must be regarded as later insertions when 'the Chronicler' became confused about the chronological sequence of the two men. Such a mistake so close to the history it describes is extremely unlikely (Fensham,1982:8-9). Furthermore, opponents of this theory, and the reversal order, disclaim the many textual reasons given for postdating Ezra (Bracy,1988:127).

4.3.1.5 Conclusion

For nearly a century it has been accepted, by both the proponents of the reversal order and the intermediate order, that Nehemiah preceded Ezra to Jerusalem. However, this seems to be changing. In the past couple of decades more scholars have shown favour towards the view that Ezra preceded Nehemiah, as is stated in the canonical text. The previous detailed arguments against the priority of Ezra are viewed as being without weight and do not substantiate wholesale rearrangements or emendations of the text (see Cross,1975:14; Smith,1971:122). Hayim Tadmor points out that "more

methodological problems are posed by assuming that Ezra came after Nehemiah than by accepting the view that he preceded Nehemiah" (Tadmor,1976:174).

Notwithstanding the challenges posed by both the reversal and the intermediate orders, when arguments and counter arguments are weighed, we will, in this study accept the traditional dating of the arrivals of Ezra and Nehemiah as 458 and 445 respectively. With these dates in mind we go on to the next section to explore the possible date of composition of Ezra-Nehemiah.

4.3.2 Date of composition

4.3.2.1 Introduction

In this subsection, we explore several possibilities concerning both the date of the memoirs and the final composition of Ezra-Nehemiah. We need to keep in mind though that the date of writing is interlinked with the issue of authorship (Bracy,1988:120).

4.3.2.2 Date of writing of memoirs

Scholars believe that the Ezra memoirs were written by Ezra himself (Oesterley,1955:125; Kaiser,1975:181) in the form of a report addressed to the Persian court (Schaeder,1930a; Noth,1943; Koch,1974), mandated after the lapse of one year (Williamson,1985). Harrison argues that Ezra was primarily responsible for the writing of his memoirs, having arrived in Jerusalem initially several years before Nehemiah, and that these memoirs were written by about 440 B.C.(Harrison,1970:1150). According to Williamson the Nehemiah memoirs were written up as a report on how the commission was fulfilled. It would thus perhaps have been composed a year, or at the most two, after Nehemiah's journey to Jerusalem (Williamson,1985:xxviii).

In general scholars have held that the Nehemiah memoirs were composed "shortly after 432 B.C.", and that they have seen a,

decidedly similarity between them and the memorial inscriptions commonly found in the

ancient Near East. It is also agreed that they comprise one of the most important and reliable historical sources for the post-exilic period in Judaea, and for the fifth century B.C. in particular (Harrison,1970:1145).

Pfeiffer also supports the view that the Nehemiah memoirs were written by Nehemiah himself (Pfeiffer,1958:833; Harrison,1970:1150) after 432 B.C. and that,

> recounting his activities during the twelve preceding years, these Memoirs report frankly and vividly, as one would do in a personal diary not intended for publication, the actual events and the emotions which they aroused in the writer (Pfeiffer,1958:833; cf also Batten,1913:2).

We will accept, along with the majority of scholars, that both the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs were written round about 440 B.C and 432 B.C respectively.

4.3.2.3 Date of composition of final book

Cave accepts that there are a variety of suggestions for the dating of Ezra and Nehemiah but argues that it could not have been written before 430 BC because some of the events which are recorded did not take place until this date (Cave,1993:16). Williamson (1985), dates the final form of the book around 300 B.C. (1985:49). The 300 B.C date has been supported by several scholars (Ryle,1917:7; Robinson,1937:77; Wright,1946:16; Holmgren,1987:36; Constable,1988:228). Thus, Williamson argues that Ezra1-6, coming from the pen of the final compiler of Ezra-Nehemiah early in the Hellenistic period (about 300 B.C.) as an introduction to the earlier combination of the Ezra and Nehemiah records, addresses a community that had experienced the initial fulfilment of that hope (Ryle,1917:7; Williamson,1985:xxxiv; Williamson,1983).

Similarly, Holmgren (1987) believes that Ezra-Nehemiah assumed their present form around 300 B.C. and had an author different from Chronicles (1987:xii), and that the author "may have made some chronological slips" (Holmgren,1987:36; Constable,1988:228).

Accordingly, scholars have argued for a date around 300 B.C. because they identify Jaddua (Neh.12:10-11) as the one mentioned by Josephus as being around during the time of Alexander the Great (Cave,1993:16). Ryle states that,

The most definite indication therefore of the date of compilation is to be found in these verses of Neh. 12, which (if accepted as they now stand in the text) prove that it cannot have been *earlier* than 320 B.C., while it was very possibly *later*, as Darius did not die till 330 B.C., and the Compiler is evidently speaking from the stand-point of subsequent history (Ryle,1917: 10).

Wright has identified what he calls a "clue to the date" of the compilation which is found in the list of high priests in Nehemiah 12:10-22. Wright explains,

This list is carried down as far as Jaddua, the son of Jonathan (11,22). According to Josephus (*Ant.*xi.8.4), Jaddua was high priest at the time of Alexander the Great (*c.*330 B.C). This means that the Compiler must have written after this date. So we will accept Josephus's dating as correct, though we must bear in mind that the Jaddua of Nehemiah 12 may have been earlier (Wright,1946:12).

Wright argues that if Jaddua is used to fix the earliest possible date for the Compiler, he can also be used to fix a possible latest date. He goes on to relate that Jaddua plays no part in the history that the Compiler records. "There is no point in introducing his name except as the last member in the line of high priests. He is included in order to bring the list in Nehemiah 12 up to date" (Wright,1946:12). If there had been one or two more high priests before the Compiler wrote, their names would naturally have been included too. The only reason for stopping short with Jaddua would be, either that he was high priest when the Compiler wrote, or that he was the father of the man who was high priest at the time of writing, or, as Albright suggests, that he was high priest elect.

In any of these cases the date of writing would be about 300 B.C. Unless strong evidence were forthcoming on other grounds, it would be reasonable to adopt 300 B.C. as the approximate date, with a margin of up to about 30 years on either side of that date (Wright,1946:12; cf also Kaiser,1975:185).

We will therefore in this study accept the following positions concerning the composition of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. First, we maintain that both the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs were written by Ezra and Nehemiah respectively round about 440 B.C. and 432 B.C. Second, that an unknown Jew completed his compilation of the entire text of Ezra-Nehemiah round about 300 B.C.

4.4 CONCLUSION

Let us summarise. Firstly, we noted that the consensus of the "Chronicler" as the sole author of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah has now been challenged and can no longer be accepted as a basis from which to work without further justification. We have already concluded that Ezra-Nehemiah was composed by a different author to the one who composed Chronicles. Furthermore, we concluded that the composition of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah took two stages. The first stage was the writing, in 440 B.C. and 432 B.C. of the Ezra and Nehemiah memoirs respectively. The second stage was the compilation of the memoirs, with additions of several sources by the final author, probably an unknown Jew who belonged to or sympathised with the returned exiles, round about 300 B.C.

The above stated conclusions set the scene for a sociological analysis of the ideological agenda of the author of Ezra-Nehemiah, as identified in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 5: SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 Aim

Chapters 4 and 5 are both aimed at an analysis of the ideology of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. Chapter 4 was the beginning of the ideological analysis of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. The purpose of chapter 4 was to establish both possible dates and authors of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. Chapter 5 takes a rather different angle on its analysis of the text, in that it examines the text from a sociological point of view. So the purpose of this chapter is to provide a socio-historical analysis of the conflict between the *am haaretz* and the returned exiles. The sociological analysis will cover the period from the fall of the Southern kingdom up to the period after the return to Judah of the Babylonian exiles. This step is necessary in order to give us a broader sociological analysis of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah.

Such a sociological analysis of the text will bolster our call in chapter 6 for a theology of renewal, transformation, reconciliation and reconstruction in (South) Africa.

5.1.2 Methodology

In order to effectively achieve the above stated purpose, this chapter is approached in six steps. Firstly, we provide a general socio-historical overview of the rise of Babylon and the fall of Judah, which led to a few people been taken in to Babylonian exile and the majority of them remaining in Palestine. Secondly, we give a detailed examination of both the religious and socio-historical conditions of the *am haaretz*. Thirdly, we examine the situation of the Israelites in exile. Both the religious and the socio-political conditions of Babylonian exile will be analysed here. Fourthly, we discuss the role played by the Persian rulers through issued decrees in resettling the exiles back in Palestine. We will also discuss the *modus operandi* of the Persian rulers in issuing these decrees. Fifthly, we will analyse the conditions of Judah during the post-exilic period of Ezra and Nehemiah, which will include a discussion on some possible causes of the tension and conflict between the *am*

haaretz and the returned exiles. Lastly, we discuss Nehemiah's measures aimed at addressing some of the causes of the conflict or tension between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. We begin by analysing the rise of Babylon and the fall of Judah, which resulted in the destruction of the city and the temple of Jerusalem.

5.2 THE RISE OF BABYLONIA AND THE FALL OF JUDAH

In this section we discuss the rise of Babylon to power and the fall of Judah. This discussion will then set the scene for an analysis in the next section of the conditions of Palestine and Babylon during the exilic period, so as to locate the two communities (*am haaretz* and the Babylonian exiles) that arose with the fall of Judah within their proper socio-historical context. We now turn to Babylon's rise to power.

5.2.1 Babylon rises to power

When Josiah ascended to the throne in 638 B.C, Judah entered her closing period of history. No longer was there reason to fear Assyria, for Ashurbanipal's (Assyrian ruler of the time) last years witnessed little military activity and only weak rulers followed him until Nineveh's fall in 612 B.C. Babylon, however, soon took over as world leader, bringing in the period known as Neo-Babylonian. This shift of power came at the close of Josiah's thirty-one year reign. Josiah's term of rule, then, was relatively free from foreign interference and dangers (Wood,1970:366). King Josiah died in 609 B.C. He was succeeded by Jehoahaz. However, the Egyptians who now controlled Palestine removed him from the throne after a three month reign (for he favored Babylon) and named his older brother Jehoiakim to be king (Boadt,1984:364). When the Babylonians drove the Egyptians out of Asia in 605, Jehoiakim had a change of heart and pledged loyalty to Babylon, not long after this he began to plot toward breaking free of foreign control (Boadt,1984:364).

In response to Jehoiakim's actions, in 601 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon moved against Egypt and was met by Necho, the Egyptian ruler of the time, near the border (Wood,1970:373-4). Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at Carchemich (cf. Jer 46:2). Then the region became the

domain of the Babylonians. Judah automatically came under Babylonian rule, even though ruled until 601/00 B.C. by the vassal Jehoiakim (Richards,1994a:258).

The rise of Babylon to power led to the first capture of Judah by Babylonians in 597 B.C. In the next sub-section we discuss circumstances around this capture.

5.2.2 Jehoiachin and the capture of Jerusalem in 597 B.C.

In 599 B.C. Jehoiakim refused to pay the annual tribute money to Babylon. Then the Babylonian regime, with a force comprised of Babylonians and Ammonite, Edomite and Moabite allies, captured Jerusalem in 598 B.C. (2 Kings 24:10-16; Richards,1994a:258; Boadt,1984:364), and stripped the temple of all its treasures (Boadt,1984:364). Jehoiakim died (598) in the middle of this rebellion and left Jehoiachin, his eighteen-year-old son to become king (Boadt,1984: 364; Wood,1970:374; Richards,1994a:258). Jehoiachin received the blow of the Babylonian attack the following March, 597 B.C., which brought severe devastation (Wood,1970:374). Jehoiachin was taken captive to Babylon in 597 (Wood,1970:374; Boadt,1984:364; Richards,1994a:258), along with the queen mother, princes, servants, and booty (Wood,1970:374), including the prophet Ezekiel (2 Kings 24:14; Jer 52:28), and with him 10,000 leading citizens, including a thousand craftmen and smiths (II Kings 24:11-16; Wood,1970:374; Richards,1994a:258). Several thousand more people would be taken to Babylon in a later deportation of 586 B.C.

Then Nebuchadnezzar installed Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, Josiah's third son, on the throne (Wood,1970:374-375; Boadt,1984:364). He was twenty-one at the time, fifteen years younger than Jehoiakim, the oldest of the three sons. Nebuchadnezzar changed his name to Zedekiah, after the pattern of Pharaoh Necho regarding Jehoiakim (Wood,1970:374-375). The people of Judah seem never to have accepted Zedekiah as their true king, probably because he had been appointed by the foreign Nebuchadnezzar. Instead, they continued to ascribe this honour to Jehoiachin, who was still in captivity (Wood,1970:374-375; Richards,1994a:258). In the next section we examine Zedekiah's reign and spell out certain issues which led to the fall of Jerusalem.

5.2.3. Zedekiah and the captivity of 586 B.C.

As a result of Zekediah's lack of legitimacy in the eyes of the *am haaretz*, and because of Zedekiah's own poor judgment and general inability, his term of reign was beset by continual agitation and unrest (Wood,1970:374-375).

A strong anti-Babylonian group in Jerusalem brought pressure for a revolt and urged Zedekiah to look again to Egypt for help (Wood,1970:375). A new coalition was being formed of Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Phoenicia (Jer.27:1-3); and this Jerusalem group wished Judah to join (Wood,1970:375; Richards,1994a:258). Certain prophets who were opposed to Jeremiah's message aided their cause in declaring that God had already broken the yoke of Babylon and that within two years Judah's captives would return home to Jerusalem (Jer.28:2-4). In opposition, Jeremiah denounced this manner of speaking, declaring it false and urging continued acceptance of Babylonian lordship (Jer.27:1-22; Wood,1970:375; Richards,1994a:258). Two other developments outside Judah helped fan revolutionary flames in Zedekiah's fourth year. These were the fact that Psammetichus II succeeded Necho in Egypt, and that a minor rebellion was staged in Babylon itself. Still, however, Zedekiah was not persuaded to listen to the anti-Babylonians (Wood,1970:375). Instead, he showed good judgment in sending a representative to Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon (Jer. 29:3;51-59)-perhaps even going himself-to express Judah's loyalty (Wood,1970:375; Richards,1994a:258). But five years later, Zedekiah was persuaded. He then did choose to revolt, and he looked to Egypt for support (Wood,1970:375).

So king Zedekiah, who had been appointed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar to rule Judah as a vassal king in 597 B.C., rebelled against his overlord in spite of the many warnings of Jeremiah (Wittenberg,1993:97). Zedekiah broke with Babylon about 589 B.C. under the prodding of the new Egyptian pharaoh, Hophra (Boadt,1984:364). Nebuchadnezzar decided to punish him and marched against Judah. In January 588 B.C. his great army surrounded Jerusalem after taking all the strong fortresses of the land (Wittenberg,1993:97; Wood,1970:375). During the summer months the Babylonians had to lift the siege for some time because an Egyptian army advanced in support of Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem (Wittenberg,1993:96). The people in Jerusalem rejoiced

because they believed that the Babylonians would soon be defeated (Wittenberg,1993:96-7). It was Jeremiah who had a more realistic view of the situation. He told the king that the Babylonians would soon be back to carry on the siege (see Jeremiah 37:6- 8). And this is what happened. Jerusalem held out till the next summer, but its fate was sealed (Wittenberg,1993:97). Nebuchadnezzar captured all the cities of Judah, surrounded Jerusalem and for two years starved the people into defeat (Boadt,1984:365; Wood,1970:376).

By July 587/586, when all food supplies were finished, the Babylonians managed to break the city walls of Jerusalem and entered the city (Wittenberg,1993:97). In accordance with Jeremiah's warning, the city fell to the Babylonians in July, 586 B.C. (Wood,1970:376). Babylon deported the most qualified elements of Judah's population (Richards,1994a:256-7).

Then, Zedekiah with soldiers, servants and members of his family fled towards the Jordan, but he was captured and brought to Nebuchadnezzar at his headquarters at Riblah in central Syria. His fate was gruesome. His sons were killed before his eyes, he himself was blinded and taken in chains to Babylon where he died (see Jeremiah 39; Wittenberg,1993:97; Wood,1970:376; Boadt,1984:365; Lemche,1988:179). The Babylonians no doubt regarded him as an unfaithful vassal who had conspired against the very lord who had originally installed him in office thereby breaking the covenant that existed between them (Lemche,1988:179).

A month after the fall of Jerusalem, Nebuzaradan, commander of Nebuchadnezzar's bodyguard, arrived to break down the city. He levelled the city walls and then set fire to all the houses and public buildings (Wittenberg,1993:97; Boadt,1984:365). In this great destruction the temple, built by Solomon, which had stood for four centuries, went up in flames as well (Wittenberg,1993:97; Wood,1970:376). Many other places in Judah met the same fate as Jerusalem (Richards,1994a:259).

In this section we have discussed the rise of Babylon to power, which ultimately led to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. So with the fall of Jerusalem, the Babylonians created two communities within the Jewish population, namely the *am haaretz* i.e. the Jews that remained in the land, and those taken to Babylonian captivity. In the next two sections (5.3 and 5.4), we examine the religious and socio-

historical conditions of both the *am haaretz* and the Babylonian captives.

5.3 ISRAELITES IN PALESTINE עסהארץ *(AM HAARETZ)*

5.3.0 Introduction

The focus of this section is on the Jews who were not taken to exile, namely the *am haaretz*. We will analyse both the religious and the socio-economic conditions of this community, hoping that such an analysis would throw some light on the ideology of the conflict between the *am haaretz* and the returned exiles after 539 B.C.

We begin our discussion with the definition of *am haaretz*.

5.3.1 Definition of עסהארץ *(AM HAARETZ)*

A Hebrew term (singular: *am haaretz*; Plural: *amme haaretz, amme haarasot*) literally meaning "people of the land", occurs 73 times in the Old Testament (51 times in singular form and 22 times in plural form) (Healey,1992:168).

There are many opinions regarding the exact meaning of this term (Healey,1992:168). The term עם is contrasted with the term *goy* . The term *goy* is taken to refer to people in general, while *am* is thought to refer to the specific population of a territory (Healey,1992:168). There is also a general consensus that ארץ is interchangeable with certain other terms, e.g., *am yehudah* (2 Kgs 14:21)(Healey,1992:168). עם likewise is said to be coterminal with the term *anse*, as in *anse yehudah* (2 Sam 2:4) (Würthwein,1936:15; Healey,1992:168).

The debate over the term centres around its use as a *terminus technicus* (Healey,1992:168). The most extreme point of view on the technical sense of the term is presented by Mayer Sultzberger. According to him in ancient Israel there existed a national assembly (*Edah*) composed of two houses (*Nesiim* and *Zekenim*). The *Nesiim* was the smaller of the two chambers (12 members) and the

Zekenim the larger (70 members). The *Zekenim* were elected representatives from the 11 tribes exclusive of Levi (Sulzberger,1909:8-13; Healey,1992:168). Sulzberger notes that the *Edah* was dissolved upon the death of Joshua. He then attempts to identify an entity which carried on those functions between the death of Joshua and the clear emergence of a political body in the Gerusia of the Hellenistic period. In his view, the *am haaretz* was this entity, and he cites a number of passages to support this (Gen 23:7,12,13; Lev. 4:27; 20:2,4) (Healey,1992:168).

Sultzberger's views, however, were generally considered to be "too extreme, too tendentious, and too heavily dependent on textual interpretations that failed to take into account the complex nature of the use of the term and the contexts in which it occured" (Healey,1992:168).

Ernst Würthwein has argued that the term refers to fully enfranchised male citizens (Würthwein,1936:18; Healey,1992:168). He states that this group represents a sort of power elite, which forms the solid core of the nation. Würthwein argues that this group not only formed a distinct social group but that they, in fact, represented a powerful class whose "economic, social, and military power combined to make them a critical faction in the functioning of the state" (Würthwein,1936:15-18; Healey,1992:168). He goes on to trace the development of this group from the earliest period of the monarchy, identifying the *am haaretz* with the *anse yehudah* of 2 Sam 2:4. The power of the group was most prevalent in the early period of the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy when the interests of the various "tribal" groups had to be carefully manipulated to achieve consensus on the monarchy and on the specific choice of kings (Healey,1992:168).

Würthwein sees the most significant development of the term *am haaretz* as having come after the division of the united kingdom of Israel into two parts, and specifically in Judah in the period between Athaliah (842-837 B.C) and the Exile (589 B.C) (Healey,1992:168). Würthwein argues that during this period the term was used to designate a specific, identifiable class. The cases cited are first the role of the *am haaretz* in the overthrow of Athaliah and the selection of Joash (2 Kings 11; 2 Chronicles 23) (Healey,1992:168). In that instance the *am haaretz* are associated with other clearly designated groups (priests, palace officials, military leaders) in the revolution and enthronement of the new king (Healey,1992:168).

While acknowledging the work that Würthwein has done, Nicholson examines the term outside the Kings-Chronicles-Jerusalem complex (i.e royal establishment). He argues that in these other instances (Gen 23:7,12,13; 42:6; Exod 5:5; Leviticus 20) the term is ambiguous and in many ways nearly generic (Nicholson,1965:60-62; Healey,1992:168). He further considers the main texts from Kings, and in each of these he raises doubts about the specific uses of the term. Stretching further into Ezekiel (12:19; 33:2; 39:13; 45:22; 46:3,9), he makes the case for a contextually based interpretation of the term (Healey,1992:168).

Closely related to Nicholson, De Vaux sees the term as simply designating the "body of free men, enjoying civic rights in a given territory" (De Vaux,19:70; Healey,1992:168). He considers the term's use in three periods. Firstly, in the pre-exilic period, it is associated with specific groups: the king or the prince, the king and his servants, priests and chiefs, the chiefs, the priests, and the prophets, and with no others. He argues, however, that it designates simply the "whole body of citizens"(De Vaux, 19 :71; Healey,1992:168). De Vaux endeavours to show that in 2 Kgs 11:20, where a distinction apparently is made between "the people of the land" and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the distinction is not based on "class" differences but simply on residency (those inside and outside the city) (Healey,1992:169). Secondly, at the time of the return from exile, the term at first has this old meaning, but in Ezra and Nehemiah it begins to change. Finally, in the rabbinic literature, it becomes a pejorative term (Healey,1992:169).

Halpern considers the evidence and argues that the term *am* is the consanguineous unit, the corporation of Israel, and the people (*am*) of the land are the people who have the land in common (Halpern,1981:196-98; Healey,1992:169). He argues against any connection between the people of the land and military units, and generally supports a contextual interpretation (Healey,1992:169).

There is no question that the term changes meaning dramatically after the exile. De Vaux and other scholars show that in Haggai (2:4) and Ezekiel (7:27; 12:19; 22:29; 33:2; 39:13; 45:16; 45:22; 46:3,9) the term retains its preexilic sense. This may also be the case in Dan 9:6. But in Ezra and Nehemiah the term begins to take on a different meaning (Healey,1992:169). On the one hand, Ezra 2:2 and Neh 7:7 seem to designate the men / people of Israel and the men / people of the land much as in the

preexilic.On the other hand, Ezra 4:4 contrasts the "people of the land" and the "people of Judah" in a way that indicates a conflict of interests (Healey,1992:169). Most significantly, the term is used in the plural in the post-exilic period (Healey,1992:169; Bergman and Ottoson 1974); it is used either to indicate the group which opposed the restoration of the temple state or to refer to the heterogeneous population which the returnees found in the land. This population is characteristically viewed with disdain (Ezra 9:1,2;10:2,11; Neh 10:20-31)(Healey,1992:169; Lipiński and von Soden,2001:175; cf Wittenberg,1991).

Gunneweg has proposed that the term *gola* takes on a revised and enriched meaning. The *bene haggola* are the true congregation in contradistinction to all the inhabitants of the land, the *amme haarasot*. Thus the terms intend a theological meaning for what were once sociological groups (Healey,1992:169). Gunneweg designates this a "semantic revolution" (Gunneweg,1983:437-40; Healey,1992:169). The rabbinic use then picks up on this late development and the term eventually comes to have a pejorative meaning. It refers to the ignorant, the impious, the nonobservant, etc. (Healey,1992:169).

From this general review it is clear that there is little evidence to support extreme interpretations of the term (Healey,1992:169). But there is sufficient evidence in various periods to indicate that within a carefully defined context the term may have specific senses (Healey,1992:169). Our focus in this study is specifically on the post-exilic interpretation of the term *am haaretz*. Having analysed the term *am haaretz* in this subsection, we move on to the socio-economic conditions of the *am haaretz*.

5.3.2 Socio-Economic conditions

5.3.2.1 Babylonians's population-deportation policy

What was the Babylonian population's displacement policy? Both Assyria and Babylon used deportation as a means of controlling and suppressing nationalistic tendencies in the colonies (Richards,1994a:242). But Gottwald (1985:424) contrasts well the difference between Babylonian and Assyrian colonial practice, when he states that,

The Assyrians replaced deported Israelite leaders with colonists from other parts of the empire, thereby deliberately disturbing the previous social and cultural fabric of the region and making it difficult for a homogenous Israelite culture and religion to flourish. By contrast, the Neo-Babylonians followed a less decisive policy with Judah. The leadership of Judah deported in 597 was replaced with a 'second team' and, when the latter were deported in 586, yet another attempt was made to form a native administration under Gedaliah. The deportation of 582 may have followed in the wake of Gedaliah's assassination.

There is, in short, no indication that Nebucchadnezzar ever introduced foreign population into Judah. On the other hand, neighboring people were enabled to encroach on the territory of Judah, most strikingly the Edomites...It is likely that Ammonites and Moabites reclaimed territories in Transjordan and perhaps even west of Jordan, while Samaritans probably pressed into Judah from the north to occupy deserted estates. Nonetheless, there remained a reduced heartland in Judah largely untouched by a residential infusion of foreigners (Gottwald,1985: 424).

The general Babylonian policy included the removal of the leadership strata. However, their observation of this principle was by no means as vigorous as that of the Assyrians had been in the preceding centuries. There are no signs at all that suggest that the forcibly deported segments of society were replaced with individuals who had been likewise removed from other parts of the Neo-Babylonian empire (Lemche,1988:176). It is important to note here that the Babylonian deportation policy would mean that no foreign population was introduced in Judah which might have changed the ethnic composition of the populace or introduced cultural developments in Palestine in the period after 587 B.C. (Lemche,1988:176).

So the Babylonian deportation policy would have meant that few people were taken into exile while the majority remained in Palestine. The Chronistic history makes it seem as if all Israel was deported and the land of Judah was uninhabited during the exile (II Chron.36.21), but this does not correspond with the historical facts (Albertz,1994:371). Even if we are unclear about the precise number of those exiled, we can say with certainty that the deportations affected only a minority, above all the upper class; the majority of the population, above all the small landowners and the landless lower classes, remained in the land (Albertz,1994:371; Grabbe,1992:120-121; Hinson,1973:153; Van Zyl et al 1979:192-193), and that they were the least skilled or qualified (Hinson,1973:153). These poor farmers, who constituted 90% of the population, were left behind to continue with the tilling of the soil (Jer. 52:16; 2 Kings 25:12; Blenkinsopp,1988:66; Lemche,1988:176; Richards,1994a:260).

But why were only poor people left behind? The idea of taking influential persons of a conquered nation as captives was copied by the Babylonians from the Assyrians. The latter had found the policy effective in minimising chances of revolution, and Nebuchadnezzar desired the same benefit (Wood,1970:377). Van Zyl too argues that the main reason why Babylonian invaders only left behind the poor and less skilled people in Palestine may have been Nebuchadnezzar's efforts "to ensure that there would be no leaders left in Judah who could organise a rebellion" (Van Zyl et al,1979:192-3; cf Wittenberg,1993:97). It is equally important to note, however, that the deportation of poor unskilled people to Babylon would have had serious economic consequences to the Babylonian economy, as this would be very expensive economically to maintain a lot of poor people who had no skills to boost the Babylonian economy.

Having discussed the Babylonian deportation policy, we will now move on to analyse the structure of the local government in Judah at this time.

5.3.2.2 Structure of local government

At this time Judah was now a province of Babylon. The Babylonian colonial policy of local government differed from the Assyrians, in that the Babylonians appointed a governor who was drawn from the local Jewish nobility, in this case, a certain Gedaliah was appointed governor of Judah (Jer.40: 7; 2 Kings 25:22ff; Richards,1994a:259).

Who was this Gedaliah? Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam, grandson of Shaphan (2 Kings 25:22). With Jerusalem destroyed, Gedaliah established a new capital at Mizpah (Wood,1970:377-378; Wittenberg,1993:98), because Jerusalem was no longer inhabitable (Wittenberg,1993:98). He ruled from Mizpah (Blenkinsopp,1998:27-28; 2 Kings 25:22; Hinson,1973:139; Van Zyl et al,1979:196; Boadt,1984:405-6; Grabbe,1992:80-84; Gottwald,1985:424). So Mizpah replaced Jerusalem as the new capital for practical and strategic reasons, including the need for open communications with the central and northern regions, now largely destroyed and depopulated (2 Kings 25:22-26; Jer 40:6-41:18; Blenkinsopp,1998:27-28).

Though Gedaliah was a Judean, he enjoyed no liberty. He was an official of the foreign king, and thus merely a representative of the overlord to whom he was responsible for everything (Van Zyl et al, 1979:196; Gottwald,1985:424; Richards,1994a:263-4). Gedaliah tried to build up the land once again and agriculture flourished to some degree (Jer. 40:10, 12). Jews who had fled to the neighboring states of Moab, Ammon and Edom began to return (Jer 40:11; Van Zyl et al,1979:196). Though Gedaliah's government might have helped the region towards economic recovery as well as provisional administrative and social structures, it did not last long (Richards,1994a:262).

Gedaliah had been governor for only two months when he was treacherously murdered by Ishmael, a member of the royal family (Wood,1970:378). Ishmael acted on behalf of a Judah loyalist group, which refused to recognise the legitimacy of Gedaliah. This group, fearing reprisals from the Babylonian regime, fled Judah. Some settled in the Transjordan, Syria, and Phoenicia while a large party of them fled to Egypt (Gottwald,1985:424; Richards,1994a:263-4; Lemche,1988:177). Jeremiah received God's revelation, which instructed the people to remain in the land and not to fear, for the Babylonians would not retaliate. Jeremiah communicated this good information to the people, warning particularly against seeking shelter in Egypt. The people, however broke their promise and refused to accept the word which he brought. Instead, they accused him of speaking falsely. They made plans to go to Egypt (Wood,1970:379). Jeremiah went as well, certainly against his will, but likely in an effort to keep God's Word before the people as best he could (Wood,1970:379; Lemche,1988:177).

The populace of Jerusalem was decidedly decreased as the number of Judeans who made the journey was large, with a second tier of leadership now also dispersed, leaving the infrastructure of the surviving Palestinian community strained (Richards,1994a:263-4; Wood,1970:379). Elders played a significant role in this time.

What were the roles played by elders in this local structure? The loss of a central political authority led to the revival of decentralised forms of organisation along kinship lines. In the Israel of the exilic period the family or the family association became the main social entity. Relics of tribal organisation which had never been completely forgotten were revived: the elders again became significant and

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took over limited local and political functions of leadership alongside priests and prophets (Albertz,1994:374-5).

As the Babylonians did not import a foreign upper class, the people of Judah could evidently even develop a limited degree of self-government on the basis of elders (Lam.5.12), revitalizing institutions from before the time of the state. However, the place of the royal central authority was now taken by the provincial administration, to whom taxes were to be paid and for whom services were to be performed (Lam. 5.12f.), in the same manner as it was done for the Israelite king. To this degree little changed on the land for the majority of small farming families (Albertz,1994:372).

In addition, Gottwald argues that those left behind, i.e. the poor of the land,

> ...tapped a wealth of local custom and were experienced participants and leaders in village cooperative networks. Thus the ancient village tribalism overlaid for centuries, was able to reemerge as the dominant force in organising and preserving Palestinian Jewish identity throughout the exile, no matter how much hampered by the imposition of Neo-Babylonian domination (Gottwald,1985:425;cf Richards,1994a:267-8).

While acknowledging the important role of elders during this period, we also need to realise that the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem witnessed the end of the institutional-ideological infrastructure of the state of Judah. Judah shifted from being an autonomous state to being a mere colony of Babylon (Richards,1994a:270).

The fact that Judah was now a mere colony of Babylon was also reflected in the new Babylonian land policy, to which we now turn in the next section.

5.3.2.3 Land policies

On the question of land, the Babylonians were unique in their approach. They redistributed[85] the land

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[85] While it has been suggested that the Babylonians redistributed the land of the deportees, one cannot entirely rule out the possibility that the Babylonian invaders themselves seized some of the propeties.

of those whom they deported to what Soggin (1984:252) calls "the sub-proletariat of the city and the country" for cultivation (Jer.39:10; 2 Kings 25:12//Jer.52:16 cf. Ezek.33:21-27; Soggin,1984:252; Richards,1994a:259). There may have been several reasons for this step. For the loyalty of the local populace (Lemche,1988:177). Accordingly, the Babylonians

> created a class of small landowners who were not imported from abroad and whose rights were based not on inheritance or purchase, but derived from the intervention of the occupying power; they owed everything to it and therefore were unconditionally faithful (Soggin,1984: 252; Richards,1994a:259).

Another consideration is the fact that cultivable land was always scarce in Palestine. It was therefore simply too valuable to let it lie fallow (Lemche,1988:177). It is also possible though, that the basic intention of the Babylonian reform had to do with the annulment of debt-and property-relations which were based on the accrual of debt. Peasants were frequently forced to hand over their land to their creditors in order to pay off their debts. This custom had flourished in Babylon more than a thousand years earlier; it is possible that the Babylonian undertaking had a socio-ideological background (Lemche,1988:178).

Thus, the installation of the landless and refugees on the properties of the large landowners (Jer.39.10; 40.10) which had either been abandoned or even confiscated (Lam.5.2) indicates that it was in the interests of the Babylonian occupying power to consolidate the situation as soon as possible in the land which had been devastated by the war (Albertz,1994:371-2).

At all events we can conclude from the slogan handed down in Ezek.11.15; 33.23 that the majority of those who remained in the land were positive about the division of property and even justified it theologically. For them the exile was Yahweh's judgment on the exploitation of the upper class and often even a *de facto* liberation from debt (Albertz,1994:371-2). So though life may not have been easy, it was looking up for many of those left (Grabbe,1992:116-8).

In the next section we examine how the *am haaretz* coped economically.

5.3.2.4 Economic and social status

The situation of the people who were not exiled was difficult, in spite of the fact that many received land *via* Babylonian policy (Richards,1994a:261). The economic damage done by the disaster cannot be overestimated. Archaeological excavations have shown that really all the fortified towns in the heartland of Judah were razed to the ground and in most cases they were not to rebuilt for many years to come (Wittenberg,1993:97). The social and economic structures which had given expression to their culture were simply no longer alive (Richards,1994a:261). The temple was destroyed, as well as the ruling house and the state (Lam 1-2; 4-5, Richards,1994a:261).

The economic and state structures were of course severely damaged by the Babylonian conquest. As Ezekiel 33:24 tells us, there were those living in the ruins of the country. Jeremiah 41:5 mentions a pilgrimage to the temple of Jerusalem by inhabitants of territories of Schechem and Shiloh. i.e. inhabitants of the former northern kingdom (Richards,1994a:262). Similarly, Soggin elaborates,

> After all, the interest of Babylon was in destroying Judah as a military base, as a bridge for Egyptian attacks, and therefore in dismantling fortifications; but that clearly also caused the destruction of other buildings whose purpose was not military (Soggin,1984:256).

Therefore, the real threat from which the population of Judah had to suffer came from abroad, from the neighbouring small states which took advantage of the decline in the population of Judah and the quite weak Babylonian military presence to invade from all sides the territory in which Judah had settled and make their political and economic interests felt (Albertz,1994:372-3). As a result, the best of the farmland was no longer within the borders of the province (Grabbe,1992:121-122). The bulk of the province was now located in the hill country and much of the land good for grain production was now lost; it is possible that Judah was not even self-sufficient in grain production (Kippenberg, 1982:47; Grabbe,1992:116-118). So although they still lived in their own land, those who remained behind had to a large degree lost their territorial and social integrity (Albertz,1994:372-3).

Grabbe reminds us that the country was a small, subordinate state most of the time, paying its required tribute but otherwise carrying on at a fairly low level economically and culturally. It was not a wealthy country. Its economy was heavily agrarian; Jerusalem was the only real urban area

(Grabbe,1992:23), and skilled handicrafts and manufacturing were at a minimum, at least in the early part of the post-exilic period (Grabbe,1992:121-122).

Graham (1984) amasses textual and archaeological evidence to show the way in which economic activity may have continued in Palestine under Babylonian rule. Graham argues that the poorest of the land became vinedressers and ploughmen (2 Chron 26:10; 2 Kings 25:12; Jer 52:16 & Isa 61:5). Archaeological evidence suggests continued agricultural activity in Palestine after the exile. The extent of produce are, of course, hard to estimate, but it is certain that the poor who had been left behind in the land did continue to make a living (Richards,1994a:267), as the soil and climate were suitable for vineyards and olive orchards (Grabbe,1992:121-122).

It is unlikely that before Jerusalem and other towns flourished, much trade took place. This is because the cities served as important agricultural markets for the peasant farmers (Grabbe,1992:116-118). The one hint of international trade involving Judah (Ezekiel 27) indicates exclusively agricultural products. This suggests that handcrafts and other products of skilled workers did not play an important part in the Judean economy at this time, although such forms of trade existed in Jerusalem, if not elsewhere (Kippenberg,1982:47-49; Grabbe,1992:116-118). Similarly, Blenkinsopp argues that there was a damage to trade "following on the destruction of Jerusalem and most of the larger towns, loss of the skilled artisan class, and a decrease in productivity due to the disappearance or takeover of the larger holdings and estates" (Blenkinsopp,1988:66).

An interesting assumption, that in the absence of a centralised and institutional cult, the peasants were not heavily exploited in terms of tribute and royal tax, can be made. Given that Samaria was still the administrative centre of Palestine during the exile, there must have been some taxation, but without a temple in Jerusalem, the amounts demanded of peasants would not have been as severe (Richards,1994a:267). The tax system may also have tended to create specialisation in crops which could be sold for cash rather than grown for the subsistence of the residents, but grain production would have been low in any case and may have been insufficient for the needs of the people themselves (Grabbe,1992:121-122).

5.3.2.5 Conclusion

We need to recall that though some of the poor of the land (*am haaretz*) took over land which initially belonged to the now exiled landlords, these people were still subjected to taxes by the Babylonians. They would still borrow seed at a high interest rate, which had to be repaid back irrespective of a threatening drought. Furthermore, we also need to realise that not all of the poor of the land became property owners, as most of the properties would have certainly been grabbed by the Babylonian invaders. So we may safely conclude that though some of the *am haaretz* became property owners the majority of them remained poor and oppressed. Having discussed the socio-economic conditions of the *am haaretz*, we now move on to discuss their religious conditions.

5.3.3 Religious conditions

In this section we analyse the implications of the destruction of the temple, the city and an end to the Davidic monarchy for the spiritual life of the *am haaretz*. So in this section we want to find out whether the destruction of the temple resulted in total standstill of all religious activities in Palestine. When the Babylonians conquered Judah in 586 B.C, the damage done in the spiritual realm was perhaps even worse. The destruction of the temple, and the city of Jerusalem, built on Mount of Zion and the loss of the Davidic dynasty touched the very heart of Israel's national religion (Wittenberg,1993:98). In the next section we closely look at how each of these three issues affected the *am haaretz*.

5.3.3.1 The loss of temple, city, dynasty

First of all, there was a loss of the temple. The temple was razed, the altar was destroyed and vessels for worship were taken away to Babylonia (Ezra1:7; Van Zyl et al,1979:197). The temple was burnt (II Kings 25:9); the bronze pillars, furniture and 'sea' were smashed (v.13) and the bronze itself removed. It has often been assumed that the ark, too, was destroyed. Nothing is said of the altar, and it is sometimes simply assumed that it remained in position. Jones comments that "It would have required a deliberate act of demolition, for it was as solid as the walls of the city" (Ackroyd,1968:

25ff.). However, we all know that the walls of the city were, in fact, pulled down (Ackroyd,1968: 25ff.). This meant that the temple, which had been the center of religious activity, was now destroyed. Jerusalem had served as the center of civic life but now it lay in ruins (Wood,1970:377). At the same time the priesthood which had the technical knowledge and skills essential to the administration of the cult in Jerusalem were in exile (Lemche,1988:178).

The main reason why the destruction of the temple threw both the *am haaretz* and the Babylonian Jews into spiritual crisis is their understanding of the role of the temple in their worship life. The people believed that Yahweh had chosen this temple as his eternal dwelling place. The temple, as God's house was the centre of all worship. No worship was possible without the temple. But now it had gone up in flames. What did the possible destruction of Yahweh's own temple mean? Was Yahweh really God if the heathen god Marduk, the god of Nebuchadnezzar, had been victorious? Was Marduk the real god, the world god of power, rather than Yahweh who could not even protect his own temple from the destruction? (Wittenberg,1993:98).

Secondly, the city of Jerusalem was also destroyed. The Jews's understanding was that Yahweh had chosen Zion, and Zion was therefore the city of God. The prophets who opposed Jeremiah had told the people that it was impossible for God to reject Zion (Wittenberg,1993:98). When the people's consciences were pricked by the preaching of Jeremiah, the prophets had calmed them saying: "Yahweh will do nothing, no harm will come to us; we will never see sword or famine. This is the city of God. God cannot forsake his own city" (see Jeremiah 5:12; Wittenberg,1993:99).

Thirdly, the Davidic dynasty came to an end with the deportation of Jehoiachin. According to the prophecy of Nathan, God had established the Davidic dynasty on its throne and it would rule forever (see 2 Samuel 7). So people were asking questions such as: How could Yahweh go against his own promises? How could he allow his own chosen king to be defeated by unbelievers? (Wittenberg,1993: 99).

The loss of temple, city, dynasty, and even their own land threw Israel into the deepest spiritual crisis of its history (Wittenberg,1993:99). The spiritual crisis called for different interpretations of these

events, in the next section we highlight two of such interpretations.

5.3.3.2 Interpretations of the destruction of city, monarchy and temple

The political catastrophe of 587 was interpreted differently by different groups (Albertz,1994:376). Firstly, for Jeremiah and small groups of the reform party it meant liberation, relief and confirmation of their prognosis, and precisely for that reason they could recognise and acknowledge it as Yahweh's just judgment upon Judah (Jer.37:3-40:6, Albertz,1994:376).Wittenberg also elaborates,

> We need to note that Jeremiah had already questioned this combination of religion and patriotism. He had warned that Yahweh could reject his own dwelling place if there was no justice. Yahweh would break down what he himself had built and would tear up what he himself had planted. There were therefore no grounds for religious security. But this message was much too radical for the people and the religious leaders to accept. What Jeremiah said was in conflict with all their most treasured religious values and beliefs. So when disaster struck, the people were totally unprepared for it (Wittenberg,1993:99).

Secondly, for the majority of those with a nationalistic religious orientation, however, who to the end had hoped for a miraculous deliverance, it represented total political failure and the collapse of their theological picture of the world. For the city which they had regarded within the framework of Zion theology as being indispensable (Lam.4:12) had been conquered; the temple in which they had seen Yahweh himself as being present (2:1) had been devastated and desecrated by the heathen (1:10); and the king who had seemed to guarantee them life and security (4:20) had been deported and executed (Albertz,1994:376).

Furthermore, Albertz explains that a feeling of dull despair spread amongst most of the *am haaretz*:

> They felt that they had been struck by an inexplicable blow of fate which put in question everything that had been handed down to them by priests, temple prophets and court theologians as the foundation of official belief in Yahweh (Albertz,1994:376).

The struggle over a theological interpretation of the political catastrophe was addressed through worship. In the next section we discuss exilic worship in Palestine.

5.3.3.3 Exilic worship

One crucial point at which there was a struggle to find an appropriate way of dealing theologically with the political catastrophe was exilic worship (Albertz,1994:378-9). In spite of the complete destruction of Jerusalem, Stern (1982:229) has found archaeological evidence to support the claim that life continued in Jerusalem. Noth (1959:296) and Janssen (1956), in a similar way, suggest that the exiles were a mere outpost, while the real nucleus of Israel remained in Palestine and authored the Deuteronomic history (Janssen,1956:17-18; Smith,1989:32-35; Richards,1994a:264).

If Noth and Janssen are correct, there is good ground for considering that there was among those who remained behind, a prolific group of writers and, more importantly, a zealous group of faithful worshipers of God. This is particularly important in the light of the fact that there were others among the remaining population who interpreted the exile as punishment for Josiah's anti-syncretistic actions (Smith,1989:32-35).

Gottwald lends some credibility to the idea of a continued worship in Palestine.

> In fact, the prevailing assumption that most of the creative religious initiatives of this period arose among the Babylonian exiles is highly dubious. That assumption is especially questionable because the deported leaders of Judah had been antipathetic to the Deuteronomic reform circles and to the prophets who denounced their revolt against Babylonians. All in all, it seems likely that the Palestinian survivors would have been quicker than the Babylonian exiles to come to terms with the political and cultural debacle by adopting the Deuteronomistic and prophetic interpretations of its causes and lessons and to devote themselves to a Yahwist-oriented communal reconstruction (Gottwald,1985:425).

Thus, it has been generally held that some form of worship (e.g services of fasting and penitence) continued on the site of the ruined temple in Jerusalem (Jer.41:5; Hinson,1973:153; Blenkinsopp,1988:61ff.;Ackroyd,1968:25ff.;Gottwald,1985:424;Wittenberg,1993:101; Richards,1994a:265). Pilgrims, some of them from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria i.e. the former Kingdom of Israel, Jer. 41:5), came to Jerusalem to bring their offerings (Van Zyl et al,1979:197; Gottwald,1985:424; Richards,1994a:265).

What format or structure did the worship take in Palestine at this time? It is held that Lamentations

could have been composed for recital as part of a liturgy carried out *in situ* (Blenkinsopp,1998:25-26; Albertz,1994:378-9). In these services community laments must have played an important role. People sang about their grief and prayed to God for forgiveness (Wittenberg,1993:101). The books of Lamentations, Psalms 79, 105-6 and Zechariah 7:2-7; 8:18-19 tell us that fasting was proclaimed to commemorate the catastrophic events of Jerusalem's capture and destruction by Babylon (Richards,1994a:265; cf Wittenberg,1993:101). According to Zechariah 7:1-6, people could only mourn and fast for 70 years after the destruction of the city (Wittenberg,1993:99-101).

Furthermore, the author of Lamentations interprets the situation of distress by relating it to Yahweh in theological terms. According to him it was not a blind stroke of destiny, nor the military power of Babylon, but rather it was Yahweh himself who destroyed Jerusalem, the temple and the monarchy (Lam.2:1-10; 4:11-16). He goes on to take up notions and formulations from Zion theology and kingship theology and seeks to show how Yahweh in his wrath has himself shattered the foundations of this world of theological ideas: he has destroyed his throne on Zion (Lam.2:1); annulled the claim to world rule (Lam.1:1; 2:15) and the impregnability (Lam.4:12) of the city of God; rejected his sanctuary and its worship (Lam.2:6); and cast his kingship to the ground (Lam.2:2.; Lam. 4:20; cf. Ps. 89; Albertz,1994:378). So, according to this author, the loss of temple, city and dynasty was God's judgment on the people's sins (1:5, 8, 22; Albertz,1994:378).

Even after the end of the exile it was still customary to commemorate the most important dates of the collapse of the state by holding four public liturgies of fasting (*sōm*) a year: the beginning of the siege in the tenth month, the breaching of the wall in the fourth month, the devastation of the temple and palace in the fifth month, and the murder of Gedaliah in the seventh month (Zech.7.2ff.; 8.18ff.). Thus this occasional form of worship, which even in the pre-exilic period was not necessarily tied to a holy place, became the element which supported the regular main cult in the exilic period (Albertz,1994:378-9).

The main cult of the exilic period differed from that of the monarchy essentially in the fact that it was no longer under royal supervision. That made it more open, a forum to which the various groups could contribute their own theological ideas. This becomes evident among other things from the fact

that alongside the normal genre of lamentation of the people (Pss. 44; 60; 74 [?]; 79; 89; Isa.51:9f; 63:7-64.11; Lam.5) other genres were used in the ceremonies of popular lamentation, like free elegaic poems in the style of the lament for the dead (Lam.1; 2; 4), compositions mediating between the main cult and the subsidiary cult (Lam.3; Ps.102), or even collections of prophetic judgments (e.g. Jer.8:4-10:24). Only through this greater institutional openness could the exilic liturgy become the place of theological clarification in the situation of political crisis (Albertz,1994:378-9).

Scholars have debated whether there was sacrifice performed in Palestine during this period. Richards maintains that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were engaged in some form of worship and sacrifice in Jerusalem prior to the arrival of the exiles (Richards,1994a:265), though there is uncertainty about the exact type of sacrificial acts performed at the site of the altar at the temple ruins (Richards,1994a: 265). Albert says that vegetable offerings and incense offerings could also have been made there (Jer.41:5; Albertz,1994:378-9). We also hear of a group of pious Northerners, eighty strong, who were murdered at Mizpah while on their way with cereal offerings and incense to the temple of Yahweh, presumed to be the one in Jerusalem (Jer. 41:5; Blenkinsopp,1998:25-26). Certain scholars argue that even animal sacrifices took place during this period. Thus, Gottwald argues,

> This worship may well have included animal sacrifices presided over by lower orders of priests who had escaped deportation (Gottwald,1985:424).

But there are those scholars who are very critical of any suggestion that animal sacrifice ever took place in Palestine at this time. They argue that because the temple was destroyed all ordinary worship services, especially sacrifices, came to an end (Wittenberg,1993:99; Smith,1989:32-35). Albertz, while believing that cereal offering may have taken place at the ruins of the temple, maintains that there were "no animal offerings, since the site would have had to be cultically pure for them" (Albertz,1994:378-9).

Jones suggests that the theology which emerged in a context of a destroyed Jerusalem can in fact be called an anti-temple or non-temple piety that was outside of sacrifice. The logic of Jones' argument is that sacrifice must have ceased in order for this kind of piety to emerge (Richards,1994a:265). While Jones' theory is attractive, it must be said that an anti-temple theology does not necessarily presuppose the absence of a temple. The temple was a symbol of oppression for the poorest of the

land in terms of tax extraction and it is conceivable that they, therefore, had an anti-temple theology while having a physical temple building (Richards,1994a:266).

5.3.3.4 Conclusion

It is clear that though the destruction of the temple, city and the dynasty had caused a serious spiritual and socio-economic crisis, the *am haaretz* continued to worship God and offered certain offerings at the site of the ruined temple. If this is indeed the case, then the returned exiles could not justify the exclusion of the *am haaretz* from the rebuilding of both the temple and the city walls on the basis that the *am haaretz* did not worship the same God as they did. In the next section we discuss both the religious and the socio-economic conditions of the Jews in Babylon.

5.4 ISRAELITES IN EXILE

5.4.1 Introduction

As we have already dealt with the Israelites in Palestine, we now also have to discuss both the socio-economic and religious conditions of the Israelites in exile, in order to place the conflict between these two opposing groups in its proper context. But before we do that we need to find out who this group of Jews that was taken to exile by the Babylonian was.

Those deported in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem included part of the leading class and some craftmen (cf. Jer.52:28-30; Richards,1994a:259); they were in fact more educated than those left behind in Judah (Soggin,1984:253). Gottwald identified them as follows:

> The royal court, the residents of the capital Jerusalem, the majority of the Judaean nobility, state officials, priests, army officers, and artisans who probably constituted no more than 5 percent of the total populace (Gottwald,1985:423).

Those who were deported considered themselves to be the elect remnant announced by the prophets (Soggin,1984:253). In the following section we discuss the socio-economic conditions of this group in exile.

5.4.2 Socio-economic conditions

For those who were deported, as opposed to those who remained in the land, the downfall of the state of Judah meant a deep social uprooting. They had lost not only their homes but also their land and a social status which was usually influential; often they had been torn from their clans or even families and as a rule were deprived of the solidarity provided by kinsfolk. The feeling of having been dragged off against their will kept high their hope of a return and of a revision of the facts of history (Albertz,1994:373). But how did this group settle in Babylon?

5.4.2.1 Settlement in Babylon

The Jews were settled in various places in Mesopotamia. Some were relocated to the periphery of the empire, in villages and rural areas, and other exiles were relocated to its very nucleus, although not to the capital (Lemche,1988:176; Boadt,1984:383).

Thus, difficulties over adaptation may initially have been considerable, but the exiles, following Jeremiah's advice (Jer.29), evidently soon became integrated into Babylonian society without giving up their ethnic or religious identity (Albertz,1994:373). This step was made easier by the Babylonian policy of settling the prisoners of war from individual countries as closed groups and granting them crown land (Albertz,1994:373). As we indicated earlier on, contrary to the Assyrian practice, the Babylonian policy was not to disperse those whom they deported in an attempt to destroy them ethnically and politically. In fact, the deportees were settled in compact groups, especially in the southern region of Babylonia (Ezek.1:1ff Jer.29:5; Ezra 2:59//Neh.7:61; Richards,1994a:260). Ezekiel is said to have been a member of a local Jewish settlement called Tel Aviv, the location of which is unfortunately unknown (Lemche,1988:180). Thus the exiles from Judah, too, were able to settle as a national group in various, sometimes abandoned, locations in the area of Nippur (Albertz,1994:373). This has been confirmed by the archives of the Jewish trading family, the *Marushus,* which date from the fifth century B.C., and which reveal the presence of a Jewish colony in the ancient Babylonian city of Nippur (Lemche,1988:180).

It appears as though exile in Babylon was not too harsh an experience, since the people taken into captivity were allowed to build their own houses and to form their own communities under their own chiefs (Bickerman, 1946:262; Hinson,1973:139; Boadt,1984:383; Van Zyl et al,1979:197). Perhaps they also formed associations (*hatru*), which were given crown land to work by the Babylonian state and paid for it by doing state service. They lived in these locations in families (Ezra 2:59) or according to professional groups (Ezra 8:17); here Levites, priests and other former temple officials, despite their lack of function, formed their own groups (Ezra 2:36ff.; Albertz,1994:373).

It is clear therefore that in this Babylonian community, alongside priests and prophets, elders took over functions of leadership (Jer.29:1; Ezek.7:1; 14:1; 20:1) and perhaps were even able to build up limited communal self-government (Albertz,1994:373). The question is once the exiles settled in Babylon, what were their employment opportunities?

5.4.2.2 Employment opportunities

It looks as though after some initial difficulties, the legal and economic situation was by no means oppressive for the exiles from Judah. The archive of the agricultural trading and credit house of Murashu from Nippur attests, though strictly speaking only for a later period (455-403), that the people of Judah were legally fully integrated in Babylonia and got along quite reasonably in their businesses (Albertz,1994:373-4).

However, it was impossible for the deported elite to maintain their social position in exile.Most of them were in the leadership class, but, in the eyes of the Babylonians, could be put to little use within the complicated administrative system then in use in Mesopotamia. The Judaeans were not educated so as to be able to undertake important administrative jobs (for which knowledge of cuneiform and of Sumerian, the "Latin" of the day, was essential). As a result there would always be doubts as to the loyalty of the group. It appears that the leadership stratum were reduced to the status of peasants who farmed plots of land which had been assigned to them by the Babylonian state (Lemche,1988:180). They had to work for the Babylonians on state projects, such as irrigation works in agriculture, or in building sites (Wittenberg,1993:103). Mostly they were in simple employment

(farmers, shepherds, fishermen), but sometimes they could also rise to higher positions in the service of Persian masters (e.g. as irrigation experts) (Albertz,1994:373-4; Wittenberg,1993: 103).

However, later sources reveal that some elements of the Jewish society in Mesopotamia eventually established themselves in other areas, such as trade and banking (Lemche,1988:180). They took part in trade in their new homeland, and some became wealthy (Hinson,1973:139). The records of the Murashu family, a Babylonian banking firm of the fifth century B.C., list several prominent Jewish families among their clients about the years 450 to 400 B.C (Boadt,1984:384). And as early post-exilic biblical texts indicate, some few found their way to the highest political offices, such as, Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Nehemiah, Ezra etc (Albertz,1994:373-4).

Although most of those who returned may have been the poorer and more marginalised exiles, their material situation was perhaps better than those who stayed behind in Palestine (Wittenberg,1993: 103). The prosperity of the exilic community may explain both the donation lists of this time (Ezra 2.69; 8.30) and why many Jews preferred to remain in the Dispersion, unwilling to leave their possessions, as they were already living comfortable and prosperous lives (Hinson,1973:155; Bickerman,1946:262; Albertz,1994:373-4).

5.4.2.3 Exile: slavery or freedom?

Scholars have been debating the question whether the exiles were ever subjected to any form of slavery or not (Smith,1989:37-38). There are scholars on the one hand, who argue that Jews were subjected to slavery practices in Babylon. Smith argues that there is evidence that Babylonians practiced slavery.

> We have cuneiform inscriptions suggesting that Nebuchadnezzar II did initiate building campaigns using labour from conquered territories. There is evidence to suggest that Jews were included in the armies of Nabonidus (Smith,1991:79).

Thus, it has been stated that exiles were at times in chains in exile. It has also been argued that slavery was characteristic of the Babylonian area, several other cultural centers of Persia, and perhaps many

of the Greek areas of Asia Minor (Grabbe,1992:22).

There are scholars on the other hand, who argue that there is no evidence that Jews were subjected to slavery in Babylon. They argue that the Babylonian economy was not primarily slave-based, that slave labour did not play the leading role in these economies and that slaves were not widely used in agricultural work on large estates, whether of landowners or the king. Furthermore, they maintain that, although some crafts workers were slaves (e.g., weavers), most were free individuals (though usually palace dependents) thus comparable to serfs in agrarian areas (Grabbe,1992:22). Moreover, Dandamaev has concluded that there is no evidence for chattel slavery in this period, but while this may certainly be the case, there is other evidence that the need for the concentration of captive populations in the Babylonian heartland was as much for labour as for discouraging revolt in the defeated territories (Smith,1991:77). It is to be noted, however, that there are only a very few references to Jews who were slaves (Lemche,1988:180). In spite of the fact that they had been deported from their homeland, they were apparently not regarded as prisoners of war (who would ordinarily have been utilized as slave labour). They were instead the clients of the Babylonian state, and the state employed them to form a colony; they were peasants on lands assigned to them by the state (Lemche,1988:181).

Though the Israelite exiles were in a foreign land, uprooted from their homeland, we also need to acknowledge that they enjoyed some form of freedom there in Babylon. Moreover, there is good evidence that conditions were not as bad under the Babylonians as under the earlier Assyrians, e.g King Jehoiachin, who had been carried off to Babylon as a prisoner in 598 B.C., seemed to have been treated with dignity and allowed to live in ease. A small Babylonian clay tablet found in the 1930's listed a daily gift of food for his household from the royal palace (Boadt,1984:384; Ackroyd,1968: 31). Again it is stated that the prophet Ezekiel moved and spoke with considerable freedom in his place of exile (Boadt,1984:384). Jeremiah, back in Palestine, kept up contacts with the exiles in the years from 598 to 586 B.C. (Jer. 29). Jeremiah counseled the exiles to "build houses and settle in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Marry and have sons and daughters...and seek the peace of the city to which I have sent you in exile" (Jer. 29:5-7; Boadt,1984:384).

Though acknowledging that the exiles may have been engaged in work for the Babylonians, Ackroyd points out that "the indications are of reasonable freedom, of settlement in communities, but possibly simply engaged in normal agricultural life of the possibility of marriage, of the ordering of their own affairs, of relative prosperity" (Ackroyd,1968:31ff).

Even though the Babylonian exiles may have enjoyed some benefits from the Babylonian economy, we need to acknowledge that they were homesick and desperate about their loss of freedom. They too sang about their grief and despair in songs such as the following: Psalms 137:1-6 (Wittenberg, 1993:103).

5.4.2.4 Conclusion

To sum up, we note that though the exile in Babylon was not a holiday resort for Israelites, the exiles seemed to have enjoyed some freedom of movement, practiced agriculture, with some even becoming so wealthy that they decided not to return back to Palestine in 539 B.C. for fear of forfeiting their immovable properties. In the next section we discuss the religious conditions of the Babylonian exiles.

5.4.3 Religious conditions

Religiously, the exiles in Babylon faced a great difficulty. Even if they wanted to serve God, many of their traditional religious practises were impossible there. The city of Jerusalem and the temple had been destroyed (Hinson,1973:143). As regards the religious practices which were observed by the Jewish exiles, there are no signs of the administration whatsoever of any kind of temple cult (Lemche,1988:181). All indications are that the Jews did not establish any temple worship during the exile, and that the traditions about the past and about the correct form of worship were both honoured and observed in congregations which probably assembled in private homes. Regular synagogual worship as such, however, had not yet evolved (Lemche,1988:181). Ackroyd does not believe that synagogues emerged during these period: "The frequently voiced supposition that this is when synagogues emerged is without clear foundation" (Ackroyd,1968:33ff).

5.4.3.1 Weeping in Babylon

It has been argued that the morale of the Jewish community was very low, even though the leaders were introducing religious practices which the people could follow when they were away from Judah and Jerusalem. The exiled Jews were still downhearted about the destruction of Jerusalem, and especially of the temple. Many of them could not believe that God still cared for his people, and they lost hope (Isa.40:27). The victories of the Babylonians and the security of their rule seemed to show that Marduk was more powerful than the Lord (Isa. 42:17; Hinson,1973:153, cf also Smith,1991:76).

Accordingly, the situation of the youth was especially pathetic. They had experienced the trauma of being uprooted and brought to a foreign land. The values of their parents did not mean anything to them anymore. The prophet Ezekiel quotes a saying which was making the rounds: "What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'?" (Ezekiel 18:2; Wittenberg,1993:103). The youth felt they had had to pay the price for what their parents had done. They were without hope and direction, a lost generation. There was nothing they could look forward to (Wittenberg,1993:105).

In this situation God sent his messengers, the prophets with a new message of hope. Ezekiel (37:1-14) and Isaiah the Younger (also called Second Isaiah), the prophets during these dark years of the Babylonian exile, protested against the exiles's hopelessness and despair (Wittenberg,1993:105). So both Ezekiel and Isaiah the Younger preached that in the valley of despair and death (exile) there is now a new hope. Ezekiel tells of the new beginning which Yahweh will make. He tells of the return of the exiles to their home country and a new knowledge of God and a new faith in him. All this will still take time but God had given the promise and that promise gives new life (Wittenberg,1993:106)

The centre of Isaiah the Younger's message is the call "Fear not!" (Wittenberg,1993:110). Because God intervenes in history and leads his people out of captivity to freedom, they can rejoice. They can rejoice already now, although the power of the Babylonians is still unbroken (Wittenberg,1993:110). Therefore, Isaiah the Younger's message not only gives new hope in the situation of despair, but it is full of joy and praise, calling on mountains, forests, and all nature to rejoice with him (Isaiah 44:23;

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Wittenberg,1993:110).

In the next section we look at how the exiles coped with foreign religious influence in Babylon.

5.4.3.2 How did the Israelites in exile cope with foreign religious influence?

How did the Israelites in exile cope with foreign religious influence? Considerable assimilation took place between Jews and Babylonians, as is indicated by the proper names which have been preserved. A large part of these are Babylonian names, even within the Judaean royal family (Lemche,1988: 181). However, this by no means suggests that the Jews accepted Babylonian forms of worship. At the same time, however, we must admit that there is no evidence that this did not take place, since such a departure from the picture of the isolated Yahweh-worshiping Jewish society would clearly have been regarded as inadmissable. This must be taken into account, since some of the Babylonian personal names assumed by Jews are names in which such major Babylonian gods as Marduk and Nabu figure, and this might be taken to suggest that some sort of acknowledgment of the gods in question did, after all, take place (Lemche,1988:181). The poetry of Isaiah of the Exile, written toward the close of Neo-Babylonian rule, may imply that many Jews at least by then were a part of the cosmopolitan populace of Babylon and very much tempted by the allure of Babylonian religion and culture (Gottwald,1985:425-6).

In contrast, Van Zyl et al (1979) has a different view on this matter,

> Those who were abducted to Babylon in 586 B.C. after the fall of Jerusalem, were faced with the choice of either conforming to the way of life and customs of the local inhabitants (and thereby losing their own identity and being absorbed by the others) or of rejecting the heathen customs at all cost and living in a separate community. The majority chose the latter path and preserved their own traditions; they clung to their religion, particularly the law (tora) (Van Zyl et al,1979:217).

It is clear that the Babylonian Jews had contact and were possibly influenced by the religion of Babylon, however, we are not quite clear about the extent of foreign influence on the exile's religious affairs. Whatever influence exile may have had on the religious worship of the exiles there were some matters of long standing tradition which could still be observed by the Jews there. In the next section

we highlight some of them.

5.4.3.3 Exile's religious practices

In order to keep the religious light burning in Babylon, the exiles observed amongst others, the following religious practices.

The first one is circumcision. This custom could be traced back to God's covenant with Abraham. It helped to distinguish the Jews from the people they lived among in exile, for the Babylonians did not practise it. Jeremiah warned the people of Jerusalem against depending on this kind of outward sign, so it is clear that this custom was practised in this time (Jer.4:4; 9:25,26; Hinson,1973:144). Under the circumstances in which the exiles lived, circumcision could thus retain its value as a sign of the covenant (Van Zyl et al, 1979:198). However, while not denying that circumcision was practised by the Babylonian Jews, Ackroyd reminds us that "whether it [circumcision] became specially prominent in the exilic period is unknown" (Ackroyd,1968:36).

Secondly, the Sabbath observance was an important custom in pre-exilic Israel. Jeremiah also supported the custom, and it is mentioned several times in the book of Ezekiel, where its neglect is said to be reason for God's judgement (Jer.17:19-27; Ezek.20:12,20,23ff; Hinson,1973:144). The observance of the Sabbath (Ezek 20:12, 22:8) in exile was given new importance and even acquired richer significance (Van Zyl et al,1979:198). Ackroyd argues that the Sabbath was re-examined and re-presented in the exilic age, and a stronger emphasis was laid upon it (Ackroyd,1968:35).

The third one is the use of Psalms. The exiles gathered the law into more orderly collections, and the Psalms into groups for use in worship (Hinson,1973:145). Not all the Psalms now in the Bible would have been composed by the time of the exile, but many individual Psalms were already known, and perhaps the first small collection had been made. Psalm 137[86] describes the feelings of the Jews in

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[86] Van Zyl maintains that it was not possible for exiles to practise regular cultic activities because Babylonia was for them an unclean land (Ps.137; Van Zyl et al,1979:198).

exile, when the people of Babylon asked them to use their Psalms as an entertainment. But no doubt Psalms were often used in the Jewish worship even in exile (Hinson,1973:144). Psalm 137 has been thought to provide an indication of worship in exile; but Psalm 137:4 has also been thought to provide a counterweight to such conjecture by implying that worship was totally impossible in such a situation, though we may doubt whether a poetic utterance of distress such as this should be generalised into proof of anything. The fact that a group of elders comes together seeking the advice of Ezekiel (8:1; 14:1; 20:1) may or may not indicate an act of worship (Ackroyd,1968:33ff).

The fourth one is the observance of laws. The Jews in exile must have valued the book of Deuteronomy, at least in its earliest versions. This book gave the people of Israel the belief that sacrifices should only be made in Jerusalem, and had led the exiles to give up sacrifice as a means of worship. The teachings about God and His ways which is contained in Deuteronomy would have been an encouragement to the Jews in exile, who were already in despair. And instruction such as Deuteronomy 6:4-9 must have been very important to the Jews in Babylon, even though they did not yet take the last two verses literally (Hinson,1973:144).

5.4.3.4 Conclusion

In this section we have discussed the religious and socio-economic conditions of both the *am haaretz* and the Babylonian exiles. We have argued that the *am haaretz* were Israelites who were left behind when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah in 586 B.C. Although they were in the majority, the *am haaretz* were poor. They continued to be farmers, though the majority lost their property due to the redistribution plan of the Babylonians. It was shown that though the destruction of the temple, city and the dynasty had caused serious spiritual and socio-economic crisis, the *am haaretz* continued to worship God and offered certain offerings at the site of the ruined temple. We have also argued that if this is indeed the case, then the returned exiles could not justify the exclusion of the *am haaretz* from the rebuilding of both the temple and the city walls on the basis that the *am haaretz* did not worship the same God as they (returned exiles) did.

We have also analysed both the socio-economic and religious conditions of the Babylonian exiles.

Economically, the exiles were better off than the *am haaretz*, due to the prospering Babylonian economy. However, those who returned back to Judah were the poorer exiles, as the richer exiles opted not to return home. Religiously, the returned exiles continued to worship their God and also continued to observe traditions such as the Torah, Sabbath, circumcision etc.

In the next section we analyse the role of Persian rulers in assisting the Babylonian exiles to return back to Palestine, and their role in the rebuilding process.

5.5 THE RETURN OF THE BABYLONIAN EXILES TO PALESTINE

5.5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to discuss the return of the exiles to Palestine in three separate groups. In this regard we will also discuss the role played by certain Achaemenid rulers in assisting the exiles to return home and also in giving them permission through decrees, to embark on a rebuilding and reconstruction programme. Such a discussion will hopefully throw some light on the conflict between the *am haaretz* and the returned exiles.

The Old Testament prophets had predicted not only the captivity of Judeans by the Babylonians, but also their return home. The prophets predicted that the time of punishment would be completed after seventy years of foreign domination (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10; Wood,1970:387). A look at the history involved shows that before that time of return arrived, a change came in world leadership. Babylonia was defeated by Persia, who then took command. The return of Judah and her subsequent history would be under this new power (Wood,1970:387). In the next section we briefly examine the fall of Babylon and the rise of Persia.

5.5.2 The fall of Babylon and the rise of Persia

Cyrus the Great became king of the Persian tribes in 559 B.C. and soon afterwards replaced the empire of the Medes with that of the Persians (Turner,1998:93). In 550 B.C. Cyrus had captured

Ecbatana, the capital of the Medes who were the most powerful enemies of the Babylonians (Wittenberg,1993:111). Then Cyrus marched against the Kingdom of Lydia in the north, in present-day Turkey, and conquered it in 546 B.C. Within a few years the political scene had changed dramatically. Suddenly the all-powerful Babylon itself was no longer safe (Wittenberg,1993:107).

Below we analyse the circumstances which led to the downfall of the Babylonian empire. The last Babylonian king, Nabonidus, had deposed the powerful priestly class in the capital city in favour of the cult of a local god, Sin, the moon-god (Lemche,1988:187). Nabonidus' people, influenced by the disgruntled priests of Marduk, were ready for a change, even if effected by a foreigner (Wood,1970: 388). Accordingly, in 539 B.C. Cyrus conquered the Babylonians (Garbini,1994:188; Wood,1970: 388; Lemche,1988:187). He personally entered Babylon a few weeks later, and was actually welcomed as liberator by the Marduk priests and the people generally (Wood,1970:389), thereby becoming the ruler of the ancient Near East. These victories introduced the *Pax iranica* (Garbini,1994:188). After the seizure of Babylon, all the Western countries up to the borders of Egypt, including Syria, Palestine and Phoenicia, voluntarily submitted to the Persians (Turner,1998: 93).

When the city of Babylon fell in October 539 B.C. the whole Babylonian empire, including Judah, passed under Persian control (Blenkinsopp,1988:61). The Persians did not change much concerning the manner of control over Palestine and Syria. The division into provinces and districts was taken over unchanged from the Babylonians (Van Zyl et al,1979:206; Hoglund,1992:4-5; Blenkinsopp, 1988:61; Lemche,1988:187; Grabbe,1992:80-84), with the single addition in Darius's reign, of Persian governors, or satraps (Lemche,1988:187; Grabbe,1992:80-84). It was under Cyrus's rule that the first group of exiles returned back home to Palestine. It is worth noting that the return of the Babylonian exiles to Palestine did not take place once in a single movement, rather it took place in three separate returns. The first came shortly after the Persian conquest of Babylon in 538 B.C.(Ezra 1:1), led by Sheshbazzar (Wood,1970:392). The second came eighty years later, in the seventh year (458 B.C.) of Artaxerxes Longimanus (Ezra 7:7), led by Ezra (Wood,1970:392). And the third came thirteen years after the second, in the twentieth year (444 B.C.) of Artaxerxes Longimanus (Neh. 2:1), led by Nehemiah (Wood,1970:392). In the next section we discuss each of these three returns in turn,

starting with the first, to which we now turn.

5.5.3 The first return to Judah (Ezra 1-6)

We have argued in chapter 4 that Ezra 1-6 was written by the unknown Jew, who became the editor of Ezra-Nehemiah in 300 B.C. It follows therefore that in this section we are discussing the ideology of the final redactor of Ezra-Nehemiah.

5.5.3.1 Cyrus role

Isaiah the Younger proclaimed that Cyrus (559-530 B.C.), the mighty Persian conqueror, had been called by Yahweh himself to set his captive people free (see Isaiah 45:1-7; Wittenberg,1993:107). Following his occupation of Babylon, Cyrus gave permission for those who wished to do so to return to Palestine (Lemche,1988:187). He did this in a form of a decree. In the following section we briefly examine the role which Cyrus played in this regard.

5.5.3.1.1 Cyrus's decree

The decree is recorded in Ezra1:1-4 and Ezra 6:3-5. After conquering Babylon on October 29, 539 B.C. (Hoglund,1992:4-5; Grabbe,1992:123), and in the first year of his reign, 538 B.C., Cyrus issued a decree (Grabbe,1992:126-9; Boadt,1984:435-436), which did not merely sanction but also actively encouraged the return (Margalith,1991:317) to Palestine of such Jews as wished to go back (Brockington,1971:14-15; Grabbe,1992:126-9), and offered grants in aid (Brockington,1971:14-15); and he also subsidised the temple from the royal treasury (Ezra 6:3-5; Margalith,1991:317; Hinson,1973:155; Blenkinsopp,1988:62; Boadt,1984:435-436). Cyrus also encouraged those who remained in Babylon to contribute to the cost of those going (Ezra 1:2-4; Hinson,1973:155).

Through his edicts, Cyrus authorised the Jews to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Hinson,1973:155; Brockington,1971:14-15; Grabbe,1992:126-9; Blenkinsopp,1988:62); and he also decreed that the sacred vessels i.e. the valuable gold and silver cups and plates which the Babylonians had taken when

they destroyed the temple be brought back to Jerusalem (Boadt,1984:435-436; Hinson,1973:155; Blenkinsopp,1988:62). Yet few Jews responded positively to his call (Hinson,1973:155).

5.5.3.1.2 Modus operandi of Cyrus's decree

The question to be asked here is why would Cyrus, a Persian king, be willing to resettle Jews even at his own financial expense? It is common knowledge that the early Achaemenids's policy towards their conquered territories was of respecting the local deities. Cyrus's policy to return the Jews back to Palestine was not a unique decision on behalf of the Jews but rather one example of both a general religious policy (Grabbe,1992:57-58) and a political policy. Let us briefly look at each of this aspects.

Firstly, we analyse the religious policy. The Persians embarked on a different policy towards the subject peoples of their empire from that of the Babylonians and Assyrians. For it was no longer aimed at suppression but at respecting, tolerating and even furthering cultural and religious identity (Albertz,1994:444), and the Jews enjoyed the fruits of this policy (Lemche,1988:188).

Cyrus was a very diplomatic and enlightened ruler who permitted peoples deported by the Babylonians to return to their homelands. He thoughtfully respected the religious sentiments of his subject peoples and governed by allowing considerable local autonomy (Turner,1998:93). This is further elaborated by the fact that "one of Cyrus's first acts after conquering Babylon was to allow the return of the statues of the various gods to their native cities" (Grabbe,1992:126-9).

In this connection, the permission to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem has been seen as an example of the "liberal" Persian attitude toward religious matters, not least when we consider that the Persians themselves were devotees of the first "modern" religion (with the exception of early Judaism) in the Near East, Zoroastrianism, in which ethical matters were emphasized at the expense of the earlier fertility religion (Lemche,1988:188).

Secondly, we discuss the political policy. Some scholars have been very critical of the straight

forward interpretation of the Cyrus decree as a compassionate, considerate or reconciliatory move. They argue that the early Persian rulers respected the local gods and local self-rule (Boadt,1984:435-436) as a matter of political expediency (Blenkinsopp,1988:62; Gottwald,1985:428-429), for "the Persians generally tried to keep the various entities in submission by certain concessions to local custom (e.g., respecting local cults and deities)" (Grabbe,1992:115-116).

We also need to remember that while the biblical texts present Cyrus as being directly inspired by Yahweh (cf.Isa. 45:1-7), the political reality is that Cyrus had no special sympathy for any foreign religion.

> He acted with respect to the Yahwist cult as he had acted with respect to the Babylonian temples...while it [the Cyrus Edict] was a decisive episode for the Judeans themselves, at the same time it was a common and banal event for the Persian political establishment. It is probable that, in doing this, Cyrus had political objectives in mind, probably already anticipating an expedition against Egypt, which was located on the other side of Judea (Briant,1992:238; cf. Ackroyd,1969).

Lemche summarises the political reasoning behind the Cyrus decree thus when he states,

> On the other hand, it would be a mistake to underplay Cyrus' real-political intentions in liberating the Jews in Babylon. By allowing elite groups of the Jewish society to return to their homeland, which few or none of them had ever seen, the king created a bond of personal loyalty between his regime and this Jewish group, whom he therefore could count on to help him govern his far-flung empire. Yet it should also be observed that a new feature came about with the appearance of the Persian empire, since the Persians either abandoned the practice of deportation or limited it severely. In actual practice, the Persians utilized a new approach, the goal of which was to strengthen the national (or, perhaps better, the local) units in order to win their support, and with the minimum possible effort on the part of the Persians themselves. The means employed to this end, that is, towards maintaining peace by preventing the various 'nation states' from making war on the Persian great king or on each other, consisted of ensuring the local populations better living conditions that previously and striking instantaneously if a rebellion nevertheless broke out. This policy was only partly successful. Rebellion took place frequently and in many locations. This may have been the case in Palestine; we possess no information about any local revolt, but the destruction layers in a number of Palestinian towns seem to indicate that the Persian period was not entirely a peaceful one (Lemche,1988:188).

Further, we need to remember that Cyrus inherited a very unstable organisation from the Babylonian kingdom, with the result that his reign was preoccupied with military expeditions to consolidate his empire (Richards,1994a:272; Albertz,1994:444-5). Nevertheless, Cyrus kept firm control through

the Persian army and a complex governmental system (Turner,1998:93). Turner argues that the chief aim of the Achaemenid empire as well as subsequent ones was to ensure a stable status quo, which allowed the accumulation of as much revenue as possible. The Persians, contrary to former empires, sought to keep the various peoples in submission by allowing certain compromises to local custom, respecting local cults and deities. However, the Persian Empire did not hesitate to acquire or retain territory by military power (Turner,1998:93-94). Accordingly, Cyrus "coopted" the religio-cultural traditions of the colonised as a means of stabilising the young Persian empire. No doubt the policy adopted by Cyrus constituted the basis for reorganising and stabilising a former Babylonian kingdom premised on population displacement and a disregard for indigenous religio-cultural practices (Richards,1994a:273).

We now come to the conclusion that the Achaemenid had a standard policy vis-à-vis local cults. It appears that the interest of the imperial authorities was not motivated exclusively by sentiments of religious piety, though that may have played a part. Indeed they tolerated and exploited local systems within an overarching imperial framework. This policy involved granting a fair measure of local autonomy with a dominant elite whose loyalty could be counted on. One such local system particularly in evidence in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia was centered on the temple. Temples served as catalysts of economic exchange and promoters of social cohesion. The temple may also have been seen as a point of convergence for the symbolic structure of the region, an "emblem of collective identity" (Blenkinsopp,1991:26), thereby mitigating to some extent the inevitable resentment generated by subjection to a foreign power (Blenkinsopp,1991:26).

So we see here that the decree was not just a compassionate act on the side of the Achaemenid rulers, rather it was both a religious and a political policy of the Achaemenid, aimed at protecting the interests of the Persian empire. Having discussed Cyrus's decree, we now move on to talk about the return of the first group of exiles and the rebuilding of the temple.

5.5.3.2. The return (Ezra 1:5-2:70) and the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 3-6)

The return of the first group of Jewish exiles from Babylon occurred soon after the issuance of

Cyrus's decree, likely in 538 or 537 B.C. (Wood,1970:393). The Jewish people returned under the leadership of Sheshbazzar (Turner,1998:94; Wood,1970:393). This return is a substantial number, but it did not include all the Jews who lived in the East (Wood,1970:393). They did not find it easy to leave; and a large number did not (Wood,1970:393; Soggin,1984:266). Judahites in particular, who would have needed to travel great distances through rather unstable and dangerous areas (Ezra 8:22 ; Neh. 2:7) are likely to have remained in the land of exile (Richards,1994a:272). As already indicated earlier, some could not return home as they had already acquired immovable property in Babylon.

With the first return of the Jewish exiles, the building of the temple began. Let us look at how this process unfolded. The returned exiles's first step was laying the foundation for the rebuilding of the Solomonic temple destroyed in 586 B.C. This step seems to have been accomplished rather quickly. However opposition was experienced from the people of the land (Ezra 4:1-5; Wood,1970:394). Before analysing the *am haaretz's* opposition to the rebuilding of this temple, we need to examine the role of temples at this particular time in history.

Blenkinsopp summarizes the socio-political situation in Achaemenid Judah in the following way. The imperial government also mandated rather than permitted the rebuilding of the temple and financed the project out of the imperial and satrapal treasury. The result was the emergence, in the early decades of Achaemenid rule, of a semi-autonomous temple-community controlled by the dominant stratum of Babylonian immigrants, the בני הגולה of Ezra-Nehemiah (Blenkinsopp,1991:50ff).

What role did the temple play during this period? It will not be necessary to labour the point that in the Near East the construction, maintenance, and control of temples had broad social and political implications. The rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem in the late sixth century is a case in point (Blenkinsopp,1988:36-37). Temples became the focus of a new type of socio-political organisation towards the beginning of the first millennium B.C., one which came into its own during the two centuries of Achaemenid rule and persisted into the Seleucid period and beyond. This "civic-temple community" resulted from the merger of temple personnel with the free, property-owning citizenry of a particular settlement. Out of this merger arose an autonomous and privileged social entity which provided its members with the means for self-management and mutual economic assistance.

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According to Weinberg (1992), Achaemenid Judah provides a well-documented case history of such a temple community (Blenkinsopp,1991:26).

Many of the larger temples throughout the Achaemenid empire were wealthy institutions with their own land holdings and work force, their own capital and produce from which they advanced loans, serving more or less the same function as banks and credit unions today (Blenkinsopp,1991:39ff). Accordingly, stimulation of the regional economies by temples serving as storage and redistribution centers, to the evident advantage of the imperial exchequer, helps to explain why they were supported by successive Achaemenid rulers. The priesthoods servicing these temples were under the supervision of imperial officers (in Mesopotamia *paqdu* or *rēš šarri*) whose chief function was to ensure payment of tribute and, in some cases, the service of temple slaves; and we note that Nehemiah as local representative of the imperial government also took measures to control the economic resources of the Jerusalem temple (Neh. 13:13). In addition, these priesthoods served as custodians of the legal traditions in the various regions; and it is well attested that the central government promoted the codification and implementation of local traditional law as an instrument of the *pax Persica* throughout the empire. In the absence of an imperial cult of the type of the Assyrian Ashur, the Achaemenids tolerated and even cultivated local deities as imperial patrons. Regional cult centers played a significant role within the Achaemenid imperial system (Blenkinsopp,1991:39ff).

Viewed from distant Susa, the temple and its clergy were crucial for imperial control and the maintenance of law and order, while for nationalist immigrant groups the project of rebuilding was intimately connected with hopes for the re-establishment of the Davidic dynasty in the person of Zerubbabel (Blenkinsopp,1988:36-37). Having discussed the significance of a temple during this period we now move on to discuss the opposition of the *am haaretz* to the rebuilding process.

As we saw in chapter 3, opposition only arose when the people of the land realised that they were being excluded from the rebuilding project. The *am haaretz* wanted to assist with the reconstruction of the temple but the returned exiles refused them permission. But why did the returned exiles exclude the *am haaretz* in the rebuilding processs?

The first reason, some scholars have argued, may have been the old North-South divide. From the religious viewpoint it is important to note that strong opposition to the religion of the North was demonstrated in Judah. This religious contempt for the cultic practices of the North became a dominant factor. The returnees as exiles from Judah did not want the people of the North to aid them with the building of the temple (Fensham,1982:66-67). So the returned exiles viewed themselves as the only pure heir of the religious tradition. The returned exiles believed that those who had lived in Palestine in the time of the exile had served other gods as well as the Lord (2 Kings 17:27-34; Hinson,1973:156). They further believed that to take in the "adversaries" described in Ezra 4:1-5 would defile their sacrificial worship by including people who were not part of the exiled community and, therefore, not legitimate members of the restored community. Such impurity would make their worship ineffectual (McEntire,1997:5; Hinson,1973:156).

> The exiles formed a self-consciously defined community, a *Hibakusha* community, a community of "survivors" who returned to Palestine with a theology of acquired innocence and purity as opposed to the defilement of those who remained behind. Such a theological hubris on the part of the exile community must have created havoc and sparked the other fuel for conflicts, such as economic abuse and religious infidelity (Smith,1989:197).

We need to point out here that though the returned exiles may have had reservations about the religion of the North, the *am haaretz* were not only Northerners, they also included Southerners.

The second issue around the exclusion of the *am haaretz* from rebuilding was the role and control of Jerusalem within the new dispensation. In the early decades of the Persian period the most crucial questions were whether Jerusalem should be re-established as the political and religious center of the province[87], whether its temple, consequently, should be rebuilt, and if so, who should control it (Blenkinsopp,1998:42). Blenkinsopp (1991) shows rather convincingly that temples were the primary centres for tax and tribute collection, i.e. the political-economic hub of the Persian exchequer. A Persian-sponsored temple presupposed revenue for Persia through taxation and tribute and a shift in the location of the seat of political power in the province Beyond the River (Richards,1994a:279). The *am haaretz*, thus, faced the risk of losing valuable revenue as well as the status of leadership and

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[87] From Neh 3:7 it appears that Mizpah remained the administrative center of Judah down to the time of Nehemiah. During all that time, opposition to the rebuilding and fortification of Jerusalem was going on (Ezra 4:6-24).

control over the peasant masses in Judah. The returned exiles faced the possibility of ultimately gaining control over the peasant masses in Judah. Thus, the returned exiles faced the possibility of ultimately gaining control of the entire region (Richards,1994a:279). It is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that the *am haaretz* elite, who must have enjoyed some control of the South in the absence of a Southern ruling elite, faced the possibility of not only losing control over the South but, in fact, losing economic and political control of the entire province Beyond the River. This, indeed, was the implication of Persian support for the returning former elite of the South (Richards,1994a:279).

There is no doubt that a rebuilt temple meant economic and political control of the region. The returning former Judahite elite were adamant in insisting that only they would rebuild the temple, in consequence of permission from Cyrus. Conflict was bound to arise, as we see especially in Ezra 4-6, as to who had the right to build, and then ultimately, to control the political-economic-ideology center of a post-Babylonian Judah (Richards,1994a:266).

The *am haaretz's* exclusion from the rebuilding of the temple led to their opposition to the rebuilding process. The *am haaretz* saw their position as being threatened by the returning exiles who carried with them an imperial decree to strengthen their position. By refusing to allow them to participate in the reconstruction of the temple, the returning exiles shared nothing of their privileged position with the others. The *am haaretz* thus felt threatened in their position (remember that at the time Jerusalem was still part of the province of Samaria), and hence the enmity (Van Zyl et al,1979:209). So we may say that the *am haaretz* were initially not opposed to the rebuilding of the temple, rather they were opposed to their exclusion from rebuilding.

The *am haaretz's* opposition brought the rebuilding project to a complete standstill, with the result that the temple remained little more than a foundation for a period of about 16 years. The resumption of rebuilding was made possible by the decree of another Persian king, namely Darius. In the next section we analyse Darius's role in the resumption of the rebuilding of the temple.

5.5.3.3. Darius's role in the resumption of rebuilding and in the reorganisation of the Persian empire

Who was this Darius? It is noteworthy that this is Darius I, the ruler of the Persian Empire (522-486 B.C.), not to be confused with Darius the Mede mentioned in the book of Daniel (Dn.6:6,9,25). He became king after the death of Cambyses, Cyrus's son (Cave,1993:48). He reigned for thirty-six years and expanded the empire all the way to India in the east and to the borders of Greece in the west (Boadt,1984:431-2).

The resumption of temple rebuilding took place during the reign of Darius. This only occured in the second year of Darius (520 B.C.; Hag. 1:1) (Wood,1970:394). The prophets Haggai and Zechariah urged that the building operations be resumed. They addressed the people generally, and specifically Zerubbabel and Joshua, who were still in command (Wood,1970:394). Following their "prophetic" efforts, work begun in the sixth month of this year (Hag. 1:15; Ezra 5:1-2). Again opposition from the *am haaretz* arose. The *am haaretz* first asked the Jews regarding their authority to do this building and then wrote directly to Darius for his confirmation (Wood,1970:394).

After a period of stagnation and opposition between the returned exiles and *the am haaretz*, Darius gave the orders for the continuation of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 6:6-12) with the assistance of the revenues from the district (Hoglund,1992:25-26; Bickerman,1946:268; Wood,1970:394). Though Darius did not rule that the *am haaretz* be excluded from the rebuilding, the returned exiles interpreted Darius's decree to mean that they alone should rebuild the temple at the exclusion of the *am haaretz*. So the returned exiles effectively excluded the *am haaretz* in this temple rebuilding project. Four years later, in the sixth year of Darius (March, 515 B.C.; Ezra 6:15), the temple was completed (Wood,1970:394).

We need to note here that though the *am haaretz* are excluded from temple rebuilding, the reasons given for the exclusion are not ethnic, rather they are about so-called true worshippers of Yahweh. So we see here that ethnicity has not as yet been used as a scapegoat to exclude the *am haaretz* from any rebuilding process. In chapter 3 we saw that ethnicity is only introduced to the debate with the

arrival of Ezra in Palestine.

Other than ordering the resumption of temple rebuilding, Darius played an important role in reorganising the Persian administration. Below, we give an overview of such a reorganisation and how it affected Judah.

It was immediately after Darius' ascension to the throne in 520 B.C. that he reorganised the empire (Richards,1994a:275) into satrapies. He was the first ruler to reorganise the Achaemenid empire into satrapies. This was the time when Darius could at last turn to the reorganisation of the empire badly shaken by the events of the previous four years of wars against Greek cities and Egypt (Blenkinsopp,1988:64). Darius divided his kingdom into twenty areas of provincial governments, each called a 'Satrapy' (Hinson,1973:149; Van Zyl et al,1979:206; Blenkinsopp,1988:64; Grabbe,1992:25-126).

Accordingly, he appointed Persian rulers (Satraps or governors) over these satrapies (Hinson,1973: 149). These satrapies, in turn, were divided into smaller units or provinces. Judah belonged to the fifth of these called "Beyond the River" (Reddit,1994:671-672), together with the rest of the Syro-Palestinian region, Phoenicia and Cyprus, assessed at three hundred and fifty talents of silver (Blenkinsopp,1988:64). Each satrapy usually represented the former boundaries of past kingdoms: military commanders assumed responsibility for imperial forces stationed in the conquered territories (Hoglund,1989:29). Hoglund notes that an intricate network of officials emerged, with some reporting directly to the Persian capital and others via their immediate supervisor, the governor (Richards, 1994a:275).

Briant (1992:238) also notes that in order to control the provinces more effectively, large numbers of native Persians were installed and were given sizeable plots of land along with the obligation of leading their cavalry troops as requisitioned by the governor. Within the province, the local peoples, dynasties and other recognised communities continued to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy (Richards,1994a:276).

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But what was the *modus operandi* of this reorganisation? While acknowledging Darius's genuis in doing what other Achaemenid rulers before and after him could not do, namely reorganising the empire into satrapies, we also need to explain the *modus operandi* of this reorganisation. Amongst others we identify two major processes of reorganisation.

First, an important aspect of Darius's new order was the collection, codification, and administration of local law codes, which were enforced together with Persian imperial law (Blenkinsopp,1988:64; Van Zyl et al,1979:206; Grabbe,1992:115-116).

The second form of reorganisation was tax collection (Blenkinsopp,1988:64; Grabbe,1992:115-116), "a severe burden which contributed substantially to unrest and rebellion" (Blenkinsopp,1988:60). While the system of tribute existed under Cyrus, Cambyses and Bardiya already, Darius was the one to unify and systematise the administrative practices (Richards,1994a:275). The satrapy had to pay its tribute each year to the Persian king, who deposited it in the stores and treasuries of the empire. "The size of the stocks of precious metals later found by Alexander the Great is an indication of the viability of the system" (Briant,1992:239; Richards,1994a:276). The people were reunited from within the large governmental provinces and made to pay a tribute each year. Each satrapy was given to a high Persian aristocrat, aided by administrators (Richards,1994a:275).

The reorganisation of the empire had serious consequences later for Judah. Especially because it introduced and consolidated the tax collection mechanisms. Heavy taxation is one of the causes of conflict among the returned exiles (Neh.5). This matter will be discussed in detail under section 5.5.5.

5.5.3.4 Summary

In this section we have discussed the return of the first group of exiles under the leadership of Joshua, Sheshbazzar and Zerubabel. This return was followed by the rebuilding of the temple destroyed in 586 B.C by the Babylonians. The rebuilding process was initially stalled by the *am haaretz's* opposition to their exclusion from rebuilding. An appeal was made to Darius to rule whether the rebuilding was authorised or not. Darius ruled that it was indeed authorised. However, Darius's ruling

did not solve the conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. His response seems to have favoured the position of the returned exiles in that it gives them the go ahead to rebuild, but without addressing the issue of the inclusion or exclusion of the *am haaretz* in the whole rebuilding process. But when one looks at the request put to Darius by the people of the land, one realises that the request was not clearly formulated and did not spell out issues that Darius had to address. In other words, Darius was not asked to rule on the inclusivity or exclusivity of the *am haaretz* in the rebuilding process, rather he was asked to rule whether the rebuilding was ever authorised and whether it should go ahead or not.

In the next section we discuss the second return of the Jews, which was led by Ezra.

5.5.4 The second return (Ezra 7-10)

5.5.4.1 Introduction

In this section we first discuss Ezra's role in leading the second group of returnees back home to Jerusalem. Second, we will discuss the role played by another Persian ruler, namely Artaxerxes, in assisting this second return. Third, we examine Ezra's role in fuelling the conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. Before we proceed with the first step as outlined above, we need to recall that in chapter 4, we concluded that Ezra 7-10 was part of the Ezra memoirs, written by Ezra himself, probably at 440 B.C. So the second return is about Ezra's ideology.

5.5.4.2 Artaxerxes's role (Ezra 7:1-27)

Fifty-eight years elapsed between the completion of the Temple and the second return of Jews to Judah. Only a few clues exist concerning the history of those years (Wood,1970:394). The second return happened during the time of Artaxerxes Longimanus. He was a Persian ruler, who reigned from 465 to 424 B.C. It was during Artaxerxes's seventh year that the second return occurred. The return was led by Ezra, a descendant of Aaron, skilled in teaching the Law (Ezra 7:6,10). In some undisclosed manner he persuaded the king to permit him to travel to Judah for the purpose of

effecting needed reforms (Wood,1970:395).

Accordingly, the request of Ezra to be allowed to go to Jerusalem was readily agreed to by the king (Ezra 7:6; Van Zyl et al,1979:211). Roundabout 458 B.C. Ezra came to Jerusalem and he brought from Babylon a Law Book to guide the life of the people in Judah (Hinson,1973:159). Like Sheshbazzar eighty years before, Ezra too received notable privileges from the Persian monarch in connection with his return. These privileges included authority to take as many of his countrymen with him as desired the opportunity; to receive from Jews in Persia as well as from Artaxerxes himself and his court councellors, gold and silver for the Jerusalem temple; to draw upon the royal treasury of the satrapy of Abarnaha for needs that might arise; to purchase animals for sacrifice at the temple; to exempt temple personnel from Persian taxation; and to appoint civil magistrates in the land of Judah to enforce the laws of Yahweh, with power of life and death over the guilty (Wood,1970: 395-396).

In the next section we discuss Ezra's role in addressing the conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*.

5.5.4.3 Ezra's mission in Palestine (Ezra 7:27-10:44)

Immediately after his return, Ezra embarked on a programme of redefining the returned exiles in ethnic terms. He encouraged them to separate themselves from the *am haaretz*. He excluded the *am haaretz* from assembly participation and also urged the returned exiles to divorce their *am haaretz* wives. In the following section we discuss Ezra's approach to the intermarriage question and how he redefined the community in ethnic terms.

5.5.4.3.1 Intermarriage

Ezra addressed the intermarriages issue in Ezra 9-10 in an ethnic manner. The intermarriage in question was between a number of Jews with non-exiles (Ezra 9). Jewish people had permitted their sons to marry non-exile daughters of the *am haaretz*, and even the priests, Levites, and civil leaders

were involved (Wood,1970:396).

The sociologist Merton describes mixed marriages as "marriage of persons deriving from those different in-groups and out-groups other than the family which are culturally conceived as relevant to the choice of a spouse" (Smith-Christopher,1996:123-4). Ezra defined the terms of the marriage crisis both ethnically (by citing the national/ethnic categories of Canaanite, Hivite, Perizzite, etc.) and religiously (by citing such terms as "the Holy Seed" זרע הקדש) (Ezra 9:2) (Smith-Christopher,1996:123-4). In this case, acceptable marriages would be those within a religious and ethnically defined group. It is clear that Ezra conceived of "his" group as consisting only of former exiles (Ezra 9:4) (Smith-Christopher,1996:123-4).

A number of scholars have noted the unique terminology employed in the narratives of Ezra-Nehemiah relating to group identity. The phrase that appears in Ezra 10:8, the "assembly of the exile" מקהל הגולה, is one such example. Others include simply "the assembly," or "the exile," or more elaborate labels such as "the assembly of those who returned from the captivity" השבים מן השבי הקהל (Nehemiah 8:17; Hoglund,1992:34-35). In that the issue of intermarriage is apparently bound up in the definition of who may belong to the "assembly of the exile," it can be concluded that the ban on intermarriage was seeking a new means to define the Restoration community (Hoglund,1992:35).

For the ideology of Ezra, the issue of intermarriage is directly related to the issue of obedience to divine ordinance (Hoglund,1992:34). In several places in the narratives of Ezra-Nehemiah, the issue of intermarriage is inextricably linked to the idea of membership in the community, the clearest example being in Ezra 10:8. Here, the penalty for not attending the meeting of the "assembly" קהל appointed to deal with the intermarriage issue is banishment from the "assembly" קהל. Thus the ban on intermarriage is an integral element in one's remaining part of the community (Hoglund,1992:34).

Scholars emphasise Ezra's mission as a reformulation of the post-exilic community. For Graetz, this transformation was the direct result of Ezra's role as a promulgator of a new understanding of the

Mosaic Torah, including an extension of that Torah to cover a total ban on intermarriage[48] (Hoglund,1992:29).

> Here the community is being redefined in exclusively ethnic terms. According to many of those who follow this line of thought, the new definition of membership in the community resulted in a transformation of the Restoration community and a new self-awareness of themselves as a distinctive element within the Achaemenid empire (Hoglund,1992:33).

Having briefly examined Ezra's definition of intermarriage, we go on, in the next subsection, to analyse how scholars have sympathised with Ezra's ethnicity.

5.5.4.3.1.1 A sympathetic reading of ethnicity

Ezra-Nehemiah is now getting a "sympathetic reading". Dyck argues that the community described by Ezra is said to have had legitimate ethnic concerns, which at times required strong measures such as those relating to intermarriage (Dyck,1996:89). Smith-Christopher suggests that the intermarriage matter should be approached from a sociology of a threatened minority by considering such actions as attempts to preserve identity and culture (Smith-Christopher,1996:123). Dyck argues that Ezra-Nehemiah expresses a *vertical* ethnicity (Dyck,1996:98). He maintains that Judah was relatively small and vulnerable community in the Persian empire (Dyck,1996:99). He talks of a community that is tightly circumscribed in terms of space. He therefore argues that the ideology of identity that we find in Ezra-Nehemiah "matches" this spatial dimension with its emphasis on ethnic depth. The focus of the identity of the post-exilic community is the experience of exile, and the story of the people begins with the story of the return from exile (Ezra1; Dyck,1996:100).

Dyck then goes on to argue that though the conflicts mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah centre on the building of the temple and walls of Jerusalem (Ezra 4; Nehemiah4), there was also conflict over the land which the new returnees claimed as their own (Ezra 9:1-2). Thus, Dyck elaborates,

> Because control of the temple and of the land are thus linked, the concern for ethnic depth was part of the on-going struggle of the community to survive as a distinct entity in the face of

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[48] Graetz saw the new emphasis on Torah as an idea originating in the exilic community in Babylon and expounded by Ezra (Graetz,1891:364-67).

outside pressures and competition. The more rigorous the application of the "exile" criterion the more the community was committed to a vertical concept of ethnicity (Dyck,1996:101). Likewise, in keeping with the small Judah hypothesis, Washington contends that intermarriage in Ezra 9 and 10 threatened the economic stability of the province by threatening its land base (Dyck, 1996:102).

Having briefly analysed a sympathetic reading of Ezra-Nehemiah, we move on in the next subsection, to critique such a sympathetic reading.

5.5.4.3.1.2 A critical analysis of Ezra's ethnicity

David Clines laments the treatment of mixed marriages crisis in Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 13. He states that he is "appalled by the personal misery brought into so many families by the compulsory divorce of foreign wives [and] outraged at Ezra's insistence on racial purity, so uncongenial to modern liberal thoughts" (Clines,1984:116). Williamson is also not impressed by the manner in which Ezra tackled this problem. He maintains that this "is among the least attractive parts of Ezra-Nehemiah, if not the whole Old Testament" (Williamson,1985:159). Without question, such large scale separation of marriage partners caused hardship and heartbreak in many cases (Wood,1970: 397).

We need to ask the question: How mixed were the marriages? It has been argued that some of these "mixed" marriages-particularly in Ezra-were probably not mixed at all in any truly racial / ethnic sense of the term, and may well have represented marriages between Jews who were not a part of the exilic-formed "Sons of the Golah" i.e the *am haaretz*, with those who were (Smith-Christopher,1996:123). So the possibility remains that these "mixed-marriages" were considered "mixed" only by Ezra and his supporters, and not in the first case by the married persons themselves (Smith-Christopher,1996:
123-4).

We need to note however that contrary to Throntveit (1989:50), Ezra's measures to ban and dissolve intermarriages were not in accordance with the law, for "we know of no law, Israelite or

Persian, mandating the dismissal of wives, foreign or otherwise" (Blenkinsopp,1993:215; cf Hoglund, 1992:232). Thus, the expression that the "holy seed" has become "mixed" with the "peoples of the lands" (Ezra 9:2; Hoglund,1992:232) represents a kind of innovative exegesis of earlier biblical traditions. The Holiness Code of Leviticus 19 forbids the intermixture of unlike materials or species, but says nothing about the intermarriage of the Israelite community with those outside. Where intermixture is referred to with regard to the people of Israel, as in Psalm 106:35, the context is one of religious syncretism and not ethnic intermarriage[49] (Hoglund,1992:232). This leads to a final suggestion, namely, that the mandatory divorce of foreign women, corresponding to nothing in either the Israelite or Persian laws[50], was the point at which Ezra overstepped his commission. In view of the critical situation during this period, there is no reason to believe that the Persians would favour a policy calculated to foment unrest among the returned exiles and *am haaretz* and one which, in any case, was practically unenforceable (Blenkinsopp,1987:420-421).

Hoglund further argues that both Ezra and Nehemiah strenuously sought to use their authority to oppose intermarriage. He states that the fact that this regulation represents an extension of the Pentateuchal laws opposing intermarriage among the Canaanites has also been made plain by a number of recent studies (Hoglund,1992:34; Cohen,1983:23-39; Clines,1981:111-117; Bossman, 1979:32-8).

Thus, Dyck maintains that Ezra's concern for ethnic purity cannot be explained in terms of some unambiguous rationale:

> He may well have thought that he was acting in an unambiguous way, that he was protecting the unique identity of the post-exilic community, but that does not mean that his actions had these consequences. Nor can we assume that the "foreign" wives of Ezra 9 and 10 were really

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[49] The hiphil form of עָרַב that is used here is fairly rare in the biblical corpus, Psalm 106: 35 being one of the few places where the same form occurs. On the ideational connections with the Holiness Code, see Myers,1965:77-78 and Williamson,1985:131-132.

[50] Pentateuchal law contemplates divorce (Deut 24:1-4), but there is no case where it is required. Contracts from Elephantine testify that both husband and wife could initiate divorce proceedings (see Porten,1968:261-62). Mal 2:16, perhaps a later edition, states that Yahweh hates divorce.

foreign. Eskenazi and Judd, like Smith-Christopher, interpret the conflict in terms of a conflict between Jews over the definition of Jewishness and hence over what constitutes a "mixed" marriage (Dyck,1996:103-4).

While noting that the ethnic ideology in Ezra is clearly vertical in orientation, Dyck argues that the author of this ideology was not representing the community at large (Dyck,1996:103-4), probably because it was divisive and exclusive rather than unifying and inclusive.

5.5.4.4 Summary

From the above analysis it becomes apparent that Ezra did not initiate any measure to reconcile the *am haaretz* with the returned exiles. His agenda was to make sure they remained separate as much as possible. In order for this part of Ezra's memoirs to be effectively used as a strong basis for the theology of renewal, reconstruction and reconciliation, the voice of the *am haaretz* who are the victims of Ezra's ethnicity has to be retrieved.

Having discussed both the first and the second return of the Babylonian exiles to Palestine, the scene is now set for an analysis of the third return led by Nehemiah.

5.5.5 The third return (Nehemiah 1-13)

5.5.5.1 Introduction

Our analysis of both the first and the second return of the Babylonian exiles to Judah has shown that the returned exiles had excluded the *am haaretz* from both the post-exilic community and the renewal and reconstruction of post-exilic Judah. In this section we want to find out how the third return affected the conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. We will therefore, focus on the conflict in Nehemiah 5 as a way of analysing how this third return affected the conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. In this section we will analyse some of the factors which contributed to the crisis in Nehemiah 5. We will however start off by discussing the return of the final group of exiles led by Nehemiah. We will secondly identify parties involved in the socio-economic crisis of Nehemiah 5, before we go on to analyse the socio-economic conditions of this

post-exilic Judah, in order to put into proper perspective our fourth step, namely Nehemiah's role in addressing the crisis in Nehemiah 5. Before we begin any analysis of the third return, we need to remember that in line with our conclusion in chapter 4, Nehemiah 1-5 was composed by Nehemiah himself, round about 432 B.C. So we are in this section analysing Nehemiah's ideology.

5.5.5.2 Artaxerxes's role (Nehemiah 1:1-2:10).

We have concluded in chapter 4 that Nehemiah might have gone to Jerusalem in 445 B.C. The text tells us that he was a high official in the court despite the low-sounding title he bore, "royal cupbearer" to King Artaxerxes (Boadt,1984:455; Hoglund,1992:209; Wood,1970:398). On receiving the letter from his own brother in Palestine describing the terrible conditions that existed there, he persuaded Artaxerxes to allow him to go home to "Judah, in order to rebuild the city" (Neh. 2:5; Boadt,1984:455; Hoglund,1992:209).

What role did Artaxerxes play here? The king granted Nehemiah's request to go to Jerusalem. Nehemiah became governor of Judah in 445 B.C., Artaxerxes's twentieth year, and reigned for twelve years (Neh. 5:14; Turner,1998:97). Years after the return of the third group of exiles and the subsequent rebuilding of the city walls, Nehemiah finds himself addressing the socio-economic crisis in Judah. It seems that two groups were involved in the conflict of Nehemiah 5. Before we analyse both events and circumstances related to the socio-economic crisis in Nehemiah 5, we need to briefly identify the parties involved in this crisis, this we do in the next subsection.

5.5.5.3 The identity of parties involved in the crisis

The question of the identity of groups involved in the socio-economic crisis in Nehemiah 5 has not as yet been adequately addressed by scholars. We will here briefly discuss two positions, namely, that the conflict is between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*, and that the conflict is an internal issue among the returned exiles.

The first position is advocated by Turner (1998). Following Weinberg (1992), Turner argues that the

post-exilic Judaean community consisted of basically two main groups of people (Weinberg,1992: 131), namely the *am haaretz* and the returned exiles. He argues that the one group has its roots in the Jewish community that stayed behind in Judah during the Babylonian exile, i.e. the indigenous population. Then, the other group, he says, has its roots in the Jewish community that went into exile, i.e. the *golah* Jews. Thus, Turner concludes that the "acute conflict in post-exilic Judah is underlined by the clash between the *golah* Jews and the indigenous or Palestinian Jews" (Turner,1998:110-111). He then goes on to assume that the majority of the debtors in Nehemiah 5 were part of the indigenous population i.e. the *am haaretz* and that the creditors were part of the *golah* Jews i.e. the returned exiles (Turner,1998:112).

Secondly, we examine the possibility that the conflict in Nehemiah 5 is an internal matter among the returnees. This we do by examining the terms used to describe the contending parties in the text of Nehemiah 5. The first group who seem to be in debt, are simply called "the people and their wives" (העם ונשיהם). Gottwald says that the implication of the phrase "the people"(העם) suggests a large number of debtors (Gottwald,1999:4). The second group, who have advanced loans to "the people", are said to be "their brothers, the Jews" (Gottwald,1999:4). Further, Gottwald correctly observes that when Nehemiah "targets the creditors for censure he addresses 'nobles'(חרים) and 'officials' (סגנים)" (Gottwald,1999:4). Thus, Gottwald concludes, the semantic implication is that the Jews of v.1 are the nobles and officials of verse 7 (Gottwald,1999:4). Accordingly, the conflict in Nehemiah 5 is between the creditors, who seem to be the nobles and officials, on the one hand, and their fellow brothers "the people and their wives", who seem to be in debt, on the other hand.

Although the above two positions have not as yet been adequately debated by scholars, I think that we need to take seriously Halligan's warning not to too easily equate the indigenous population, i.e. the *am haaretz* with the protesters of Nehemiah 5 (Halligan,1991:148), for the following two reasons. First, the conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz* is never resolved throughout the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. The *am haaretz* are left out of the community of the returned exiles and they continue to protest against their exclusion in Nehemiah 6. If the conflict in Nehemiah 5 was between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*, as Turner assumes, then, there would be no need for the *am haaretz* to continue with their opposition to their exclusion by the returned exiles, as is evident in

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Nehemiah 6. In other words, the fact that the *am haaretz* continue to oppose the returned exiles, after the conflict resolution of Nehemiah 5, clearly tells us that the crisis in Nehemiah 5 is not between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*, rather, it is an internal matter between the returned exiles themselves. Second, we have argued in chapter 3 that the terms "Jews" יהודיא, "nobles" חרים and "officials" סגנים are used to refer to the returned exiles in Ezra-Nehemiah. So, in view of the fact that the parties involved in the conflict in Nehemiah 5 are the "Jews" and their brothers, this effectively rules out the possibility of the involvement of the *am haaretz* in this conflict.

We conclude, therefore, that the conflict in Nehemiah 5 is an internal matter within the returnee community, at the exclusion of the *am haaretz*. Although, the *am haaretz* have been ignored and placed outside the debate of Nehemiah 5, we need to analyse issues that formed the debate within the returnee community, not only as a way of understanding the insensitivity and arrogance of the returned exiles to the needs and fears of the *am haaretz*, but also to enable us to propose for a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction a reading of the biblical text which is sensitive and inclusive of all stake holders in any conflict in Africa. This we do in the next subsection.

5.5.5.4 Events and circumstances related to the socio-economic crisis

Nehemiah 5:1-5 gives us a lively report of an outcry made to Nehemiah as governor (5:1) by the "people and their wives" against the Jewish "nobles and officials" (Neh. 5:7). Within the "people and their wives" there are three small groups mentioned. The first group complained that it had to mortgage its children for credit simply to get the bare means of survival (Neh. 5:2). The second group complained that it was having to mortgage its fields, vineyards and houses to get grain, probably both for food and for seed-in the famine (Neh. 5:3). And the third group had to mortgage its fields and make its children slaves to borrow money to pay the "king's tax" (מדת המלך)(Neh. 5:4-5; Albertz, 1994:495).

Nehemiah takes drastic steps (Neh. 5) to address the crisis. In order for us to fully understand Nehemiah's measures (Neh. 5), we need to analyse the events and circumstances related to the socio-economic crisis, namely famine, numbers, loans, taxation and wall rebuilding.

5.5.5.4.1. Famine

In Nehemiah 5:1-19, for example, the problem for some was a famine that was driving up the prices of grain (Neh. 5:2-3; Hoglund,1992:212). Famine was a periodic problem in Judah (cf. Hag.1; Mal.3). The famine faced by the debtors could have been the result of a possible drought (Turner,1998:121; Hoglund,1992:214; Albertz,1994:451-2). This failure in agricultural productivity led to extreme market pressures on the prices of grain since this commodity was necessary not only for individual nutrition but in order to pay the imperial taxes (Hoglund,1992:214; Albertz,1994:496). Inadequate crops and the interruption of the harvesting also contributed to famine (Turner,1998:121). As we will discuss later below, the reference to the famine might be another way of referring to the poverty caused by the preoccupation with the wall. It is probable that it concerns a more general time of need. However, Clines (1984:167) notes that "the failure of the crops (barley harvest in April/May, wheat in May/June) must have been disastrous for famine already to be felt in August/September, the months of the wall-building". Keil (1879:209), on the contrary, argues that "famine" (ברעב) "does not necessarily presuppose a scarcity in consequence of a failure of crops or other circumstances, but only declares that they who had been obliged to pledge their fields were suffering from hunger" (Turner,1998:121).

5.5.5.4.2. Numbers

The debtors state their numbers as one of the major reasons for their economic misfortune (Neh. 5:2). Weinberg[52] (1992:132) argues that before the year 458 B.C. the postexilic Judaean community included 42, 360 members (cf. Ezra; Neh 7:66) which is approximately 13-15% of the total population of Judah then. After 458 B.C. the number of community members increased to 150,000 making up approximately 50-60% of the population of Judah. The growth of community membership

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[52] Weinberg's population estimates are thought to be wildly excessive. Charles Carter concludes that Judah's population in Persian I was about 13,000 and in Persian II about 20,000 (Carter,1999:294). This estimation is based on Carter's view that Persian Judah was restricted to the hill country (Gottwald,2002:5). If, however, as some scholars believe, Persian Judah included the shephelah and part of the coastal plain, Carter's figures might be doubled, but they would still be a fraction of Weinberg's projection (Gottwald,2002:5).

after 458 B.C. was the result of both the growing prosperity and security of the community, and the arrival of new returnees from Babylon. This influx of people would have contributed to the intensity of the socio-economic crisis of Neh. 5. The growing prosperity of the richer people would have increased the severity of the poorer people's plight, considering that the majority of the community was poor (Boshoff,1991:187; Turner,1998:120-121). People deliberately had large families as an insurance for old age; when there was no social security system you had to depend even more on the family (Cave,1993:158). With all the work they had to do for Nehemiah, they were not able to produce enough grain to stay alive (Fensham,1982:190-192). They had to buy the grain, and because they were poor it was difficult to pay for it (Fensham,1982:190-192).

5.5.5.4.3. Persian taxation

Their outcry is related to taxation, directly or indirectly, and the main complaint of Neh. 5:5 is that these actions are perpetrated within the community by "kinfolk" (Wijk-Bos,1998:63-64). What probably sparked off the severe social conflict was the additional taxation needed for rebuilding the walls, which Nehemiah imposed on the people of Judah in 444 in the form of forced labour (Neh.3), or corvee labour, for the rebuilding of the city-walls (Ephal,1988:158-159; Turner,1998:123).

Taxation was regarded as very important in the Persian Empire. The Satrap had to collect the royal tax from the governors of small provinces as he and his civil servants were not paid by the king (Gathaka,1992:196). The governors had to collect taxes from their subjects for the Satraps and the king. The governor had also to collect tax from his subjects for his own subsistence and for that of his servants (Gathaka,1992:196).

The Persian empire demanded three kinds of tax from the subjected satrapies. The first one was tribute tax (cf. Neh. 5:4). Like other Persian provinces, Judea had to pay an annual tribute to the Persian monarch, partly in kind (Gathaka,1992:196). Second, was a poll tax and third, was a land tax (Ezr 4:13. 7:24; Ephal,1988:158-159; Turner,1998:123). People had to pay real estate or "ground tax", which was in connection with the fields and vineyards. Darius instituted a tax on the past yield of the fields combined with the amount of crops they yielded. This became a heavy burden on the

farmers (Fensham,1982:190-192).

In addition, in the early post-exilic period there was a further heavy burden: after the financial reform of Darius the taxes for the Persian king (v.4) had to be paid in silver coin, at a level fixed in advance for individual provinces without heed to the actual yields of harvests. As the province of Judah had no silver of its own, the money could be raised only by selling natural products. But for this surplus production was necessary, and the smallholding which had traditionally aimed at self-sufficiency were not tailored to that. This meant that in the face of this new burden the small farmers had to cut things to the bone simply to get by, and it only took very slight additional difficulties like failures in the harvest or conscription for building the walls to upset their precarious situation over a broad front (Neh 5:1, 5; Albertz,1994:496). Kippenberg suggests that the Darian innovation of silver currency throughout the Persian empire may have brought about a growing impoverishment of farmers, who had to produce more surplus to exchange for silver (cf Neh. 5) to pay taxes, and the failure of some families would then lead to debt-bondage (Neh 5; Smith,1996:554-555).

Consequently, taxation had become burdensome and was generally felt as oppressive. People were highly taxed and had to borrow to pay taxes and it was these taxes that increased their debt burden. Any cessation of payment was regarded as rebellion (Gathaka,1992:196). In the next section we discuss how loans led most of the debtors into increasing debts and slavery.

5.5.5.4.4. Loans

Those who could not raise the money for their taxes would have to borrow the money to be paid back with interest. The largest burden of taxation fell on groups with the least amount of power, the farmers and poorer parts of the population (Wijk-Bos,1998:63-64). The negotiating of loans was, therefore, an everyday practice in Old Testament times. However, an attempt was made to prevent the practice of acquiring interest from debtors (cf. Lv. 25:36:37). Interest rates in the ancient Near East were unreasonably high and some creditors demanded it in advance (Chilton,1992:114). In the Persian period the interest rates rose sharply from approximately 20% under the reign of Cyrus and Cambyses up to 40-50% at the end of the fifth century B.C. (Yamauchi,1980:270). At Elephantine,

for instance, loans of grain carried unusually heavy interest rates and awkward penalties for non-payment (Kraeling,1953:259-265). When a Jew fell into debt, he had to serve his creditor as a "hired servant" (Lv. 25:39-55; Turner,1998:121-222).

Demanding interest on a loan was, however, against the law (Lev. 25:36-37; Wijk-Bos,1998:63-64). The Jewish liberation from Egypt was the ground for the prohibition of the giving of loans at interest (cf. Lv. 25:38; Ex. 22:25). Exploitation of debtors and impoverished people was a new form of slavery, namely economic oppression. Neufeld (1955:355-412) argues that the prohibition of loans at interest was an attempt to prohibit the exploitation of helpless Jews, and not an attempt to prohibit commercial loans. The Sabbath and Jubilee years accentuate the importance of maintaining what God has redeemed (Gottwald,1992:85; Turner,1998:122). However, debt was a constant social problem in Israel. Abusive lending was never deterred successfully (Ezk.18:5-18; 22:12). Hence, the introduction of loans at interest was one of the main causes of the socio-economic crisis Nehemiah attempted to resolve (Gottwald,1992:85; Turner,1998:122).

In addition, we hear of the loss of goods and children. Nehemiah 5:1-5 tells us about the poverty in the province of Judah (Fensham,1982:190-192). When times were hard and there were no financial reserves it was a case of having to go into debt to buy food or starve (Cave,1993:158). Poverty was therefore rife, and those who had any property mortgaged it for food, or sold their own children into debt slavery (cf. Exod.21:1-11) in order to pay their creditors (Ryle,1917:84; Fensham,1982:190-192; Gathaka,1992:197-8; Wijk-Bos,1998:63-64). The case of the daughters was in certain circumstances different. They could be taken into the service of the creditor as a second wife of the household (Fensham,1982:190-192; Gathaka,1992:197-8).

In the next section we discuss Nehemiah's wall rebuilding project as one of the factors which contributed to the socio-economic crisis.

5.5.5.4.5. Wall building

Wall rebuilding after the return of the Babylonian exiles under Nehemiah may have contributed to

poverty in the region. The text tells us that Nehemiah rebuilt the defensive walls of Jerusalem (Grabbe,1992:132-136) in the face of strong opposition (Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem)(Neh.1-6; Brockington,1971:20). As we argued in chapter 3 there was opposition by the *am haaretz* to Nehemiah's exclusive approach in wall rebuilding (Grabbe,1992:132-136).

Rebuilding what had been destroyed was difficult. The economy of Palestine was still in ruins (Wittenberg,1993:111). But why a defensive wall? The presence of urban fortifications allowed a city to consider itself independent of the empire[53], capable of determining its own destiny. Such independent thinking was naturally fraught with the potential for rebellion. The accusations by Nehemiah's opponents, that in rebuilding Jerusalem's walls the restoration community was planning to rebel (Nehemiah 6:67), had some plausibility within this ideological context (Hoglund,1992:210-212).

Thus, Hoglund interprets Nehemiah's task of rebuilding the wall as part of a larger imperial policy (Hoglund,1992:209-210). He explains that at a time when very few urban sites in the Levant possessed a city wall system, Nehemiah was charged by the imperial court to rebuild Jerusalem's walls in order to provide an inland defensive centre (Hoglund,1992:243). According to Hoglund the fact that Nehemiah sought to build such a citadel in 445 B.C., a time when the deployment of imperial garrisons was taking place throughout the Levant, suggests Nehemiah's task was simply part of a larger imperial policy (Hoglund,1992:209-210).

However, the socio-economic crisis was probably not caused by the wall-building itself, but was

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[53] Gottwald (2002:5) is critical of Hoglund's claim that "presence of urban fortifications allowed a city to consider itself independent of the empire"(1992:210ff). Gottwald argues that it would depend upon who authorised the fortifications and the power position of the city in question. He further states that "since the fortification of Jerusalem was at Persia's instigation and with Persian assistance, the most that could be said is that, once fortified, Jerusalem was in a stronger position to revolt if Nehemiah had so intended, but of this there is no textual indication other than the self-serving allegations of adjacent provincial governors who charge that Nehemiah intends 'to become their [the Judahites] king' (Neh.6:6). Of course there are those who think that Zerubbabel had earlier attempted such a rebellion against Persia based on the apparent enthusiasm of Haggai and Zechariah for such an uprising" (Gottwald,2002:5).

intensified and underlined by Nehemiah's appeal for commitment to the wall-building. The wall was completed on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, the sixth month, which implies that the building was going on from about the middle of July to early September (Blenkinsopp,1988:256). The important harvesting of grapes and olives took place during this time and the absence of the farmers from their lands would have aggravated the situation. The end of the harvest was also the time for the collecting of debts in money and kind (Turner,1998:104). According to Neh. 4:16 Nehemiah expected that the farmers from the rural areas would stay in Jerusalem (Fensham,1982:190-192). In such circumstances farming became impossible (Fensham,1982:190-192). Poverty was caused by the fact that farmers were not able to look after their fields because of the wall building, so they did not have time to grow enough food to live on (Cave,1993:158).

Consequently, the high ideals and precautionary measures of Nehemiah had their effect, and the heaviest burden was on the people of the rural areas (Fensham,1982:190-192). The involvement of the debtors in the wall-building, therefore, would have worsened their situation (Turner,1998:104).

In this section we have outlined certain possible socio-economic causes of the crisis within the returnee community as evident in Nehemiah 5. A discussion on the possible causes of the socio-economic crisis sets the scene for a discussion on Nehemiah's measures to address this crisis. So in the next section we analyse some of these measurers.

5.5.5.5. Nehemiah's measures to address the socio-economic conditions

On hearing an outcry from the debtors regarding famine, poverty, taxation, debt slavery, Nehemiah was ready to address the socio-economic crisis head on. In this section we offer a brief analysis of those measures.

The first measure is debt remission. The complaint of the small farmers to Nehemiah was successful in that he angrily rebuked their creditors, the 'nobles and officials', who were a section of the returned exiles, in public before the popular assembly for their anti-social conduct (Neh. 5.6f.) and imposed a general remission of debts of grain and silver on them (vv.10-12; Albertz,1994:495-6;

Wood,1970:403; Turner,1998:117).

While acknowledging that at first debt remission will have brought relief to the small farmers and once again kept the social peace, Albertz argues that "it was not a long-term solution to the structural crisis; the process of impoverishment among the small farmers continued" (Albertz,1994:495-6). Gottwald could not agree more, when he says,

> This one-time cancellation of debts provided temporary economic relief and solidified the control of the reformed party. Realistically, however, since the wealth of the abusive upper class was not confiscated, the combination of landed and commercial wealth probably worked toward the eventual undermining of the reforms in Judah (Gottwald,1985:433-434).

Hoglund believes that Nehemiah's response was not to exempt the population from these imperial obligations in consideration of the circumstances but to alleviate the short-term impact of this economic crisis by forcing lenders, including himself (5:10), to forgo the demand of interest payments and pledges (Hoglund,1992:214). So this step involves the remission of interest on these debts (the *m't* of 5:11), but retaining the principal as a debt obligation (Hoglund,1992:214).

Second, Nehemiah ordered the return of productive agrarian property, namely fields and vineyards, mortgaged on account of debt, to their former owners (Turner,1998:117; Hoglund,1992:214). Accordingly, Nehemiah called the lenders to "restore" (השיבו) all personal property held as security for loans (Neh 5:11). They were also to give back the "hundred" (מאת) that had been charged (Neh. 5:11). This term מאת may indicate the percentage of interest, one-hundredth per month, or twelve percent per annum. It may also mean simply "percentage" in general. In either case, the lenders were to give back all profit made on the loans. Although the text does not state explicitly that all loans were to be forgiven, this may also be implied, especially from "we will not demand anything more from them" (מהם לא נבקש) (Neh.5:12, Roberts,1993:207-208).

Nehemiah further ordered the Jews to return back to the poor the lands and houses that they possessed through the mortgages, and a heavy interest on the sums of money, grain, wine and oil that they have advanced. They are instructed to give back at once the houses and the lands that they would in any case have to restore in the Year of Jubilee (Gathaka,1992:204).

Third, Nehemiah ordered the manumission of sons and daughters who were subjected to slavery on account of private debts (Tadmor,1994:169; Turner,1998:117). Nehemiah condemns the creditors for selling their brothers into slavery. Even the selling of one Jew to a fellow Jew would have been debasing, burdening the community as a whole (Turner,1998:164). The selling of any Jew to foreigners was a totally unacceptable practice (Williamson,1985:239). Blenkinsopp (1988:259) argues that the buying back of Jews would have enraged the foreign slave-owners who benefitted from the employment of Jewish slaves (Turner,1998:164). Further, Nehemiah affirms that the Jewish people should go out of their way to buy back enslaved Jews who were forced to sell themselves to foreign creditors. Myers (1965:131) argues that it is unclear whether the redemption of Jewish 'brothers' refers to "the redemption of exiles from Persian authorities or from surrounding people" (cf.Batten,1913:241; Turner,1998:164).

Fourth, Nehemiah's handling of the crisis ended with a reconciliation between the debtors and the creditors. After confronting the offenders directly, Nehemiah summoned "a great assembly," (גדולה קהלה) including the accused, the victims, and others to serve as witness (Neh. 5:7) (Roberts,1993:207-208). Thus, he summoned a great assembly of all the people, even those who suffered under the leaders (Fensham,1982:193). Thus, the appeal was as successful as the accusation had been and hence the commitment, "We will return it"(נשיב) (Neh. 5:12). The guilty persons had no choice and pledged to return what they had taken from the farmers. They did what Nehemiah demanded (Fensham,1982:195; Gathaka,1992:205). The problem was partially solved (Fensham, 1982:195).

Though, their pledge was sincere, Nehemiah knew that he could nevertheless not fully trust them, knowing human nature. He, then, insisted on a legal oath before the priests in the presence of witnesses (Gathaka,1992:205). Accordingly, the guilty responded by saying "Let it be so" (אמן) (Neh.5:13). They were taking the consequences if the oath should be broken (Fensham,1982:196).

The above analysis of Nehemiah 5 reveals that Nehemiah tries to reconcile the debtors and the creditors. The reconciliation is preceded by the assurance of the creditors to restore back what they accumulated through taxes from the debtors. We clearly notice from this text that the reconciliation

here is not a cheap one. Rather it involves restitution and contribution by the wrongdoer to the wronged one.

Having briefly outlined Nehemiah's measures to address the socio-economic conditions, we move to analyse, in the next subsection, Nehemiah's conflict resolution strategy.

5.5.5.5.1. Manner of his conflict resolution

Nehemiah has used two strategies to resolve the socio-economic crisis between the creditors and debtors, namely religious appeal and personal appeal (confession). Let us look at them in turn, beginning with the religious appeal.

Nehemiah continues to persuade his audience to understand the immense importance of socio-economic reform in the postexilic Jewish community. He appeals to their reason and emotions by stressing the significance of (1) the Torah, (2) the religious judgement of the Jewish community and (3) their experience of brotherhood (Turner,1998:167).

Nehemiah's resolution of the crisis reflects his moral responsibility and his request to God marks his religious interpretation of the socio-economic crisis. McConville (1985:100) interrelates Nehemiah's nationalist and religious motivation as follows,

> Nehemiah makes the point that the character of the community reflects the character of God. The brotherhood in Israel is meant to be a showpiece, a model of the potential human society.

In addition, McConville argues that Nehemiah's rhetoric reinforces the importance of God being the judge of human conduct,

> The invocation of God's favour is not so much a plea for a reward as an emphatic way of claiming that he has acted in good faith and from right motives. It is a statement of confidence that God is judge, and judges favourably those who sincerely seek to do his will (McConville,1985:102; cf Turner,1998:194).

Secondly, Nehemiah uses his confession as a means to persuading the creditors to agree to his proposed measures. Nehemiah candidly confesses that he and his servants also committed the sins

he accuses the creditors of, thereby hoping that his confession would motivate his audience to support the objective of socio-economic reform and disarm severe opposition to his reform efforts (Van Selms,1953:112; Slotki,1951:221). Williamson (1985:240) remarks that by this confession, Nehemiah "probably succeeded in maintaining the unity of the community" (Turner,1998:168). In this regard, Nehemiah attempts to persuade his audience to grasp the severity of the predicament of the poor. His admittance of guilt plays on the emotions of his audience, driving them to self-reflection and self-critique (Turner,1998:168).

However, it is worth noting that Nehemiah's confession confirms that he was a wealthy landowner (Clines,1984:169). Thus, Nehemiah was part of the "group" of creditors who were accused by the poor Jews (verse 1). However, although Nehemiah and his family contributed to the agony of the poor people, they probably never took any Jew into debt-slavery (Fensham,1982:195; Turner,1998:168).

In sum, Nehemiah reiterates that any exploitation and marginalisation of poor Jews by wealthy landowners, including himself and his family, "are insensitive and immoral" (Holmgren,1987:112; Turner,1998:168).

5.5.5.5.2. A critical analysis of Nehemiah's conflict resolution

It has been accepted that the resolution of the socio-economic crisis would improve not only the economic vitality of Judah, but would also influence its political future. However, certain scholars believe that Nehemiah hoped that the resolution of internal strife would benefit his position before the Persian king (Turner,1998:165). Thus, Eskenazi (1998:153) summarises Nehemiah's self-assertiveness as follows,

> [he] persistently asserts himself, amasses power, issues unilateral directives, and places himself as the indispensable center.

Scholars have also argued that Nehemiah emphasises his generosity with the phrases "at my table" (verse 17). His character, his insights, his achievements, his food provisions, his self-sacrifice, etc. is the centre of the narrative. Turner argues that in 5:14 Nehemiah declares that his conduct was beyond suspicion and that his character is one of generosity and self-sacrifice (Turner,1998:200-201).

Moreover, in 5:15, Nehemiah compares himself with the former governors (cf who came before me). Nehemiah sees himself as the pivotal figure in the history of the post-exilic Jewish community. His leadership is beyond comparison and all former and subsequent governors should be measured against him and his achievements (Turner,1998:200-201). Thus Nehemiah's rhetoric knows only one hero: himself! However, Turner asks, how is it possible that Nehemiah welcomed 'foreigners' to his table, but excluded 'foreigners' religiously (cf. Mangan,1982:190). Does he describe his hospitality only to impress his audience? (Turner,1998:200-201).

In addition, it is argued that Nehemiah's request for God's favour reflects something noble and something dangerous (Booth, Goodman & Gregory,1880-131). The God-fearing and unselfish Nehemiah exposes himself as a self-righteous man, anxious to be honoured by God for deeds his own people possibly did not credit him for openly. Nehemiah's desire for power and honour exceeds the greed of the creditors and former governors, whom he accused of exploitation of the poor. Fensham (1982:199) therefore says that "what he did was not out of charity; he did it to receive the favour of God" (Fensham,1982:199; Turner,1998:201).

Nehemiah's reform activities have been interpreted by certain scholars as Nehemiah's agenda to establish a Persian pattern of administration and military control in Judah (cf. Meyers,1987:516; Hoglund,1992:243; Berquist,1995:10). However, North (1992:1070) warns us not to underestimate Nehemiah's independence from the Persian king. Although Nehemiah established a Persian pattern of administration, he was no passive puppet in the hands of Persian king (Turner,1998:116-117).

Though we need to critically analyse Nehemiah's role in conflict resolution in this chapter, we should guard against rejecting everything Nehemiah did as ingenuine. The fact of the matter is that Nehemiah himself set a fine example, something which no one before had done, by refusing the customary remuneration for his services (Wood,1970:403-4). And, Nehemiah was willing to rock the boat, by challenging his own group, the returned exiles, to release slaves and remit the debt. So while critiquing him we also need to acknowledge the important role he played in laying a foundation for the resolution of the conflict in Nehemiah 5.

5.6 CONCLUSION

We now come to the following conclusion. The Babylonian exiles did not abandon worship of Yahweh. But the fact that they had priests and Levites with them in exile did not make them more religious than the *am haaretz*. After all the exiles also intermarried with the *am haaretz* wives. It follows, therefore, that on religious grounds the exiles had no basis to exclude the *am haaretz* from rebuilding the temple, the city walls and from being part of the *golah* community.

Let us also summarise the ideology of each of the layers of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah with respect to the *am haaretz*. The first return of the Babylonian exiles to Jerusalem, recorded in Ezra 1-6, represents the ideology of the final redactor of Ezra-Nehemiah. We saw earlier on that the returned exiles, on returning from Babylon, embarked on the rebuilding of the temple, at the exclusion of the *am haaretz*. So, the ideology of the final redactor of Ezra-Nehemiah, while favouring the returned exiles, is biased against the *am haaretz*. The second return of the exiles to Jerusalem is recorded in Ezra 7-10. We have argued in chapter 4 that Ezra is the author of Ezra 7-10. So the second return is Ezra's ideology. We argued that immediately after his return, Ezra embarked on a programme of redefining the returned exiles in ethnic terms. He encouraged them to separate themselves from the *am haaretz*. Thus, he excluded the *am haaretz* from assembly participation and also urged the returned exiles to divorce their *am haaretz* wives. The third return, under the leadership of Nehemiah, is recorded in Nehemiah 1-5. This text represents the ideology of Nehemiah himself. Nehemiah 5 records a debate by the returnees about the shortage of food, taxation, debt, slavery etc. This debate excludes the *am haaretz*. It is important, however, to note that though Nehemiah has failed to reconcile the returned exiles with the *am haaretz*, he succeeded, in chapter 5, to reconcile the debtors and the creditors within the returnee community.

The above summary of the ideologies of the authors of each of the layers of Ezra-Nehemiah tell us that the entire Ezra-Nehemiah text is coloured with an exclusivist ideology which is biased in favour of the returned exiles, while being biased against the *am haaretz*. Our analysis of the exclusivist ideology of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah is an important step in our quest for a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction. The purpose of such an analysis is to enable us to effectively de-

ideologise the exclusivist ideology in the text and read the text against the grain, i.e. from the perspective of the excluded and marginalised *am haaretz*.

In the next chapter we examine the significance of a sociological analysis of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah for a theology of renewal, transformation, reconstruction and reconciliation.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY OF THE TEXT OF EZRA-NEHEMIAH FOR A THEOLOGY OF RENEWAL, TRANSFORMATION AND RECONSTRUCTION IN (SOUTH) AFRICA

6.0. INTRODUCTION

This thesis began with an analysis, in chapter 1, of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. The purpose was to make these two concepts a theoretical framework, within which this thesis, which is about renewal, transformation and reconstruction, could rest. Chapter 2 offered a detailed analysis of Charles Villa-Vicencio, Jesse Mugambi, and Andre Karamaga's reconstruction theology and how they each use Ezra-Nehemiah in their reconstruction theology. Having noted that the above scholars use the Ezra-Nehemiah text without paying attention to the prevalent ideology in the Ezra-Nehemiah text, an ideology which is biased in favour of the returned exiles, but against the *am haaretz,* we then moved on to chapter 3, to demonstrate that the Ezra-Nehemiah text is coloured with an exclusivist ideology. It is here in chapter 3 where we argued that there is a contestation between the *am haaretz* and the returned exiles in Ezra-Nehemiah. Furthermore, we argued, in chapter 3, that if Ezra-Nehemiah were to be used in a theology of reconstruction, it has to be read taking into consideration the voice of the *am haaretz* as well, rather than only address the voice of the returned exiles. Chapter 4 then demonstrated that the Ezra-Nehemiah text was a product of several authors and was compiled in different layers and years. Thus, we argued that the final editor, who may have been an unknown Jew, has compiled the whole text round about 300 B.C, using both the Ezra Memoirs and the Nehemiah Memoirs which were probably written by both Ezra and Nehemiah round about 440 B.C. and 432 B.C. respectively.

In chapter 5, we went on to analyse the ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah. An analysis of the ideology in the text of Ezra-Nehemiah has identified certain key aspects, aspects which we want to explore the significance of for our context. Though such an analysis highlighted several issues which could be used in a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction in (South) Africa, we will, in this chapter, only focus on the following issues: ethnicity, reconciliation, poverty, foreign debt, and women oppression.

Throughout this chapter, our aim is to contextualize the above mentioned issues from the text of Ezra-Nehemiah, against the grain, namely retrieving the silenced voice of the *am haaretz*. I need to state, however, that though this chapter is about theological resources in our quest for the process of renewal, transformation, reconstruction and reconciliation, it does not offer an in-depth analysis of the theological resources to be discussed. Rather, this chapter focuses on a critical, socio-historical and ideologically aware reading of the Bible as a resource for theological reflection and therefore is the beginning of a process towards an in-depth and an exhaustive analysis of theological resources in a quest for the renewal and reconstruction of Africa.

Let us now look at the abovementioned issues in turn, beginning with ethnicity.

6.1 ETHNICITY

6.1.0. Introduction

Our sociological analysis of the text of Ezra has shown that Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem brought ethnicity with him. Before Ezra's arrival, the conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz* has not been about ethnicity. It was Ezra who introduced ethnicity to the conflict by using exclusive terms such as "holy race" etc referring to the returned exiles. Such a use of ethnic terms to describe the post-exilic community undoubtedly fueled conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. In the following section, we want to examine how ethnicity has been used in Africa to fuel conflict. We will also examine how a theology of reconstruction could assist in addressing the ethnic problem in Africa. But before we move on to do the above, we will explore some definitions of the word ethnicity, and then go on to analyse how Ezra abuses ethnicity to further exclude and marginalise the *am haaretz*.

6.1.1. Definition

The word "ethnic" comes from a Greek word "ethnos", originally meaning "nation" (Nambala,1997:26; Chipenda,1997:43). Furthermore, José Chipenda tells us that an "ethnic group is composed of people who share common racial, cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics" (Chipenda,1997:43).

Oddland tells us that ethnic groups are not always culturally homogenous, but the individuals within a group generally share certain distinctive cultural values and traits that symbolize their identity (Oddland,1997:63). Following Hutchinson & Smith (1996:6-7), Oddland argues that ethnic groups exhibit six main features. The first feature is a common proper name, to identify and express the essence of the community. The second is a myth of common ancestry, a myth rather than a fact, a myth that includes the idea of a common origin in time and place and that gives an *ethnie* a sense of fictive kinship, what Horowitz terms a super family. The third feature is, a shared historical memories, or better, shared memories of a common past or pasts, including heroes, events, and their commemoration. The fourth is one or more elements of common culture, which need to be specified but normally include religion, customs, or language. The fifth one is a link with a homeland, not necessarily its physical occupation by the *ethnie,* only its symbolic attachment to the ancestral land, as with diaspora peoples. The last one is a sense of solidarity on the part of at least some sections of the *ethnie's* population (Hutchinson & Smith,1996:6-7; Oddland,1997:63).

How did Ezra abuse ethnicity to further exclude and divide the post-exilic community? Mark Brett says that particular groups "go about constructing 'ethnic' identities, as opposed to the other kinds of identity" (Brett,1996:9). He further argues that there are "several productive ways of constructing ethnic identity" (Brett,1996:9). Jonathan Smith also emphasises the fact that the "construction" of otherness is relational and transactional. "Something is 'other' only with respect to something 'else'" (Smith,1985:15). So if otherness is always a product of where one is standing, then it should be regarded not so much as a state of being but as "a political and linguistic project, a matter of rhetoric and judgement" (Smith,1985:46; see Brett,1996:10). Brett goes further and argues that although *ethnie* can be "exceptionally durable once formed, they are also symbolic constructions which have

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to be maintained by reiterated practices and transactions" (Brett,1996:10).

Thus, Brett argues that Ezra-Nehemiah is an example of a "long and heated conversation about how the boundaries of Israelite community are to be constructed and maintained" (Brett,1996:11). He sees the "racialised marriage policies of Ezra-Nehemiah" (Brett,1996:11) as an "extreme position" in "construction" of ethnic boundaries (Brett,1996:11). By "racialised" marriage, Brett alludes to the "lineage-based or biological idea inherent in the reference to the 'holy seed'(Ezra9)" (Brett,1996:11). Brett argues that Ezra-Nehemiah's extremism is shown by the fact that it represents a "particularist strand of post-exilic political theology which is opposed to a great number of other traditions within the Hebrew Bible itself" (Brett,1996:11). Brett correctly observes that Ezra-Nehemiah's concept of ethnicity seems "to focus simply on blood-ties and genealogies" (Brett,1996:12).

Smith-Christopher has also argued that in his ethnic "construction", Ezra defined the terms of the marriage crisis both ethnically, by citing the national / ethnic categories of Canaanite, Hivite, Perizzite, etc. and religiously, by citing such terms as "the holy seed" (Ezra 9) (Smith-Christopher,1996:124). Thus, acceptable marriages would be those within a religious and ethnically defined group of the returned exiles (Smith-Christopher,1996:124).Clearly, Ezra sees "his" group as consisting only of the returned exiles (Ezra 9:4). However, Ezra's ethnic "construction" is undermined by what we argued in chapter 5, that these "mixed marriages" were considered "mixed" only by Ezra and his supporters, and not in the first case by the married persons themselves (Smith-Christopher,1996:124). Thus, Ezra used his position to justify ethnic and oppressive attitudes and policies toward the *am haaretz*, whom he considered the "foreigners" and "enemies" (Smith-Christopher,1996:124). So Ezra's ethnic "constructions" effectively excluded the *am haaretz* from membership of the post-exilic community.

Having briefly defined the term ethnicity, and how Ezra "constructs" it against the *am haaretz* to suit his exclusive and divisive agenda, let us briefly consider some statistics of ethnicity in Africa. About 40% of the world's states have more than five sizable ethnic populations (Nambala,1997:26). Chipenda reminds us that in Africa we have more than 2,000 ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has its own language which is expressed in the context of a particular culture (Chipenda,1997:45). Nigeria

alone has about 450 different ethnic groups and 90 in Ethiopia, 35 in Namibia (Nambala,1997:26). Nambala reminds us that Africa is divided not only by the boundaries of nation-states but also by ethnic differences, geographic barriers, and vast distances. Moreover, he argues that each African country's character is also diverse (Nambala,1997:27). Furthermore, he states that whether one speaks of ethnicity or race, ethnicity in Africa is given both as a blessing and a point of conflict (Nambala,1997:27).

In the next subsection, we discuss both the abuses and strengths of ethnicity in Africa.

6.1.2 Abuses and strengths of ethnicity

First, we discuss the legacy of the slave trade on ethnicity. Nambala argues that centuries of the slave trade in Africa is also a contributing factor to the various ethnic separations on the continent (Nambala,1997:30). Thus he explains,

> Here I refer to both imposition of plantation slavery in Africa and commercial overseas slaving by Europeans, Americans and Arabs. The effect of the slave trade was devastating to Africa with regard to its population as well as to its social mobility and development (Nambala,1997:30).

Nambala then goes on to explain that the scattering of people during the slave era pushed people to create a close group in the process whereby other groups would be viewed as intruders and disturbers of their group peace (Nambala,1997:30). He elaborates that these small groups formed not only their unique languages but also their unique culture, habits and other social norms (Nambala,1997:30).

Second, we explore the impact of the legacy of the colonial era on ethnicity. Nambala reminds us that colonialism was imposed upon the Africans by Europeans without regard of their nationhood, big or small (Nambala,1997:30). Thus he argues that,

> Colonial states often grouped together several ethnic groups and created a "multi-ethnic state" with artificial boundaries which often run across pre-existing nations, ethnicities, states, kingdoms, and empires (Nambala,1997:31).

Third, we examine the role of missionaries in furthering ethnicity. Nambala states that missionary activities often accompanied colonialism (Nambala,1997:31). Thus he explains,

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Various denominations did not only divide clans and tribes, but also worked separately among different ethnic groups in a given country. The result was that one finds one ethnic group belonging to the membership of one denomination, whereas the other denomination posses[sic] membership of another ethnic group. Separate activities of missionaries from different denominational backgrounds also aggravated the ethnic consciousness among the African people. One ethnic group might have a tradition of looking down upon another ethnic group, this would mean that even the denomination working among the so called inferior ethnic group would be seen as inferior (Nambala,1997:31).

Nambala then explains that as the church concentrates on certain groups of people in a country, those groups also slowly were discouraged to leave their culture, and take up much of the European culture (Nambala,1997:31). Thus, he explains that,

> Those groups which did not have missionaries, although in the same country, maintained much of their cultural tenets. This state of affairs also forced ethnic groups to view themselves differently from others even in terms of faith and social affiliation (Nambala,1997:31).

Fourth, we explore the roles of political parties and church leadership in Africa, in promoting ethnicity. Maimela has argued that in Africa, ethnic diversity has been used by "politicians to destructive ends" (Maimela,1997:118; cf Chipenda,1997:43; Oddland,1997:63). The destructive ends include "tribal or ethnic conflicts which have given rise to civil wars, conflict, refugees and destruction of African society" (Maimela,1997:118). Nambala too argues that Africa "is also marked by social violence and unrest and ethnic and tribal violence...in almost every country" (Nambala,1997:32). Nambala continues to elaborate on the ethnic conflicts in Africa as

> part of the colonial legacy whereby ethnic group identity and feelings on diverse social, psychological, economical, political and otherwise experiences is being expressed. As such ethnicity becomes a problem to Africa (Nambala,1997:33).

Maimela then explains that in South Africa "the political ideology of apartheid was implemented precisely to exploit the reality of ethnic diversity to further the socio-economic and political interests of the dominant whites" (Maimela,1997:118). Maimela reminds us that the advocates of apartheid used scriptures to justify their ideology. Thus he argues,

> Their favourable text was the story of the tower of babel which tells us of the confusion of tongues. It was deduced from the story that it is God's will that separate races and nations should be separated to live far from each other. As the will of God, this separation was not revoked in Christ's reconciliating work. Hence the Acts of Apostles narrates the speaking of different tongues at the Pentecost the difference being only that the spirit enabled different

races to hear one another (Maimela,1997:118).

Here, like in Ezra, we see the abuse of scripture to justify separation of people according to their ethnic or racial orientation.

For example, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and his Inkatha Freedom Party have misused the diversity in South Africa, prior to the democratic election of 1994, by arguing that

> a united South Africa would lead to the destruction and wiping out of the so-called Zulu nation. This misuse of ethnic diversity to prompt Zulu ethnic political life has led to conflict, untold misery and killing of over 4,000 people between 1992 and 1994 (Maimela,1997:118).

Having discussed the abuse of ethnicity, we will now consider a few strengths of ethnicity. Maimela argues that God's gift of racial and cultural diversity of people should be seen as a source of strength and enrichment (Maimela,1997:118). Accordingly, he elaborates that,

> Indeed, life would be dull and poor if different ethnic groups were to be reduced to the sameness or common denominator (Maimela,1997:118).

Nambala could not agree more when he says that,

> Africa is endowed with a beautiful color of racial and ethnic pluralism. It is praised because of its diverse culture, languages, customs and habits...The multi-attractions of Africa is accredited to her diverse tribal and ethnic backgrounds. Otherwise the continent would have been a homogeneous society, thus unattractive, if only one group of people existed in it (Nambala,1997:32).

Thus, he cites the South African situation of post 1994 as a way of accommodating all ethnic groups, when he argues,

> ...it was precisely the acceptance of diversity which forced politicians to seek a compromise by creating a federal constitution which promotes the desolution of power to the nine regions. Therefore, diversity which has resulted in a federal constitution has provided a check on the central government and should be seen as supportive to the democratic change in South Africa (Maimela,1997:118; see Brett,1996:3-4).

6.1.3 The role of reconstruction theology

Moving from the fact that many people affected by ethnic conflict are church members, the church has a role to play in encouraging co-existence and harmony among different ethnic groups. Thus, she

will have to insist that there is nothing wrong in ethnicity, but the problem is the "polarising and destructive forms of ethnicity" (Nambala,1997:33).

For the church to be effective in addressing ethnic conflicts in society, it will have to address ethnic conflicts within itself first (Nambala,1997:33). Oddland argues that the church, in this situation, has to witness unity with a diversity (Oddland,1997:64). Thus he declares that "in Ethiopia alone more than 90 different cultures have the potential to share cultural cognitive inputs on their knowledge of Christ, and to contribute to theology" (Oddland,1997:64). He argues that,

> more than 2000 cultures on the whole continent of Africa alone may add the variety of Christian worship by contributing their expressions through their different affective dimensions. The complexity of cultural diversities expressed through different ethnic groups are an immense potential for sharing a richer multidimensional witness of the Church (Oddland,1997:64).

For his part, Birri argues that we have to fight against any form of ethnic conflict with the "gospel of love both in the church and in the society" (Birri,1997:80). At the same time, argues Birri, ethnicity can become "a means through which the gospel is given witness, and through which culture serves the cause of Christ" (Birri,1997:80). Accordingly, Birri elaborates that,

> The variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment (Birri,1997:80).

Balcomb, has also identified several steps that the church should take in order to address ethnicity in Africa. First, he says that ethnicity should be faced and not be avoided (Balcomb,1996:21). Second, we must make it a matter of consistent prayer. Thus he says "Prayer helps us both to face up to the problem as well as seek ways to deal with it. Prayer itself can change things. Sometimes it is only prayer that can do this" (Balcomb,1996:21). Third, ethnicity should be made a subject of teaching and preaching in the church (Balcomb,1996:22). Fourth, there is a need to work towards "equalizing the relationships between people and groups of people in the church where they are unequal in the societies in which we live" (Balcomb,1996:22). Fifth, there is a need to undermine the "stereotypes that exist in society between people of different groups" (Balcomb,1996:22). Balcomb suggests that the undermining could be done through prayer, teaching, worship, drama, story-telling, and deliberate confrontation in the spirit of unconditional acceptance (Balcomb,1996:22). Sixthly, Balcomb argues

that we need to create an atmosphere in the church where the members feel a sense of belonging and self-esteem. "If the church itself can provide", argues Balcomb, "these things then there will be no need for people to be seeking them in their ethnic identities" (Balcomb,1996:22).

Ezra failed to address the ethnic conflict in an even handed manner. He effectively excluded the *am haaretz* from the *golah* community, through ethnic definitions. Thus, if reconstruction theology has to contribute to the resolution of ethnic conflicts in Afrca, it has to take into account the voices of all groups within such a conflict.

Having explored some of the abuses and strengths of ethnicity in Africa, we need to briefly consider how the discussion on ethnicity could contribute to a theology of renewal, transformation, and reconstruction in Africa. Biblical texts could either be used to justify the abuse of ethnicity or be critically appropriated to affirm the cultural diversities among groups within a community as a positive sign of God's creation. It is my contention that in order to effectively avoid the trap of abusing scripture to foment ethnic conflicts, a sociological analysis of the context in which a particular scripture is situated will have to be undertaken. A straightforward reading of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah without a critical sociological analysis of the world that produced or shaped the exclusivist ideology prevalent in the text, is dangerous in that it perpetuates rather than solves the ethnic conflict between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*.

Jonathan Dyck, warns, as we also do, that,

> There is a danger, however, in taking ideologies of identity at face value without considering the social complexity of the concept of identity, without taking into consideration that ideologies of identity are the point at which the beliefs of the people are taken hold of for the purpose of power (Dyck,1996:116).

Thus, reconstruction theology, bearing in mind that ethnic categories within scriptures have been used, by Ezra, the church and certain political leaders to "manipulate and to rule" (Brett,1996:8), should also encourage the use of scripture as "modes of resistance" (Brett,1996:8) to ethnic conflicts.

6.2 RECONCILIATION

6.2.0 Introduction

The Ezra-Nehemiah text does not, in general terms, show any sign of resolving or reconciling the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. In discussing reconciliation, we argued that though the conflict between the *am haaretz* and the returned exiles was never resolved in an accommodating manner, namely taking into consideration the needs and fears of the *am haaretz*, we will in our application of the text to our context, argue that any meaningful reconciliation between enemies will have to take into consideration the fears and needs of all groups involved in the enmity. A closer analysis of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah reveals that though Nehemiah failed to reconcile the *am haaretz* with the returned exiles, he tries (Neh. 5) to reconcile the creditors and the debtors, who were members of the returnee community. Nehemiah, on hearing an outcry from "the people", their wives and their children, moves on to take drastic steps aimed at reconciling the creditors and the debtors, who were both members of the returnee community. Reconciliation here does not exclude transformation and reconstruction. As part of reconciliation, the creditors have to absolve loans. Notwithstanding the exclusion of the *am haaretz* from the debate between the creditors and the debtors, it is this apparent attempt at reconciling both the creditors and the debtors which will inspire us in our discussion on reconciliation in (South) Africa.

6.2.1 Definition

The 1993 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa ends with an epilogue entitled "National Unity and Reconciliation". Among other things, it says,

> This Constitution provides an historic bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterised by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful coexistence and development opportunities for all South Africans, irrespective of colour, race, class, belief or sex (Mbeki, 1998:68).

And, it continues by saying that,

> The pursuit of national unity, the well being of all South African citizens and peace require

reconciliation between the people of South Africa and reconstruction of society (Mbeki,1998:68).

De Gruchy, correctly sees the above quotations from the Republic of South African Constitution as laying what he calls "the secure foundation for the people of South Africa to transcend the division and strife of the past, which generated gross violation of human rights, the transgression of humanitarian principles in violent conflicts and a legacy of hatred, fear, guilt and revenge" (De Gruchy et.al.,1999:1). De Gruchy argues that the above stated issues should be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not revenge, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* but not for victimisation (De Gruchy et.al.,1999:1).

Likewise, Turner describes reconciliation as "the restoration of broken and violated relationships among people. An interrelated understanding of the 'horizontal' (or human) aspect of reconciliation and the 'vertical' (or godly) dimension of reconciliation is presupposed (Turner,1998:8). Thus, Turner argues that reconciliation "fundamentally communicates critical inclusivity and peaceful participation" (Turner,1998:8). It is this inclusivity that was lacking in Ezra-Nehemiah. We have argued in chapters 3 and 5 that Ezra-Nehemiah's ideology is exclusive and biased against the *am haaretz*.

For Tutu, forgiveness means sacrifice. He argues that forgiveness means "abandoning your right to pay back the perpetrators in own coin, but it is a loss which liberates the victim" (Tutu,1999:219). Thus, Tutu argues that in reconciliation we need to "go beyond retributive justice to restorative justice, to move on to forgiveness, because without it there was no future" (Tutu,1999:209). However, Tutu is quick to point out that forgiveness should not be taken for granted; for it is neither cheap nor easy

> In forgiving, people are not asked to forget. On the contrary, it is *important* to remember, so that we should not let such atrocities happen again. Forgiveness does not mean condoning what has been done. It means taking what has happened seriously and not minimising it; drawing out the sting in the memory that threatened to poison our entire existence. It involves trying to understand the perpetrators and so have empathy, to try to stand in their shoes, and to appreciate the sort of pressures and influences that might have brought them to do what they did (Tutu,1999:219).

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Does the victim depend on the culprit's contrition and confession as the pre-condition for being able to forgive? In answer to this question, Tutu argues that,

> There is no question that, of course, such a confession is a very great help to the one who wants to forgive, but it is not absolutely indispensable. Jesus did not wait until those who were nailing Him to the cross had asked for forgiveness. He was ready, as they drove in the nails, to pray to His Father to forgive them and He even provided an excuse for what they were doing. If the victim could forgive only when the culprit confessed, then the victim would be locked into the culprit's whim, locked into victimhood, whatever her own attitude or intention. That would be palpably unjust (Tutu,1999:220).

In contrast, Grunebaum-Ralph warns that the manner in which the notions of reconciliation and healing are privileged and foregrounded over and above notions of justice, culpability and restitution tends to (and is meant to) obscure and minimise the differences between the victimised on the one hand and the perpetrators and beneficiaries on the other. Unless care is taken, reconciliation can (if it has not already) become "a fetishised discourse, a claim, a right, which devalues the experience of those who have been wronged" so that all are regarded as being equally victimised (Maluleke,1999:107-108).

At the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing Dr Auerbach offered seven steps to reconciliation that all faith communities could agree upon:

> becoming aware of having done wrong; publicly acknowledging the wrongdoing; expressing remorse for the action or lack of action; making restitution for the harm caused; requesting forgiveness from the harmed person; making a sincere commitment not to repeat the wrongdoing; and accepting forgiveness where it is offered (De Gruchy et al.,1999:60).

As part of their contribution to the reconciliation debate in South Africa, scholars have tried to give theological backing to the reconciliation debate. Thus, Domeris outlines four aspects which are important to his biblical understanding of reconciliation. First, reconciliation involves confrontation with evil (Domeris,1987:80). Secondly, there is a need to issue a challenge for a complete change both societal and personal (Domeris,1987:80). Accordingly, Domeris argues that,

> Where two parties are at war, Christians have a duty to bring them together. However one must not loose sight of the root meaning of reconciliation, namely to change. Unless the oppressing party change completely there can be no reconciliation between the oppressed and the oppressors. Unless there are clear signs of repentance and confession of wrong, reconciliation cannot take place. First there must be change! Once more the radical element

is present. Until apartheid and the brutal face of capitalism are destroyed, there can be no reconciliation in the true sense of that word. Compromise yes, but reconciliation, no! (Domeris,1987:80).

Thirdly, it implies becoming involved in the revolutionary ministry of changing society to make it acceptable to God. Since the basic problem in South Africa is class and not colour, we are talking about reconciling rich and poor. This means that where wealth is a barrier between people, that wealth must be shared. Where education is a barrier between people, the education opportunities must be equalised (Domeris,1987:80).

Finally, as pointed out by Mosala, there is the economic barrier which separates people from their land, from their possessions and from the fruits of their labour (Domeris,1987:80).

Who needs reconciliation or who should be reconciled? Mbeki answers the question as to who should be reconciled in South Africa, when he states,

> The challenge ahead of us is to achieve reconciliation between the former oppressor and the former oppressed, between black and white, between rich and poor (who, in our own conditions, are also described by colour), between men and women, the young and the old, the able and the disabled (Mbeki,1998:40).

What is significant about Mbeki's view on who should be reconciled is that he does not only see reconciliation as that which happens between enemies, rather, he extends it to include men and women, able and disabled, and young and old.

Mandaza too argues that reconciliation should also be between blacks:

> reconciliation is usually confined to white-black relations, sometimes to the exclusion of that which might be desirable between black and black during the transition. So it is that differences between the departing colonial master or apartheid leader and the incoming African nationalist leader are more easily resolved and reconciliation established than is the case between African leaders-even those, as that period in Zimbabwe's post-independence history illustrates with respect to the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), who will have jointly been the main agency for the liberation process. This is part of the legacy of race, colour and class in southern Africa (Mandaza,1999:82).

6.2.2 Relationship between reconciliation and transformation

Nehemiah's reconciliation between the debtors and the creditors was followed by the commitment from the creditors to contribute to the reconciliation process through debt remission and the return of mortgaged property. Similarly, scholars in Africa have argued for a clear link between reconciliation and transformation. Accordingly, Tutu declares that,

> In South Africa, the whole process of reconciliation has been placed in very considerable jeopardy by enormous disparities between the rich, mainly the whites, and the poor, mainly the blacks. The huge gap between the haves and have-nots, which was largely created and maintained by racism and apartheid, poses the greatest threat to reconciliation and stability in our country. The rich provided the class from which the perpetrators and the beneficiaries of apartheid came and the poor produced the bulk of victims. That is why I have exhorted whites to be keen to see transformation taking place in the lot of blacks. For unless houses replace the hovels and shacks in which most blacks live; unless blacks gain access to clean water, electricity, affordable health care, decent education, good jobs and safe environment - all things which the vast majority of whites have taken for granted for so long - we can kiss goodbye to reconciliation. Reconciliation is liable to be a drawn-out process with ups and downs, not something accomplished overnight and certainly not by a Commission, however effective (Tutu,1999:221).

Clearly, Tutu does not see reconciliation as an event, rather he sees it as a process that could not be accomplished overnight.

Likewise, De Gruchy believes that redressing injustice and bringing about social transformation was therefore the first step to real reconciliation (De Gruchy et. al.,1999:59).

While for others, transformation precedes reconciliation, for Mbeki reconciliation is a prerequisite to transformation. Thus he elaborates,

> Needless to say, the reconstruction and development of our society was impossible as long as this conflict persisted. Its transformation could not begin until reconciliation had been achieved between the mortal enemies. And yet the reconciliation also could not be attained until the political conditions in our country had themselves been changed. No reconciliation was possible outside the context of the establishment of a democratic system, outside the context of the abandonment of the system of white minority rule (Mbeki,1998:42).

Accordingly, Mbeki maintains that without reconciliation the conflict and the war would not come to an end and that it would never be possible to embark on the important task of reconstruction and

development (Mbeki,1998:96). However, Mbeki maintains that we need to understand and manage the dialectical relationship between reconciliation and transformation. He believes that these two concepts belong together. "They are interdependent and impact upon each other. None is capable of realisation unless it is accompanied by the other" (Mbeki,1998:41-42).

Takatso Mofokeng (1986,172) reverses the order by beginning with transformation rather than reconciliation:

> There is no possibility of reconciliation between black and white people in this country until the oppressive structures and institution, be they black or white, are transformed and put into service for the benefit of the underprivileged majority of this land (Quoted by Mosala,1987:19).

Mosala goes further than Mofokeng, by arguing that,

> Reconciliation must have something to do with the reversal of our alienation; and our alienation is not alienation from white people first and foremost; our alienation is from our land, our cattle, our labour which is objectified industrial machines and technological instrumentation. Our reconciliation with white people will follow from our reconciliation with our fundamental means of livelihood (Mosala,1987:23).

Maluleke could not agree more, when he argues that,

> Viewing alienation from 'means of livelihood' rather than alienation from white people as being the primary 'ailment' from which blacks need to be 'cured', this view of reconciliation extends to and includes the need to be reconciled to black history, culture and religious traditions (Maluleke,1999:103).

Having analysed the definition of reconciliation, we want to go on to examine the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa more fully, in promoting reconciliation.

6.2.3 The role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

The mandate of the TRC is spelled out in the Promotion Of National Unity and Reconciliation Act (De Gruchy et. al.,1999:2), as to promote "national unity" and reconciliation (Everett,1999:156). In promoting national unity and reconciliation, the commission was charged with several responsibilities. First, the TRC's had to provide a record of gross human rights violations committed

by both the upholders of apartheid and the liberation movements between 1 March 1960, when the liberation movements were banned, and 6 December 1993, after which, it was agreed, armed conflict and political violence could no longer be justified or tolerated (De Gruchy et. al.,1999:2; Everett, 1999:156). Second, it was mandated to identify the victims, investigate their fate, and to recommend possible measures of reparation (De Gruchy et. al.,1999:2; Everett,1999:156). Third, the TRC was mandated to process applications for amnesty and indemnity (De Gruchy et al,1999:2; Everett,1999: 156). Fourth, the TRC was mandated and to make recommendations with regard to measures necessary to prevent future gross human rights violations (De Gruchy et. al.,1999:2; Everett,1999: 156).

Mbeki explains the purpose of the TRC when he says,

> Similarly, and as part of the process of reconciliation, we have thought it important that human rights abuses that occurred during the struggle should be exposed and acknowledged. Accordingly, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be established to discover the truth about these abuses, enable those involved to obtain amnesty and those affected to receive reparation. We believe that in this way we will avoid the possibility of people seeking vengeance against those who persecuted them, and create a climate for healing of wounds and true reconciliation among those who were enemies (Mbeki,1998:63).

Did the TRC accomplish its mandate? Scholars are divided on this issue. Below we analyse both the positive and negative responses to this question.

Certain scholars have been sympathetic to the role played by the TRC in South Africa. The following explanations have been advanced. First, they argue that the entire life of the TRC has been about beginning to create the reconciliation space, to make an opening through which others may go (De Gruchy et. al.,1999:6).

> Whatever its limits and problems, however, the TRC has introduced an important agenda into the public sphere. It is the public as a whole, in all of its dimension and through all its diverse, contest and fragment institutional and organisational forms, that must continue the task (De Gruchy et. al.,1999:6-7).

Second, the TRC should be seen as a crucial means for developing the fundamental political principles of public life and constitutionalism. From the standpoint of constitutional development, the TRC's work has heightened popular awareness that all governance must exist within a higher

frame of justice to which all are directly responsible (Everett,1999:156). Third, the TRC has uncovered many untold stories which were hidden for many years. Fourth, it has provided a platform for many hurt people to tell their stories.

We now move on to examine positions of those who are very critical of the role of the TRC in reconciling South Africans. Firstly, many have expected it to uncover the whole truth, to be the instrument for reconciliation, only to find themselves disillusioned. Maluleke has argued that the Commission itself may have been guilty of promoting unrealistic expectations (De Gruchy et. al.,1999:6; cf Maluleke,1997a; Maluleke,1999:105).

Secondly, South Africa remains a deeply divided society. In this context the TRC was limited by its mandate to deal with "gross human rights violations" and it could never be expected to deal with the deeper material bases of injustice and their threat to the health of the whole society (De Gruchy et. al.,1999:6-7; cf Maluleke,1997a; Maluleke,1999:105). The focus was, therefore, on the human rights violator, the extent of the violation and the motive. Duties and obligations to political parties or liberation movements took centre-stage in so far as the violator was concerned. And so people could argue that they received orders and acted honourably as functionaries of their superiors (Botman,1999:126). Thus, second and third generation rights, in particular economic rights, have remained beyond its scope (De Gruchy et. al.,1999:6-7).

Thirdly, the problematic question of determining the meaning and scope of reconciliation is also raised by the TRC. Reconciliation cannot be established on the basis of juridical or pseudo-juridical process, or even through confession and forgiveness as mere linguistic acts. Reparation must come into the picture, and this has not been adequately defined (De Gruchy et. al.,1999:7-8).

Fourthly, scholars ask several questions: does amnesty serve justice? What is the price exacted for the pain of victims in the TRC and related processes? What about the beneficiaries of the system that hurt so many people? This question in particular has not been adequately addressed, if at all. It raises the probing question of what makes for a perpetrator, and the related question of how far the line of responsibility for gross human rights violation goes (De Gruchy et. al.,1999:8). Maluleke responds

by arguing that the TRC was promoting reconciliation without judicial justice. He states that basic to the entire TRC process in South Africa is the pursuance of the notions of "national reconciliation" rather than vengeance or justice in the judicial sense of the word (Maluleke,1997a:60).

In the fifth place the cut-off dates have been criticised. It has been argued that the provision that 1 March 1960 be the date of commencement for activities to be probed is probably also related to the need for clearly delimited frames of reference as well as negotiations-inspired compromises. Here again, it has been pointed out that 1960 is very late in the genealogy of oppression and dispossession of black people (Maluleke,1997a:65).

The last one is the amnesty versus reparation debate. The Act provides for "the granting of amnesty to persons who make full disclosure of all the relevant facts" (Maluleke,1997a:67). The fact that persons who make full disclosure can be pardoned just for telling "the truth", has perhaps been one of the most difficult aspects of the Act for the victims of gross human right violations. It is significant that the Act does not require the perpetrators to demonstrate any remorse or show any willingness to make reparations for their actions (Maluleke,1997a:67). Moreover, in terms of the Act, all that is required is for them to make a full disclosure. Also, whereas the committee on amnesty has the power to grant amnesty, the Rehabilitation and Reparations (R & R) committee, which deals with reparations for victims, can only make recommendations to either the president or a parliamentary standing committee (Maluleke,1997a:67). This means that while the TRC is able to "finalise" what it can offer to amnesty applicants, it is unable to do the same for victims (Maluleke,1997a:67).

6.2.4 Conclusion

Despite shortcomings, no one can deny the important role played by the TRC in beginning a process of fostering reconciliation in South Africa. With some improvements, the South African experience can be used elsewhere in Africa.

Reconstruction theology has an important role to facilitate the process of reconciliation in Africa, a continent ravaged by civil wars. It is important however, that when reconciliation among warring

parties is facilitated in Africa, the voices of all parties involved in a conflict should be heard and taken seriously, especially if we want to avoid the continued opposition similar to that of the *am haaretz* in Ezra-Nehemiah. Nehemiah, like Ezra before him, failed to reconcile the *am haaretz* and the returned exiles. Instead of including them in a fully representative post-exilic community, both Ezra and Nehemiah sidelined the *am haaretz* by excluding them from participation in any activity aimed at renewing and reconstructing the post-exilic community. Nehemiah went a step further in his exclusion of the *am haaretz* by placing them outside the debate on taxation, food shortage, debt, slavery etc. Thus, Nehemiah's actions show the failure of reconciliation between the returned exiles and the *am haaretz*. Nehemiah's actions as the governor resembles the case of our governments, which tend to place the poor and marginalised outside the debate on issues which directly affect their daily lives. Our sociological analysis of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah has shown that the returned exiles (including Ezra and Nehemiah) had no sound theological justification for the exclusion of the *am haaretz* from the renewal, transformation, reconstruction and reconciliation process in post-exilic Jerusalem. We contend, therefore, that any meaningful appropriation of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah in reconciliation process in Africa should take into consideration the needs and fears of the *am haaretz*. In other words, the sidelined and excluded voices of the *am haaretz* should be listened to and also taken seriously. For any reading of Nehemiah 5 which fail to retrieve the sidelined and marginalised voices of the *am haaretz* would not only be insensitive to the plight of the poor and marginalised in Africa, but it would also be dangerous to the whole process of renewal, transformation, reconstruction and reconciliation in Africa.

6.3 POVERTY / FOOD CRISIS IN AFRICA

6.3.0. Introduction

The text of Ezra-Nehemiah highlights poverty (Neh.5) as one of the issues that Nehemiah had to address among the poor Jews in post-exilic Judah. As we saw, in our analysis of chapter 5, the debtors cried to Nehemiah, in order that he may address their socio-economic conditions which included a lack of food, and which ultimately led them to poverty. In this subsection, we would like to analyse Africa's poverty/food crisis, and then go on to spell out the role of reconstruction theology

in addressing the food / poverty crisis in Africa.

6.3.1 Definition of poverty

What is poverty? Silungwe states that traditionally poverty is thought of as a lack of money, but evidence from numerous studies on poverty suggest that poverty is about a lack of access, lack of power, lack of income and resources to make choices and take advantage of opportunities (Silungwe,2000b:8). Theuri also says that poverty, as popularly understood, is the absence of material goods and amenities needed to sustain one's life at a level and in a manner that promotes the dignity of the human person; it degrades everything that is human (Theuri,1999:233-234).

Gustavo Gutierrez, the Peruvian theologian, describes the life of the poor in terms of hunger and exploitation: insufficient health care; lack of proper and decent housing; lack of proper formal education; unemployment and minimum wage systems. He refers to the poor as abused human beings whose rights of association and expression are often censured in the interest of a few aristocrats. Theuri goes on to argue that like the poor in Latin America and elsewhere in the world, the African poor form a world of their own. They are mostly the ghetto and slum dwellers, those whose monthly pay is less than one luncheon of a rich and a powerful person (Theuri,1999:235). Theuri describes the poor as those who die of hunger, those materially and economically poor, the sick, the illiterate, unemployed, exploited, and underpaid, those in drought and flood stricken areas, victim of both tribal clashes as well as those other persons whose rights to be fully human have been violated due to ethnic cleansing, detention, both physically and mentally harassed persons (Theuri,1999:240-241).

Thus, Africa is said to be suffering under chilling destitution, characterized by poverty. Theuri elaborates that a majority of Africa's people are not simply poor; they are destitute, with hardly any means for adequate livelihood, as opposed to the rich who are not merely 'rich', but are affluent, having more than they would ever need for comfortable living (Theuri,1999:233; Silungwe,2000:1).

Mbeki has provided some statistics on the extent of poverty in South Africa. He states that,

> The income differential between whites and Africans in our country remains in the range of

8 to 1. More than 80 per cent of the economy is controlled by the whites, who constitute 13 per cent of our population...Between eight and nine million Africans are classified as destitute (Mbeki,1998:64-5).

The Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC), highlights the following facts concerning poverty in South Africa. First, that 53% of all South Africans live below the officially recognised poverty line. Second, 75% of the poor live in rural areas where black households especially those headed by women are the most affected. Third, 40% of those in employment earn less than the official poverty level. Fourth, 95% of all South Africa's poor are black. Fifth, that between 1994-1997, directors' pay grew twice as fast as labourers' wages (SRB,2000:10).

Though the above statistics are directly related to South Africa, they are equally relevant to many African countries. A recent study by the Economic Commission for Africa reveals that the extent of poverty in Africa has increased steadily, both in urban and rural areas. It states that,

> In 1970, 17.6% of all poor people in the world were to be found, according to some estimates, in Africa. The proportion is expected to reach 32% by the year 2000. The extent of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, as indicated in Table iv. below, is worse than in any other developing regions. In 1985, half of Africa's population lived below the poverty line, whereas the proportion in the other developing regions did not reach one third (ECA,1995:61).

Although lack of food is not the only aspect which characterises the condition of the poor, in the next section we want to focus on lack of food in Africa, as the poor in Nehemiah have cried out, partly due to lack of food.

6.3.2 The food / poverty situation in Africa

Getui notes that Africa is portrayed in the mass media in the whole world as a continent which is in deep crises, one of them being suffering from food deficit, making it the most hungry continent in the world. The continent is a regular and constant recipient of food aid mainly from the western world. Many more African countries experience regular and acute food shortages, particularly of the staple food, maize-meal. The prices of food keep rising such that for many people life is a real struggle (Getui,1999:220-221).

And, a study by the Economic Commission for Africa also shows that food and nutrition are major areas of concern in Africa. It reports that,

> Continued food insecurity is evidenced by the fact that 33% of the population is chronically undernourished. Drought, especially in Southern Africa, led to 18 million people being exposed to possible famine in 1991; and intractable civil wars and political instability, particularly in the Horn of Africa, created great needs for good emergency action for over 15 million people in 1992. Ethiopia continued to be at risk from famine, even in 1994: it was then dependent on an estimated 1 million tons of food aid. In Somalia and the Sudan, a combination of drought and civil unrest has placed over half the population at risk from famine, while Kenya, as a result of poor rains, 961,000 people were judged to be drought-affected in 1993, of whom 679,000 were in immediate need of relief assistance. The decline in per capita food production in the last 10 years has meant that, without ready imports, the available daily calorie intake is only 92% of the normal requirements. Consequently, the number of Africans who are unable to obtain adequate daily intake of calories has been risen from 99 million in 1980 to 168 million in recent years (ECA,1995:59-60).

In Nehemiah's time, the causes of poverty and lack of food were great numbers, taxes, and several oppressive measures that the poor were subjected to. In the next section we examine some of the causes of poverty in Africa.

6.3.3 Causes of the food crisis / poverty

The above described status quo calls for an investigation into the factors that are behind the food crisis in Africa (Getui,1999:221). Firstly, civil wars are major causes of poverty and food shortage in Africa. Although, in Ezra-Nehemiah there is no direct link between civil wars and food shortages experienced by the poor Jews, in Africa, certain countries have been or are still engaging in civil wars, to mention a few, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Angola, Burundi and others. These civil wars result in large numbers of refugees, death, disruption of smooth running of the economy, all of which has a direct impact on hunger, unemployment and poverty.

The second issue is globalization. Getui elaborates,

> Multi-national food processing companies have expanded their markets in third world countries. This is closely linked to globalization and its companion, free market. The trans-national corporations offer lower prices for their products hence strangle local food production. They also impose trade embargoes. The poor peasant farmers are, therefore, not motivated to continue producing at a loss. This frustration is expanded on by the prevailing

governments which marginalises the poor. They are not only denied economic and political power such that they are unable to obtain credit but by all means [sic]. Their labour benefits others. They are also vulnerable to poor seed and fertilizer control and other relative negatives (Getui,1999:221-222).

As part of globalization, the world financial system has had a negative impact on African economies. Hence, Sam Kobia's comments that, "the world financial system is a greater cause of hunger in Africa than drought" (Gathaka,1992:195). Mugambi has also observed that African countries have been pressurised to embark on structural adjustment programmes in order to win the support of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Mugambi,1995:156).

Thirdly, overpopulation has been cited as a factor in the lack of food in Africa. In Nehemiah 5:2-3, the poor complained that they had bigger families but had very little food to feed on and were too poor to pay for it (Gathaka,1992:194). Gathaka argues that in Africa, overpopulation is a relevant factor. "Like those who had returned from captivity, we have 'numerous sons and daughters'...As Christians we need to practice family planning methods" (Gathaka,1992:194). Getui too states that the growing population in Africa is a factor responsible for food crisis. Thus she argues,

> In Africa, tradition holds that the more children one has the better they serve as security in old age, a source of income, a source of prestige, insurance that at least some of them will survive poor nutrition, sanitation and medical care. These benefits are subject to debate but for now we just need to note that many children also make heavy demands on limited food, often resulting in a crisis (Getui,1999:222).

The colonial legacy has been identified as the fourth factor that has contributed towards the food crisis in Africa. Getui believes that this legacy has several dimensions. First, she argues that the colonial powers viewed the agricultural systems of the subjugated land as backwards and primitive, precisely because they did not produce a marketable surplus that could meet the need of the colonisers to extract wealth and yet many African societies were centered on self-sufficiency. They consequently destroyed the cultural patterns of production. The colonial masters imposed their own agriculture patterns, some of which were hostile and destructive to the African environment. Second, they set out to reduce diversified self-provisioning agriculture to one or two cash crops. They forced peasant to grow cash and export crops. This trend has continued to today, in that these crops are controlled by a handful of foreign corporations and hardly any benefit trickles to the producers. Third, they also did not prepare the local people to take over, hence justifying their continued presence and

control (Getui,1999:222).

The fifth factor has been identified as the exclusion of women in the economic and agricultural sectors. Getui argues that women who are the backbone of agriculture are sidelined by the western technical experts. It is the men who are trained in the use of new techniques while women are left with hoes and digging sticks. The women are often engaged in cash crop plantation work at the expense of their own subsistence farmlands. One wonders whether food production would improve if land ownership and other privileges over it were extended rightfully and justifiably to women (Getui,1999:223).

The sixth problem is Africa's model of production and consumption. Mugambi's concern is that "the model of production and consumption currently prevailing in Africa increases dependence rather than independence. A socially healthy nation should consume what it produces and export any surplus. Conversely, it should produce what it consumes and import any deficit" (Mugambi,1995:158). Gathaka argues that emphasis on cash crops has contributed greatly to our food crop crisis. Even when we produce enough cash crops, the cash they bring in is not enough, because the prices are low and the currency has been devalued. The plummeted cash crops prices are not enough to service the debts, pay interest, or buy additional equipment to produce more. More emphasis should now be placed on food rather than cash crops (Gathaka,1992:194-195).

The seventh cause is structural injustice. Theuri argues that poverty is brought about by structural injustice which fosters dependency and unfair distribution of country's natural resources. Poverty, then, is not an accident of nature. It is established and sustained, consciously or unconsciously, by people who happen to be in charge of the continent's resources and governance, inflicting great violence on the majority of people in the continent (Theuri,1999:235-236).

Having identified some of the causes of poverty or food shortage in Africa, we will examine, in the next section, some possible solutions to this problem.

6.3.4 Some solutions to the food crisis / Poverty in Africa

Nehemiah solved the food crisis by asking the expropriators to write off debts of the debtors. However, in our context, this may not necessarily be an easy option to follow. In order to address the food crisis in Africa, the following measures are suggested.

First, there has to be an inclusive decision making as far as the use of productive measures are concerned. Getui argues thus,

> All interested parties should participate in decision making on the use of productive measures and so that all can make effective demand on those resources in a move to lessen the gap between the rich and the poor (Getui,1999:225; cf also Wamue,1999:214).

Theuri goes further and argues that the poor should also participate in the production of goods.

> The African Church should also encourage the governments to allow the poor people the right to participate in the production of goods, that is, since the poor people labour in the production of their country's economy, in the service of all, participation and common ownership of the means of production are two additional factors which must regulate business and accountability in today's Africa. Hence workers, employers and employees, rich and poor alike should be ready to adopt proposals for joint ownership of the means of work and for participation by workers in the management and profits of business (Theuri,1999:241).

The second measure is the need to reduce the population. Thus Getui argues,

> Africa is not necessarily over-populated but ways and means of making her take care of the population and regulating it ought to be taken into consideration. Of course it is noted that some of the conventional methods advocated for population control are detrimental to health, hence care should be taken that in the process of family planning, health, particularly that of the woman is not compromised. The church's stand and advocacy on population issues in Africa should take into consideration the cultural aspects, as well as the subtle reasons and methods that are directed at the continent (Getui,1999:225).

Third, there is also need for food consumers to promote that which is local and be proud of it. What is grown should be environmentally viable and kind. Of great dietary value are the healthy indigenous foods that are being replaced by cholesterol-rich and sugar-loaded manufactured foods (Getui,1999:225-226; Wamue,1999:214).

Fourth, cash crops should not be promoted at the expense of subsistence crops (Getui,1999:226;

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Gathaka,1992:194ff). Fifth, there should be no discrimination in the agricultural sectors. It is also important to have all people treated equally regardless of their race, gender, age, and social status, so that they may all contribute towards food production and consumption. This touches on rights to land ownership, production, marketing strategies and pricing and food taboos (Getui,1999:226; SRB,2000:3).

A sixth aspect has to do with new farming technologies. Thus Getui argues,

> New farming technologies, rapid growth of transportation and communication should be adopted and incorporated in a move to increase production and thus motivate the farmers. The increased food production can be ensured if as many workers as possible were recruited in farming enterprises, including the 'layabouts'. This also serve as an employment opportunity (Getui,1999:226).

Seventh, a food reserve programme is also important. Getui argues that "this should be linked to the global information and early warning system on food and agriculture so that government can take preventive measures. Indeed, even at domestic level the need for a food-reserve programme cannot be over-emphasized" (Getui,1999:226-227).

Eighth, is the empowerment of previously disadvantaged farmers. Clearly, there is also a need to empower the poor instead of giving them charity. Theuri argues that in recent decades, the problem of poverty has been discussed under such themes as "preferential option for the poor"; "preferential love" as opposed to "mere charitable work" (Theuri,1999:232; Wamue,1999:214). Mbeki is also very critical of what he calls an "expansion of a system of charity and aid"(Mbeki,1998:279). He argues that important though these are, there has to be what he calls "resource transfers which would ensure that those who are on the margins of the world economy themselves arrive at the point where they can achieve their own sustainable development" (Mbeki,1998:279).

Ninth, we should aim at achieving self-reliance. The people can be encouraged to evolve life-style and dietary habits that promote self-reliance, widening their menus and recipes and adopting alternative food resources. In the process, the advise of local experts is essential (Getui,1999:227; Wamue,1999:214). Likewise, Mugambi argues that the churches should design

> alternative strategies to enable the people in the exploited nations to cope with economic

marginalisation. These strategies include self-reliant programmes for food production, preservation and storage, education on the international economy, strengthening and stabilizing of local and national marketing infrastructures, and so on (Mugambi,1995:156).

The tenth aspect is the restructuring of the United Nations system. Mbeki argues that there is a need to focus on the matter of the "restructuring of the United Nations system so that it pursues an agenda truly determined by the united nations of the world" (Mbeki,1998:280; SRB,2000:3).

The eleventh issue is the encouragement of women participation in economic sector. Mbeki reminds us that only 30 per cent of African women participate in the formal economy, with the majority trapped in poverty and destitution (Mbeki,1998:64). Mugambi too argues that programs will be needed for enabling women to increase their productivity and efficiency in income generating activities. Most importantly, the church will need to be organized in such a way that women take more active roles in ecclesiastical affairs (Mugambi,1995:177).

Twelfth, the way forward to beat poverty is for government and civil society to develop a mutual sense of responsibility, to pool their resources together in order to provide basic services such as health and education. Of course, it could be argued that government has the sole responsibility to provide goods and services to its citizenry. But for government to deliver properly, it will require active support and participation of the civil society or public. Certainly the whole of civil society shares a responsibility to function in ways which enhance the common good (Silungwe,2000b:8; SRB,2000:3).

Thirteenth, the church should not only look at the question of the relationship between God and the poor, but also of the relationship of the God of the poor, the God of life, with the economic, political and social particularities of concretely oppressed people. In the Gospel of John we read that Jesus said, "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). To give flesh to this goal and to embody it practically is a great theological challenge (Silungwe,2000:1). Despite the fact that Nehemiah, in addressing the food / poverty crisis, excluded the *am haaretz*, the Ezra-Nehemiah text can be used to address the food / poverty crisis in Africa. That Nehemiah placed the *am haaretz* outside the debate on food / poverty crisis does not mean that the *am haaretz* were not

affected by the food / poverty crisis that some of the returned exiles were complaining about. Thus, in using Ezra-Nehemiah to address the food / poverty crisis in Africa, a theology of renewal, transformation, reconciliation and reconstruction should adopt a reading of the text which brings the poor and marginalised of Africa into the mainstream of theological debate on food / poverty issues, as this debate directly affects their daily lives. Thus a theology of renewal, transformation, reconciliation and reconstruction, while advocating an appropriation of the biblical text which supports the inclusion of the poor and marginalised in any debate on food / poverty crisis in Africa, should also challenge any theological attempt to justify the exclusion of the poor and marginalised in such a debate. So a theology of renewal, transformation, reconciliation and reconstruction should not only design theological justification for the inclusion of the poor and marginalised in this debate, rather it should go a step further to design, with the poor and marginalised, appropriate and relevant theological tools and skills that will empower the poor and marginalised so that they are not just token representatives in debate on food / poverty matters. The poor and marginalise need skills and tools which will build confidence in them in order that they themselves take center stage and shape the nature and direction which such debates on poverty etc. would take.

In this section we have examined some possible solutions to the food crisis in Africa. The lack of food in Nehemiah 5 led people into debt or slavery. In the next section we highlight the debt question in Africa.

6.4. DEBT AND SLAVERY

6.4.0. Introduction

In Nehemiah 5:3 we have heard that land which could have produced enough for the people is mortgaged, including the houses, "to procure grain in the famine." Some claimed relief on account of a past famine, which had forced them to mortgage their fields, vineyards, and houses. Their real estate was mortgaged. There was real economic pressure. People living on their land had to sell their land to buy seed. Now they had to rent land, and still feed the same number of mouths. This situation is true of our situation in Africa. We need not belabour this point more, but it must be observed that

the North deserves serious blame for mortgaging our countries by sometimes dictating terms too severe for Africa to carry. Their Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) are not aimed at recovery but at continued slavery (Gathaka,1992:195).

The Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC), highlights that,

> The servicing of an apartheid debt and unsustainably high interest rates are diverting resources from wiping out poverty and undermining inequality. Government's drive to reduce the budget deficit ensures that there is less money for our social services, even though the needs are constantly growing (SRB,2000:10).

Cishak makes a similar point when he argues that the External Debt is a major reason for the failure to render meaningful services to the public. The evidence is clear, as for example hospitals and schools are not well supplied with necessary equipment and drugs due to lack of funds. The External Debt in Africa is the major cause of impoverishment to the masses (Cishak,1992:7).

How is the debt situation in Sub-Saharan Africa? The external debt stock of sub-Saharan Africa countries would reach US$ 194 billion in 1994, with South Africa accounting for US$ 16.6 billion, i.e. about 9% of the total (ECA,1995:163). Mozambique spends ten times more on interest than on healthcare. Zambia spends five times more on interest than on education. In 1980, the total debt of the world's poorest nations was US$568 billion. Between 1980 and 1997, the South paid the Northern creditors US$2.9 trillion in interest and principal payments. Yet the total debt of the South has now reached US$2 trillion (SRB,2000:4).

With the exception of Egypt, which benefited from special measures of debt write-off in 1991 and which has at least enjoyed some respite, nearly all the countries in the region have been plunged more deeply into economic distress, saddled with heavy indebtedness and accumulated arrears and trapped within the vicious circle of repeated rescheduling under current restructuring agreements (ECA,1995:169).

6.4.1 The effects of the debt crisis

The following effects of the debt crisis have been identified. First, the disastrous effects of the

payment of the African debt can be compared to a low intensity war which brings death, hunger, malnutrition, sickness, unemployment, homelessness and loss of dignity and personal worth to millions of children, women and men, young and old. Second, there is the obscene widening of the gap between rich and poor and the increasing impoverishment and pauperisation of the majority of the African population. Third, the consequences of the debt on the right to the life of infants and children are reflected in the high rates of malnutrition, low birth weights and prevalence of preventable diseases that cause the death of thousands of children daily. Fourth, there is the gross unemployment of crisis proportion especially among the youth and women. Fifth, there is the devastating and disastrous impact on the living standards and well-being of hundreds of millions of Africans leading not only to the destruction of the social fabric of African society and to the emergence of perverted morality under which corruption, injustice and dishonesty are applauded, and honesty, justice and virtue disdained. Sixth, there are serious implications of the debt crisis and its effects on human rights for the mission and calling of the church, and on the spiritual welfare of individuals. Seventh, the debt crisis contributes to the denial and gross abuse of human rights as enshrined in international instruments of human rights (Gathaka,1992:208).

The above seven effects can be seen as symptoms of the following root causes, which we discuss below.

6.4.2 The root causes of the debt crisis

The following root causes of the debt crisis have been identified. First, an unjust world economic system under which Africa has been forced over the last five hundred years to support and subsidize the high consumption and wasteful lifestyle of industrialised nations of the North through the cheap export of her children as slaves or immigrant workers, and her natural resources as commodities (Gathaka,1992:209). Second, an unjust international financial system that rewards Africa poorly for her labour and resources and penalises her severely with high interest rates for loans contracted to service the production of exports to rich nations of North America and Europe (Gathaka,1992:209). Third, the irresponsible borrowing and irresponsible lending of loans that have been spent on projects conceived and designed through corruption and the acquisition of irrelevant, inappropriate and in

most cases absolete equipment, manufacturing plants and materials (Gathaka,1992:209). Fourth, the mismanagement through corruption incompetence, greed and avarice, of national resources including loans that were contracted at high rates of interest (Gathaka,1992:209). Fifth, the imposition of unacceptable, alien and disastrous development models and plans on African population without their consent or knowledge, by leaders who grasp and maintain power through force, coercion and summary elimination of those who dare speak out or oppose them (Gathaka,1992:209). Sixth, the abdication by the church of its responsibility to train, teach and nurture the continent and its people in responsible citizenship, true religion and morality and the values of the kingdom of God, and to challenge Christian of the North on the realization of a just and equitable international financial monetary and economic order (Gathaka,1992:210).

6.4.3 Recommendations or possible solutions to the debt crisis in Africa

There has been a call for the formulation of an international Ethic of Lending and Borrowing which applies to both lender and borrowers, stipulating, amongst others, the following. Firstly, that public system of accounting and auditing should be open to discussion by the general populace (Gathaka,1992:210). Secondly, that projects and programmes for which loans are contracted be viable, feasible and beneficial to the development of the people as a whole (Gathaka,1992:210). Thirdly, that loans be procured not for political purposes or goals, but for legitimate development goals and objectives that serve the interest of people (Gathaka,1992:210). Fourthly, that loans not be linked / related to the self-interest of conditions imposed by the leaders, such as the purchase of capital goods or recruitment of personal from the lending nations or institutions (Gathaka,1992:210). Fifthly, that loans should not be taken out for unnecessary military or security purposes or to offset budgets for military expenditure which are but only expandable and unproductive investment (Gathaka,1992:211). Sixthly, that where political leaders have accumulated personal wealth outside their countries, a provision or granting a loan should be tied to the repatriation of such wealth back to their countries (Gathaka,1992:211). Nyerere believes that for an African Renaissance's vision to come true, the debt of Third World countries would have to be scrapped. Thus he declares that "a large number of the world's poorest countries are paying vast sums of money that could have gone to development. It's absurd. All these debts must be written off" (Gumede,1997:1).

The United Nations's Economic Commission for Africa report has highlighted the need for a special debt strategy for Africa. The report paints Africa's debt situation as

> a major development issue on which the international community must urgently focus its attention. And that palliatives, rather than real relief measures, driven mainly by obsession with resolving a liquidity crisis, are in the least suitable to the peculiar situation of the countries in Africa facing a serious solvency crisis. Furthermore, debt relief measures for countries implementing SAPs, and faced with the ardent tasks of democratization and reconstruction, as the case may be, require immediate and massive concessional flows in conjunction with debt relief. It is only in that way that African countries will be enabled to resolve their solvency crisis and sustain domestic restructuring efforts for a stable polity and sustained economic recovery (ECA,1995:169).

The report goes further to state that the solution to the African debt crisis will require,

> in addition to macroeconomic policy re-orientation, more meaningful and multidimensional measures, involving specific commitments on the part of creditors and debtors alike. The African countries have, on their part, the responsibility to take appropriate measures to restructure their economies and per force create an enabling environment for domestic and foreign investment. But, reducing and managing external dependence, and developing the capacity to cope with changes in the external environment require long-term adjustment and transformation, and a good deal of international support. This is why it is essential that Africa's debt crisis be placed within the global context of Africa's relations with the rest of the world, and that the specific strategy for dealing with it should centre on two majors integrated policy measures: the first having to do with the immediate relieve of the pressure of debt service on the continent's fragile economic and social structures; the second focusing on the restoration of the external viability of the African economies so that the favourable conditions that would attract the necessary financing for economic recovery and sustainable growth can be fostered. The real problem is with the political commitment needed to translate commonly shared views into action (ECA,1995:171).

A theology of renewal, transformation, reconciliation and reconstruction will, in appropriating the Ezra-Nehemiah text to address the debt problem in Africa, have to read it from the perspective of the *am haaretz*, who have been left out in a debate between Nehemiah and the returnee community. While commending Nehemiah for taking bold steps in ordering the expropriators to cancel the debt that led the debtors to perpetual dependence on the expropriators, a theology of renewal etc. should also argue that Nehemiah's actions in placing the *am haaretz* outside the debate on factors that led to their debt state was an unfortunate move which Africans should not emulate when debating the African debt crisis. Currently the debate on the debt crisis in Africa and its possible cancellation is conducted by the rich western countries and the selected African governments, at the exclusion of the poor and marginalised who are most hit by the huge debt that Africa is currently servicing. A straight

forward application of Ezra-Nehemiah to the debt debate in Africa, without reading it against the grain, namely from the perspective of the *am haaretz* will, instead of alleviating the plight of the poor and marginalised, further condemn them to eternal exclusion and marginalisation from the mainstream debate on debt remission or its cancellation. Such a reading would not only be insensitive to the needs and plight of the majority of Africans who live below the poverty datum line, it would also be dangerous in that instead of addressing the debt crisis in a long lasting manner which would also take the concerns of the poor and marginalised, it would further condemn them to their exclusion zone. In addition, such a reading would miss an opportunity to equip the poor and marginalised with theological tools and skills not only to be able to challenge the forces that continue to relegate them to the poverty zone, but also to equip them to contribute meaningfully on what they see as major issues affecting them on the road to debt reduction, remission or cancellation.

6.5 WOMEN OPPRESSION

6.5.0 Introduction

Our sociological analysis of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah has shown that there are "elements of hostility towards women in Ezra-Nehemiah (e.g. Ezra 10:1-44; Neh. 10:28-31)" (Carroll,1992:93). Carroll argues that where women in general are prepared to listen and follow the ideological instructions in Ezra-Nehemiah "there is no problem with women (e.g. Ezra 8:3; Neh 12:43). But where 'foreigners' or opposition is concerned, then the Ezra-Nehemiah literature is opposed to women. In this sense Noadiah must be numbered among the women to be opposed for ideological reasons" (Carroll,1992:93). We have argued in chapter 3 that Noadiah[54] refused to be sidelined by Nehemiah. She protested against the exclusion of the *am haaretz* from the rebuilding process. Her opposition made her Nehemiah's enemy. Thus Noadiah's opposition to Nehemiah was not just a

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[54] Gottwald argues that "the case for Noadiah as a model of female assertiveness seems dubious, since we don't know exactly what her role was in opposing Nehemiah" (Gottwald,2002:5). Our main argument for the use of Noadiah as a model of female assertiveness, has been precisely the fact that the ideology of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah tries to silence her by not fully reporting all her activities in opposing Nehemiah. *Contra* Gottwald, Decock sees the use of Noadiah as a model of female assertiveness "as an example of creative reading against the grain"(Decock,2002:2).

coincidence, it was part of the *am haaretz's* protest against their exclusion from participation in the rebuilding and reconstruction process taking place in post-exilic Palestine.

Moreover, there are in Ezra-Nehemiah women who were forcefully divorced from their husbands. The fact that we do not hear their cry does not mean that they did not cry nor does it mean that they approved of their oppression, rather their silence is due to the fact that they have been silenced by the authors of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. It is important that when appropriating this text for renewal and reconstruction, we do not just accept the ideology of the text which is biased and hostile against women who oppose it, but that we try to retrieve the silenced and sidelined voices of these women in Ezra-Nehemiah.

Like the women of Nehemiah 5, women in Africa are today crying of untold sufferings due to wars, poverty, HIV/AIDS, abuse etc. Like Noadiah, some women have the courage to stand up against their sufferings today. However, still some like those who were forcefully divorced, are silenced, and we will never hear their cries or their protest.

Before we discuss women oppression by men and society in Africa, let us briefly examine few cases where women participate in their own oppression.

6.5.1 The role of women in their own oppression

Ayanga reminds us that throughout history, religion has sanctioned and made sacred the oppression of women as a God-given doctrine that must not be challenged. Thus religion has placed women in a social status out of which they dare not move. However, women, argues Ayanga, as a major segment of society, cannot entirely escape the blame for their subservient status (Ayanga,1999:91; Nasimiyu-Wasike,1992103; see Ammah,1992:83-4).

To begin with, women have contributed to their lowly status through general acceptance of their prescribed social role and position. Following Paul Harrison, Ayanga argues that, "women are not only half the present human race, but the principle nurtures [socializers] of all the coming

generations" (Ayanga,1999:92). This means that women should actually be a force to reckon with any society. But this is not the case. Women have through the centuries come to accept, and to believe, that they have no say even in those matters which intimately concern them. According to Ayanga women do not show confidence in their fellow women as political leaders. They do not yet feel ready to vote for politicians of their own sex. They rather vote for a good-for-nothing man than their own fellow woman who might be more honest and more interested in their problems. This shows the extent to which women have been socialised to accept an inferior position in society (Ayanga,1999:92). Ayanga further argues that the problem is made more complex by the fact that women, like men, have accepted, and continue to perpetuate sex-segregation in many aspects of social life- especially in the labour market. Thus a woman who desires to go into politics is often regarded as one who is going against the traditional 'female' occupations (Ayanga,1999:92). This belief has negative results. For if a woman is successful in aspects of life that are ascribed to the male domain this means social rejection or loss of femininity. Thus, a woman will shy away from excelling in the sciences, in architecture, engineering and in management, because these are men's domain. Ayanga is of the opinion that this fear comes about as a result of cultural stereotyping. The woman is afraid of succeeding because she has been taught that these professions are exclusively reserved for men. These stereotypes adversely affect women's choice of careers (Ayanga,1999:95).

Like Hazel Ayanga, Judith Bahemuka argues that "there is no doubt that women are their own worst enemies" (Bahemuka,1992:132) in perpetuating their own oppression. Bahemuka then goes further to justify her view, by mentioning several explanations. First, women help to perpetuate oppressive social structures. Second, they socialise their children to understand that girls should be dependent and that boys should exercise supremacy. Third, they create an environment conducive to polygyny by involving themselves with already married men (Bahemuka,1992:132).

Daisy Nwachuku too highlights women's role in their own oppression, when she argues that,

> some of the obnoxious and repressive role functions of women, whether in religion or in social matters, were formulated in the distant past by powerful elderly women for the purposes of female discipline in the areas of wifely submission, chastity, good material care, and for maintaining the aura of femininity (Nwachuku,1992:66).

However, Nwachuku believes that the issue of female oppression by females in traditional Africa is

an issue which calls for further and immediate in-depth study as a vital contribution to the improvement of the condition of women (Nwachuku,1992:66).

6.5.2 Men and Society as oppressors of women

It would also be incorrect to deny that men are the major oppressors. But one needs to go further and ask: Why do men oppress women? (Ayanga,1999:93-94). Right from infancy, men are taught the values and attitudes that make them chauvinistic. They are taught to shun emotions and gentleness because these emotions are 'womanish'. Thus men have been socially conditioned to be hard-hearted and oppressive (Ayanga,1999:94; Oduyoye,1995:45,61; Nasimiyu-Wasike,1992103). Members of any society internalize the social values around them to such an extent that they view the societal norms as natural. Men are as much products of their society as women are. They, like women, believe that oppressive traits are part-and-parcel of their being human (Ayanga,1999:94; Oduyoye,1995:34, 54; Nasimiyu-Wasike,1992103).

Culture and religion do also play a role in women's oppression (Maina,1999:137; Oduyoye,1992:10ff; Ammah,1992:83-4; Owanikin,1992:218). It could be argued that culture and religion impinge on women's participation in political leadership. In other words, religion can be used as a tool to either enhance or limit women's participation in the political process. Religious beliefs circumscribe leadership to men thereby legitimising male domination over female in political leadership roles (Maina,1999:136; Oduyoye,1995:15). Islam and Christianity could be cited as religions whose doctrinal imperatives legitimise male domination over women by circumscribing leadership to men (Qurán, 4:34, 2:28; Bible, Eph.5:22-23, Tim. 2:11-12, 1 Cor. 14:34-35, Col.3:18) (Maina,1999:137; Oduyoye,1995:9,101; Kanyoro and Oduyoye,1992:2ff; Edet,1992:34; Ammah, 1992:83-4; Fanusie,1992:140ff).

Thus, culture and religion's role in supporting male dominance over women, have obviously contributed to women abuse (Mbeki,1998:261; Oduyoye,1995:164ff). Mbeki paints a picture about women abuse and domestic violence in South Africa, when he states,

> The road we still have to traverse towards the attainment of a democratic and fully non-sexist society can be measured by the frightening scale of woman abuse and domestic violence.

Statistics which quantify this scale of human anguish and suffering is, by any standard, impermissible. It is estimated that roughly 30 per cent of violence reported to the South African Police Service (SAPS) are domestic in nature. One out of every four women is either physically, emotionally or sexually abused by her male partner. An average of 15 000 cases of child abuse is reported to the Child Protection Unit of the SAPS every year (Mbeki,1998:261; see Oduyoye,1995:164ff).

Mbeki then goes on to argue that progress in the struggle against violence and abuse of women and children also depends on the progress made in establishing a democracy characterised by political and social stability, personal security and the promotion of peace. In communities which are afflicted with political and criminal violence, it is women and children who bear the brunt of the culture of violent conflict which is nourished by such conditions. The intensity of violence, poverty and general want leads to large-scale disruption of family and personal life and creates fertile conditions for the spread of social ills like rape, violence against women and child abuse, and the spread of diseases like AIDS (Mbeki,1998:263; Oduyoye,1995:164ff).

Let us now consider some facts about women and development. In spite of those landmark conferences and the efforts at integrating women in national development activities, women in Africa remain as disadvantaged as ever. They have tended to bear a disproportionate burden of the socio-economic crises, and they see themselves as the unfortunate hostages to the social, political and economic order within their country which is both inequitable and discriminatory (ECA,1995:65).

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's report has highlighted health and nutrition, literacy and training, access to education and economic opportunities, as well as participation in decision-making as areas in which women are still adversely disadvantaged. The report states that women and girls continue to have less access than men to formal education at the tertiary level (ECA,1995:65). It further notes that

> those who succeed in gaining access to that level have a greater tendency to drop out, sometimes because of financial, cultural and other related constraints pertaining to differential socialization processes for girls. As a result, adult female literacy rates in North Africa are amongst the lowest in the world and access to schooling remains well below that enjoyed by boys. In sub-Saharan Africa, about 65% of the women over the age of 15 are illiterate, compared to 40% for men. More than 20 million African girls aged 6-11 years did not attend school in 1990. High gender disparities in literacy rates and in attendance at the primary and secondary levels of the educational system still persist to the disadvantaged of girls, despite

the steady increase in the overall levels of literacy in the religion since the beginning of the last decade (ECA,1995:65).

While noting that in the past two decades women have made significant progress in securing participation in the organised labour market, the report goes further to note that the unemployment rate among women remains "three times as high as that of men" (ECA,1995:62). Accordingly, the report says that,

> Women remain a disadvantaged part of the labour force, being frequently considered merely as a part of the "contingency" work force. Jobs held by women are usually in the less prestigious sectors of the economy, of the most temporary duration and obtainable mostly under precarious contracts. This state of affairs explains the preponderance of women in the most unproductive subsectors of the informal economy. Despite the efforts made to increase the number of women employed in the modern sector in Africa, the share of women in paid employment remains low compared to their ratio in the total labour force (ECA,1995:62).

While stating that "improvement in women's health and reproductive rights is central to their ability to assume the decision-making power which would enable them make the necessary choices in other vital areas of their lives" (ECA,1995:65), the report notes that unfortunately African women "do not yet exercise control in matters relating to fertility and reproductive capacity" (ECA,1995:65).

Additionally, the report states that there is a substantial evidence to indicate that the AIDS pandemic is affecting women more disproportionately than men (ECA,1995:65).

> Women now account for 55 per cent of all new cases of HIV diagnosed in Africa, indicating a somewhat greater vulnerability to AIDS compared to men. More than 6 million women of child-bearing age have been infected by the HIV virus. In some of Africa's major urban centres, one out of every three pregnant women attending ante-natal clinics is infected (ECA,1995:66).

African Platform for Action (APA) has identified 11 critical areas of concern, which constitute the major problem areas to the advancement of women in Africa, as follows:

> women's poverty, insufficient food security and lack of economic empowerment; inadequate access to education, training, science and technology; women's vital role in culture, the family and socialization; means of improving the general health of women and their reproductive health, including family planning and population-related programmes; women's relationship with and linkages to the environment and the management of natural resources; the involvement of women in the peace process. The political empowerment of women, women's legal and human rights; mainstreaming of gender-disaggregated data; women,

communication, information and the arts; and the girl-child (ECA,1995:66).
Consequently, as a way of addressing the above stated conditions of women, the report states that there is "an urgent need to increase resource allocation investment in job creation, environmental protection, family planning, health, education and nutrition of Africa's children; and to devise modalities for integrating women into the main stream of development efforts" (ECA,1995:67).

Having discussed the oppression and sufferings of women in Africa, we go on to explore some implications for reconstruction theology in addressing this issue.

6.5.3 Implications

Whereas the road to liberation is difficult, it is not an impossible one. It, however, calls for a total overhauling of the social systems as we know it today. It also calls for a questioning of the theological assumption on which women's oppression is based. Further, it implies that there is need for a keen awareness by the women themselves, an awareness of their social and economic status and of the fact that this can be changed. They should move from pitying themselves in their oppression, to asking why this oppression has persisted despite the women's liberation movement that has existed for decades (Ayanga,1999:95).

In order to achieve authentic and meaningful liberation, women must first, as Rosemary Radford Ruether suggests, "find their own distinctive identity" (Ayanga,1999:96; See Beya,1992:177; Hinga,1992:185). Finding a new identity should not be taken to mean a mere imitation of male models. Certain scholars argue that half the time when women talk of being liberated, it would seem that they are talking about becoming like men and doing the things that men do. If women can find their own identity, scholars argue, then they would work towards re-ordering their life accordingly (Ayanga,1999:96; Beya,1992:177; Hinga,1992:185).

Ayanga believes that women should be able to accept, be thankful and be proud of being women. Society has hitherto implied that there is something wrong with being a woman. Yet women know that this is not so. Sometimes women behave as if they are apologetic about their existence. As part of the process of discovering their unique identity, women need to be on planet earth. She also should

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not be ashamed of the specific roles which she has to perform, specifically those which make her different from men (Ayanga,1999:96).

Thus by participating in education, including theological education, women can meaningfully contribute towards changing their social situation. In the next subsection we discuss education's role in fighting women discrimination.

6.5.3.1 Education and women's liberation.

In African traditional education, the girls were taught by their mothers and also by specifically appointed older women within the society. The girls were taught how to be good homemakers and wives. This entailed hard work and obedience to the husband. The initial stage in the education of boys was still the mother's responsibility. She therefore taught both her sons and daughters from the earliest time onwards (Ayanga,1999:97; Oduyoye,1995:34,53,62,104).

Women were not really encouraged to participate beyond a specified level. When education was allowed for them, it was in specifically "feminine" disciplines-cookery (home science), nursing, primary school teaching, and so on. It was not envisaged that a woman could go beyond this level. Other occupations which required a higher level of education were reserved for the men (Ayanga, 1999:98; Oduyoye,1995:52).

Education (both formal and informal) has contributed greatly in conditioning women to accept their subservient role. By doing this, education has been an instrument of oppression. Women can, however, use the same tool, education, in their endeavour to change their role in society. Women are vital in the education and eventual socialisation of their children. They can use the same methods to bring up their children as "male" and "female", but not as "superior" and "inferior" (Ayanga,1999:98; Bahemuka,1992:132).

Thus education, to be effective, must be for both boys and girls. As observed earlier, men are as much the products of their society as women. They are socialised in a world which demands that they be

oppressors. To act differently is to be "like a woman" (Ayanga,1999:99).

Thus feminism in general and feminist theology in particular must have liberation of the whole person and society as its goal (Ayanga,1999:99; Oduyoye,1995; Oduyoye,2000:121). Anne Nachisale Musopole goes further to explain that

> Women's goal of liberation is not only to destroy men's dominance over them, but also to teach man the right way to be human. Liberation projects that have been launched by women in Africa are not aimed at domination of women over men. Women want to be free and successful, able to work hand in hand with men (Musopole,1992:201).

To merely reverse the social roles between men and women, would defeat the purpose of women's liberation (Ayanga,1999:99; Oduyoye,1995; Oduyoye,2000:121). Oduyoye goes further and argues that any strategy to liberate women must begin by taking "seriously women's questions and concerns about their status" (Oduyoye,1995:171; Oduyoye,2000:124ff; Kanyoro and Oduyoye,1992:2ff; Ruether,1983:12ff), and also be accompanied by "voicing" as an "attempt to break the silence about" their situation as African women (Oduyoye,1995:170; Kanyoro and Oduyoye,1992:2ff).

Women unconsciously perpetuate sex segregation in the labour market by keeping themselves within the traditionally "female" occupations. They also help in the sex stereotyping at work. If the vicious cycle is to be broken, women should make every effort to make use of the improved accessibility to educational institutions, and to venture into those academic and professional specialisations which have generally been regarded as the man's domain. The educational system itself should provide equal opportunities for both girls and boys, men and women. This should be in practice and not just in theory; in policy, and not merely in political propaganda (Ayanga,1999:100).

Ayanga goes further to suggest that the rural woman, who bears the brunt of this oppression, must be made aware of what possibilities of changing her lot in life lie within herself. In doing this, Ayanga continues, the rural woman too can take part in the task of educating the new generation.

> She should be made aware of the fact that her position in society has not been necessarily decreed by the gods, it is a status perpetrated by society and is therefore subject to challenge, change and revision. The rural women must be sensitized to appreciate their legal and social rights. Sensitisation is in itself a form of education-it should be aimed at creating an awareness both of the predicament and also the possibilities for change (Ayanga,1999:100).

Consistent with this insight, Florence Dolphyne suggests that women who are privileged, particularly

educationally, "must take active part in programmes for the less fortunate women in their communities" (Ayanga,1999:100). Numerous seminars organized by the elite and held in the big cities (virtually inaccessible to the more oppressed rural women) will not yield the intended or desired fruits, unless they and the results from them are taken to the local levels in the rural areas where most women live (Ayanga,1999:100).

Having analysed the role of secular education in general, in addressing the challenges women face in their quest for liberation, we will, below, also examine the role of theological education in this regard.

We have already hinted at the fact that the introduction of formal education also contributed to the sidelining of women. Whereas education on religious beliefs could be passed on from grandmother to granddaughter, the seminaries sidelined women. It is worth noting that most churches in Africa are patterned in the inherited medieval forms. The doctrinal standards of most historic churches in Africa are archaic but since such churches have to be faithful to the mother churches it becomes difficult for them to make independent decisions especially on the issue of women in the church because they are not sure of the reaction of these mother churches (James,1999:110).

Several suggestions on women's theological education have been put forward. As long as official religious church leadership is considered the domain of men (James,1999:110; Edet,1992:34), theological education will remain male oriented. Such a scenario gives women few chances in pursuing theological education. How can the situation be improved and thus increase the chances of women to study theology? Here are some suggestions (James,1999:110):

First, concerning recruitment, church leaders should be open to discover young women with the desire to study theology and to give them the necessary support and encouragement (James,1999:118; Kanyoro and Oduyoye,1992:2ff). Women who obtain university degrees in religious studies, often because they could not attend theological colleges, should be given vocational opportunities to serve in the churches (James,1999:118).

Second, the curriculum used in theological colleges should include more material about women especially courses on 'the role of women in the Bible', and 'the contribution of women to the history of the church'. Such courses could help alleviate the biases and prejudices that women students get from their male colleagues (James,1999:118; Oduyoye,1995:14).

Third, there should be communication between the theologically trained women as well as with the grassroots women in the churches. Those who have achieved formal training are the hope of others. They need to theologically define what constitutes the true word of God. In other words, the women theologians should play the role of leading other women in contextual Bible studies (James,1999:118).

Fourth, for ordained women to effectively minister to the church, the attitude of both women and men that places women in subordinate positions has to change to one that recognises them as equal to men as far as service to God is concerned (James,1999:118). Churches should, therefore, educate their congregations on the implication of ordaining women. This could prepare them to accept the women posted to their churches (James,1999:119; cf Musopole,1992:199).

Fifth, women must be specialists in Bible translation. This is solely because translators influence the text. And thus far Bible translation is still a preserve of men (Kanyoro,1992:99).

> Thus, unless women also get into the area of Bible translation, the thought system of women will remain unreflected in the text which we receive. The language of the Bible will also remain masculine until the women take up the will to rise and influence this aspect of the Christian's base (Kanyoro,1992:99).

Finally, women theologians have to assert their right of recognition as the ministers of the gospel in the church of God. They have to develop confidence that their role in the ministry does not depend on male legitimization. It depends on the re-orientation of the cultural bias on the males role. Women theologians should play the role of combatting the structures that dehumanise them. It requires them to assist for the right of theological education, as well as all other aspects (James,1999:119).

6.5.3.2 The role of reconstruction theology in women's liberation

Because of its influential role in formal and informal education, the church can provide leadership in changing attitudes. Considering that the majority of its members are women, it should not be difficult to pass on the message of change (Ayanga,1999:100-111). What appears to be the problem is that in some ways the church has not wanted the change to go further. The church, perhaps because of its predominantly patriarchal power structure, has thus far not allowed or encouraged the change in attitudes towards women (Ayanga,1999:111).

The church, like the rest of society, needs to be liberated from the fetters of sexism. It should be set free in order to be able to apply the eternal truths of the gospel to the frustrating and often confusing issues which face people today (Ayanga,1999:111; Oduyoye,1995:5).

The church should encourage and promote, within herself, effective participation of both men and women at all levels. It is assumed that the church should always be in a position to encourage and promote the participation of all its members to contribute to the church's well-being depending on each member's ability and talents (Okemwa,1999:120; Ayanga,1999:103; Oduyoye,1995180ff).

Social justice can only be understood in the community tradition of the church itself, and in the context of the dialogue between the word of God and cultural traditions where the Gospel is proclaimed and the church established. However, some traditions are sexist. Reconstruction theology has an obligation to change such traditions to accommodate both genders as members of society. This will obviously include the whole question of how women are viewed in our societies. They are viewed as different beings, perhaps less human and less in everything as compared to men (Okemwa,1999:134).

Reconstruction theology must seek to reinstate the women, as Jesus Christ did, into her full status as a "total person", whole and worthy, being created in the image of God, and a fully accepted member of the Body of Christ (Nwachuku,1992:73).

Reconstruction theology will also have to draw on theological resources such as the incarnation of Jesus Christ, if it is to have an impact in its quest for women liberation. It will have to declare that God's love for humanity was revealed in Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ came to the world as a human being in order to restore humanity, including both male and female and the whole creation to new life. Thus, reconstruction theology should declare that,

> Through Jesus, an intimate relationship was established between God and humanity(Eph. 5). By Jesus's incarnation, women and men were freed from servitude to sin and death, and human life was fully divinized (Nasimiyu-Wasike,1992:115).

In addition, reconstruction theology should equip women to liberate themselves from the mere acceptance of the status society allots to them. Women must liberate themselves from being the carriers of oppressive societal expectations and passing them on to their children. Women must liberate themselves from the inferiority complex sustained by subservient status (Ayanga,1999:104). Only then can the awareness and liberation be passed on to their oppressors. Men need to be liberated from the dehumanising consequences of being an oppressor. They must be liberated to be human, and not merely "man". Attitudes must be changed in accordance with the message of Christ, that new wine cannot be put in old wineskins. The church should also be a living example of a free community of women and men, a community truly set free in Christ (Ayanga,1999:105).

Finally, the text of Ezra-Nehemiah could be used to undermine the stereotypes about women in Africa today. Despite the fact that the Ezra-Nehemiah text is against women who oppose the ideology of the text, this text could serve as a theological inspiration against women abuse, especially if read against the grain. If de-ideologised, Noadiah could serve as a source of inspiration for many women who are abused, marginalised and silenced in Africa. Noadiah, as it became clear in our analysis earlier in both chapters 3 and 5, refused to be silenced by the oppressive ideology of Nehemiah, an ideology which excluded the *am haaretz* from the renewal and reconstruction of the post-exilic community. We heard that Noadiah, a prophetess from among the *am haaretz* protested against Nehemiah's exclusive measures against the *am haaretz*. Noadiah refused to either be silenced or coopted into structures which aim to further oppress and marginalise her. In addition, the silenced voices of the *am haaretz* women who were forcefully divorced from their returned exiles husbands could be utilised, especially if the text is read from their perspective. Our sociological analysis of these marriages in chapter 5 has shown that these marriages were not illegal in terms of both the Persian

and the Israelite laws, but they were 'illegal' only in the eyes of Ezra. So reconstruction theology should draw from such sociological analysis in its quest to equip women to challenge and dismantle structures, be they theological or otherwise, aimed at perpetuating women subjugation and oppression.

6.5.4. Summary

In this chapter, we have tried to spell out some significance of the sociological analysis of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah for an African theology of renewal, transformation, reconciliation and reconstruction. Being fully aware that we have not spelled out all issues arising out of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah for a theology of renewal, transformation, reconciliation and reconstruction, we however, do believe that ethnicity, reconciliation, poverty, debt and women oppression are some of the major issues that this theology should grapple with, if it is serious about renewing the African continent. So, the purpose of this chapter is not to delve into an exhaustive and an in-depth sociological analysis of ethnicity, reconciliation, poverty, debt and women oppression. Rather, this chapter marks the beginning of an in-depth discussion/process. This chapter's contribution is to suggest a critical, socio-historical and ideologically aware reading of the Bible as a resource for theological reflection. And, specifically we focused on the theological implications of ethnicity, reconciliation, poverty, debt and women oppression for an African theology of renewal, transformation, reconciliation and reconstruction.

6.6. CONCLUSION

The Ezra-Nehemiah text has been used by Jesse Mugambi, Charles Villa-Vicencio and André Karamaga in a quest for a theology of renewal and reconstruction. While the quest for this theology should be supported by all who are serious about the challenges facing Africa today, the way the three African scholars have used Ezra-Nehemiah undermines their basic call for a theology which aims at addressing the needs and plight of the poor and the marginalised in Africa. This is precisely because they appropriate the Ezra-Nehemiah text without engaging with the text in any depth. By not so doing, the three scholars have failed to identify an ideology prevalent in the Ezra-Nehemiah text, an ideology which is biased in favour of the returned exiles, but biased against the *am haaretz*.

Thus, the purpose of this study has been twofold. First to demonstrate, that the Ezra-Nehemiah text has a particular exclusivist ideology which tends to be biased against the *am haaretz*, whilst being biased in favour of the returned exiles, and second, to delve into a sociological analysis of this particular ideology. As indicated earlier in our introduction and throughout this research, a sociological analysis of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah is the main focus of this study. Such a sociological analysis has shown, *contra* Mugambi, Villa-Vicencio, and Karamaga, that, for a theology of renewal, transformation, reconciliation and reconstruction, to be effective, it will have to be conscious that the Ezra-Nehemiah text is not neutral. Rather, it has a particular ideology, an ideology which is biased against the *am haaretz*. Thus, we have consistently argued throughout this study that reconstruction theology will have to take seriously, in its theological backing of the process of renewal and transformation in Africa, the fact that each and every text in the Bible is the product of its socio-historical context. And that, in order to effectively use any text in the reconstruction process in Africa, without it further oppressing and silencing the already silenced and marginalized poor, the text's ideology has to be subjected to a rigorous sociological analysis, so as to de-ideologise it.

While not questioning the concept of reconstruction as propagated by Mugambi, Villa-Vicencio, and Karamaga, this study's contribution to the project of renewal and transformation in Africa is on the theological level. First, this study warns against any uncritical reading of the biblical text, like the ones by Mugambi, Villa-Vicencio, and Karamaga. By uncritical reading, we refer to any reading of

the Bible which does not engage, in an in-depth manner, with the text. Any uncritical reading of the biblical text tends to further oppress and sideline the poor and marginalised by appropriating the biblical text as the "revealed word of God" (Mosala,1989). Instead of empowering the poor and marginalised, an uncritical reading of the text disempowers and weakens them. As it became clear in our study, a straightforward reading of Ezra-Nehemiah tends to uncritically support the ideologies in Ezra-Nehemiah, in portraying the returned exiles as the legitimate Israelites who should lead the reconstruction and renewal process in post-exilic Palestine at the exclusion of the *am haaretz*, who are portrayed as "enemies" and "foreigners". This study has shown that such an uncritical reading of Ezra-Nehemiah perpetuates the ideology of sidelining, excluding and marginalising the *am haaretz* from any meaningful participation in the renewal and reconstruction process in post-exilic Palestine. Such an uncritical reading is dangerous, and should not be left unchallenged.

Second, this study goes further, to read the Ezra-Nehemiah text "against the grain". The study has tried to retrieve the voices of the marginalised *am haaretz*, and has also attempted to read the Ezra-Nehemiah text from the perspective of the *am haaretz*. By so doing, this study hopes that in appropriating the Ezra-Nehemiah text in the renewal and transformation of Africa, theologians will be sensitive to the voices and needs of all stakeholders in taking up this theological task in Africa.

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