

South Africa's Axial Religious Transformation:

The Utilization of the Axial Hebrew Prophets'
Response Models in the Revision of South Africa's
Maladaptive Pre-Axial Response Models

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

Master of Biblical Archaeology

at the

University of South Africa

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March 2007.

I declare that:

**South Africa's Axial Religious Transformation: The utilization of the
Axial Hebrew Prophets' Response Models in the Revision of South
Africa's Maladaptive Pre-Axial Response Models**

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SUMMARY

This study searches for the origin and history of the concept of individual accountability and the reason for its absence in the African Traditional Religion framework. This search begins in the Axial Age (800-200 BCE), and discusses ancient Israel's Axial Age and its Axial Hebrew prophets' response models. The study tracks the introduction of Axial ideals to South Africa, via Christianity since 1826, and examines the Xhosa prophets' response models to their Axial context. The Social Christians attempts to impart Axial ideals during the period of segregation and the Tuskegeean response model are also examined. The similarities between ancient Israel and South Africa as revealed by Biblical archaeology, underlie this study's call for the utilisation of the power of religions such as Christianity, and of South Africa's religious elite, to rapidly alter current maladaptive beliefs within the African Traditional religious framework that impedes Africans' ability to adopt individual accountability.

Key terms:

Axial Age; Axial Age transformation; Axial Age religion; Hebrew Prophets; Israelites; African Traditional Religion; Xhosa Prophets; Cross-cultural transformation; Biblical Archaeology; Ancient Israel; South Africa; Period of Segregation; Social Gospel; Nongqawuse; Nxele; Ntsikana; Karen Armstrong; Achille Mbembe; Religious elite; Tuskegeean.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	1
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	2
1.1 HISTORY OF THE STUDY.....	2
1.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY.....	3
1.2.1 The research problem.....	3
1.2.2 The origins and significance of the Axial Age transformation.....	4
1.2.3 The effects of religious belief systems and culture on society.....	5
1.2.4 Comparative analysis between South Africa and Ancient Israel and Judah.....	6
1.2.5 African Traditional Religion and its relationship to Axial-derived Christianity.....	6
1.2.6 Cross-cultural change misconceptions.....	6
1.3 PERSONAL BELIEFS AND THIS STUDY.....	7
1.4 PROPOSALS OF THIS STUDY.....	8
1.4.1 The use of Christianity to alter cultural and religious belief systems.....	8
1.4.2 Connections to be initiated between religious belief systems and other societal systems.....	8
1.4.3 Harnessing the power of religious belief systems.....	9
1.4.4 A call for all religious belief systems to be open to rational inquiry, honest criticism, reassessment and transformation.....	11
1.4.5 A call for all religious belief systems to operate from within the Axial decoupled cosmological realm.....	12
1.5 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	13
1.5.1 The utilisation of cross-cultural adoption.....	13
1.5.2 The promotion of Axial derived religious belief systems to rapidly alter perceptual frameworks and beliefs.....	14
1.5.3 A call for South Africa's Spiritual Renaissance.....	16
1.6 METHODOLOGY.....	16
1.6.1 Karen Armstrong as principle source.....	17
1.6.2 Other literature consulted.....	18
1.6.3 Outline of this study.....	20
CHAPTER 2: THE AXIAL AGE – A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	22
2.1 DEFINITION OF THE AXIAL AGE.....	22
2.1.1 The Axial Age concept.....	22
2.1.2 The hallmark traits of the Axial Age.....	23
2.1.3 The results of Axial change.....	25
2.1.4 The rise of the new Axial societal centres and their elites.....	26
2.1.5 The practical application of Axial perceptual frameworks.....	27
2.1.6 The overall effect of Axial Age transformation on civilization and religion.....	28
2.1.7 The way societies respond to Axial transformation.....	29
2.2 THE AXIAL AGE AND AFRICA.....	30
2.2.1 Congruent and non-congruent societies.....	31
2.2.1.1 <i>The division between congruent societies and non-congruent societies.....</i>	31
2.2.1.2 <i>The link to particular styles of social organisational transformation.....</i>	33
2.2.2 The value of Eisenstadt's observation.....	34

2.3	THE AXIAL AGE AND RELIGION.....	35
2.3.1	The reasons behind the Axial perceptual framework shift.....	35
2.3.2	The origin of the term 'Axial Age'.....	37
2.3.3	The difference between Axial and pre-Axial religions.....	37
2.3.4	The Axial faith as expressed by Axial sages.....	38
2.3.5	Morality and ethics becomes the new central core of Axial religion.....	38
2.3.6	An Axial Age transformation demands change.....	39
2.3.7	The Axial Age and the emergence of the 'Golden Rule'.....	39
2.3.8	New key realisations that alter humans' perception about their position in the human realm.....	39
2.3.9	The Axial Age gives rise to new Axial based religious belief systems throughout the ancient world.....	40
2.3.10	The Axial Age produced new religious ideals and remarkable luminaries.....	41
2.3.11	The Axial Age and capitalism.....	42
2.3.12	The Axial Age as a response to the violence of its time.....	42

CHAPTER 3: ANCIENT ISRAEL AND THE AXIAL AGE 43

3.1	CHANGES WITHIN CANAAN LEAD TO THE HIGHLAND SETTLEMENTS.....	43
3.2	THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS OF THE CENTRAL HILL COUNTRY OF CANAAN.....	44
3.2.1	The third wave settlement.....	44
3.2.2	The third wave settlers.....	45
3.2.3	The third wave settlers are set apart from preceding waves.....	46
3.2.4	Archaeology and the Exodus from Egypt.....	47
3.2.5	The origin of the early Israelites.....	47
3.2.6	The early Israelites re-invent their identity.....	48
3.2.7	The early Israelites religious praxis.....	49
3.3	THE ISRAELITES PRE-AXIAL PERCEPTION OF GOD AND RELIGION BEGINS TO CHANGE.....	49
3.3.1	Ancient Israel begins its shift from myth to history.....	50
3.3.2	Ancient Israel begins to contemplate the decoupling of its cosmological realm.....	50
3.3.3	The 'Yahweh alone movement' is revealed in the words of Elijah and Elisha.....	51
3.3.4	Elijah initiates Ancient Israel's decoupling of its cosmological realm.....	52
3.4	ARCHAEOLOGY REVEALS ANCIENT ISRAEL'S PAST.....	53
3.4.1	The iron-age settlers become recognised as Israelites.....	54
3.4.2	Ancient Israel during the Axial Age.....	55
3.4.3	No Archaeological evidence for a United Monarchy.....	56
3.4.4	The Northern Kingdom of Israel during the Axial Age.....	57
3.4.5	Assyria and the Northern Kingdom's olive oil trade.....	57
3.4.6	The Northern Kingdom's olive oil trade brings trade and prosperity.....	58
3.4.7	The Northern Kingdom's uneven distribution of wealth divides the people into rich and poor.....	59
3.4.8	The Northern Kingdom attains full statehood.....	60
3.4.9	The Northern Kingdom's composition and its two capital system.....	61
3.4.10	The Northern Kingdom's Axial change is linked to prophetic protest.....	62
3.4.11	The Northern Kingdom's demise.....	63
3.5	THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM.....	63
3.5.1	The cult of Yahweh.....	64
3.5.2	The Yahweh alone movement emerges in the Northern Kingdom.....	65
3.6	JUDAH DURING THE AXIAL AGE.....	66
3.6.1	Judah attains full statehood.....	67
3.6.2	The Reign of Hezekiah.....	67

3.6.3	The Reign of Josiah and the Deuteronomists.....	69
3.6.4	The Deuteronomists were the intellectual elite of their time.....	70
3.6.5	Josiah's death marks the end of Judah's spiritual revival.....	72
3.6.6	Babylonian Conquest and Exile.....	73
3.6.7	Judah is provided with the catalyst for Axial transformation.....	73
3.6.8	Ancient Israel's first Axial Age begins to draw to an end.....	75
3.7	THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF JUDAH.....	77
3.7.1	Judah's religious praxis is varied and polytheistic.....	77
3.7.2	Judah's religious praxis as revealed by archaeology.....	78
3.7.3	Religious worship was not confined to the Jerusalem Temple.....	78
3.7.4	The cult of Yahweh was not truly monotheistic.....	79
3.7.5	Varied forms of ancient religious and syncretic praxis existed in Judah.....	80
3.7.6	The YHWH-alone movement appears in Judah.....	81
3.7.7	The YHWH-alone movement is linked to Axial ideals.....	81
3.7.8	The Axial perceptual framework shift provides the base for the Judeo-Christian tradition.....	81
3.8	THE DYNAMICS OF AXIAL RELIGIOUS CHANGE WITHIN ANCIENT ISRAEL.....	83
3.8.1	Armstrong and the J and E narrative.....	83
3.8.2	Knohl and the Holiness School.....	85

CHAPTER 4: THE HEBREW AXIAL AGE PROPHETS..... 90

4.1	THE AXIAL HEBREW PROPHETS.....	90
4.2	THE AXIAL HEBREW PROPHETS COME FORWARD.....	91
4.3	THE PROPHETS AND THEIR RESPONSE MODELS.....	93
4.3.1	Amos.....	94
4.3.2	Hosea.....	97
4.3.3	Isaiah.....	98
4.3.4	Jeremiah.....	102
4.3.5	Ezekiel: Israel's Axial Prophet in Exile.....	106

CHAPTER 5: SOUTH AFRICA'S RELIGIOUS CONTEXT PRIOR TO 1652 UP TO THE PRESENT..... 113

5.1	SOUTH AFRICA AND ITS INHABITANTS, PRIOR TO THE INTRODUCTION OF THE AXIAL AGE.....	113
5.1.1	The early Bantu-speaking pastoralists.....	113
5.1.2	The early Bantu economy and culture.....	114
5.1.3	The early Bantu mixed farmers.....	114
5.1.4	The natural resources.....	114
5.1.5	Early Bantu relay trade.....	115
5.1.6	Early Bantu community structure and settlement patterns.....	115
5.1.7	Early Bantu political structures and systems.....	116
5.1.8	Bantu mixed farmers encounter aboriginal hunter groups.....	117
5.2	EARLY PRE-AXIAL RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF SOUTH AFRICA... 119	
5.3	THE PRE-AXIAL RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF SOUTH AFRICA IN THE PRESENT.....	124
5.3.1	The comparison between Pre-Axial Age and Axial Age principles.....	124
5.3.2	The effect of a pre-Axial belief system on the earthly realm.....	126

5.4	AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION: CONTEXT AND PERCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS	127
5.4.1	Pre-Axial African context and religion	128
5.4.2	Hierarchy	129
5.4.3	The group as opposed to the individual	130
5.4.4	Ethics	133
5.4.4.1	<i>The African body and soul are mutually interdependent</i>	133
5.4.4.2	<i>Group socialisation and communication</i>	134
5.4.4.3	<i>Assisting and sharing: Ubuntu</i>	134
5.4.4.4	<i>Peace</i>	135
5.4.5	Respect	136
5.4.6	Maladaptive ATR beliefs cripple African communities	137
5.4.7	ATR concepts of social justice and guilt	138
5.4.8	The impediments of ATR, culture and ethics	139
5.4.9	The nature of ATR prevents an Axial transformation occurring from within	140

CHAPTER 6: SOUTH AFRICA AND THE MOVE TO MODERNITY

144

6.1	THE EFFECT OF MODERNITY ON RELIGIOUS BELIEF SYSTEMS	144
6.2	SOUTH AFRICA: THE CHALLENGE OF A TRIPLE PERIOD OF TRANSFORMATION	146
6.2.1	South Africa's Axial Age arrives with the European settlers	147
6.2.2	African Traditional Religion and its introduction to the Axial Age	148

CHAPTER 7: THE INTRODUCTION OF AXIAL RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS THROUGH THE XHOSA'S ADOPTION OF CHRISTIANITY

150

7.1	THE XHOSA'S EARLY SETTLEMENT PATTERN	150
7.2	THE STRUCTURE OF THE XHOSA'S ATR RELIGIOUS SYSTEM	151
7.3	THE BRITISH MISSIONARIES' EFFECT ON THE XHOSA PERCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THE COLONY	152
7.3.1	The Xhosa's loss of land produces two prophets	153
7.3.1.1	<i>The prophet Nxele and his pre-Axial model for militant resistance</i>	153
7.3.1.2	<i>The prophet Ntsikana and his pre-Axial evolutionary model of response</i>	155
7.3.2	The establishment of a permanent mission amongst the Xhosa	156
7.3.3	The missionary endeavours and perceptions from 1820 onwards	157
7.3.4	The missionaries introduce literacy	158
7.3.5	The Colony's Axial Age transformation affects the Xhosa	159
7.3.6	Christianity and biblical imagery shapes Boer and settler perceptual frameworks	160
7.3.7	Christian mission education produces an educated black elite	160
7.3.8	Christian civilization and commerce	161
7.3.9	The result of the Nxele model in the Nongqawuse incident	163
7.3.10	The validity of the Xhosa's pre-Axial model of response	164
7.3.11	Axial transformation and the value of a negotiable accommodation	165
7.3.12	The Xhosa embrace Axial change after the Nongqawuse incident	166
7.3.13	The Xhosas embrace Christianity after the Nongqawuse incident	167
7.3.14	The Xhosas, education and politics	168

CHAPTER 8: THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE NONGQAWUSE SYNDROME..... 171

8.1 MBEMBE’S ASSUMPTION IGNORES THE UNDERLYING HISTORY 171

8.2 THE REVIVAL OF THIS INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSE MODEL IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT 173

8.3 WHAT THE NXELE STYLE RESPONSE MODEL REVEALS 174

8.4 HIV/AIDS AND THE CHOICE OF THE NXELE STYLE RESPONSE MODEL 175

8.5 THE DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER ARGUES FOR AN AXIAL-BASED RESPONSE TO HIV/AIDS 176

8.6 THE DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER REFUTES AND REPUDIATES AFRICAN TRADITIONAL HEALERS 177

8.7 THE INABILITY OF TRADITIONAL HEALERS TO TREAT A VIRAL BASED ILLNESS 179

8.8 MILLENARIANISM, NATIVIST REVIVALISM AND POLITICS: DISTINGUISHING FACT FROM FICTION..... 181

8.9 THE COUPLED COSMOLOGICAL REALM ENGENDERS VICTIMHOOD 183

8.10 THE SOUTH AFRICAN ELITE ARE FAILING THE PEOPLE 185

8.11 MBEMBE ASKS PERTINENT QUESTIONS..... 186

8.12 THE REPLY TO MBEMBE’S QUESTIONS..... 187

CHAPTER 9: THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL IN THE PERIOD OF SEGREGATION..... 189

9.1 THE EMERGENCE OF THE AXIAL LINKED SOCIAL GOSPEL 189

9.2 THE SOCIAL GOSPEL EMBODIES AXIAL IDEALS 190

9.3 THE AXIAL IDEALS OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL ARE REVEALED.. 191

9.4 THE SOCIAL GOSPEL MISSIONARIES CALL FOR AN AXIAL RESPONSE 192

9.5 THE SOCIAL GOSPEL CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES EXTEND COMPASSIONATE CARE TO THE AFRICAN PEOPLE 193

9.6 THE SOCIAL GOSPEL’S POSTMILLENNIAL THEOLOGICAL CORE 194

9.7 THE SOCIAL GOSPEL: ITS TUSKEGEEAN ASPECTS 195

9.8 THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS’ POLICIES IGNORE AXIAL IDEALS.... 198

9.9 THE SOCIAL GOSPEL CHRISTIANS AND THE SANNC 199

9.10 THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS, TUSKEGEEISM AND THE WHITE PATERNALISTS 200

9.11 THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS FACE COMPETITION 201

9.12 THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS AND THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH 203

9.13	THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS AXIAL IMPULSE IS REVEALED BY D.D.T. JABAVU	205
9.14	THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS DURING THE 1940S.....	207
9.15	THE MISSIONARIES CONTRIBUTION TO SOUTH AFRICA	208
9.16	THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS AND SEGREGATION	209
9.17	THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS INSTIL AXIAL RELIGIOUS IDEALS AND REALISATIONS	211

CHAPTER 10: SOUTH AFRICA AND THE NORTHERN KINGDOM AND JUDAH: A COMPARISON OF AXIAL AGE TRANSFORMATION..... 212

10.1	VIOLENCE: A KEY CATALYST FOR AXIAL TRANSFORMATION ..	212
10.2	THE DESIRE TO RETAIN A UNIQUE CULTURAL IDENTITY	212
10.3	AN AFFINITY FOR A PRE-AXIAL BELIEF IN SUPERNATURAL INTERVENTION	213
10.4	A NEW REASON FOR THE ORIGIN OF THE YHWH-ALONE MOVEMENT	215
10.5	THE AFFINITY FOR 'MAGICAL THEOLOGY'	216
10.6	RAPID URBANISATION LEADS TO THE DISSOLUTION OF SMALL- SCALE/TRIBAL BASED STRUCTURES	217
10.7	THE ELITES DISREGARD FOR THE PLIGHT OF THE ORDINARY PEOPLE.....	218

CHAPTER 11: SHATTERING A CULTURAL-CHANGE MISCONCEPTION

11.1	CULTURAL CHANGE SHOULD NOT BE CONFINED TO THE GROUP	220
11.2	CULTURAL CHANGE IS NOT CULTURAL EVOLUTION.....	222
11.3	CULTURAL CHANGE IS PASSED BY DIRECT TRANSMISSION...	223
11.4	EVOLUTIONARY STABLE STRATEGY: ITS ROLE IN A CULTURAL GROUP	224
11.5	EVOLVING CULTURAL TRADITIONS ENGENDER CULTURAL CHANGE.....	225
11.6	THE KEY TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL BELIEF SYSTEMS.....	226
11.7	THE ROLE PLAYERS IN THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS	227
11.8	THE CREATION OF NEW PERCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS BY THE INTELLECTUAL ELITE	228
11.9	THE ROLE OF THE HEBREW PROPHETS ETHICAL TEMPLATE	229
11.10	TRANSFORMATION THROUGH 'A CONSPIRACY OF DOVES'	229

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSION	231
12.1 THE SEARCH FOR THE CONCEPT OF INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTABILITY	231
12.2 SOUTH AFRICA'S INHABITANTS AND THE ARRIVAL OF THE EUROPEANS.....	232
12.3 THE XHOSA PROPHETS RESPONSE TO THEIR CHANGING WORLD.....	233
12.4 THE RESULT OF THE XHOSA PROPHETS' RESPONSE	234
12.5 THE PROBLEMS INCURRED DURING THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY	234
12.6 THE XHOSA'S STRUGGLE WITH URBANISATION AND DISCRIMINATION	235
12.7 THE RESULT OF MALADAPTIVE RELIGIOUS BELIEF SYSTEMS	236
12.8 AXIAL IDEALS AND REALISATIONS CAN TRANSFORM SOCIAL ETHICS.....	237
12.9 SOUTH AFRICA, THE NORTHERN KINGDOM AND JUDAH: THE SIMILARITIES.....	237
12.10 ATR AND THE PRESENT AXIAL CONTEXT	239
12.11 THIS STUDY'S RECOMMENDATIONS.....	241
12.12 THE ROLE OF THE INTELLECTUAL ELITE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S TRANSFORMATION	242
12.13 THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN TRANSFORMATION.....	244
12.14 RELIGIOUS BELIEF SYSTEMS' ROLE IN TRANSFORMATION....	245
 APPENDIX 1: PRE- AND POST-EXILE PROPHETS	 247
 APPENDIX 2: WAVES OF SETTLEMENT IN THE HIGHLANDS	 248
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 249

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig 1. The Cosmological Realm	Page 24
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

'We must face the matter squarely that where there is something wrong in how we govern ourselves, it must be said that the fault is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are ill-governed.'

Nelson Mandela's African Renaissance speech. Organisation for African Unity, 1994.

1.1 HISTORY OF THE STUDY

The central idea behind this thesis began in mid February 2005, in a response to a question posed to me by the Director of Community Affairs, Ms Linda Giuricich, from St Mary's School, Waverly, Johannesburg. Ms Giuricich's community affairs projects include a private outreach programme for disadvantaged communities in the townships and squatter settlements around Johannesburg. This outreach programme is specifically aimed at township and squatter settlement high schools and their teachers. The programme had however, encountered certain difficulties, particularly in relationship to the concept of the individual accountability. The majority of black South African teachers appeared to have a clear understanding of the concept of *group accountability*, but not of *individual accountability* and were thus either reluctant or/and unable to accept that they, as teachers, were individually responsible for each pupil's welfare and academic progress in the classroom.

Consequently the question she initially posed to me was: 'Why are the African teachers in the programme so unfamiliar with the concept of individual accountability, and therefore unable to embrace it?' This question initiated a search for the origins of the concept of individual accountability in the human perceptual framework. This led me to the work of Douglas Rushkoff, professor of Communications at New York University, Karen Armstrong author and teacher at the Leo Baeck College and S.N. Eisenstadt, Rose Isaacs Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The Nigerian author and American newspaper editor, Chika Onyeani, has also written and spoken about this incessant abdication of personal responsibility and the subsequent blame game that the Black race resorts to

when they speak about their lack of progress, or what he terms ‘their whining and victim-mentality’ (1990:3). In fact, Mr Onyeani is so exasperated by this persistent and debilitating mindset of victimhood and entitlement that he writes:

Whatever it is, it must be in our genes – our inability to take care of ourselves, our dependence on others to take care of our every need. One must question the intelligence of a race of people which has seen how centuries of dependence on others have made them perpetual slaves who then continue to build castles in the sky (1990:119).

This harsh assessment made me realise that Mr Onyeani had never considered exploring the origins of the concept individual accountability and why it was not part of African cultures or part of their perceptual framework, either in Africa or in the African Diaspora.

Rian Malan, like Chika Onyeani, also examines what he, along with some black American conservatives, such as Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele and Dinesh D’Sousa, has identified as the ‘African cult of victimhood’. He is, however, far more positive than Mr Onyeani and he does not simply lay the blame on the idea that this mindset is the result of a problem of congenital corruption. But most importantly, he does not accept the idea that Africa is beyond hope or help. However, Malan, like Onyeani, does also not appear to connect the problem of victimhood and entitlement to the absence of individual accountability in the African perceptual framework, although he does recognise that Africa’s reluctance to abandon its victimhood and entitlement perceptual framework could lead to the implosion of its culture (Malan 2006:15).

1.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

1.2.1 The research problem

The research problem driving this thesis is the search for the origin and the history of the concept of individual accountability and the reason for its continued absence in the African Traditional Religious-derived perceptual framework in the current Axial-based context of South Africa. This thesis

tracks the concept of individual accountability back to ancient Israel¹ during its Axial Age (800-200 BCE). It examines the Hebrew prophets' response models to ancient Israel's Axial transformation. This search will be used to elucidate the reasons for the absence of this concept within the traditional ATR framework which is directly connected to the retention of ATR's² pre-Axial coupled cosmological realm. This study will utilise other academic disciplines in this thesis besides Biblical Archaeology. These include amongst others, Evolutionary Biology, Palaeontology, History, Archaeology, Anthropology and Comparative Religious Studies.

1.2.2 The origins and significance of the Axial Age transformation

This thesis will examine the origins of the Axial Age³ transformation, its direct connection to the emergence of the concept of individual accountability and its value and significance in the development of the modern world and its current perceptual framework. This study will also assess the effect that the Axial concept of individual accountability had on the major monotheistic belief systems, especially in Judaism and Christianity. This study explores the core Axial religious belief system ideals and realisations that have shaped Axial religions and Axial civilizations to the present day. This study also investigates and attempts to explain why the concept of individual accountability, as opposed to group accountability, appears to be absent in the present day South African perceptual framework and why it has not yet become a regular facet of African Traditional Religion, its culture and its ethics.

¹ Throughout this study, the name 'Israel' is used in two distinct and alternative senses: occasionally as the name of the northern kingdom and as a collective name for the community of all Israelites. In most instances, the study refers to the northern kingdom as the 'Northern Kingdom' of Israel and the wider community as 'ancient Israel' and occasionally as 'the people of Israel'.

² Note that African Traditional Religion will, at times, be referred to as ATR. ATR is a very ancient religious system that contains a shared perception of a uniform Godhead but with many variations in praxis that are unique to each small-scale/tribal society (Sundermeier 1998:4).

³ The Axial Age is a notable period of civilizational and cultural transformation (800 – approximately 200 BCE) that occurred in the ancient world with consequences for all subsequent developments (Wittrock 2005:52).

1.2.3 The effects of religious belief systems and culture on society

This study also assesses and discusses religious belief systems, which are part of human culture, especially in relation to the transformation of the maladaptive and anachronistic aspects of African Traditional Religion and ethics and its cultural beliefs.

The term 'maladaptive' is to be understood as 'failing to adjust adequately to the environment, and undergoing emotional, behavioural, physical, or mental repercussions' (Oxford Dictionary 1995 s.v. 'maladaptive'). For the purpose of this study, and especially in its application and understanding within the context used above, the term 'culture' is to be understood as that which is defined by Richerson and Boyd:

Culture is information capable of affecting individuals' behaviour that they acquire from other members of their species through teaching, imitation, and other forms of social transmission (2005:5).

It is significant that they proceed to point out that culture is neither nature nor nurture, but a bit of both. They also explain that culture combines learning and inheritance in a manner that cannot be parsed into context or genes (2005:11). But most importantly, for the South African context, they draw attention to the reality that many cultural beliefs and behaviours can be maladaptive, citing witchcraft as a simple example (2005:167). Richerson and Boyd include religious belief systems in their definition of 'other forms of social transmission'.⁴

The word *belief* in this study is always to be understood as it is defined by de Bono (1990:212) i.e. 'belief is a perceptual framework which leads us to see the world in a way that reinforces that framework' so that 'belief' is the truth of the perceptual system.

⁴ This social transmission is evident in their study of subculture resistance to demographic transition, notably to that of birthrates. They mention and discuss conservative religious groups, especially the Anabaptists. Neither of the Anabaptist's Amish or Hutterites high birthrates have gone through the demographic transition, because their religious belief systems' customs effectively block the features of cultural evolution that make almost all modern societies susceptible to demographic transition (Richerson & Boyd 2005:180-182).

1.2.4 Comparative analysis between South Africa and Ancient Israel and Judah

With the recent information and insight obtained from biblical archaeology, particularly the work of Finkelstein and Silberman, and Dever, detailed comparisons in this study are drawn between the contexts of (current) South Africa and ancient Israel and Judah (800-200 BCE). This is done to illustrate a) the similarity of their historical contexts and b) the similarity of their intense desire to retain their specific cultural identity in the face of pressure from the respective world powers. This comparison will also serve to demonstrate why this study's suggested cross-cultural adoption and amalgamation of Axial derived Hebrew Prophetic response model and ethics, to pre-Axial African Traditional Religion and ethics in the present time, would be eminently suitable and context-appropriate for South Africa.

1.2.5 African Traditional Religion and its relationship to Axial-derived Christianity

With the primary assistance of Sundermeier, this thesis examines African Traditional Religion - its main ideas, customs and praxis as well as its ethics and most importantly, why it has been so unsuccessful when faced with the demands and needs of African people living in a post-Axial Age-derived, and modern scientific context. The pivotal role of the Axial-derived belief system, Christianity and the way that it introduced and implemented the essential Axial ideas of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice, is identified and reviewed by this study. This is primarily done with the assistance of Janet Hodgson, Eugene M. Klaaren, Wallace G. Mills and Richard Elphick and their invaluable examination of the political, social and cultural history of Christianity in South Africa through their collected essays in the book *Christianity in Africa: a political, social and cultural history* (Elphick & Davenport 1997).

1.2.6 Cross-cultural change misconceptions

With the insights of the late Harvard palaeontologist Stephen Jay Gould and with the new cutting edge theory of Richerson and Boyd, this study will strive

to show that all cultural beliefs are flexible, adaptable and inter-changeable. This information will allow the study to shatter a common maladaptive cross-cultural change misconception and it will grant gravity and validity to this study's cross-cultural adoption suggestion. This cross-cultural adoption proposal recommends that African Traditional Religion, culture and ethics amalgamates and anastomises the ancient (c 800 BCE) Axial based Hebrew Prophets' response model and its ethical template.

1.3 PERSONAL BELIEFS AND THIS STUDY

The overall proposal of this study is directly related to the groundbreaking work of Peter J Richerson and Robert Boyd. Linked to their theory is my personal conviction and belief in human equality, regardless of colour or creed. My personal belief is shaped by two factors a) the observations of Darwin that sexual selection is primarily responsible for the superficially conspicuous and different features that characterise local population worldwide (an observation supported and granted great credence by the distinguished biologist Jared Diamond and by the eminent Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford, Richard Dawkins (see Dawkins 2004:89-90)); b) a collective repository of the history and tragic consequences of discrimination based on creed and race, which, for me, is so poignantly expressed by Shylock who asks:

Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not seek revenge? If we are like you in the rest we shall resemble you in that.
William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act III, Scene I.

Indeed, we may substitute the name of any other marginalised, non-elite, disposable and/or exploited group of people and Shylock's questions are as pertinent today as they were when Shakespeare wrote them. Consequently the backbone of this study is based on the understanding that:

- All humans are intrinsically similar.
- What truly sets us apart are our respective cultures and their defining belief systems, both religious and cultural.

1.4 PROPOSALS OF THIS STUDY

1.4.1 **The use of Christianity to alter cultural and religious belief systems**

The study proposes that it is possible to use an Axial-derived religious belief system (with a clearly decoupled cosmological realm), in this instance Christianity, to rapidly alter and realign specific deleterious concepts within a religious belief system and its perceptual framework. This includes specific aspects of cultural and religious belief systems which are, particularly from this study's perspective, the anachronistic and highly maladaptive concept of group accountability that is (still) part of African Traditional Religion and most African Christian religions, as well as part of the general black South African perceptual framework, both in Africa and in the African Diaspora. This thesis calls for the introduction of new sense of transparency, honesty and flexibility within all our religious belief systems and would like to see an overall religious perceptual transformation that would enable all religious belief systems to finally open up to rational enquiry and respond positively to criticism. This study also proposes that we should use our religious belief systems in an informed and intelligent manner to assist us in our revision of maladaptive and context-inappropriate religious and cultural beliefs, ideas and perceptions; and that we should use religious belief systems to facilitate the introduction of new and/or revised functional and context-appropriate ideas and perceptions.

1.4.2 **Connections to be initiated between religious belief systems and other societal systems**

This study is acutely aware of the power that religion wields, which is why it proposes that a perceptual framework shift can (and should) be initiated through the use of a religious belief system, in this instance, the key Axial teachings of the Hebrew Prophets and their timeless Axial response models. This idea is also supported by the reality of the complex connections that

religious belief systems have to social contexts and perceptual frameworks. This understanding is one that scholars like Mircea Eliade (Eliade & Couliano 1991) both propounds and supports in his work (for example, *The History of Religious Ideas*, 3 volumes and *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, 16 volumes). Couliano, in discussing Eliade (Eliade & Couliano 1991:6-7) notes that Eliade observed that once we acknowledge that all systems are interlinked, it becomes clear that any change in the system of religion will also affect all other systems that construct history. Likewise, Armstrong notes that the world's religious response to the radical transformation of modern culture (what Eliade terms 'all other systems' (Eliade & Couliano 1991:6-7)) is indeed symbiotic with modernity. Western civilization has completely altered the world. Consequently – 'nothing – including religion – can ever be the same again' (Armstrong 2000a:xi-xii). To this end, Armstrong (2000a:xii) notes that major worldwide change and perceptual framework shifts in non-religious systems has subsequently obliged people to forge new cultural identities (albeit not that successfully) and to, once again, reassess their religious belief systems, which were designed for a pre-modern world with different societies, cultures and contexts.

1.4.3 Harnessing the power of religious belief systems

Prior to the destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York on 9/11, the immense power that religion exerts over the lives (and indeed the deaths) of people in the new millennium, was not always that evident, especially to the average layperson in the street. But 9/11 and other incidents like the London bomb attack in 2005, the bombings in both Bali in 2002 and Madrid in 2004, have served to remind and alert people to the dark side of religious power and religious belief systems. It has also made people aware of the emergence of what Armstrong (2000a:x) has termed a type of 'militant piety' that is popularly known as fundamentalism⁵. To this end, Dawkins (2006b:304-305) points out

⁵ American Protestants first used the term, fundamentalism, in the early part of the 20th century to set themselves apart from the more 'liberal' Protestants, who were seen as distorting their faith. Fundamentalists want to return to the basics of their faith as they wish to re-emphasise the fundamentals of their Christian tradition. This tradition is identified with the literal interpretation of scripture and the selective retrieval of certain core doctrines. The Fundamentalist movement is not monolithic in all its guises. Each specific Fundamentalist

that we should, unlike most Western politicians who avoid using the 'R word' (religion) (and please note that the media also does this), acknowledge that it is indeed religious belief systems that drives the actions of these individuals who are responsible for 9/11 and for the London bombings of 2005. Dawkins astutely points out that these people are not psychotic, instead he proceeds to explain that:

They are religious idealists who by their own lights, are rational. They perceive their acts to be good, not because of some warped personal idiosyncrasy, and not because they have been possessed by Satan, but because they have been brought up from the cradle, to have total and unquestioning faith (2006b:304).

Therefore the terrorists that are responsible for the destruction of the World Trade Centre and for the London bus bombings in 2005 are, Dawkins (2006b:304) notes, no different from the Christian murderers of abortion clinic doctors, as none of these people were motivated by 'evil' either. They were all driven by what they perceived as 'righteousness, faithfully perusing what their religion tells them'.

Thus the key issue at stake here is the fact that 'these people actually believe what they say they believe' (Dawkins 2006b:305-306). Consequently this dissertation, along with Dawkins, has identified the need for people to acknowledge the fact that any moderate religious belief system, and not only religious fundamentalism, can provide the catalyst that triggers chilling behaviour. Kindly note in relation to Dawkins observation, (as Richerson and Boyd pointed out above) that religious systems beliefs are also directly related to the development of each community's cultural beliefs. Nevertheless, it is this same inherent and remarkably extensive power of religious belief systems, particularly Axial-derived Christianity, that this study would like to

movement, is Armstrong points out, 'a law unto itself and has its own dynamic (2000a:x). Muslim and Jewish fundamentalisms are not concerned with doctrine. Doctrine is primarily a Christian obsession, and although this does muddy the water, it illustrates that the term *fundamentalism* can be misleading. Nonetheless, it has become a useful label for all these various movements, which despite their differences, tend to reveal, what Armstrong describes as a 'strong family resemblance' (Armstrong 2000a:x-xi). Armstrong (2000a:369) also points out that these fundamentalist movements are not an archaic throwback to the past as they are 'modern, innovative and modernizing'.

harness to rapidly alter counter-productive and maladaptive aspects of traditional ATR, culture and ethics and the frameworks they engender.

1.4.4 A call for all religious belief systems to be open to rational inquiry, honest criticism, reassessment and transformation

The sober realisation of religion's dark side should not only alert us to the maladaptive aspects and dark side of any religious belief system, *per se*, but it also ought to alert us to the fact that most religions systems, including the three monotheistic religious belief systems, still persist in teaching their followers that *unquestioned faith* is a virtue. We therefore need to acknowledge that it is essential that *all* religious systems, including African Traditional Religion, should move to open themselves up to rational inquiry, discussion and valid criticism, if humanity is to progress and co-exist in peace. The acts of violence that are currently being perpetrated in the name of religious belief systems are directly connected to the religious belief systems' demand of unquestioned *faith*. This clearly shows that, contrary to what religion has taught to date, namely that faith is a virtue, that religious 'faith is evil precisely because it requires no justification and brooks no argument' (Dawkins 2006b:308).

It is therefore in this spirit that this study proposes that all religious systems, including ATR, should not only be open to inquiry and discussion but also to context-appropriate revision. Any religious belief systems requirement of unquestioned faith not only provides the basis for radical and violent behaviour in the name of the specific religion and its beliefs, but also stands in direct opposition to the core ideals of all Axial derived religions, and in opposition to the words of the Axial sages who were steadfast in their insistence that it was imperative to question everything. They were emphatic in their conviction that no person should ever accept any religious teaching on faith alone (Armstrong 2006:xiii).

1.4.5 A call for all religious belief systems to operate from within the Axial decoupled cosmological realm

The next extremely disconcerting aspect about religious fundamentalism is that, in their quest to re-establish God in the mundane realm, and return him to their political sphere, they are, in effect, rejecting the essential Axial separation between state and church and between the secular and profane realm (Armstrong 2000a:369). Please note that this is a highly precarious move as it consciously seeks to re-couple the cosmological realm's two different parts, the mundane/ profane and the sacred/transcendental. This is the classic pre-Axial mindset. This pre-Axial perceptual framework is regressive. It cancels out all the key Axial Age realisations, including individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice, that are integral to the quintessential ethical and compassionate teachings of all the Axial sages and the Hebrew prophets' response models. The fundamentalists' re-coupled cosmological realm, by its very nature, also immediately absolves people of their need to accept any individual responsibility for their own lives and their own actions. This re-coupled realm means that humans do not need to, nor are they obligated to, assume any responsibility for the welfare of their fellow humankind. This stands in stark contrast to any decoupled Axial context, where people not only assume responsibility for their own lives and actions, but also understand that it is their responsibility to implement universal compassion and to create and maintain order in the earthly/mundane realm, by actively implementing the Axial religious belief systems' teachings of social justice.

The understanding and acceptance of these sombre realities will mean that all religious belief systems will need to:

- Understand the value of an Axial decoupled cosmological realm and the individual responsibility and individual accountability that this understanding encompasses, with its call for all humans to embrace

the concept of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice;

- Jettison the anachronistic idea that unquestioned religious faith is a virtue;
- Realise, and accept, that *all* religious belief systems are open to inquiry, valid criticism and ultimately to context-appropriate and functional, productive revision.

Only then will religious belief systems be able to revise and redesign their teachings and praxis to accommodate, not only the needs of their members in their current context, but also, most importantly, the needs and sensibilities of all the people from other religious belief systems as well. This will also permit various religious belief systems to accommodate all the lifestyle differences of non-affiliated communities that live amongst them and around them, so that they may all co-exist peacefully. This will mean that all religious systems will finally have to put religion's classic 'golden rule' into praxis, and that this rule will now have to be applied not only to all affiliated members, but to all non-affiliated people as well. This is precisely what this thesis strives for when it calls for the implementation of the Axial-derived Hebrew Prophetic response model with its ethical template of excellence, and its insistence on the key concepts of Axial religion, namely, universal compassion and social justice for all, regardless of culture, religious creed, colour or gender.

1.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.5.1 The utilisation of cross-cultural adoption

In the light of past events such the 9/11 New York bombings and most recently the London bomb attack of 2005, this study notes that religious belief systems are not only capable of transforming perceptions and beliefs, but that these systems can do so in an exceedingly swift manner. This study notes that essential and important African cultural and religious perceptual framework shifts could rapidly be achieved from the moment that Africans (notably those within their intellectual circles, particularly the religious elite) choose to move

towards embracing and utilising cross-cultural adoption. They must accept that this process is not only inevitable, but that it has always been the most successful and practical way for all civilizations to adapt to new contexts, so that they may continue to not only survive, but to thrive.

Once South Africa (and its intellectual elite) have moved to abandon their unjustifiable aversion and unsustainable reluctance to participate in cross-cultural adoption, then this study would recommend that the people of South Africa, (especially their religious and intellectual elite), employ the religious belief systems, particularly Christianity and South Africa's invaluable Independent Christian Church-based belief system⁶, to assist them to re-introduce and apply the Old Testament Hebrew prophets' Axial response models. The application of the Hebrew prophets response models with its ethical template can be used to swiftly instil the key Axial religious ideals of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice in South African societies.

1.5.2 The promotion of Axial derived religious belief systems to rapidly alter perceptual frameworks and beliefs

Although our current perception of the immense (and still untapped) power of religious belief systems and their ability to transform societal perceptions and alter behaviour has been gained through our recent exposure to the violence, bloodshed and intolerance of the dark side of religious power, this study, along with Rushkoff (2003:xvii), proposes that we should not simply abandon religion⁷. What we need to do instead, as Rushkoff (2003:xvii) suggests, is to strive to overcome our religious illiteracy. This religious illiteracy has blinded us to the essential Axial realisations of individual accountability, and the two essential central tenets of all Axial based religious systems, namely, universal compassion and social justice.

⁶ This study concurs with Sundermeier (1998: 228-231) about the valuable contribution that these syncretic African Christian Churches are making to African society.

⁷ The term 'religion' in this study refers to the three monotheistic faiths of Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

The current absence of these two key Axial religious principles in the daily praxis of all religious systems (in the light of 9/11 and the London bombings alone⁸), should alert us that what we need to do is to:

- Move to question the validity of the present central tenets and praxis of *all* religious belief systems;
- Harness the power of religious belief systems to rapidly re-introduce and re-implement the key Axial religious concepts of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice, both in theory and daily praxis.

This study believes that this approach, i.e. one that calls for a new open understanding of all religious belief systems where unquestioned faith is abolished, plus the re-introduction and re-implementation of the Hebrew Prophets' Axial response models with their Axial teachings of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice, is ideal for the reassessment and revision of the maladaptive aspects of ATR culture and ethics. The utilisation of the Hebrew prophetic response model is an approach that will rapidly enlighten and enable South Africa and its people to move to swiftly construct new and more socially just, compassionate and context-appropriate religious belief systems, ethics and non-religious perceptions and realities. This Axial-based perceptual framework shift will also empower South Africa in its Axial-derived context, and in doing so, will allow the people of South Africa to find new ways to break out of their current merciless, and often violent, struggle for survival.

⁸ There are a large number of acts of violence and bloodshed, besides terrorism, which are committed in the name of a religion. They include some of the following: - the deliberate killing of doctors at abortion clinics, such as the shooting of Dr. John Britton and his bodyguard, in Florida USA 29 July 1994; the death sentence for the Muslim Abdul Rahman for converting to Christianity, in Afghanistan in 2006; the public beheading of Sadiq Abdul Karim Malallah in Saudi Arabia for blasphemy on 3 September 1992; as well as the many instances of the public stoning of women, accused of adultery that are still common practice in Muslim countries such as Afghanistan.

1.5.3 A call for South Africa's Spiritual Renaissance

This study's suggested proposal for South Africa's transformation and revision of its maladaptive aspects of ATR, culture and ethics, is encapsulated in the words of the late Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), a noted mystic and progressive universalist. Rabbi Kook was the first chief Ashkenazi rabbi of pre-state Israel in 1929 and envisioned and called for a Spiritual Renaissance. The central proposal of this thesis, and Rabbi Kook's vision, are both clearly expressed in his words *'to renew the old and sanctify the new'*. This refers to the obsolete and maladaptive aspects of (any) religion, in this instance the pre-Axial coupled cosmological realm of African Traditional Religion, Ethics and African Cultural systems; and to 'sanctify the new' redesigned and revised aspects of an Axial-based ATR religious belief system, culture and ethics, that functions within a decoupled cosmological realm.⁹

In doing this, South Africa will be initiating what Rabbi Kook stood for, namely a Spiritual Renaissance and in this instance it would be a Spiritual Renaissance that would assist South Africans to redesign the anachronistic and maladaptive facets of ATR, culture, ethics, beliefs and perceptions. It will also enable ATR and its literate Axial-based religious elite to call for the acceptance of the Axial-derived concept of individual accountability, as opposed to the traditional pre-Axial ATR-derived concept of group accountability.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

This study reviews the major transformation period of antiquity, known as the Axial Age (800-200 BCE) and pays specific attention to the Axial transformation of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Judah, to their Axial prophets and sages and to the subsequent dynamics of their Axial transformation. It draws parallels between the Axial Age transformation of the ancient Northern Kingdom of Israel and Judah and their long and arduous transition towards individual accountability and South Africa's own current

⁹ <http://www.judaicaplus.com.tzadikim/kook>

transformational dilemmas and obstacles. It examines South Africa's current period of transformation which it is encountering together with the rest of the world and includes the move towards modernity, rational empiricism, science and technology as well as globalisation. It also examines South Africa's own current Axial Age transformation and seeks to determine the reasons behind South Africa's ostensible inability/reluctance to embrace Axial individual accountability as well as the underlying pathology that engenders their seeming incapacity to grasp the essential necessity of adopting the Axial concepts of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice in the modern Axial-derived world.

Our current period of transformation, both in South Africa and in the rest of the world, is not without precedent in human history as it was preceded by a period known as the Axial Age transformation (800 to 200 BCE), (Armstrong 2000a:xii).

1.6.1 Karen Armstrong as principle source

This study's focus on the religious facet of Axial Age transformation, *per se*, has meant that Karen Armstrong is one of the principle sources in this thesis. Armstrong's work¹⁰ pays particular attention to the Axial Age period and its influence on the formation of the great Axial-derived religious belief systems, which include the three current major monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Armstrong's most recent publication, *The Great Transformation: The beginning of religious traditions* (2006) is chiefly cited because her work alone discusses religion(s) within their Axial Age frameworks, their Axial origins, Axial sources and Axial-derived beliefs. Armstrong also examines the collective key Axial Age religious belief systems concepts of human accountability, universal compassion and social justice. These key Axial Age religious belief system ideals (that Eisenstadt discusses from a historical perspective), that Armstrong discusses in great depth in her most recent publication, all initially emerged in Israel in the words and teachings of the Hebrew prophets and sages of the Old Testament in the

¹⁰ They include 'The Battle for God' (2000a) and 'A Short History of Myth' (2005).

prophets' calls for individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice.

1.6.2 Other literature consulted

This study has found the new collection of academic texts, on the socio-historical reinterpretation of the Axial Age, from the recent conference in Florence in December 2001 invaluable. The conference was organised under the joint auspices of the European University Institute, and the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences. The texts were mainly focussed on defining the Axial Age and understanding its ideals and realisations, and the long term value that this transformation had on succeeding civilizations. The texts include the work of the doyen on the Axial Age, namely S.N. Eisenstadt from the Hebrew University at Jerusalem, on whose interpretation and analysis of the Axial Age the subsequent debate and response of the conference texts were based. Other notable insights were derived from the work of Johan P. Arnason, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at La Trobe University in Melbourne; Jan Assman, Emeritus Professor of Egyptology at Heidelberg University; Israel Knohl, Professor of Biblical studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Arpad Szokolczai, Professor of Sociology at University College, Cork, Ireland; Björn Wittrock, Professor at Uppsala University and the principal of the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences. Their work cited in this study are academic texts from the conference in Florence, and they all appear in the publication *Axial Civilizations and World History* (2005), which has been edited by Arnason, Eisenstadt and Wittrock.

Finkelstein and Silberman's work, *The Bible Unearthed* (2001), has been invaluable, along with Armstrong and Thomas L. Thompson's underrated *The Bible in History* (2000) and to a lesser degree with the work of William Dever, in casting a new and different perspective on the period under review, namely Ancient Israel's Axial Age.

The challenging work of the late, erudite Harvard palaeontologist Stephen Jay Gould, *Life's Grandeur: The Spread Of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (1996), and the contentious Richard Dawkins, noted evolutionary biologist and the Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford's timeless classic *The Selfish Gene* (2006a), has, along with the new cutting edge work of Peter J. Richerson, Professor of Environmental Science at the University of California and Robert Boyd, Professor of Anthropology, at the University of California, Los Angeles, highlighted the value and intrinsic role of cross-cultural exchange in human society. Their new work *Not By Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution* (2005) contributed immensely to producing a new and valuable understanding, from a scientific perspective, of the power that belief systems wield and the inherent danger of the maladaptive aspects of certain belief systems to the overall well-being of a society. These scientific based insights link into this study's overall perspective and its proposal to reclaim religious literacy and harness the power of religious belief systems to specifically alter the maladaptive aspects within particular religious belief systems.

The main body of information for the review of ATR came primarily from the concise observations of Theo Sundermeier's *The Individual and community in African Traditional Religions* (1998) and to a lesser degree from *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (2002) by Laurenti Magesa. This study's review of the Axial change effected by the introduction of Christianity to the Xhosa came from Janet Hodgson's incisive look at Christian beginnings among the Xhosa, from the book *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (Elphick & Davenport 1997) as did the essay on the Benevolent Empire and the Social Gospel by Richard Elphick (Elphick & Davenport 1997) that enabled this study to identify and follow Axial change and adaptation during the period of early South African segregation.

This study is however primarily indebted to the extremely thought-provoking and highly controversial ideas expressed by Douglas Rushkoff, Professor of Communications at New York University, whose work, *Nothing Sacred: The Truth About Judaism* (2003) provided the catalyst (along with Ms Giuricich's

question) and the initial springboard for this thesis. This study would also like to note that Professor Rushkoff's ideas and revelations would not allow me to abdicate my responsibility in writing down what this study considers as pivotal ideas for an Axial based religious and social change within the South African context.

1.6.3 Outline of this study

Chapter 2 reviews the pivotal period of change in antiquity known as the Axial Age (800-200 BCE). This chapter also reviews the significance of the Axial Age religious transformation on ancient and current civilizations and their respective religious frameworks and beliefs.

Chapter 3 pays particular attention to the historical archaeological based origin of the Israelites, their background and the non-biblical history of ancient Israel's Northern Kingdom and Judah and their varied religious praxis.

Chapter 4 examines the changes that Axiality imposed on ancient Israel, and the pre-Axial and Axial Hebrew prophets' response models that provided their people with the key Axial derive religious ideals and realisations that enabled them to experience a complete Axial transformation including their religious/symbolic level, prior to and during the painful throes of their Axial Age transformation.

Chapter 5 traces the background of South Africa prior to its introduction to Axial change. It discusses the pre-Axial religious context of South Africa and looks at ATR, its hierarchy, the group as opposed to the individual, its ethics and concepts of respect. The chapter also looks at how ATR inhibits an Axial transformation from occurring within South Africa and looks at the future of ATR in the Axial Age.

Chapter 6 examines the effects of the global shift to modernity and its impact in South Africa and how this period of transition also effected change within present day religious belief systems. Chapter 6 also points out that South Africa is unique in that it is in the process of a triple period of transformation.

Chapter 7 deal with the introduction of Axial ideas to the Xhosa and particularly to the introduction of religious Axial ideals through the efforts of the first Christian Missionaries.

Chapter 8 discusses the reappearance of the Nongqawuse syndrome in the present context and discusses certain points raised by Achille Mbembe.

Chapter 9 introduces the Social Christian missionaries and the Social Gospel in the period of segregation. It also explores the drawbacks of a Tuskageean response model in an Axial context.

Chapter 10 draws comparisons between ancient Israel's Axial transformation and South Africa's ongoing struggle with Axial change.

Chapter 11 sets out to shatter a common African misconception about cultural change in relation to the cross-cultural adoption of innovative and viable ideas from several surrounding cultures to improve a society and to assist the society in the revision of anachronistic and maladaptive beliefs and perceptions.

Chapter 12 is the conclusion where this study calls on the intellectual elite to assume the role of leadership in South Africa's Axial transformation.

CHAPTER 2: THE AXIAL AGE – A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Axial Age constitutes one of the most important cultural crystallisations in global history with consequences for all subsequent developments (Wittrock 2005: 52).

2.1 DEFINITION OF THE AXIAL AGE

The concept of an Axial Age as a specific epoch and Axial Age civilizations are ideas that:

have been central to a broader debate on civilizational themes and problems during the last two decades. The growing interest in civilizations and ways of comparing them can, in more general terms, be seen as an integral part of the “historical turn” that has opened up new horizons of social enquiry. In that context, new approaches to the Axial Age exemplify a more widespread effort to translate the ideas inherited from the philosophy of history into the language of historical sociology (Arnason, et al 2005:1).

From a historical perspective, the Axial Age is a ‘time period of radical cultural transformation in several major civilization centres, unfolding during four or five centuries around the middle of the last millennium BCE’ (Arnason, et al 2005:1). To this end Arnason (2005:41) points out that the Axial transformation involved what he perceives as a ‘radicalisation of pre-existing ways of articulating the world’.

2.1.1 The Axial Age concept

This idea of the Axial Age as a specific period of transformation arose during the period of the Enlightenment (Arnason, et al 2005:1). The Axial Age theory emerged between 1935 and 1956. The conception and initial crystallisation of the theory is attributed to sociologist Alfred Webber, philosopher Karl Jaspers and political philosopher Eric Voegelin (Assman 2005:133). The Axial Age idea continued to develop in the works of Voegelin and most notably in the historical and sociological context of S.N. Eisenstadt’s approach to this theory (Assman 2005:3).

2.1.2 The hallmark traits of the Axial Age

Eisenstadt (2005:537) provides us with a clear description of what he terms 'the specificity of the Axial complex'. The crystallization of the Axial civilizations, for Eisenstadt, is composed of:

- The relatively specific and precise patterns of radical decoupling of the diverse structural and cosmological dimensions of social order and
- The development of non-congruent societies.

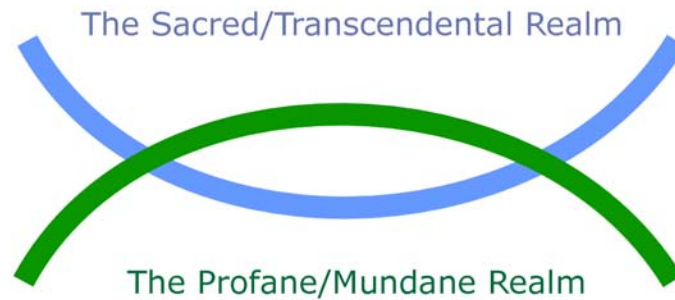
Eisenstadt sees this transformation as the most radical that civilizations experienced prior to the emergence of modernity.

The central foundation of this Axial Age decoupling was based on:

- The radical metaphysical division and decoupling of the transcendental/sacred and mundane/profane realm. This decoupling was also linked to an increased perception of a specific/definite reality that lay beyond the given one, that possessed new temporal and spatial conceptions.
- A radical problematisation of the (previous) conceptions and understanding of cosmological and social orders. This in turn led to the formation of new Axial models and orders which produced new difficulties. The most notable dilemma was the undertaking to bridge the gap that now existed between the two decoupled realms.
- A surge in reflexivity and second order thinking (which is, in essence, the reflection upon the thought processes themselves).

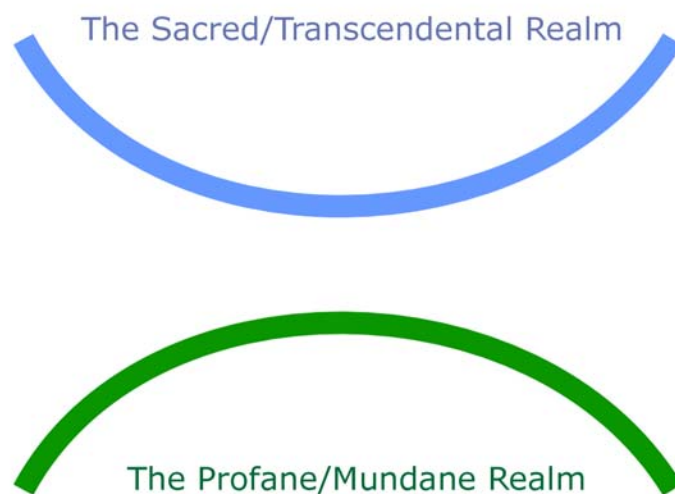
The Cosmological Realm

The Coupled Pre-Axial Cosmological Realm



Within the coupled realm gods/supernatural beings from the supernatural/sacred realm intervene in human affairs and in doing so, they cancel out any concept of human individual accountability and human responsibility for the welfare of their fellow human beings. Besides ATR, present day Charismatic and certain Pentecostal churches operate within a coupled realm as well.

The De-Coupled Axial Cosmological Realm



Within the de-coupled realm gods/supernatural beings are completely removed from the profane realm and do not intervene in human affairs, consequently humans are responsible for their own lives and for the welfare of their fellow human beings

Fig 1. The Cosmological realm

Arnason (2005:2) explains that this Axial Age decoupling and transformation experience can be understood as 'a comprehensive rupture and problematisation of order'. In response to this radical decoupling and the

subsequent breakdown of their pre-Axial perceptual frameworks, people were obliged to move forward, and to create new models (and suitably modified contexts) of order. These new models were based on dramatically revised Axial Age perceptions. They include the following:

- The radical new metaphysical demarcation/decoupling between the transcendental and mundane realms, where the mundane realm (now) took precedence over the transcendental realm;
- The marked increase in reflexivity and second order thinking, which enabled people to develop a clearer awareness of human potential and individual human responsibility, hence the Axial understanding that humans, not gods, were (now) responsible for the creation and maintenance of order in the human realm;
- The general broadening of (all) horizons, that ultimately altered peoples' perception of the world beyond their immediate contexts;
- The emergence and the understanding of a universal perceptual framework, as opposed the particularism of pre-Axial perception and thinking (Arnason 2005:2; Wittrock 2005:66; Eisenstadt 2005:537,538).
- The decoupling of their cosmology which was also directly linked to, and continued in, their extensive decoupling of the many other aspects of their social order and social structures.

2.1.3 The results of Axial change

The most important result of all these perceptual shifts in these Axial civilizations was new varieties of institutional visions that increased the extent of their institutional possibilities in all facets of life. They include concepts and patterns of collective identity and political order (Eisenstadt 2005:538). Eisenstadt (2005:538) also draws attention to the fact that these new perceptual frameworks influenced other contexts as well, which includes the mundane life such as social order, personality and cultural activities.

2.1.4 The rise of the new Axial societal centres and their elites

Linked to these changes in Axial Age civilizations was the inclination to establish and construct a major societal centre (or centres) to symbolise the specific core identity and the praxis of their redesigned transcendental perceptual frameworks. This centre (or centres) remained autonomous and was clearly demarcated from the political collectives as well as from the pre-Axial perceived local and small-scale/tribal religious collectives and was the source of their new perceptions and belief systems that related to their decoupled transcendental realm and its relationship to human existence. The Jerusalem Temple is an example which relates to this study's examination of the Axial transformation of ancient Israel (Eisenstadt 2005:538).

Eisenstadt (2005:238-239) explains that along with the rise of societal centres, there was also the need to determine which groups and institutions would now be the most appropriate carriers of their new redesigned belief systems. This gave rise to a new type of elite, such as the Hebrew prophets in ancient Israel (and later their priests and sages), the Greek philosophers in ancient Greece and the Hindu Brahmins in India. Eisenstadt's (2005:540-541) observations below, about the extensive power that the elites exercise in relation to their particular communities and contexts, is of value to the main argument in this study that calls on the current elite to revise religious belief systems and to implement universal compassion and social justice. He states that the 'initial small nuclei of such groups of cultural elites or of intellectuals developed the new cosmologies, the new transcendental visions and conceptions, and were of crucial importance in the development of the new "civilizational" institutional formations and the concomitant new patterns of collective identity and world vision in these societies'.

The newly emerged elites were pivotal in the restructuring of their hegemonic societies as they linked up with other elites forming new coalitions. This enabled them to alter and redesign their previous pre-Axial institutional concepts and patterns to meet their new contextual requirements. The newly designed Axial derived perceptions and belief systems of societies that

developed in this framework were all varied and context-specific and were primarily shaped by each society's prevailing elite coalition. This was achieved through the elite coalition's proclamation and implementation (through various methods of control) of (new) cultural patterns which in turn led to new Axial Age derived perceptual frameworks and belief systems.

2.1.5 The practical application of Axial perceptual frameworks

The new Axial perceptual frameworks could be used to question and protest against existing perceptions and institutions and they could be used to transform and justify change. The consequences of this paradigm shift is clearly seen in praxis in ancient Israel in Jewish monotheism, as well as in Greek philosophical thought (Arnason 2005:3). Arnason notes that all these Axial Age perceptions may be read as signs of a conscious move towards a marked increase in contemplation and reflection in relation to the (universal) human condition. The resulting potential of this reflexivity is also seen by Wittrock (2005:72) as the reason for people's increased ability to override their pre-Axial perceived notions of the limits of inevitability within their daily and social contexts, as well as providing (for Wittrock) the catalyst for the formation of context-specific and appropriate cosmologies and their related belief systems.

The most notable hallmark trait of Axial Age breakthrough is encapsulated for Arnason in Eisenstadt's work *The Axial Age breakthroughs: Their characteristics and origins* (1986:1), namely 'the emergence, conceptualisation and institutionalisation of a basic tension between the transcendental and mundane order' (Arnason 2005:38-39). This is a concept that can be placed alongside Durkheim's distinction between the sacred and the profane. But it should *not* be confused with the division between the supernatural and the natural, a difference that Durkheim heeds us to observe. This means that we may now speak of a transcendental/sacred realm and a mundane/profane realm. Arnason (2005:39-40) explains that this (new) higher transcendental and moral realm is now to be understood by Eisenstadt's definition to be 'beyond any given this – or other-worldly reality'. Used in this context, the term 'other-worldly' is representative of the 'abode of

the dead' and the 'world of the spirits' and is a typical characteristic of pre-Axial Age cultures and their perceptual frameworks.

The new division between the two realms also enabled people to discuss and reinterpret their new cosmological perceptual frameworks, which they proceeded to redesign, using their original oral formats and their textual inscriptions. This also facilitated the emergence of sets of rules and allowed for the authoritative interpretation thereof (Wittrock 2005:66). This move to codify and standardise did produce a certain degree of separation from previously maintained belief and ritual, but it also enlarged the potential for new frameworks of interpretation that allowed both the creation and spread of orthodoxy and the challenge of heterodoxy (Wittrock 2005:66).

2.1.6 The overall effect of Axial Age transformation on civilization and religion

The scope of Axial Age transformation was not only confined to what Wittrock (2005:63-64) refers to as the cultural crystallisation of the imagination and representation of human existence, but also extended to the formation of culturally entrenched structuring principles for macro-institutions. Consequently we have:

- The formation of the great world religions;
- The emergence of imperial political orders that enables the formation of extensive trade routes that allowed the meeting of Sinic and Hellenistic cultures (a noteworthy development in relation to the theory of cross-cultural exchange that is utilised in support of my argument in this study);
- And it also enabled the radical change and innovation in the institutions of warfare and military organisations.

Eisenstadt (2005:546) also draws our attention to the specific dynamics that contact and cross-cultural exchange between Axial and non-Axial civilisations can contribute and generate. He stresses that this contact and cross-cultural exchange was responsible and essential for the transmission of new ideas

and perceptions that are integral for the combination of different cultural and belief frameworks as well as for the successful design of entirely new cultural perceptual frameworks and belief systems. This observation is of great value to the underlying argument in this study and is discussed in relationship to the current (and popular) perception about the manner in which ATR transformation should occur.

2.1.7 The way societies respond to Axial transformation

Wittrock (2005:81) observes that we may well describe the Axial Age as an epoch in global history for its eventual implications were truly global. He then points out that 'the Axial transformations faced non-Axial cultures and societies with a choice between accommodation and rejection'. Societies could accommodate the Axial Age in different ways. They could adopt either one (or both) of the following:

- The *complete* conversion to the cosmology of a religion and/or
- The *complete* adoption of a political order derived from Axial cosmology.

In certain instances it could also result in the addition of a *complete* Axial cosmology to a set of different non-Axial cosmologies and practices.

Eisenstadt (2005:541-542) also points out that it is possible to observe a marked autonomy in all the dimensions of Axial Age social order (this includes political formations of discourse, economic groupings or the establishment of new collective identity) which was, to certain degree, independent of (even if closely connected to) the Axial cosmologies.

It is clearly apparent, from the information above that, Eisenstadt (2005:560) is correct when he states that the Axial Age transformation comprises a very decisive component in the development of human societies which developed during the Axial Age, in different context-appropriate styles. He also observes that the creation of (varied) Axial Age civilizations (with their proclivity for

universalism, their radical division between the sacred and profane realm and the decoupling of their various structural and cosmological dimensions of order) was also responsible for the conception of 'new visions of possible world histories'.

2.2 THE AXIAL AGE AND AFRICA

During the Axial Age transformation that occurred between 800-200 BCE, the only civilisation on the African continent that participated in this transformation was the ancient Kingdom of Egypt. Assman (2005:136-148) discusses three of these Axial related aspects of change within the Egyptian belief system, namely, the beginning of a general judgement of the dead, the concept of the 'heart directed man', and the concept of 'personal piety'. Assman then proceeds to point out that although these changes were major transformations within the religious and intellectual history of ancient Egypt that triggered significant modifications, they still did not qualify as Axial Age transformations on the religious/symbolic level (2005:135). Armstrong also observes that Egypt's participation did not include an Axial Age religious transformation. Consequently Egypt 'only participated in the new Axial Age ethics later: in Islam or in Christianity, which were reinstatements of the original Axial age Impulse' (Armstrong 2000b:11).

I would like to note that what Assman and Armstrong's statement and observation means is that none of Egypt's religious ideas induced the required radical Axial Age divide between their cosmic/sacred and mundane/profane realm. Without this, Egypt could not access the key Axial Age realisations which are essential for an ethical transformation, especially a classic Axial Age change, which is built on the core Axial religious ideas of individual accountability, social justice and compassion.

Along with Armstrong and Assman, Eisenstadt (2005:535-537) also provides an insightful selection of studies that deal with Africa and early state-formations. These studies are valuable in that they reveal certain key aspects of Axial Age change within these societies. These changes include different

decoupling combinations of their cosmological and structural frameworks and the associated increase in reflexivity. However these studies, once again, cast light on the fact that although certain significant Axial Age features were exhibited by some of these pre-Axial and non-Axial societies, these features were insufficient to qualify them as complete Axial Age transformations as was the case in Egypt.

Although Eisenstadt's examination of these societies is connected to his discussion of the Axial decoupling process of the symbolic and the structural components of societies (2005:532-537), it still serves to provide information on the African societies that exhibited significant Axial Age change (albeit insufficient to qualify for a complete Axial transformation) within their intellectual and religious frameworks. The study deals with two aspects: 1) the sharp division between congruent and non-congruent societies and 2) the societies' levels of congruency and non-congruency which were linked to their particular styles of social transformation.

2.2.1 Congruent and non-congruent societies

2.2.1.1 The division between congruent societies and non-congruent societies

Congruent societies produced a high degree of consistency whereas non-congruent societies revealed inconsistencies between the following concepts of social order:

- The production of varied levels of organisational, structural and functional diversity in politics, kinship and economics, as well as in
- The design and regulation of the division of labour, and
- The coherent and comprehensive function of the elites.

This decisive factor between congruent and non-congruent societies (whether they were tribal, city-state, patrimonial and/or imperial contexts) was revealed in the structures of their respective centres, their patterns of collective identity (or identities) and their associated patterns of reflexivity.

In the congruent societies in Africa, for example: the Asantes, the Zulu states, the Congo and the Egyptian Kingdom, their major centres were organisationally and ecologically well defined and precise. But they were not symbolically detached and distinguishable from their outer peripheral limits. These centres were formed around elites but these elites were not autonomous. They were either enmeshed or embedded in different types of ascriptive units. The units were often broad and reconstructed and carried cultural orientations that were marked by a noticeably low degree of tension and a marked lack of separation between their cosmic/sacred and mundane/profane realms (Eisenstadt 2005:536).

The associated patterns of collective identity that emerged in these types of societies were also marked by proportional agreement and by a large degree of continuity. This was seen in the interlinking composition of their major collectives (which include local and central as well as territorial, political and kinship collectives) and their specific patterns of reflexivity that they produced. In these congruent societies, their patterns of reflexivity, despite attaining high levels of complexity, did *not* engender a second order of reflexivity which is a prerequisite for the possible critical examination of their cosmological perceptual frameworks and contexts and of the institutional basis that existed in these societies (Eisenstadt 2005:536-537).

The opposing or non-congruent groups reveal different facets. This group includes tribal or small-scale archaic societies and/or city-states, for example, the African Ite, the African Buganda and the various African Islamic societies which existed in classical city-states or in different imperial and imperial-feudal contexts. These non-congruent groups' centres developed in a manner that allowed them to be symbolically, and to a certain degree organisationally, separate from the major frameworks of the social division of labour. This includes well-defined tribal or territorial centres that were crafted by the elites who were comparatively more autonomous than the elites in the congruent societies (described above). These elites were also responsible for officially declaring the extent of the tension and the separation that was acceptable

between their cosmic/sacred and mundane/profane realms within their societies (Eisenstadt 2005:536-537).

These societies were also inclined to set up multiple collectives that were composed of varied cultural perceptions and contexts. Despite these differences, the groups within these collectives would unite to form new and varied co-operative configurations (Eisenstadt 2005:537).

Within congruent and non-congruent groups, the particular designs of their centres, their collectives and their specific dynamics were diverse and varied. This variation and diversity was directly connected to the structure of their dominant elites and their respective coalitions. It was also linked to the type of systems the elite employed to exercise control. This diversity was also determined by specific contexts, such as: their geopolitical context, their economics, their technology and by their particular organisational affinities (Eisenstadt 2005:532-537).

2.2.1.2 The link to particular styles of social organisational transformation

In congruent societies, the move from one level to the next (for example, from early state to archaic kingdom or patrimonial, semi-patrimonial or semi-imperial structures), has mainly been linked with the redesigning and extension of one or more of the following: kinship, territory, ascriptive groups and symbols and the increased significance of territorial groups, as opposed to those that are based on kinship alone. Congruent societies were also marked by a substantial rise in specialisation by the elites (despite their embedment in a wide assortment of different groups), and by a miscellaneous collection of cosmological perceptual frameworks. However, despite these societies' wide-ranging cultural perceptions and contexts, their belief systems were all alike in that they were all characterised by similar *low* levels of tension and/or separation between their cosmic/sacred and mundane/profane realms.

Non-congruent societies, by way of contrast, reveal the formation of more diverse and intricate organisational and symbolic centres and collectives in

their process of transformation from one institutional level to the next. This designed a context that produced a larger selection of active 'non-embedded' elites who, due to increased reflexivity¹¹, effectively promulgated a greater degree of tension and separation between their societies cosmic/sacred and mundane/profane realms than the congruent societies managed to achieve (Eisenstadt 2005:532-537).

2.2.2 The value of Eisenstadt's observation

The value of Eisenstadt's observation of African societies and state-formation above, is that it clearly reveals that, despite the manifestation of certain Axial Age characteristics, especially in Africa's non-congruent societies, Africa has still not experienced *the* classic Axial Age transformation experience especially on the religious/symbolic level. The reason for this impasse is directly connected to the first, most essential, step for Axial change, namely Africa's continued reluctance to radically decouple/divide its mundane/profane realm from its cosmic/sacred realm (Eisenstadt 2005:535-537).

It is this coupled cosmological perceptual framework that is preventing Africa from following through on a total Axial Age transformation on all levels. Without this essential cosmological decoupling, Africa cannot comprehend and embrace the value of the essential Axial-derived concept of individual accountability, as well all the other key Axial Age realisations, that are crucial for the creation of a new ethical template that is based on the Axial Age ethical concepts of social justice, compassion and universal concern.

Although the non-congruent African societies do exhibit a certain degree (albeit a limited degree) of separation between their cosmic/sacred and mundane /profane realms, they have not experienced the essential but radical Axial Age cosmological divide that facilitates the full emergence and acceptance of the key Axial Age realisations of individual accountability, the realisation that all actions have consequences in the present and the future

¹¹ I would like to add that the influence of Islam, with its Axial Age derived cosmic perceptual framework, should also be included here, even if Eisenstadt fails to acknowledge it in his study of African societies and early state-formation (2005:535-537) which is duly summarised here.

and that people, not gods, are responsible for men and women's welfare on earth.

This study would also like to point out that any discussion pertaining to the non-congruent Islamic African societies and centres must take cognisance of the fact that Islam is a direct impulse of one of the original Axial Age religious belief systems, i.e. Judaism, and that Islam also stems from Christianity which, in turn, is also derived from Judaism. This means that any divide and tension that arose in these Islamic African societies between their cosmic/sacred and mundane/profane realms, is most probably as a result of their adoption of Islam, and that it did not necessarily arise spontaneously, or because of a sudden increase in second-degree reflexivity within these societies. It would also stand to reason that the Axial Age derived cosmic perceptions of Islam would colour the perceptions of people who came into contact with these new ideas of Islam, even if they chose not to embrace Islam directly. These observations are also valid and applicable to any societies that embraced Christianity or who were exposed to, and were familiar with, the Christian Axial Age-derived cosmic perceptual framework and its subsequent Axial impulse.

2.3 THE AXIAL AGE AND RELIGION

The Axial Age was one of the most seminal periods of intellectual, psychological, and religious change in recorded history
(Armstrong 2006: xii)

2.3.1 The reasons behind the Axial perceptual framework shift

The Axial Age paradigm shift was the result of dramatic changes that occurred during this period (roughly 800-200 BCE). Retso (2005:335) points out that the ultimate catalyst was the breakdown of Bronze Age cultures and the world-view associated with them. Arnason (2005:43) also points out that the best-known Axial transformations did, in fact, take place in environments that were affected (in a long term perspective) by the consequential events of the Late Bronze Age. These events included various critical factors that

disabled or destroyed civilizational centres that ultimately disrupted the power balance between these centres and their peripheries. It also encompassed the result of thousands of years of economic, social and cultural revolution.

The Axial perceptual shift began in Sumer (present day Iran) and in ancient Egypt and spread throughout the ancient world, from the Middle East into Europe, across Iran, into India and up to China. Armstrong (1993:36) explains that for reasons yet to be fathomed, all the major civilizations developed along parallel lines even when no contact existed between them (for example, Europe and China). During the Axial period in the fourth and third millennia BCE, people gradually began to grow more crops than they needed for personal consumption and in doing so, moved beyond subsistence farming. They used the surplus for trade and acquired additional income. This new prosperity enabled them to build the first civilizations. During this period, the merchant class arose. The power shifted from King and palace, and temple and priest, to the market place, the wellspring of Axial wealth. The wealth generated in this age also led to an intellectual and cultural florescence. People began to develop the arts and create powerful polities: cities, city-states and eventually empires (Armstrong 2000a:xi, 1993:36).

Within these new contexts and perceptual frameworks, the people of the Axial Age, after the Axial decoupling of their cosmological realm and reflection, discovered that their pre-Axial religious systems, which had functioned adequately before, were now unable to meet their new Axial needs and contexts. This spiritual shortfall was felt right across the ancient civilized world (Armstrong 2005:79). Within their cities and empires, the people began to reflect and extend their perceptual frameworks and contemplate concepts of a richer spirituality and start their quest for new religious solutions that would help the people to restore a sense of 'measure, balance and of order' across the board (Szakolczai 2005:117).

2.3.2 The origin of the term 'Axial Age'

Armstrong (2005:79) explains that the German philosopher Karl Jaspers dubbed this period of transformation the 'Axial Age' precisely 'because it proved to be so pivotal in the spiritual development of humanity' and that 'these insights gained during this time have continued to nourish men and women to the present day' and that it 'marks the beginning of religion as we know it'. The spiritual need and quest of the people of this period, was also triggered by factors such as their new sense of human suffering which was exemplified by the inequality and exploitation of the labour of peasants, the backbone of this agrarian society. Armstrong, points out that because the people had 'became conscious of their existence, their own nature and their own limitations in an unprecedented way. These factors plus their experience of utter impotence in a cruel world all combined and impelled them to seek the highest goals and an absolute reality in the depths of their being' (Armstrong 2000a:10). People were actively striving to develop new concerns related to individual conscience and morality and were beginning to understand that mere ritual praxis alone, would prove to be insufficient and that they would need to practise universal compassion and social justice and treat each other with respect (Armstrong 2005:81).

2.3.3 The difference between Axial and pre-Axial religions

Armstrong (2006:xiii) points out that all the religious traditions that emerged in the Axial Age greatly extended the frontiers of human consciousness and located a transcendental dimension in the central core of the people's being. However, she notes that they did not necessarily perceive this as supernatural and that most of them chose not to discuss it. In the same way that Arnason, above, points out that Durkheim was adamant that the concepts of sacred and profane should not be understood as that of supernatural and natural. This study notes that when a belief (usually a pre-Axial belief) exists in God(s)/supernatural being(s), such as African ancestral spirits who intervene in the human realm and are held accountable for the welfare and affairs of humans, that the realm that these type of supernatural beings/gods inhabit is one that these believers confuse with the sacred realm (as defined by

Durkheim and Armstrong). The Axial experience of the transcendental was understood to be ineffable and the only attitude deemed appropriate was that of reverent silence. Most of the Axial Age sages and philosophers, Armstrong observes, had no interest at all in metaphysics or in doctrine. Certain sages even refused to discuss theology as they maintained that it was 'distracting and damaging', while some postulated that it was 'immature, unrealistic and perverse to look for the kind of absolute certainty that many expect religion to provide' (2006:xiii).

2.3.4 The Axial faith as expressed by Axial sages

These sages were not intent on imposing their personal perception of the ultimate reality on anyone, as they believed that no person should ever accept any religious teaching on faith alone. These men were adamant that it was vital 'to question everything and to test any teaching empirically, against your personal experience' (Armstrong 2006:xiii), and they taught their followers 'to look within themselves for truth and not to rely on the teachings of priests and other religious experts' (Armstrong 2005:82). To this end, Armstrong notes that when an Axial Age philosopher or prophet began to stipulate and/or require a specific obligatory doctrine, it usually marked the end of the Axial Age (2006:xiii):

The Axial shift in perception meant that the most important aspect of Axial Age religion(s) was not what you believed, but what you did, how you behaved and how that altered you at a profound level.

2.3.5 Morality and ethics becomes the new central core of Axial religion

Prior to the Axial Age, people had encountered and experienced the divine/sacred through the ritual(s) of sacrifice that were integral to the religious praxis of that time. But the Axial sages combined ritual with ethics and made morality the central core of spiritual life. This meant that the only way people could connect, in an Axial Age world, with God (or Nirvana, Brahman or the 'Way') was to live a compassionate life. These Axial sages were adamant that people must, firstly, commit themselves to an ethical life, as discipline and habitual benevolence/compassion, not metaphysical

conviction, would grant people access to the transcendence that they all searched for (Armstrong 2006:xiv). This stands in sharp contrast to the present where many people assume that proof of God or the existence of the 'Absolute' needs to be corroborated prior to committing themselves to a religious way of life (2006:xvi).

2.3.6 An Axial Age transformation demands change

The Axial Age prerequisite of an ethical and compassionate life meant that men and women had to be prepared to change. These sages did not aspire to comfort or renew on a short-term basis, but sought instead to create a new type of human whose compassion was universal and encompassed the whole world. Armstrong (2006:xvi) also notes that the particularisation and limitation of compassion was always a clear indication that the Axial Age was drawing to a close.

2.3.7 The Axial Age and the emergence of the 'Golden Rule'

The Axial ideal of universal compassion was also responsible for each (religious) tradition producing its own Golden Rule, namely the realisation and understanding that:

You do not do unto others what you would not have done unto you.

This meant, 'respect for the sacred life of all beings – not orthodox belief – was (Axial Age) religion', consequently if people behaved in a kind and compassionate manner towards each other then they could save the world (Armstrong 2006:xvi).

2.3.8 New key realisations that alter humans' perception about their position in the human realm

The Axial Age paradigm shift also produced new key Axial-derived realisations that altered people's perceptual frameworks and conduct. Arnason (2005:40) points out that within the new Axial Age perceptual framework, humans took precedence over the world of the spirits and the dead. This meant that:

- Humans, and not gods, were now made responsible for the creation and maintenance of (human) order and (human) conduct and that this in turn facilitated the beginning of
- The idea of an impersonal world order, namely, one that lies beyond the gods. This new perceptual framework allowed people to develop the idea of individual conscience and personal accountability and
- People began to realise that all their actions had consequences that would affect them and the lives of future generations;
- Men and women also began to understand that gods did not provide assistance, nor could sacrifice diminish human suffering;
- This new understanding meant that they would have to depend entirely upon themselves, and that they would be accountable for what happened in their lives (Armstrong 1993:36, 2000b:7,10-11).

This startling perception was responsible for a different direction in the design of context-appropriate religion as it signalled the end of the idea of 'magical control' and heralded the introduction of 'inner depth and contemplation' as the new basis for the creation of the new Axial derived belief systems (Armstrong 2000b:17). Assman notes that this paradigm shift is mentioned by Voegelin (Assman 2005:153) as another key distinguishing trait of Axial Age transformation.

2.3.9 The Axial Age gives rise to new Axial based religious belief systems throughout the ancient world

In response to the spiritual crisis and needs of this period, each area in the ancient world developed its own unique religious system. China gave us Taoism and Confucianism, Hinduism and Buddhism arose in India and in Ancient Greece (in Europe) philosophical rationalism came to the fore. In the Middle East, two types of monotheism arose, Zoroastrianism in Mesopotamia (modern day Iran) and Judaism in ancient Israel (Armstrong 1993:36-37). In this manner, the great confessional faiths of the ancient world emerged, faiths that still continue to guide and comfort to the present day (Armstrong 2000a:xii). However, Armstrong (2006:xvii) points out that all the Axial people did not develop in the same manner. In China the people progressed slowly

until the advent of Confucius. He was responsible for actively cultivating the first full Axial spirituality in China, toward the end of the 6th century BCE. The inhabitants of India were always ahead of other civilizations in their Axial Age transformation, with the *rishis* laying the foundations for the Indian Axial Age change well before 800 BCE when they made a conscious effort ‘to go beyond empirical knowledge and intuit a deeper, more fundamental truth’ (Armstrong 2006:17). In Israel, the prophets, priests and historians were responsible for initiating their Axial Age change, which reached an astonishing level of intense creativity during the Babylonian exile in the 6th century (Armstrong 2006:xvii).

2.3.10 The Axial Age produced new religious ideals and remarkable luminaries

Remarkable luminaries also came forth during this period – exceptional prophets, philosophers, sages and reformers. These were men whose innovation, protest and guidance helped to shape and produce the Axial religious belief systems and who were adamant that believers had to understand that the new Axial ideals replaced older concepts and that:

- The virtue of compassion was the (new essential Axial) prerequisite to the sacred life;
- That people must perceive the sacredness within each human being and
- That voluntary care-taking of the weak and the vulnerable (the widow, the orphan and the stranger) in our societies would now become the new measure of genuine piety (Armstrong 2000a:xii).

These luminaries include the following: Buddha (Gotma) in India (approximately 488 BCE), the Hebrew prophets in Israel (8th, 7th and 6th century BCE), Zoroaster in Iran (6th century BCE)¹² and Confucius and Lao

¹² Note that Armstrong does concede that recent research and scholarship has indicated that Zoroaster was a much earlier figure and that most Indologists tend to place Buddha a century later than previously recorded (2006:xvii).

Tzu in China (6th and 5th century BCE). Wittrock (2005:63) also includes Mencius from China and Socrates and Plato in Europe, whose philosophical rationalism was so profound that it was later used by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike in their own religious quests (Armstrong 1993:37, 2000b:10).

2.3.11 The Axial Age and capitalism

There is another important factor to which Armstrong (1993: 37) draws our attention. In the light of the fact that we are currently caught up in the most powerful capitalist-driven society to date, it is worth noting that the profound Axial insights all developed in the market-driven economy of the Axial Age in the spirit of aggressive capitalism. This means that capitalism is at no stage to be viewed as an impediment to the ability of people to be creative, innovative and insightful across the board.

2.3.12 The Axial Age as a response to the violence of its time

Armstrong (2006:xiv) also points out that the religious visionaries of the Axial Age did not produce their compassionate ethic under, what she terms 'idyllic circumstances'. To the contrary, these traditions arose in societal contexts that resemble our own. These Axial Ages societies were also splintered and disrupted by violence and warfare, and ironically enough, the factor that triggered religious change was the moral rejection of the violence that these sages observed within their own contexts. In the sages' search for the underlying cause for violence in the human psyche, these Axial religious visionaries began to reflect and look inward to enable them to investigate the uncharted realm of human experience (2006:xiv).

CHAPTER 3: ANCIENT ISRAEL AND THE AXIAL AGE

3.1 CHANGES WITHIN CANAAN LEAD TO THE HIGHLAND SETTLEMENTS

The twelfth century BCE was a tumultuous period of upheaval and change in the eastern Mediterranean that witnessed the collapse of the Egyptian, Greek and Hittite kingdoms. Armstrong (2006:36) notes that although the exact reasons for the turmoil remain unclear, that it was most probably the result of intense climatic and environmental change, one that Thompson (2000:155) refers to as 'the great Mycenaean drought: c. 1300-1050 BCE'. It would appear that this large-scale drought and famine severely undermined the economic structures of the day, which were unable to respond accordingly. Consequently, by 1130 Egypt had lost most of its foreign provinces including Canaan.

During this period, Canaanite port cities like Hazor were destroyed, while many other cities like Taanach in the Jezreel valley, were completely abandoned (Thompson 2000:156; Armstrong 2006:36). Armstrong (2006:38) notes that the decline of some of these large Canaanite coastal city-states of the Egyptian empire was gradual. The exact reasons for their demise remain open to discussion. As Thompson (2000:156) notes, Egypt's response to this drought, the subsequent collapse of international trade and the increased impact of the substantial refugee problem were extremely complicated. Thompson (2000:158) also points out that Egypt remained intent on retaining their overland trade in timber and olive oil from Canaan. This led to a total decrease in Egypt's influence in the Canaanite highland and in the northern regions, but it saw an increase in their presence in the lowlands and in the southern coastal plain. Egypt's presence in these areas was primarily responsible for the successful integration of the Aegean refugees with the indigenous lowland and southern coastal population. The high cost and persistence of the Egyptians commercial interest in Canaan eventually paid dividends, and the towns in the lowland and southern coastal areas where they maintained a presence, all began to recover by the end of the drought. Thompson (2000:163) notes that Canaan's olive oil industry also boomed

once more when the drought ended and international trade was re-established.

By the end of the drought, both Armstrong (2006: 38) and Thompson (2000:158) point out that approximately 200 new, small settlements were spread out across the highlands, reaching from Beersheba in the south to lower Galilee in the north. Both Armstrong (2006:38) and Finkelstein (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:101) note that most scholars agree that the inhabitants of these highland settlements were the people of 'Israel' that the Merneptah victory stele (c 1207 BCE), the first non-biblical reference to Israel, mentions. Armstrong (2006:38) notes that the stele reveals that, by this time, (approximately 1207-1210 BCE), the inhabitants of these highland settlements were perceived, by their enemies, as 'a group apart' from the Canaanites, Hurrians and Bedouins who also lived within Canaan (ancient Palestine).

Armstrong (2006:38) draws attention to the fact that there is no contemporary account of the early development of early Israel and that the Bible in itself is a product of the Axial Age. But, along with Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:113) and Thompson (2000:158) she agrees that archaeological surveys since 1967 clearly reveal that these highland settlements were, contrary to the biblical account of the exodus from Egypt, the first Israelites and that it would appear that a dramatic social transformation occurred in the central hill country of Canaan.

3.2 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS OF THE CENTRAL HILL COUNTRY OF CANAAN

3.2.1 The third wave settlement

Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:114-18) note that the archaeological surveys and remains reveal that this specific settlement was the *third wave* of the highland settlement and that this third wave had begun in the Iron Age I

(1150-950 BCE)¹³. Prior to this settlement, there had been two preceding settlements, one in the Early Bronze Age and one in the Middle Bronze Age. This third wave settlement, the early Israelite settlement, began approximately 1200 BCE with roughly 250 small rural communities, with a total of around 45,000 people. This highland settlement developed gradually and peaked in the eighth century which was the beginning of the Axial Age. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:115) note that after the establishment of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel, this area had about 500 sites with a population of roughly 160,000 people. These Highlands were ideal for the growth and production of olives and wine which were the most lucrative and profitable sectors of Middle Eastern economy. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:115) note that all three highland settlements appeared to have sent surplus olive oil and wine to the lowlands and possibly to areas beyond Canaan, like Egypt. Early Bronze Age storage vessels from Egypt, that were analysed, reveal that they were made from Canaanite highland clay, and one jar still contained the remains of grape seeds.

3.2.2 The third wave settlers

These third wave settlers were most probably Canaanite pastoral nomads who were obliged to produce their own grain when Canaan's political and economic networks collapsed during the twelfth century. This meant that eventually these pastoralists began to invest more effort and time into their farming in the highland settlements, and by doing so, a 'permanent shifting to sedentarisation occurred' (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:118). All three waves of highland settlements share similar settlement patterns and are characterised by the same material culture, such as pottery, architecture and village planning. This would tend to point to similar environmental and economic conditions for all three waves of settlement (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:115).

¹³ See Appendix 2: Waves of Settlement in The Highlands.

3.2.3 The third wave settlers are set apart from preceding waves

Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:119) draw our attention to the key factor that sets the third settlement apart from the preceding settlements. Their archaeological surveys and observations have revealed that all the Iron Age I settlements of the third wave have no pig bones; unlike the previous two waves of settlement that did contain pig bones. This indicates that throughout the Iron Age, the era of the Israelite Monarchies, no pigs were raised or cooked and eaten in these highlands by these third wave settlers, the early Israelites. This stands in sharp contrast to the Philistines of the same period who ate pork and to the Ammonites and the Moabites who also appear to have consumed pork. This ban on pork cannot simply be attributed to environmental or economic conditions alone and would appear to be the most noticeable and specific shared trait of these early Israelites who settled on these highlands, west of the Jordan (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:119).

We do not know why the Iron Age I third wave settlement ceased to raise and consume pork, but Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:120) point out that 'distinctive culinary practices and dietary customs are two of the ways in which ethnic boundaries are formed'. This would indicate that the early Israelites, for reasons that are still not clear, deliberately chose not to raise or eat pork at least half a millennium before the composition of their Torah, with its laws and detailed dietary regulations (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:120).

Ironically, Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:118) and Armstrong (2006:39) point out that the archaeological account of the appearance of Israel is the opposite of what the Bible describes. Both also agree that archaeology has shown that the emergence of Israel was as a result of the collapse of Canaanite culture and not its cause, and that the early Israelites did not come from outside of Canaan, as there is no indication of a change of population.

3.2.4 Archaeology and the Exodus from Egypt

Archaeology has also shown that there was no mass exodus from Egypt, and that there are no signs of any violent conquest as described in the book of Joshua. The highland surveys and archaeological record also indicates that the people who made up the early Israelite populace were local inhabitants who were probably migrants from the failing city-states (Armstrong 2006:39) or/and large groups of pastoral nomads who were forced to produce their own grain when the city states economic networks collapsed in the twelfth century. This would mean that the third wave settlement, like the previous two highland settlements, was also from Canaan itself. Thus Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:118) note that ‘the early Israelites were – irony of ironies – themselves originally Canaanites’ (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:118; Armstrong 2006:39-40). However, the most recent research based on linguistic analysis, archaeological data and inscriptions by Anson Rainey, all serve to indicate that Finkelstein & Silberman may only be, in Rainey’s own words, ‘partly right’ when they describe the highland settlers as ‘invisible’ pastoralists from the hill country in the Late Bronze Age (Rainey 2006. S.v. “Biblical Archaeology Review”).

3.2.5 The origin of the early Israelites

Rainey proceeds to cite data that would indicate that the biblical account may well be correct as recent research reveals that the early Israelites were indeed pastoralists, but that they came from the east, from Transjordan, from across the Jordan river, into western Palestine (Rainey 2006. S.v. “Biblical Archaeology Review”). These pastoralists, Rainey explains, would have been Aramean pastoralists as ‘every cultural trait evinced by the new settlers in the hill country of Palestine in the Early Iron Age points to the origin of these people in the steppes of Transjordan and possibly the Syrian Desert (and perhaps some via the Lebanese Beqá Valley; the settlers in upper Galilee)’. Thus Rainey sees the absence of pork bones at these highland Iron Age sites as an indication that these people had come from the steppes, where it was too hot to raise pigs. Consequently, he notes that it was simply their ignorance of pig farming that lay behind the absence of pork bones. Whilst this is an

interesting idea that Rainey suggests, it still fails to explain why these highland settlers would continue to shun pork *completely* (and, it would appear, to be on a long-term basis), in an area that was conducive to raising pork.

Along with their deliberate decision to stop farming and eating pork (or if we are to follow Rainey's argument – to persist in their effort not to farm due to ignorance) it also would appear that these early Israelites who came from many various different ethnicities, such as Gibeonites, Kenites, Jerameelites and Canaanites, all deliberately chose to turn their collective backs on the ancient urban culture of Canaan (Armstrong 2006:40).

3.2.6 The early Israelites re-invent their identity

Thus, according to Armstrong and Finkelstein & Silberman's perspective, by doing so, these early Israelites literally re-invented their identity by claiming to be foreigners to the land of Canaan. Armstrong (2006:40) perceives this choice as one that was shaped by two factors. Firstly, archaeological data has shown that there was a great deal of socio-economic upheaval in the highlands, plus major demographic shifts and around two hundred years of constant 'life-and-death' confrontations between the highland's various competing ethnic groups (mentioned above). The next key motivating factor would appear to be the highlanders' common experience of living on the periphery of the existing culture of their day and their perception of seeing themselves as outsiders and thus, as foreigners to the land of Canaan. In this sense, Armstrong (2006:40) points out that Israel was thus a 'newcomer in the family of nations, born of trauma and upheaval, and constantly threatened with marginality'. This is an observation that, ironically, would also link in perfectly with Rainey's theory of the highland settler origins. Consequently these early Israelites would appear to have consciously developed a counter-identity and their own counter-narrative that would allow them to, intentionally, set themselves apart from the other nations in their region. All of the above also allowed them to confirm the idea that they were truly different to the other nations in their region as they (alone) 'enjoyed a unique relationship with their God, Yahweh' (Armstrong 2006:40).

3.2.7 The early Israelites religious praxis

Although, Armstrong notes that the absence of pork bones in these settlements reveal that the early Israelites had already begun their attempt to set themselves apart from their neighbours during the Iron Age I period (between 1150-900 BCE), it would still appear that, until the sixth century, early Israel's religious beliefs and praxis was still remarkably akin to that of their neighbours (Armstrong 2006:41). There was no central sanctuary in early Israel. Instead, there were a number of temples at Shechem, Shiloh, Bethel, Gilgal, Sinai and Hebron where it would appear that the early Israelites would carry their Ark of the Covenant from one temple to the next. At these gatherings they would then renew their covenant treaties in the presence of their God, Yahweh (Armstrong 2006:43). In keeping with the pre-Axial ideas of holy battles, Armstrong (2006:44-45) notes that the (pre-Axial) spring festival of *Pesach*, at Gilgal was originally conceived as a preparation for the holy war for the Promised Land that had begun with their assault on the walled city of Jericho (Armstrong 2006:45).

3.3 THE ISRAELITES PRE-AXIAL PERCEPTION OF GOD AND RELIGION BEGINS TO CHANGE

During this pre-Axial period, Yahweh was perceived as a war god, and war, in pre-Axial times, was also seen as a sanctified rite. However, the early Israelites were beginning to alter their pre-Axial religious perceptions and slowly move towards the Axial Age religious framework of a decoupled cosmological realm. Where most people in the Middle East still re-enacted cosmic battles and commemorated and celebrated a victory achieved in sacred time in their primordial world of myth, these Israelites began to choose, instead, to celebrate a victory that they believed had occurred in *human time* in their not too distant past. This Axial-linked change, that Armstrong (2006:45) draws our attention to, is also supported by the observation of Assman. Thus, Assman (2005:134) quotes Voegelin to explain that, prior to the Axial Age, the societies of the ancient Near East (like ancient Palestine), were ordered in the form of the cosmological myth. Nevertheless the Axial

Age wrought a 'decisive transformation in terms of a 'break' from the 'cosmological myth', or a 'leap in being'. This led Israel, with its celebration of a victory in human time, into the openness of history 'under God' (thus, history in the sense of *historia sacra*).

3.3.1 Ancient Israel begins its shift from myth to history

This subtle perception shift from myth to history is clearly seen the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:15-16) which is one of the Bible's earliest poems. In this poem the Israelites reveal their shift from myth to history by commemorating a victory that they believed had taken place in human time in the not-so-distant past as opposed to a victory achieved in sacred time in the primordial world of myth (Armstrong 2006:45). This song which was probably chanted at the spring festival of *Pesach* at Gilgal, reveals that originally Yahweh had lead his people on a 'triumphant march through the Promised Land' (that was Canaan) and 'not through the Sinai peninsula'. It also tells us that Israel's enemies were drowned in the river Jordan and not in the Sea of Reeds. It would therefore appear that this early spring ritual that celebrated their crossing of the Jordan, helped to shape their later account of their crossing of the Sea of Reeds and that this song was later adapted to fit the story of their exodus in the Torah (Armstrong 2006:45). Once again, this study would like to note that the Song of the Sea, with its triumphant march through Canaan and its river crossing, also lends credence to Rainey's (2006. S.v. "Biblical Archaeology Review") origin theory, mentioned above, and that Rainey (2006. S.v. "Biblical Archaeology Review") himself notes that this would also explain why Jacob received the name 'Israel' before he crossed over into Canaan/Israel (Genesis 31:28).

3.3.2 Ancient Israel begins to contemplate the decoupling of its cosmological realm

Although the Axial Age did not strictly begin in earnest until 800 BCE, the first indication of the essential Axial Age decoupling of the cosmological realm in ancient Israel first appeared between 900-800 BCE. We are able to identify this early attempt of an Axial cosmological decoupling in the words of the prophet Elijah in the Northern Kingdom. Armstrong (2006:66) refers to 1 Kings

19:11-13 to denote this first pre-Axial sign of a decoupling between Yahweh (the sacred realm) and the natural world (the profane realm):

Then Yahweh himself went by. There came a mighty wind, so strong it tore the mountains and shattered the rocks before Yahweh. But Yahweh was no longer in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake. But Yahweh was no longer in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But Yahweh was no longer in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle breeze. And when Elijah hears this, he covered his face with his cloak (1 Kings 19:11-13).

This was, Armstrong (2006:66) notes, the vital ‘transcendental breakthrough’ moment, (or the classic, but essential, Axial Age decoupling of the cosmological realm that Eisenstadt speaks of above), for, instead of portraying the divine as immanent in the natural world, Yahweh had now become separate and other. Although the prophet Elijah had managed this transcendental breakthrough, he appears to have lacked the finesse and skill to impart this Axial Age concept of spirituality to the people of his time.

3.3.3 The ‘Yahweh alone movement’ is revealed in the words of Elijah and Elisha

The words of Elijah¹⁴ and Elisha also reveal the probable beginning of the ‘Yahweh alone movement’ (Armstrong 2006:64). Elijah’s ‘Yahweh alone’ proposition introduced a ‘new tension into traditional religion’ that was characterised by its sharp clash with rival deities (Armstrong 2006:65). This conflict was also instrumental in shaping the prophets’ spirituality (Armstrong 2006:66). During this period, the ancient perception of Yahweh as a divine warrior began to fade away because of its connotations to the Phoenician god Baal. Gradually, Yahweh was beginning to be perceived in an Axial-derived fashion, in that Yahweh was now seen, not as the god of storms, but as a God who presided over a divine assembly, as Axial gods are gods of peace as opposed to gods of war (Armstrong 2006:66).

¹⁴ The Yahweh-alone movement is detected in Elijah’s words when he heard Yahweh sentence Ahab’s successors to death, except for those ‘who have not knelt before Baal’ (1Kings 21:19).

3.3.4 Elijah initiates Ancient Israel's decoupling of its cosmological realm

The beginning of the essential cosmological realm decoupling, in ancient Israel and in Judah, begins with Elijah in 1 Kings 19:11-13. This was in perfect keeping with the manner in which Axial religious change begins. Nevertheless, Armstrong (2005:67) points out that the concept of social justice was already a familiar concept in the Ancient Near East, as well as in ancient Israel and Judah. Thus we should realise that the acknowledgement and existence of social justice prior to 800 BCE should *not* be seen as a specific sign that heralded the start of an Axial Age before 800 BCE (2006:68). Therefore, in Psalm 82 it states how Yahweh denounces his rival deities for neglecting their most important obligation, namely the implementation of social justice and subsequently condemns them all to death:

Yahweh stands up in the divine assembly,
Among the gods he dispenses justice:

"No more mockery of justice.
No more favouring the wicked!
Let the weak and the orphan have justice,
Be fair to the wretched and the destitute;
Rescue the weak and the needy
Save them from the clutches of the wicked!"

Ignorant and senseless, they carry on blindly,
Undermining the very basis of earthly society.
I once said, "You too are gods,
Sons of the Most High, all of you,"
But all the same you shall die like other men;
As one man, gods, you shall fall.

Rise, Yahweh, dispense justice throughout the world,
Since no nation is excluded from your ownership (Psalm 82:1-8).

In keeping with the (pre-800 BCE) Ancient Near East tradition of social justice depicted in this Psalm, Elijah is clearly adamant about the people's responsibility to practice compassion and benevolence. This demand is clearly evident in his confrontation with Ahab in the incident of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 20:17-29).

3.4 ARCHAEOLOGY REVEALS ANCIENT ISRAEL'S PAST

By 800 BCE, Israel had entered its Axial Age period of transformation. The first truly concrete and definitive moves towards Axial Age spirituality began at this time. These Axial perceptual framework shifts that the prophets heralded and that the priestly 'Holiness School' implemented, were the first crucial building blocks of Israel's Axial Age religious spirituality. This Axial transformation included the most central distinguishing Axial Age trademark, an insistence on universal compassion and concern, that would peak during their exile in Babylon and reveal a brief but intense period of extraordinary creativity (Armstrong 2006:xvii).

Thompson (2000:164) notes that the earliest period of the Iron Age I highland settlement has traditionally been presented as the 'Golden Age' of ancient Israel, under the rule of the united monarchy of David and Solomon. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:152-153) note that until the recent excavations of the central hill country in the 1980s, most archaeologists and biblical historians tended to accept the traditional biblical narrative of the rise and fall of the united monarchy at face value. Consequently, these assumptions have led scholars to believe 'that the construction of the great "Solomonic" cities with their gates and palaces were indisputable evidence of full-blown statehood by the tenth century and of Jerusalem's iron-fisted control of the north' (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:152). However, as Thompson so succinctly states:

There is no evidence for a United Monarchy, no evidence of a capital in Jerusalem or of any coherent, unified political force that dominated western Palestine, let alone any empire of the size the legends describe. What we do know of Israel and Judah of the tenth century does not allow us to interpret this lack of evidence as a *gap* in our knowledge and information about the past, a result merely of the accidental nature of archaeology. There is neither room nor context, no artefact or archive that points to such historical realities in Palestine's tenth century. One cannot speak historically of a state without a population. Nor can one speak of a capital without a town. Stories are not enough (2000:164-165).

Even though there are many scholars, like Dr Ami Mazar from Jerusalem University¹⁵, who choose not to embrace Thompson's view, there are however, scholars like Finkelstein & Silberman who have also, through the careful study and use of recent archaeological studies and data, disputed the historicity of the united monarchy (2001:340-344). Finkelstein (2001:145) in his work, co-authored with Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision Of Ancient Israel And The Origin Of Its Sacred Texts* (2001), states that 'the historical reality of the kingdom of David and Solomon was quite different from the tale. It was part of a great demographic transformation that would lead to the emergence of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel – in a dramatically different historical sequence than the Bible describes'.

3.4.1 The iron-age settlers become recognised as Israelites

Although it is clear that not all the scholars agree on where these Iron Age I highland pastoralists came from, or whether the united monarchy was as powerful and resplendent as the Bible claims, the fact remains that by the beginning of Iron Age II (900-586 BCE), these particular people identified themselves, and were recognised by their neighbours, as the early Israelites. Archaeological surveys also reveal that these highland settlements in each wave of settlement were always divided into two distinct societies, the north and the south – with a dividing line running more or less between Jerusalem and Shechem. This is the same boundary that would later separate Israel and Judah. Archaeological surveys also indicate that these two separate highland societies occupied approximately the same areas as the later Iron Age kingdoms of Judah and Israel (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:153).

Maps of previous waves of the Early Bronze Age highland settlements clearly show that the northern settlement, just like the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was always more densely populated, with far more settlements that possessed and displayed a complex hierarchy of large, medium and small sites and that these sites were all dependant on settled agriculture. The

¹⁵ Religion & Ethics Newsweekly. An online companion to the weekly television news program. Feb 6 2004. Episode no 723 (http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/index_flash.html).

southern section, like the later kingdom of Judah, was always more sparsely populated with fewer and smaller sites. The absence of permanent buildings and the small quantities of pottery shards all suggest that the populace in the south were primarily migratory pastoral groups (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:153-154). It would therefore appear that Shechem/Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and Jerusalem/Judah were always distinct and *competing* areas as they occupied extremely different climate zones. Each area had its own specific ecosystem as well as its own topography, rock formations, vegetation and potential economic resources (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:155).

Judah was a small hilly and remote area that was isolated by climatic and topographical constraints, whereas the northern highland of Israel, with its fertile valleys and hilly slopes, was a far more hospitable and productive area. This meant that any settlement that arose in the north had far more economic potential than the south. The result of this was that there was a marked increase in the populace and a noticeable increase in the complexity and the development of the economic and social structures of the north, as opposed to the biblical account of the south's success. The consequence of this was that by the beginning of the Axial Age, in 800 BCE, it was the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and not Judah, that was set to become prosperous and dramatically more populous, and, may I note along with Finkelstein & Silberman, an emerging Axial Age state (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:157-158).

3.4.2 Ancient Israel during the Axial Age

It was thus during the eighth century BCE, when the Northern Kingdom of Israel entered the Axial age, that the Northern Kingdom's Hebrew prophets – Amos, Hosea and Isaiah – were able to come forward, to speak out against perceived injustice within ancient Israel (Knohl 2005:201). Arnason (2005:23) notes that these Hebrew prophets were amongst the first of the most remarkable examples of creative individuals that the Axial Age produced, and as active vocal protesters they also serve to embody the Axial Age component of (possible) dissent and (potential) heterodoxy (Eisenstadt 2005:542). This meant that it now became possible for people to not only

think beyond their previously prescribed perceptual frameworks and contexts but to voice protest as well, which is precisely what these Axial Age Hebrew prophets proceeded to do.

The prophetic age is divided into two groups, Pre-Exile Prophets and Post-Exile Prophets. The period begins with Amos (circa 760-750 BCE) and ends with Jonah (a book written circa 350 BCE)¹⁶.

Armstrong (2006:86) notes that by the beginning of the eighth century it was also possible to discern the first distinct signs of the Axial Age religious transformation within the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. It would appear that the people of Judah and Israel were becoming aware that, in the face of the unfolding current events in the Middle East, their religion now challenged many of their existing perceptions of the divine. It was also at this time that certain people, like the Hebrew prophets, the Deuteronomists and the Holiness School, began to question and criticise the Israelites style of religious ritual and praxis and call, in true Axial fashion, for the establishment of an ethical based faith (Armstrong 2006:86).

3.4.3 No Archaeological evidence for a United Monarchy

Although the development of the Canaanite highlands into two separate states, was, as we saw above, a natural development, there is no archaeological evidence at all to support the belief that these two Axial period kingdoms arose out of an earlier political unity (the so-called United Monarchy) that originated in the south. Finkelstein & Silberman are direct about this observation when they state that by 800 BCE, when Israel was a flourishing densely populated area with many settlements that included large regional centres, villages and many tiny hamlets, Judah was still an under-populated, economically marginal backwater.

¹⁶ See Appendix 1: Pre- and Post-Exile prophets.

Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:159) do, however, also point that although these two Iron Age states had their own distinct characteristics, that they also had much in common in that they:

- Both worshipped Yahweh (along with other deities);
- They shared a common pool of many heroes and legends as well as narratives about a common past;
- They spoke similar languages, or dialects of Hebrew; and
- By the beginning of the Axial Age, in 800BCE, they both wrote in the same script.

3.4.4 The Northern Kingdom of Israel during the Axial Age

By 800 BCE, the Northern Kingdom, contrary to the Biblical depiction, had entered its Golden Age. This was an age that was so fortuitous for these 'sinful northerners' that Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:207) note that even the biblical author of the books of Kings was obliged to seek an explanation for their 'puzzling good fortune' (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:197, 206-207). The author of Kings chose to interpret their good fortune as God's compassion, but in reality, it appears to be directly connected to the Northern Kingdom's position as a loyal vassal state to the regions all-powerful Assyria and to the Israel's highly productive olive oil trade.

3.4.5 Assyria and the Northern Kingdom's olive oil trade

Thompson (2000:167) points out that Assyria's interest in the Northern Kingdom's olive oil trade with Egypt was already evident by the early ninth century, when Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:159) note that their olive oil industry was already well developed, and that the early Northern Kingdom had its origins in the olive oil industry's expanding demand for trade. By contrast Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:159) clearly point out that the olive oil trade in Judah, only moved from local, private households to a state industry in the seventh century. Thompson (2000:167) also points out that although the success of the Northern Kingdom's olive oil trade was initially based on the close economic cooperation of its farmers, that it was their dependence on

the economic cartels of Assyrian-Egyptian trade that 'shaped their destiny as vassal states of the empire and forced them into the hazard of ever supporting the strongest'. This form of affiliation was inevitable at this time in the ancient world, where sovereign states did not exist, nor was there any other type of affiliation that resembled the great regional states of Europe (Thompson 2000:168).

3.4.6 The Northern Kingdom's olive oil trade brings trade and prosperity

By the time that the Northern Kingdom had moved into its Axial Age period of transformation, the people had already moved beyond subsistence farming to a complicated network of villages and hamlets and subsequently extended their trade boundaries (Thompson 2000:165). It was during the reign of Jeroboam II (786 -746), that the Northern Kingdom's economy rightly began to prosper as it was now (as Assyria's vassal state) directly linked to the growing world economy of the Axial Age. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:207) observe that this economic boom is clearly reflected in the Northern Kingdom's agricultural developments and is also reflected in their increased trade and newfound prosperity. These factors were also responsible for a substantial increase in settlements in the southern hills of Samaria and they also triggered a striking increase in the population. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:207) point out that by the end of 800 BCE, the Northern Kingdom (in both urban and rural areas) was the most densely populated area in the Levant. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:208) provide general population estimates that illustrate the Northern Kingdom's extraordinary demographic growth. Their figures reveal that during the Early Iron Age the highland population was roughly 45,000 but by the eighth century the population of the Northern Kingdom (plus its territory in Transjordan) was approximately 350,000 and Judah was only \pm 100,000 people¹⁷.

¹⁷ Their estimates were calculated by using a combination of archaeological and ethnographic data. Their method of estimating ancient populations, uses the built up areas of all occupied sites during the 8th century BCE (determined by the presence of distinctive 8th century pottery types) which is multiplied by a density coefficient, that is, the average density of population observed in traditional, premodern societies of the 19th or beginning of the 20th century (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:208).

Archaeological surveys reveal that, during the eighth century, many brand new olive orchard based settlements arose on rocky spurs in areas that were particularly conducive to olive farming, and that many olive presses and other processing installations were cut into the bedrock around these new villages (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:207). Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:212) draw our attention to the Samaria ostraca that reveal a sophisticated system of credit and record keeping of the olive oil and wine shipments from these outlying villages to the capital city, Samaria. These ostraca receipts clearly show how the crops of the peasants were claimed by the landowners or by government tax representatives who controlled the crop collection. Armstrong (2006:87) also draws attention to the fact that these rural peasants, who endured the abuse of landowners and government tax officials plus the burden of crippling taxation, were also the king's main supply of labour (often forced labour). Their labour was employed for the king's cultural and political projects, such as Jeroboam's major construction at Megiddo, Hazor and Gezer (Armstrong 2006:87). Armstrong (2006:87) also notes that the artisans in the towns did not fare well either. This situation meant that the division between the poor (mainly rural) peasants and the other non-elite and the rich elite was steadily increasing and becoming distressingly obvious.

3.4.7 The Northern Kingdom's uneven distribution of wealth divides the people into rich and poor

The benefits of the Northern Kingdom's olive oil export trade to Egypt and Assyria that generated the country's main source of income, was also confined, as in all agrarian societies of that period, to their elite (Armstrong 2006:86; Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:212). The beneficiaries were the Northern Kingdom's Israelite monarchs and the Israelite aristocracy, producing what Knohl describes as the Israelite *nouveaux riches*. They are aptly described by the prophet Amos 'as lying on ivory beds, lolling on their couches, drinking wine incessantly and searching for ways to take from their poor neighbours' (Knohl 2005:209). Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:212) also draw our attention to the delicately carved Phoenician styled Samarian ivory plaques with Egyptian motifs, that were used to decorate palace walls and

furniture that serve to reveal the luxurious lifestyles and multicultural tastes of the Israelite elite.

3.4.8 The Northern Kingdom attains full statehood

It was also during the height of the Northern Kingdom's prosperity, under the reign of Jeroboam II (788-747 BCE), that the kingdom experienced and achieved the full criteria for statehood: namely:

- Literacy;
- Specialised economic production – in this instance olive oil and wine;
- Bureaucratic administration;
- A professional army used by Jeroboam II to conquer Transjordan;
- Their clear social stratification which was seen in their distribution of luxury items;
- Monumental building projects;
- A fully developed settlement system of cities towns and villages

(Armstrong 2006:88; Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:158-159, 170, 212).

Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:176) also explain that, during the rule of the Omride dynasty (884-842 BCE), the Northern Kingdom developed into a *fully developed* territorial national state. Three ancient inscriptions: the Mesha stele, the 'House of David' inscription from Dan and the Monolith Inscription all reveal that Omri and his successors were, in reality, powerful kings. The Omrides were actively involved in the arena of international power politics; they expanded the territory of their kingdom and maintained one of the principal standing armies in the region (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:177-180). Archaeological data also testify that the Omrides surpassed all other monarchs, within the Northern Kingdom and in Judah, as the ultimate builders and administrators, and that Omri himself was responsible for the conception and original construction of the opulent palace at Samaria as well as the magnificent palace at Megiddo (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:180, 181, 182, 183).

3.4.9 The Northern Kingdom's composition and its two capital system

One of the most interesting and important factors of the Northern Kingdom is its unique demographic population mix, especially that of the Northern Kingdom's Israelites and the kingdom's Canaanites. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:192,193) point out that of all the Omrides resources that they had at their disposal, their heterogeneous population was their most important resource for war, building and agriculture.

Recent archaeological and historical findings have shown that Samaria was the capital of the predominantly Israelite population of the hill country around Samaria, and that the Canaanite populace were primarily located in the fertile valley around Jezreel, which served as the Canaanite centre. Thus Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:194) note that the kingdom's religious diversity and multicultural composition makes it difficult to define the Northern Kingdom as a specifically 'Israelite' state, whether from an ethnic, religious or cultural perspective. It would therefore appear that it was these Northern Kingdom's Israelite monarchs' ability to occasionally marry foreign women, build Canaanite shrines and palaces, and relate to and negotiate with other nations, that was, (albeit unbearable and unthinkable from the Biblical perspective) the main reason for the astonishing success and prosperity of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:195)¹⁸.

Archaeology has revealed that the Northern Kingdom's government centres, like Megiddo, Jezreel and Samaria were all well fortified and that they had ornate palaces built of ashlar blocks that were decorated with stone capitals. Once again Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:159) draw attention to the fact that archaeology has shown that monumental architecture, with its ashlar masonry and its decorative stone capitals, only appears in Judah in the seventh century. Judah's monumental architecture is also of a lesser quality and built on a much smaller scale than that of the Northern Kingdom. Archaeological

¹⁸ The great success of the Northern Kingdom's multi-ethnic society is a lesson that is applicable within the multi-ethnic South African context and South Africa's multi-ethnic composition should not be seen as a negative factor in its economic and social aspirations.

remains also confirm that the capital of the Northern Kingdom, Samaria, already existed as a large palatial government centre before 800 BCE but Jerusalem only became fully urbanised in the late eighth century.

3.4.10 The Northern Kingdom's Axial change is linked to prophetic protest

Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:212) indicate that the Northern Kingdom's entry into the Axial Age, in 800 BCE, also marked the beginning of Israel's prophetic protest. This, Cantor (1995:23) explains, was no accident. The prophets arose in direct response to all the new Axial Age induced changes and systems that ultimately affected the people and their religion. They include:

- The shift from rural to urban areas that broke down social and economic equality that had existed in older tribal periods;
- Increased trade that led to the accumulation of wealth and its uneven distribution that began to divide the community between rich and poor;
- Conflicts that arose between landlord and peasant;
- A marked increase in the conflict that arose between rural and urban inhabitants, as well as the conflict(s) that arose between king and priest, and king and commoner.

Armstrong (2006:87) also observes that this troubled social situation was an economic as well as a religious one, for 'in the Middle East a king who abused his obligations to the needy violated the decrees of the gods and called his legitimacy into question'. Arnason (2005:47) explains that the King-God who had previously represented both cosmic and earthly orders had disappeared. Consequently, the conflict(s) that arose between king, priest and commoner was as result of a new understanding of rulership that emerged during the Axial Age. This Axial-derived perceptual shift gave people a secular ruler who was, in principle, accountable to a higher 'order'. Linked to this change was the increased scope of the cognitive horizon that extended the power base of the elites and their (power) centres plus the rapidly growing diversity of cognitive resources, which all served to create an obstacle to the

monopolisation of power. This, in turn, led to the emergence of (both) power structures and of protest movements. Hence we have the context that enabled the early Hebrew prophets, Amos, Hosea and Isaiah to come forward to speak out. Thus, these were the contexts and factors that were responsible for inaugurating the Axial Age religious transformation in the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 800 BCE.

3.4.11 The Northern Kingdom's demise

The Omrides successful and prosperous reign provoked envy and military rivalries, especially from the powerful Assyrian empire. Archaeological records bear testimony to the peak of the Northern Kingdom's prosperity during Jeroboam II's reign. But after his death, Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:214) note that a series of violent dynastic rivalries led to a series of events that marked the end of the Northern Kingdom's existence. The kingdom's attempt to permanently end their Assyrian vassalship brought the wrath of Tiglath-pileser down upon them. Tiglath-pileser conquered and annexed most of the kingdom's territory, sacked many of its main cities, and along with Sargon, deported about forty thousand people (about one fifth of the estimated population). These measures all served to effectively bring the Northern Kingdom to its knees (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:215, 221).

3.5 THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

Assman (2005:153) observes that early monotheism does not deny the existence of other gods since the request to remain faithful to *the* Lord would not make sense without the existence of these other gods. However, what is important is that the Israelite destruction of representation (as revealed in their account of the Golden Calf's destruction) meant that their sacred/transcendental context became independent of their political context. This move was vital for ancient Israel's Axial Age mind shift (as described by Eisenstadt above) and it allowed religion to become an independent context from which other contexts, both cultural and political, could be transformed.

3.5.1 The cult of Yahweh

Religious beliefs, praxis and systems in the Northern Kingdom and Judah mirrored systems found throughout ancient Israel and the Levant (Thompson 2000:168). Both Thompson (2000:169) and Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:242) point out that, despite the Bible's depiction of monotheism, the cult of Yahweh was a system that existed along with other systems of worship. Archaeology reveals that other deities were also worshipped, many along with Yahweh. To underscore this observation, Dever (2005:290-291) states that 'the *real* religions of ancient Judah consisted largely of everything that the biblical writers *condemned*'. They include Baal, Asherah, the hosts of Heaven, as well as a selection of deities from surrounding areas (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:242). It would be correct to say that initially the religious perspective of ancient Israel was not unique but akin to those of Mesopotamia and Egypt as well as Phoenicia and Syria (Thompson 2000:168). The *early* cult of Yahweh also tended to resemble Ancient Near Eastern religious system patterns, more so than Biblical tradition reveals (Thompson 2000:169).

In the Northern Kingdom, most of the people in the north were Israelites, hence the cult of Yahweh was dominant in the north. In the south, amongst the mainly Canaanite inhabitants, the patron of choice was Dagon. The population of the Northern Kingdom was multi-ethnic and politically integrated and they were open and flexible when dealing with religious systems. Both Kings (for example, the Israelite king Ahab and his Phoenician wife Jezebel) and commoner intermarried and built shrines to Yahweh and other deities. Jeroboam constructed two cultic bulls at sanctuaries of Dan and Beth-el (Armstrong 1993:58) and traded and communicated with other nations (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:191,192,194,195; Thompson 2000:171).

And although Elijah, Elisha and the prophets Amos and Hosea were pro-monotheism, there was never a focussed attempt by the rulers of the Northern Kingdom to sanction the worship of Yahweh alone (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:247). But prophetic criticism gained value after the Assyrian conquest.

Through the prophets' scathing attacks on social injustice and what they perceived as an impure lifestyle, the prophets ushered in the spiritual and social movement of social justice and morality (and the worship of Yahweh) that would affect both people and Biblical text to the present day (Cantor 1994:24; Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:213-214).

3.5.2 The Yahweh alone movement emerges in the Northern Kingdom

Although it is clear that Yahweh was worshipped along with other deities in the highlands, Finkelstein & Silberman (2002:247) point out that what is not clear, is where the decision to worship Yahweh alone originated. This new religious movement, (which Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:248) tell us has been aptly called the 'YHWH-alone movement'¹⁹ by the outspoken Morton Smith), is already articulated in the cycle stories of Elijah and Elisha as well as in the words of the prophets Amos, and Hosea who condemns idolatry:

And now they add sin to sin,
They smelt images from their silver,
Idols of their own manufacture,
Smith's work, all of it.
"Sacrifice to them", they say.
Men blow kisses to calves! (Hosea 13:2).

Because both these prophets were active during the eighth century in the Northern Kingdom, some scholars are of the opinion that the YHWH-alone movement arose in the Northern Kingdom. They suggest that a group of non-conformist priests and prophets, who were horrified by the injustice and idolatry of the Assyrian period, were the originators of this idea. After the Northern Kingdom fell, they fled to Judah and brought their YHWH-alone movement with them and then proceeded to instil these ideas in Judah as well (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:248).

This movement is mainly perceived in religious terms. But Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:249) draw attention to the fact that this group also harboured specific views on domestic and foreign policy. They were very territorial in that

¹⁹ Note that Morton Smith's apt and abbreviated term will be used when reference is made to this particular movement.

they aspired to restore the Davidic dynasty throughout the whole of Israel. These aspirations produced an ironic situation in Judah where we see a burst of retrospective theology, and a situation where all that was genuinely Judahite was labelled Canaan heresy. Thus 'what was old was seen as foreign and what was new was suddenly seen as true' (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:249).

3.6 JUDAH DURING THE AXIAL AGE

Unlike the Northern Kingdom, where there was a great degree of religious and cultural diversity, Judah was more homogenous and its religious and social contexts were, thus, intertwined.

Archaeology has shown that, contrary to the important role that the Bible bestows on Judah and its United Monarchy (of David and Solomon), this area remained a small sparsely populated rural backwater until the eighth century BCE. Archaeological surveys indicate that prior to 800 BCE, the population of Judah was roughly one-tenth of the population of the Northern Kingdom (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:230, 238). There is no trace of widespread literacy, no evidence of monumental architecture, bureaucracy and record keeping until 800 BCE (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:235, 238).

The defeat of the Northern Kingdom heralded the start of a variety of decisive changes that rapidly changed the political and religious context (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:230). After the fall of Samaria in 720 BCE, Assyrian provinces and vassal states surrounded Judah. The Judean King Ahaz (743-727 BCE) decided to allow Judah to become Assyria's vassal state as well. This enabled Judah to enter the international arena and to become a participant in the Axial political and economic spheres of its day. Judah's population, and most notably Jerusalem's population, all increased to record levels (it went from ±1000 to 15000) and there was a sharp increase in their trade with their neighbouring states (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:230, 243).

Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah, became a city of note. Within the time span of one generation, the city changed radically. At the end of 800 BCE, the city increased greatly in both land surface and appearance. It grew from 10 to 12 acres of a small humble town, to a city of 150 acres of high-density housing, workshops and public buildings. The city also moved from being the seat of a local dynasty, to becoming the kingdom's political and national religious centre (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:243).

3.6.1 Judah attains full statehood

All these sudden Axial economic and social changes were linked to the kingdom's vassal status and would appear to indicate that Judah had probably become an active participant in the increased Arabian trade of Assyria. This economic transformation in Judah meant that the kingdom finally attained statehood. Archaeology reveals the following indicators of statehood:

- Monumental inscriptions, seals, seal impressions and ostraca for royal administration.
- The use (albeit intermittent) of ashlar masonry and stone capitals in public buildings.
- The appearance of mid-size towns that served as regional capitals.
- Economic specialisation is seen in their development of large-scale olive oil and wine industries, that progressed from small-scale, private, local production to state industry.
- The mass production of pottery and other crafts, in central workshops and the distribution of these goods throughout Judah.

(Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:245-246).

3.6.2 The Reign of Hezekiah

As we saw, above the YHWH-alone movement had taken hold in Judah. With the ascension of Hezekiah to the throne, the movement seemed to gain momentum. Hezekiah not only began to implement their religious reforms, (like the centralisation of the cult in Jerusalem only, and calling for the abolishment of rural shrines), but he also appears to have taken the YHWH-alone movements territorial aspirations very seriously (Armstrong 2006:100;

Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:252). Armstrong (2006:100) and Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:251) both note that Hezekiah's foreign policy and his decision to take up arms against Assyria, was disastrous. His attempt to take on the Assyrian empire cost Judah dearly.

The Assyrian king, Sennacherib, brought his forces into Judah in 701 BCE and began to lay systematic siege to the countryside. Sennacherib's assault on Jerusalem failed. The reason for this failure is still unknown, and although historians have speculated that an epidemic/plague²⁰ may have foiled the Assyrians, it is more likely that Assyria's campaign was directed towards crushing the rebellions in the olive oil producing coastal town of Ekron and the Shephelah's town of Lachish (Thompson 2000:186). Thompson (2000:187) explains that Jerusalem's true historical value in the hill country area, both politically and economically, was, despite the prominence given to it by the Bible, very brief. Lachish dominated the olive oil trade (which was the major cash crop in the Judean highlands) and it was Lachish that had been the regions primary threat to Assyria's policies, which supported Jerusalem's control of Judah.

The full extent of the Assyrian onslaught is seen in almost every mound excavated in Judah. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:260) point out that this was not random violence, but a carefully crafted campaign that was designed to methodically destroy Judah's economy and wealth. This is clearly evident at the second city of Judah, Lachish, which was situated in Judah's most fertile agricultural area. Lachish was literally razed to the ground and 15,000 men, women and children were buried in a mass grave (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:260,262). Armstrong (2006:101) observes that Hezekiah's 'patriotic pride and chauvinistic theology' was responsible for the destruction of his previously flourishing kingdom. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:263, 264), point out that the Shephelah never recovered from Sennacherib's violent assault and devastation, and that Judah's population declined

²⁰ This speculation may well be motivated by the biblical author's account that states that 'the angel of Yahweh slew 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp and the army was forced to withdraw' (2 Kings 19:35) (Armstrong 2006:100-101).

dramatically. Extensive tracts of fertile land in the Shephelah were also given to the city-states of Philistia by Assyria. Hezekiah was also forced to pay tribute to Assyria and many Judahites were deported to Assyria. Despite Hezekiah's piety and his faith in Yahweh and his saving intervention, Hezekiah's YHWH-alone motivated foreign policy had cost him his prosperous state and had left him with the very small city-state of Jerusalem (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:264; Armstrong 2006:101). Assyria was the only victor.

3.6.3 The Reign of Josiah and the Deuteronomists

Armstrong (2006:157) notes that the seventh century was the turning point for the religion of Judaism. After the death of Hezekiah's son, Manasseh (687-642 BCE), who had moved away from the YHWH-alone movement of his father, his son Amon replaced him. Amon's reign, however, was short lived as the nationalistic aspirations of the people led to his assassination two years later in Jerusalem (Armstrong 2006:157). Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:275) note that the sixteenth lineal descendant of King David, the eight year old son of Amon, Josiah was put on the throne. His early life remains vague and the account of his religious awakening (2 Chronicles 34:3) is, Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:275) observe, at best 'biographical idealisation after-the-fact'. Armstrong (2006:159) explains that the account of Josiah's 'religious awakening' probably meant that he had become a follower and a proponent of the YHWH-alone movement.

Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:275-276) explain that Josiah was perceived by many as their greatest hope for national redemption and was seen as:

a genuine messiah who was destined to restore the fallen glories of the house of Israel. Because of – or in accordance with – the tenets of a law book “miraculously” discovered in the temple of Jerusalem, he embarked on a campaign to root out every trace of foreign or syncretistic worship, including the age-old high places in the countryside.

Josiah had been cast in this, his messianic role, because of the theology of a new religious movement that arose due to the discovery of a written text. It was during alterations to the Temple in 622 BCE, that this text which has been identified by most scholars as the original form of the book of

Deuteronomy was supposedly 'found' by Josiah's priest Hilkiah (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:276). Armstrong (2006:160) points out that with this written text, how 'religious truth sounded completely different when presented this way', that is, in the form of a written text as opposed to an oral proclamation. 'Everything was clear, cut-and-dried – very different from the knowledge imparted by oral transmission' (Armstrong 2006:160).

This written text's discovery was a pivotal moment in history as the theology of these texts dramatically changed the concept of what it meant to be an Israelite, and in doing so, laid down the foundations for the future of Judaism and Christianity. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:276, 280) indicate that besides being regarded as the definitive law code that was given to Moses at Sinai (whose observance would ensure the survival of the people of Israel), that these Deuteronomistic texts were also the catalysts that literally sparked a religious revolution and a complete reformulation of Israelite identity, in that

- they contained the central features of biblical monotheism:
- they established the exclusive worship of one God, in one place;
- they centralised, national observance of the main festivals of the Jewish year (Passover, Tabernacles); and
- most importantly and of value to this study, these texts also contained the Axial-derived ideas of 'legislation dealing with social welfare, justice and personal morality'.

3.6.4 The Deuteronomists were the intellectual elite of their time

Armstrong (2006:160, 164) also explains that these Deuteronomists made Yahwism, and ultimately Judaism, into a religion of the book, and that this meant that written scripture would, from now on, become the benchmark for religious orthodoxy in the West. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:280) also draw attention to the fact that the appearance of these written texts in 622 BCE, slots in to the archaeological record of the spread of literacy in Judah during this period. Biblical historian Moshe Wienfeld (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:281) has proposed that Deuteronomy reveals similarities to early Greek

literature. This is seen in the way that they both articulate ideology within set speeches in their format of blessings and curses and in both their ceremonial praxis for the foundation for new settlements.

The Deuteronomists were the new intellectual elite of their time and in true Axial fashion, as described by Eisenstadt (2006:540-541), the Deuteronomists were crucial in altering and redesigning new institutional concepts and belief systems. They achieved this through their proclamation and implementation (via various methods of control) of new cultural patterns that produced new Axial-derived perceptual frameworks and belief systems. Armstrong (2006:161) notes that, despite the Deuteronomist's claim that they were conservatives who were returning to the original faith of Israel, they were instead, extremely innovative and were responsible for the extraordinary religious development and literary expression of national identity, to the extent that the era of Josiah heralded a dramatic new stage in Judah's history (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:289).

In keeping with the essential Axial Age decoupling of their cosmological realm, Armstrong (2006:162) notes the most important ways in which they created a secular sphere with its own morality and regulations which governed conduct alongside the religious cult. The Deuteronomists creation of a secular sphere was, in essence, the essential Axial division between, and the separation of, religion and politics, or as Assman (2006:151) so clearly states, between state and church, and has to be understood as one of the most significant aspects of the Axial age. This Axial cosmological decoupling was also seen in their judicial reforms. Prior to their reforms, tribal elders at local shrines had administered justice, but the Deuteronomists set up a supreme court in Jerusalem and they appointed state judges in every city.

The Deuteronomists' perception of rulership was also typical of the Axial understanding as described by Arnason (2006:46,47). Arnason explains that in Axial civilizations, the 'King-God', the embodiment of the cosmic and earthly order alike, disappeared and a secular ruler, in principle accountable to some higher order, appeared. Thus Armstrong (2006:162) points out that the

Deuteronomists divested the king of his traditional powers and removed him from the sacred realm, in that he now became a secular king, and not a sacred figurehead. The king's only duty was to read the written Torah, 'diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes, neither exalting himself above other members of the community nor turning aside from the commandments, either to the right or to the left, so that he and his descendants may reign long over his kingdom in Israel' (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

In sharp contrast to pre-Axial concepts, where it was usually permissible to only consume meat that had been ceremoniously sacrificed in designated sacred areas, the Deuteronomists moved to condone the secular slaughter of animals as well. This was a practical innovation as well, as all local temples had been abolished in their move to centralise worship in Jerusalem (Armstrong 2006:161).

3.6.5 Josiah's death marks the end of Judah's spiritual revival

Josiah's life ended unexpectedly and abruptly. There are two accounts in the Bible, the terse and pithy account in 2 Kings 23:29, and a more detailed account in 2 Chronicles 35:20-24, which converts Josiah's death into a battlefield tragedy (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:289-290). The Deuteronomists hope of Josiah as their 'divinely anointed messiah who was destined to redeem Judah and lead it to glory' (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:291), was dashed on the hill of Megiddo where he was slain by the Egyptians led by Necho in 611 BCE (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:291; Armstrong 2006:165-166). Josiah's death marked the end of a period of 'spiritual revival and visionary hopes' (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:291). Armstrong (2006:166) points out that

None of the reforms survived his death. The dream of political independence had been shattered, and Judah was now a bit player in the struggle between Egypt and the new Babylonian empire, which threatened its very survival.

3.6.6 Babylonian Conquest and Exile

Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:296) draw attention to the value of the Babylonian exile and post-exilic Jerusalem, and the remarkable impact that these experiences had on the continuing development of Israel's religious belief system. It was during these periods that the texts of both the Deuteronomistic history and the Pentateuch underwent extensive revisions and additions, which would lead to their final format. It was also during this period that the people of Israel would create 'new modes of communal organization and worship in Babylon and Jerusalem during the sixth and fifth centuries BCE that would form the foundations of Second Temple Judaism and thus of Christianity' (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:296).

3.6.7 Judah is provided with the catalyst for Axial transformation

Armstrong (2006:167) explains that the key catalyst for all this Axial change was their experience of 'unbridled, shocking violence'. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:297) point out how the people were confronted with scenes of total destruction and filled with feelings of utter hopelessness as Jerusalem was finally razed, along with the Temple in 587 BCE. The people also lost their young king, Jehoiachin, in 597 BCE when he submitted to the first Babylonian invasion in 597. They also lost their last reigning Davidic king, Zedekiah, in 587 BCE, who was blinded and exiled, as well as his sons and heirs, who were murdered at the same time. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:302) explain that in addition to the recent and unexpected death of King Josiah, the Babylonian's destruction of Jerusalem and their Temple also served to deal the people a shocking *theological* blow in that 'the unconditional promise of YHWH to David of the eternal rule of his dynasty in Jerusalem – the basis for the Deuteronomistic faith – was broken'. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:303) remark that this situation would have cast the authors of the Deuteronomistic history into a state of anguish, for 'how could their sacred history be maintained in this time of darkness? What could its meaning possibly be?'

In 587 BCE the Babylonians returned and deported another 5,000 people and left mainly the poor non-elite and those who had defected to Babylon behind in war ravaged Judah²¹. Judah itself was incorporated into the administrative structure of the Babylonian empire, and Armstrong (2006:167) notes that a third group of people were sent into exile in 581 BCE. Archaeological surveys have revealed that, contrary to some scholarly views that posit that the exile was not that traumatic, the Babylonian invasion was, in fact, very brutal and that their subsequent devastation was far more intense and devastating than the Assyrian invasion of Israel had been. Judah, Armstrong (2006:168) notes, had entered a 'dark age, one of the most miserable periods of its history'.

These tragic events began in 597 BCE when the young Judean King, Jehoiachin, initially submitted to the first Babylonian invasion, under Nebuchadnezzar, who invaded Judah and deported 8,000 exiles, including the king. This fateful invasion had been sparked by their rebellion against Babylonian rule. This first group of exiles included members of the royal family, the military, the aristocracy and many skilled artisans. Armstrong (2006:167) draws attention to the fact that it was this first group of deportees, from 597 BCE, who were responsible for creating the new Axial vision. When the shock of their defeat and exile began to fade the deportees realised that the need for a history of Israel was indeed urgent. These people had lost all that they valued and held dear, their homes, villages and cities, their land, their tombs, Jerusalem and their temple as well as political independence and their four centuries of Davidic rule. They understood that an updated and revised Deuteronomistic History would be the best way for the exiles to reassert their identity and that it would provide them with a concrete link to the land of their forefathers, to Jerusalem and their temple and to the past history of their respective dynasties. From these aspirations arose the 'second'

²¹ Finkelstein and Silberman (2001: 306-307) note that the majority of the populace did not go into exile and that they continued their agricultural way of life as before. Certain towns remained, such as Mizpah, north of Jerusalem, and that people still visited the ruins of the temple in Jerusalem, where they continued to conduct some type of cultic praxis (Jeremiah 41:5). Finkelstein and Silberman also note that the Judahite community who remained behind were composed of artisans, scribes, priests, prophets as well as the poor villagers. They also point out that an important part of the prophetic work was compiled in Judah, such as the books of Haggai and Zechariah (2001:307).

distinctive Deuteronomy, known to scholars as Dtr2 (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:303).

This was also the time period of the prophet Jeremiah, who remained behind in Judah, and that of Ezekiel, who was deported to Babylon in 597 BCE. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:307) also draw attention to the fact that both archaeology and the texts reveal that between the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, and the return of the exiles after Cyrus' proclamation in 538 BCE, that Judah was not in total ruin and uninhabited. Nevertheless, the returning exiles did alter the settlement pattern of Judah. Slowly urban life in Jerusalem began to increase and many of the people who returned from Babylon also chose to settle in the Judean hills. According to the accounts of Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7, the number of repatriates was approximately 50,000. On the other hand, we are not certain whether this was the final total after a period of a 100 years, or if this was the total population of Judah that included those who had remained behind. However, archaeology has shown that these figures are far off the mark. Survey data from all the fifth and fourth BCE settlements in Judah have shown that the total population was in the order of 30,000 people. It was thus this small post-exilic community of that time that was so influential in shaping later Axial-based Judaism (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:308).

3.6.8 Ancient Israel's first Axial Age begins to draw to an end

The closing of the (first) Jewish Axial age at the time (which is primarily related to the discussion in this study) seems to have been mainly connected to the Israelites difficulties of dispersion and resettlement and particularly with their return from exile. Armstrong (2006:379) explains that the Axial Age did, however, re-appear again in a rich and complex florescence during the first century CE. The original key Axial Age ideas were clearly evident in the more highly developed and advanced inclusive spiritual concepts of the progressive Pharisees. Even though these advanced Axial spiritual perceptions are, strictly speaking, not part of the initial Jewish Axial Age, they are still the original Axial ideas, in essence, and are as applicable and valid today as they

were when they were articulated and extended in the first century CE. The Pharisees most significant and timeless Axial ideas were the following:

They believed that the whole of Israel was called to be a holy nation of priests and that God could be experienced in the humblest home as well as in the temple. He was present in the smallest details of daily life, and Jews could approach him without elaborate ritual. They could atone for their sins by acts of loving kindness rather than animal sacrifice. Charity was the most important commandment of the law (Armstrong 2006:379).

In light of certain extreme religious factions who, in their attempt to justify their violent behaviour, will insist on accepting the Bible as the literal word of God, the words of the eminent Pharisee, Rabbi Hillel (c 80-30), are now more apt than ever before. He was clear about the fact that the written text (the Torah) was not the literal letter of the law, but its *spirit* and his view was perfectly expressed in his Golden Rule. The Talmudic account of Hillel's pronouncement of his Golden Rule is told in the Talmudic story where a pagan is said to have approached Hillel and promised to convert to Judaism if the rabbi could teach him the entire Torah while standing on one leg. It is said that he replied:

What is hateful to yourself, do not to your fellow man. That is the whole of the Torah and the remainder is but commentary. Go learn it²² (Armstrong 2006:379).

This Axial-derived Golden Rule of Hillel, along with the previous teachings of universal compassion, acts of loving kindness and social justice, formed the central tenets of Judaism. Jews, Armstrong (2006:380) states, were now obliged to all move away from the violence and divisiveness of their years of war and conflict, and were now morally bound to build a (new) united community with 'one body and one soul'.

²² Rushkoff (2003:31) points out that Hillel is careful to express his Golden Rule in the negative. 'Do unto others what you would have them do unto you', the inverse of Hillel's Golden Rule, he explains, has a completely different meaning. He points out that the inverse is 'a particularly dangerous phrase in the mouths of reformers and the Crusaders, who used this positively stated rule to justify the killing of non-Christians. According to their logic, if you yourself would rather be slain at the hands of a righteous man than die a nonbeliever, then you must kill all nonbelievers! Hillel's negative phraseology, like Maimonide's negative theology, keeps any particular command from God out of the equation'.

The Rabbi's classic Axial Age principle that 'the ultimate reality was transcendent and ineffable', and that no one could have the last word on the subject of God meant that, in true Axial fashion due to the decoupled cosmological realm, the teaching of God was no longer confined to the sacred/transcendental realm. The teachings had been promulgated on Mount Sinai, and were thus the indisputable possession of every single Jew, so, 'it did not belong to God anymore'. Consequently, we were not to listen to any *bat qol*, (voice) from heaven, let alone to any human who claimed to speak for or on God's behalf (Armstrong 2006:382). These Rabbis, moreover, said that each Israelite had experienced God in their own particular way.

All these marked Axial social and political changes in Judah (described above), were also linked, just as they were in Israel, to the appearance of the Judahite prophets²³ like Micah, Jeremiah Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah and an intense overall Axial religious transformation, that was, initially, driven by these prophets, as well as by Josiah and the Deuteronomists, and according to Knohl, the Holiness School as well (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:246; Armstrong 2006:157, 159, 161).

3.7 THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF JUDAH

3.7.1 Judah's religious praxis is varied and polytheistic

In Judah during the Axial Age right up to and including the Late Monarchic times, Yahweh was also worshipped along with Baal, Asherah, the hosts of heaven and other deities such as the Egyptian deities along the coast of the Shephelah (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:242; Thompson 2000:171). The cult of Yahweh was not strictly monotheistic – Yahweh was worshipped with a consort such as Asherah and at times with an accompanying heavenly retinue. Jeremiah also tells us about the many other deities that were worshipped in Judah (Jeremiah 11:16). The book of Kings speaks of the

²³ Armstrong (2006:171) states that Job *may* have been an exilic as well as an Axial prophet, whose key aim was to illustrate that God, himself was without compassion, and that his text also reveals that some exiles themselves may well have lost all faith in Yahweh. I have, however, chosen not to discuss Job in this study.

priests of the countryside who burnt incense on a regular basis at high places to the sun, the moon and the stars. Religious praxis also varied. It included public worship at Temple, open air altars, shrines and high places with priest and priestess to private worship (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:242; Thompson 2000:172). In the temple in Jerusalem, Yahweh was also worshipped along with other deities.

3.7.2 Judah's religious praxis as revealed by archaeology

Archaeological finds such as incense, altars, clay figures, libation vessels and offering stands from Judah, reveal that religion was extremely varied and that it was not geographically centralised or confined to Yahweh or the Jerusalem Temple (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:241). Thompson (2000:168) notes that this allowed regional characteristics of religion to evolve over time, in the same way that language dialects tend to become fixed as a result of stability instead of political and/or state dominance. Thus Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:241) concur when they note that Judah's religious rituals were performed in two different arenas, the Temple in Jerusalem and amongst the clans of the countryside. Powerful kinship ties bound and shaped not only their daily lives, but the clan's religious rituals praxis as well. The clan's rituals were related to land, fertility, ancestral blessings and the sanctification of their pastures and fields (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:241). Dever (2005:117) states that these clan holy places were used for private family worship and not for set regular services. There was no prescribed theology, no priestly supervision and no need to conform.

3.7.3 Religious worship was not confined to the Jerusalem Temple

Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:241), in relation to these variations in clan based religious praxis, proceed to note that both Baruch Halpern (biblical historian) and Lawrence Stager (archaeologist), have compared the remains of highland Iron Age settlements with the biblical description of clan structures and have recognized a definite pattern of extended family compounds where the compound residents executed rituals that were, at times, markedly different from those at the Jerusalem Temple. It is also worth noting that local tradition and customs were adamant that Judahites inherited not only their

homes and lands but also their tombs from their God and their ancestors. People offered sacrifices within their clan compounds, at their family tombs and at open altars in the countryside (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:241). Dever (2005:111-125) speaks of these shrines, which he defines as a local holy place that served a single nuclear family unit, a small-extended household or a group of related families. They include many examples such as: the 12-11th century BCE hilltop village of 'Ai that lies north east of Jerusalem; Tel Rehov in the northern Jordan Valley and Tel Amal, a small 10th century Israelite village, to name a few.

Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:241) point out that these places of worship were seldom disturbed, even by the most pious and zealous of kings, and that given their origin and traditional role in ancient religion, it is not surprising that the Bible should repetitively state these 'high places where not taken away'. It would therefore appear that the existence of these high places and household shrines and places of worship was not an apostasy from an earlier purer faith but simply part of a much older (pre-Axial) tradition of the hill country (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:241-242), or if we follow Rainey's theory, then it might have to be part of an older (pre-Axial) tradition that the Aramean pastoralists brought with them into these highlands.

3.7.4 The cult of Yahweh was not truly monotheistic

Archaeological finds have indicated that the cult of Yahweh was not strictly monotheistic – archaeological artefacts such as the discovery of hundreds of naked fertility goddess figurines in Judah, have revealed that Yahweh was worshipped with a consort such as Asherah. These figurines were usually small standing women cupping their breasts, and were found in large numbers in late Monarchic Judah, in the heartland of Judah between Beersheva and Bethel. In the West, they are found as far afield as the Lachish-Beth-Semesh line (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:353). Not all scholars agree about Asherah's role as consort, but Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:242) and Dever (2005:160-167) both speak of Asherah and the early 8th century site of Kuntillet Ajrud in the northeastern Sinai. Both men agree that this was an 'Israelite' site and that it had contact with the Northern Kingdom of

Israel and with Judah. The site yielded many fragmentary Hebrew inscriptions that, for unknown reasons, have never been adequately published in catalogue or photo format to date (Dever 2005:162).

The most telling body of Hebrew inscriptions disclose references to four deities: Yahweh, El, Baal and Asherah. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:242) appear to be cautious about the inscription's reference that connects Asherah to Yahweh, as they say 'They (the inscriptions) apparently refer to the goddess Asherah as being the consort of YHWH'. But Dever (2005:162) is more confident and supports his view that these inscriptions do reveal Asherah's relationship to Yahweh and bases it on his understanding of Hebrew grammar. However Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:242) do proceed to concede that should Asherah's status as consort to Yahweh, appear more than just 'a sinful northern hallucination', that an analogous formation, that mentions YHWH and his Asherah also appears in late-monarchic inscriptions from the Shephelah of Judah.

3.7.5 Varied forms of ancient religious and syncretic praxis existed in Judah

During the Axial Age religious praxis varied. It included public worship at Temple, open-air altars, shrines and high places with priest and priestess – to private worship (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:242; Thompson 2000:172). Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:242) draw attention to the fact that archaeology and biblical sources all show that, within the temple in Jerusalem, Yahweh was also worshipped along with other deities, right up to late monarchic times. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:242) note that all the prophets are direct about the many deities that were worshipped together with Yahweh. Thus, Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:242) note that Jeremiah informs us that 'the number of deities worshipped in Judah equalled the number of its cities and that the number of altars to Baal in Jerusalem equalled the number of bazaar stalls in the capital' (Jeremiah 11:13). Furthermore, there were cult objects connected to the dedication of Asherah, and the hosts of heaven that were installed in the Temple as well. The prophet Ezekiel viewed these syncretic practices as an abomination and spoke about them (in Ezekiel 8), as well as

the worship of the Mesopotamian god of Tammuz alongside Yahweh in the Temple at Jerusalem. Thus, Thompson (2000:169) rightly observes that all this evidence reveals that the Iron Age 'cult of Yahweh proved to be more typical of the ancient Near Eastern religious world than of biblical tradition'.

3.7.6 The YHWH-alone movement appears in Judah

In keeping with the general Axial Age shift to monotheism, a similar movement towards monotheism (the YHWH-alone movement) also arose in Judah in the late 8th century and early 7th century BCE. After the fall of Samaria, a new perception of religion and religious law arose. It was tempered by temple and priestly groups (such as the Deuteronomists) who were moving to define the 'correct' methods of religious conduct and worship, based on social justice, compassion and pure monotheism (Cantor 1984:24,26; Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:247; Knohl 2005:211).

3.7.7 The YHWH-alone movement is linked to Axial ideals

This transformation was also linked to the newly emergent Axial idea that holiness now depended on a combination of two factors, namely, ritual observance *plus* the adherence and praxis of the moral commandment(s) (Knohl 2005:211). Consequently, Armstrong (2006:86) notes that this religious transition in the eighth century prompted the people of Israel and Judah to reflect and contemplate their situation and current events of their time. These classic Axial Age traits of increased reflexivity and second order thinking that Eisenstadt (2005:537, 538) speaks of, and that Armstrong observes (above), were responsible for the people's analysis of events, and their current historical context, which in true Axial manner, served to challenge their previous pre-Axial notions of the divine.

3.7.8 The Axial perceptual framework shift provides the base for the Judeo-Christian tradition

This study would like to draw attention to the fact that this major Axial Age styled perceptual shift in their religious belief system framework was so intense that Biblical historian Baruch Halpern has suggested that it was in this small period of a couple of decades in the late eighth and early seventh

century BCE, that the monotheistic Judeo-Christian tradition, ethos and civilization emerged (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:247).

Scholars offer differing opinions on the source of these Axial Age ideas, but they agree that these ideas first occur in the post-Omrade writings of Elijah and Elisha (written well after the fall of the Omride dynasty). These ideas are also central to the works of prophets Amos and Hosea, who were active in the north in the eighth century BCE. (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:247-248). Armstrong (2006:87) points out that Amos and Hosea were the first literary prophets and that although their disciples initially transmitted their traditions orally, they were written down and formed part of the prophetic oracles by the end of the eighth century BCE. During this period, the art of literacy had spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean and western Semitic world. Prior to this, Armstrong (2006:86) notes, the use of writing had been primarily reserved for practical, administrative purposes. However, the scribes now began to set up royal archives and to record and preserve ancient stories and customs, and by the end of the century, she notes that the Torah had most probably been written down as well (Armstrong 2006:86).

Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:306-307) explain that after the Babylonian conquest, a type of cultic activity appeared to continue amongst the ruins of the Temple in Jerusalem. He also points out that amongst the group left behind in Judah were prophets (such as Jeremiah) and priests as well as scribes.

It is therefore clear from the discussion above, that neither the Northern Kingdom nor Judah's Axial Age derived religious ideas and beliefs were expressly those of a group removed from the rest. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:248) also mention other possible sources, such as dissident priests and prophets, who in the final days of the Northern Kingdom, were appalled by the idolatry and social injustice of the Assyrian period. Some scholars have also pointed to certain factions that were connected to the Temple in Jerusalem and whose motivation was to gain religious and economic control over the rapidly developing countryside. However, I believe that Axial Age reflexivity

and the conditions created by their Axial decoupled realm, allowed ancient Israel and Judah's Axial Age religious belief systems to emerge in more than one specific location, and among more than one particular group of their religious elite. This is an idea that Israel Knohl, the Professor of Biblical Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has also put forward and is one that I discuss further on. The religion and praxis of ancient Israel, discussed above, also serve to reveal the constant exchange of cultural ideas through cross-border amalgamation and anastomosis which they experienced in their ever 'changing political realities of empire and trade' (Thompson 2000:168).

3.8 THE DYNAMICS OF AXIAL RELIGIOUS CHANGE WITHIN ANCIENT ISRAEL

The dynamics of Axial Age religious change becomes evident in the Torah during the eighth century BCE. Both Armstrong (2006:90-94) and Knohl (2005:201-221) mention and discuss the way in which the Torah began to reflect the ideas and vision of the Axial Age and the Prophets in the eighth century BCE. Armstrong discusses the J and E narrative and what they reveal in relation to the Axial Age, while Knohl examines the Holiness School and its relationship to Ancient Israel's Axial Age.

3.8.1 Armstrong and the J and E narrative

This section examines Armstrong's work on the J and E narrative (2006:90-94). Armstrong (2006:90) points out that the general fear of writing seemed to diminish in the eighth century in the Near East as kings began to document traditions that reflected well on their kingship and rule. These written texts were duly collected and kept in libraries. She continues to point out that although scholars cannot put exact dates to the production of the two early texts, known as the J narrative (since this author referred to God as Yahweh) and E narrative (as the E author called God *elohim*, a more formal divine title), that they were probably combined and written down in the late 8th century and placed in the royal archive in Jerusalem (2006:91).

These two narratives, J and E, represent two different perceptions of Ancient Israel's religious tradition. J most likely came from Judah while E would appear to have come from the Northern Kingdom. Armstrong indicates that these narratives had probably been used in the early cult of Israel, but by the eighth century they had been replaced by the royal liturgies of Samaria and Jerusalem. This enabled the writers of this phase to extend and create a more adequate account of the origin and history of early Israel (Armstrong 2006:91).

The J narrative tends to focus on Abraham while the E narrative tends to concentrate on Moses. But neither J nor E depicts Moses as a lawgiver and neither mentions the Decalogue. However, E does include a collection of ninth-century laws (also known as the Covenant Code), which does reveal Ancient Israel's pre-Axial understanding and emphasis of the importance of justice to the poor and weak (Armstrong 2006:920).

Armstrong (2006:93) proceeds to draw our attention to the first signs of Axial Age spirituality, that she calls *kenosis*, within the J and E narratives of the Torah. This *kenosis* is seen in J's account of Abraham's vision of Yahweh at Mamre.

Abraham's response to the three strangers reveals the classic Axial religious spirituality of 'personal surrender, combined with practical compassion' that allowed Abraham, in this instance, to encounter the divine. The E narrative's account of the binding of Isaac is also of particular value to the emergence of Axial compassion as it serves to illustrate that, prior to the Axial Age's revised perception of God, that 'Israel's *elohim* was not only a friendly, benevolent presence, but was sometimes terrifying and cruel, leading his devotees to the brink of meaninglessness' (Armstrong 2006:94). Thus, this E narrative clearly reveals the pre-Axial 'destructive potential of an experience of the divine, before it was established that any violence – physical or psychological – was incompatible with the sacred' (Armstrong 2006:94).

3.8.2 Knohl and the Holiness School

Although the Hebrew Prophets are synonymous with the emergence of Axial Age change in Israel, Knohl (2005:203-204) points to the clear connection between the prophets' vocal protestations and the subsequent Axial Age transformation that it triggered in the priestly circle. The Axial transformation of the priestly circle is extremely valuable, within the context of this study, as it duly illustrates that a community can revise and transform key concepts and its ethical template and still retain its core identity.

Knohl (2005:203-221) discusses Torah and Holiness, and reveals how these concepts were transformed during the 8th century. Knohl (2005:207, 208) offers us a new perception in relation to the P (priestly source) of the Torah. The general understanding has been that the distinctly different linguistic and stylistic Leviticus 17-21, also known as 'The Holiness Code', antedated P, who subsequently edited it. But Knohl claims that H is later than P and also points to many other sections in P that belong to the H school. He calls P 'the Priestly Torah' and H is 'the Holiness School' (Knohl 2005:208).

According to Knohl, the old Priestly school wrote the Priestly Torah, from the 10th century BCE to approximately the second half of the 8th century BCE which was the time of Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah. Knohl notes that during this period, the priests formed an elite group whose attention was focussed on the 'hidden, divinity ensconced within its shrine' that was encircled by the walls of the sanctuary, which ultimately served to separate the priestly elite from the non-elite (Knohl 2005:208-209).

But the Axial Age changes, discussed above, only served to intensify and exacerbate the sharp divide between all the elite and the non-elite. This growing polarisation increased dramatically when a large segment of the populace lost their land when the elites forced them to sell their ancestral plots for subsistence, forcing many into slavery to survive. This unjust situation arose because the elites rigid observance of law was not coupled to

the praxis of morality (Knohl 2005:209). Knohl explains that this occurred because the people believed that they could gain sanctity merely through the meticulous praxis (and observance) of cultic law and ritual alone (Knohl 2005:209).

Although it is well recognised that this social and religious crisis of the 8th century prompted the prophets to speak out and call for change, Knohl also draws our attention to the fact the priesthood were also aware that they needed to 'transcend the limits of the temple and enter the broader avenues of the nation, even at the price of surrendering the loftiness of earlier faith and practice of the priestly elite' (Knohl 2005:209). Knohl notes that this crisis is clearly evident in the writings of the prophets of this period, namely Amos, Isaiah and Micah, who all noted the divide that existed between cult and morality (Knohl 2005:209).

Prior to 800 BCE, the Priestly Torah had a distinctive perception of the relationship that existed between cult and morality. Their perception called for a sharp divide between cult and morality, which meant that two realms were entirely removed and interdependent of each other. For the Priestly Torah, Knohl explains, 'morality was universal, while the divine revelation to the people of Israel was wholly in the realm of religious ritual and worship' (2005:209-210). This perceptual framework indicates that the Priestly Torah was incapable of responding to the prophets' criticism and was in no position to offer a solution to the crisis (Knohl 2005:209-210).

This impasse clearly demonstrated the need for change and innovation within the priestly camp. Consequently, the religious crisis and prophetic criticism of this period (\pm 850 BCE) was responsible for the emergence of the Holiness School within the ranks of the Priestly Torah circle. The Holiness School, Knohl points out, moved to address the people as a whole 'and worked towards an integration of the popular and Priestly faiths; this school of thought wanted to exit the ivory towers of the priesthood and approach the nation and its spiritual needs' (2005:208). Knohl (2005:208) also points out that

Only the Holiness School with its integration of both priestly and popular contents, could have gathered all the different codes and traditions and forged them into a single book, for they alone were both tied to the Priestly heritage and open to the nation as a whole and in this manner could have acted as the cement, the bridge reaching across the various writings. By making the priestly laws available to the whole nation in the framework of the Torah they gave the people access to the holy sphere of the sanctuary.

The most important part of the Holiness School's innovation was linked to their rejection of the Priestly Torah's sharp demarcation between morality and religious ritual praxis, as the Holiness School combined morality and ritual. Knohl (2005:210) notes that they wanted *all* the people of Israel, not just the priests, to be holy and that this is clearly apparent in Leviticus 19:2, which states:

Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them:
You shall be holy, for I the LORD God, am holy (Leviticus 19:2).

Before the Holiness School, in the Priestly Torah, holiness was exclusively linked to the theme of religious ritual, for example, the Temple, sacrifices, and holidays. Consequently we find that although these concepts appear in Leviticus 19, they are also accompanied by specific ethical commandments (19:18) such as

Love your fellow as yourself (Leviticus 19:18)

You shall not falsify measures (Leviticus 19:35-36)

Knohl (2005: 211) points out that the Holiness School, by placing these ethical commandments alongside the ritual commandments, wanted to instill the idea that if you wanted to be holy, that you needed to combine ritual praxis and morality. The Axial inspired concept of holiness, for the Holiness School, meant that what you did and how you behaved now became just as important as ritual praxis, thus it was now incumbent on all to work for social justice, care for the poor and the weak and to love their fellow person (Knohl 2005:210-211).

Although the prophets and the Holiness School agree on the value of social justice and righteousness, the Holiness School is not critical about the ritual aspect of religion. However, despite their total devotion to ritual, they were still

intent on drawing attention to the close affinity of religion and morality as components of holiness (Knohl 2005:211).

Knohl (2005:212) also draws attention to the Holiness School's attempts to set up a 'programme of reform, to rectify the wrongs of the day'. He notes many instances where this is seen, for example: the jubilee year which now became, for the Holiness School, a year when *all* social inequality was to be redressed. The Holiness School, also for the first time in Biblical literature, rejects the concept of slavery within Israelite society (even though non-Israelites could still be enslaved), for 'it is impossible for an Israelite to be enslaved to one of his brethren. They are all slaves of the LORD' (Lev. 25: 44-46).

Knohl (2005:213) explains how the Holiness School broke through the walls of the sanctuary and granted everyone access to God. They did this by giving up the religious sublimity of the elitist and esoteric Priestly Torah and by accepting the popular customs of the people. This is seen in the way that they embraced the popular offering of the first fruit and the *omer* offering. Their aim was to integrate the priesthood and the nation, which they intended to achieve by calling on the whole nation to live a holy life. In this way 'all the people of Israel became priests of sorts' (Knohl 2005:214). They stated that all the people of Israel had been called to lead lives of holiness and in this way they began a revolution in the religious life of Israel. Knohl (2005:215) observes how 'the effects of this revolution can be traced to the religious and spiritual development of Israel, not only in the time of the first Temple, but to the second Temple as well'. In this way the Holiness School also set the foundations for the central idea of Second Temple mainstream Judaism, which was later to continue among the Pharisees (Knohl 2005:215).

Knohl (2005:221) states that the Holiness School's tendency to extend the limits of the sacred and to enable access to the holy for all people, are Axial Age changes. These changes began in 850 BCE during Israel's Axial Age

with the Holiness School who was being castigated by the prophets. The Pharisees subsequently took up this trend and continued to develop it.

The key lesson that we may glean from ancient Israel's major Axial Age transformation within their religious belief system and popular customs is that it clearly illustrates that:

- Civilizations that are flexible and open to change do not necessarily lose their core identity
- These civilizations capacity for change and adaptation increase the odds of long-term survival.

These are pertinent observations that relate to Africa's reluctance to consider new ideas beyond the horizons and their reluctance to redesign archaic aspects of their African traditional Religion and Ethics, which is discussed further on.

So, in keeping with changing patterns in the Axial Age, the Hebrew prophets arose when social inequality and injustice demanded new religious responses and systems in ancient Israel. Their response was shaped by the Axial Age realisations that actions had consequences and that people needed to accept responsibility for their own lives (Armstrong 1993:36; Armstrong 2000a:xii).

CHAPTER 4: THE HEBREW AXIAL AGE PROPHETS

4.1 THE AXIAL HEBREW PROPHETS

The Hebrew prophets²⁴ were not mystics, neither were they enlightened men (in the Buddhist context) who had experienced their internal enlightenment after a lengthy, self initiated and disciplined quest (Armstrong 2006:87). Armstrong (2006:87) notes that these prophets were men who experienced the divine as ‘a rupture, an uprooting, and a shattering blow’ and that their religious experiences were often ‘accompanied by strain and distress’. Armstrong (2005:93) points out that these Hebrew prophets also felt obligated to dismantle the old myths that they perceived as incompatible with their Axial reform. Consequently, prophets such as Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel all took it upon themselves to radically revise the ancient stories as Yahweh’s all-encompassing transcendence only served to reveal how empty they had become in an Axial context.

Isaiah’s nerve-racking vision that called him, revealed a seraph that flew past him and touched his lips with a live coal. This action symbolically purified him so that he could speak the words of God. Armstrong (1993:52-53) explains that Isaiah was totally overwhelmed with fear and terror when this visual summons to prophesy came upon him so unexpectedly that the incident made him call out these words:

What a retched state I am in! I am lost,
for I am a man with unclean lips
and I live among a people of unclean lips,
and my eyes have looked at the king, Yahweh Sabaoth.
(Isaiah 6:5).

These Hebrew prophets were men who had been called (or, who call) to God to speak and spread His word. Hence, the Hebrew word for prophet is ‘Nabi’ – that is, one who is called or who calls (Armstrong 1993:54; Cantor 1994:25). Cantor proceeds to explain that as men chosen to speak God’s word, they

²⁴ The word ‘prophet’ does not mean one who can foretell the future. The word ‘prophet’ comes from the Greek ‘*prophetes*’ which means one who speaks on behalf of a deity (Armstrong 2006:64).

were God's 'chosen successors to Abraham and Moses as truth speakers of divine intelligence' (1994:25).

These Axial Hebrew prophets divine summons to prophesy was a call that they were literally 'forced' to pursue. Armstrong (1993:57) draws our attention to Amos and how his response to the call to prophesy captured his personal sense of duty and obligation to do so in these words:

The lion roars; who can help feeling afraid?
The Lord Yahweh speaks: who can refuse to prophesy?
(Amos 3:8).

4.2 THE AXIAL HEBREW PROPHETS COME FORWARD

These Hebrew prophets were not men who were eager to go about and proclaim Yahweh's message. In fact, this mission filled them with grave anxiety and deep reluctance. It was as if these Axial prophets subconsciously seemed to grasp the fact that the transformation of Israel's pre-Axial God into an Axial symbol of transcendent power, would not be a simple and undemanding process. The prophets seemed to understand that this task would be difficult and that it would be fraught with pain and suffering (Armstrong 1993:53).

Norman Cantor (1994:24) proceeds to describe the Hebrew prophets as 'visionaries and rigorous moralists who made public pronouncements communicating Yahweh's current message to the people'. These prophets were men, Armstrong (2006:87) notes, who spoke out in the name of Yahweh. They spoke out against the government of their day and the indulgent lifestyles and material culture of the elite (Armstrong 2006:87; Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:212-213; Cantor 1994:24). They castigated the new elites whose actions were responsible for a large segment of the population's loss of land when the elites forced them to sell their fields and ancestral plots for subsistence, forcing many into slavery to survive (Knohl 2005:209). This unjust situation arose because the elites rigid observance of the law was not coupled to the praxis of morality. Knohl (2005:209) explains

that the people believed that they could gain sanctity merely by the meticulous praxis (and observance) of cultic law and ritual alone. Armstrong (2006:88) draws attention to the fact that this type of injustice was also a religious as well as an economic problem. In the Middle East, a king who ignored his obligations to the marginalised and the oppressed violated the decrees of the gods and called his own legitimacy into question. Consequently, she notes, it was therefore not surprising that these prophets rose up in the name of Yahweh to criticise their governments.

These prophets did not, Cantor (1994:24) notes, simply advocate a return to the customs, practices and a way of life of earlier times. These were progressive men who demanded fulfilment of morality and social justice as well as the pure worship of Yahweh. They came forward at a time when it was vital to reorganise their religious belief frameworks and their traditions so that they would meet the revised Axial needs and conditions of the people (Armstrong 1993:49).

The Axial Age's decoupling of the cosmological realm also facilitated the prophets' emergence. This Axial separation of the sacred/transcendental and the profane/mundane realm allowed religion to become an autonomous domain. This, in turn, permitted religion to become an independent springboard from which it now became possible to transform all other domains (Assman 2005:153). From within this new framework, the Hebrew prophets were now able to step forward as the first ground breaking examples of Axial Age creative individuals. As exceptional creative Axial individuals they became 'the most effective bearers of new ideas against conservative traditions, and of inner spiritual aspirations against obstacles in the external world' (Arnason 2005:22-23). Armstrong (2005:95) explains that these prophets felt that 'they were taking their people into an unknown world, where nothing could be taken for granted, and normal responses were denied'. However, she points out that 'eventually this stress gave away to serene confidence, and the religion that we know call Judaism came into being' (2005:95).

4.3 THE PROPHETS AND THEIR RESPONSE MODELS

As we have seen from the work above, Israel's decoupled cosmological realm and its subsequent changing patterns and developments in its Axial Age prompted the emergence of their Hebrew prophets. These Axial prophets' response was shaped by the Axial Age realisations and the understanding that people needed to accept responsibility for their own lives (Armstrong 1993:36; Armstrong 2000a:xii). Armstrong (2006:87) notes that the first literary Hebrew prophets were Amos and Hosea, who were clearly alarmed by the social and religious crisis of their day.

In true Axial fashion, Amos and Hosea introduced an important new Axial dimension – empathy, which meant that ritual had to be accompanied by ethical conduct and social justice. These prophets also imparted a new Axial sense of spiritual awareness, that Armstrong terms *kenosis* and defines as the dismantling of egotism (see above). But what this new Axial spiritual awareness really meant, in their context, was that Amos and Hosea wanted people to understand that religion (and its praxis) should not be used to 'inflate communal pride and self esteem' (Armstrong 2006:90). These prophets wanted to encourage everyone to literally abandon their egotism and to examine their inner lives (their internal dialogue, a *hesed* with their God) and to develop a deeper overall vision that was drawn from personal introspection. Armstrong (2006:90) notes that these Axial religious ideas of Amos and Hosea were also appearing in parts of the Torah that were being produced at the same time.

Initially Amos and Hosea's teachings were orally transmitted by their disciples, who eventually wrote them down at the end of the eighth century, and in doing so, compiled anthologies of prophetic anthologies. These recorded final texts also included the words of the successive prophets, which makes it more complicated when any attempts are made to ascertain the authenticity of

individual prophets. But it is obvious that both Amos and Hosea were deeply distressed by the social crisis of this period (Armstrong 2006:87).

4.3.1 Amos

Amos (760-750 BCE) was the first prophet to emphasise the importance of social justice and compassion and was extremely conscious of the agony of human suffering. He spoke on behalf of 'the oppressed, giving voice to the voiceless, impotent suffering of the poor' (Armstrong 1993:57). He operated in Israel under Jeroboam II. He was originally a shepherd from Tekoa in Judah who was directed, by Yahweh, to go and observe life in Israel (Armstrong 2006:87). Amos offered a searing criticism on the blatant social inequality due to the uneven distribution of wealth and the elite's extravagant lifestyles in 8 BCE:

Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the midst of the stall; who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David invent for themselves instruments of music, who drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils (Amos 6:4-6).

He brought them no message of consolation but castigated them instead for misunderstanding their role as God's 'Chosen'. He reminded them that as 'the Chosen', they have no privilege but have instead a responsibility (what Alex Bein (1990:53) explains as 'chosenness for greater duties – service to God and the consecration of life' not 'capricious favouritism'). Amos tells them they are as bad as the Gentiles for they blatantly ignore all social injustice within their community, they oppress the poor, they neglect widows and orphans, they practice bad business and commit acts of extortion and exploitation and they exhibit a total lack of compassion across the social spectrum. Amos tells the people that Yahweh says, 'Never will I forget a single thing you have done' (Amos 8:7). He reminds them that God had not intervened in history to exalt Israel – No! God had intervened to secure social justice! (Armstrong 1993:58).

They, along with Jeroboam, who had also neglected his duties to the poor, would suffer hardship. Jeroboam would be killed, the country would be

destroyed and the people would, according to Amos 7:17, be ‘taken into exile, far distant from its own land’ (Armstrong 2006:88).

Armstrong (2006:88) points out that the prophets were akin to modern political commentators. Consequently, Amos could clearly see that Jeroboam was involved in a high risk venture by allowing Israel to be a vassal state of Assyria, and that it would be simple for Assyria to obliterate Israel, should the need arise.

This observation enabled him to jolt the people by giving them the first of three distressing new messages. His first message was that:

Yahweh was no longer reflexively on the side of Israel, as he had been at the time of the exodus (Armstrong 2006:88).

This message shocked the people of Israel who had continued to see Yahweh as a divine warrior who would stride down from the southern mountains to assist them should the need arise. But now, according to Amos, Yahweh, the divine warrior, would *not* align Himself with Israel. Yahweh was now going to lead a holy war, through the king of Assyria, *against* Israel and Judah, and He would proceed to crush the kingdoms of Amon, Damascus, Moab, Philistia and Tyre as well (Armstrong 2006:88).

In keeping with the iconoclastic nature of Axial age spirituality due to the marked increase in reflexivity and second order thinking, Amos represented the classic embodiment of what Arnason (2005:22-23) has described above as ‘the most effective bearers of new ideas against conservative traditions’. And Amos, as the personification of ‘the effective bearer of new ideas against conservative traditions’, now proceeded to present the people with their second agonizing message. In this message, Amos expressed both derision and Yahweh’s distaste for Israel’s religious rituals and festivals, and what Dever (2006:105) so incisively ascertains as Yahweh’s rejection, not only of sacrificial rite *per se*, but of the self righteousness, hypocrisy and dependency that this (classic pre-Axial) rite produced. In Amos 5:21-24 he states that Yahweh objects to sacrifice by saying:

I hate your feasts,
I take no pleasure in your solemn festivals.
When you offer me holocausts,
I reject your oblations,
And refuse to look at your sacrifices of fattened cattle.
Let me have no more of the din of your chanting,
No more of your strumming of harps

Instead, Armstrong (2006:88) states that Amos was adamant that what Yahweh truly wanted was genuine piety and universal compassion, instead of empty ritual, thus Amos says:

But let justice flow like water,
And integrity like an unfailing stream

Amos condemns those who 'pay lip service to the dictates of religion while gathering riches for themselves and abusing the poor' (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:213). In Amos 8:4-6 we read:

Listen to this, you who trample on the needy
and try to suppress the poor people of the country,
you who say, "When will the New Moon be over
so that we can sell our corn,
and the sabbath, so that we can market our wheat?
Then by lowering the bushel, raising the shekel,
By swindling and tampering with the scales,
We can buy up the poor for money,
And the needy for a pair of sandals
And sell the refuse of the wheat"(Amos 8:4-6).

Just as in the present, people in the past were reluctant to heed Amos' words and enter into their own personal dialogue and relationship with God (Armstrong 1993:58). As always, very few people elect to follow the Axial derived religious concept of universal compassion. The majority of men and women still tend to prefer to assume outward signs of piety, such as the ritually appropriate praxis of worship in synagogue, church, temple and mosque (Armstrong 1993:58).

Amos' third painful message for the people was meant to undermine the pride that they took in their (perceived) exclusive relationship with Yahweh. He told them that they were mistaken as Yahweh had also liberated and assisted the

Arameans and the Philistines and settled them in their respective promised land (Amos 3:1-2; Amos 9:7-8) (Armstrong 2006:88-89).

Amos' words were designed to pierce the national ego and undermine Israel's self-esteem. His words were chosen to induce the essential and ideal Axial Age spirituality of self-surrender. Amos wanted the people to stop using their religion to prop up their sense of self-worth and use it instead to help them rise up above self-interest and to begin to rule with equity and justice. These words that Amos spoke were, for Amos, not his words but those of Yahweh and as such, they were an expression of his empathy with Yahweh who had experienced the injustice of His people as a personal humiliation (Armstrong 2006:89).

4.3.2 Hosea

Hosea (c 745 BCE) also operated in Israel under Jeroboam II at approximately the same time as Amos. Hosea's understanding of Yahweh's distress when His people, the Israelites, literally went whoring after other gods, was brought to the fore for Hosea when his own wife joined the Baal fertility cult and became a sacred prostitute. Hosea equated his desire to win back his wife with what he felt Yahweh must feel when He considered granting His faithless people a second chance. Although Hosea, like Elijah before him, was also moving towards monotheistic Yahwism, his concern was ethical. The Baal cult practices had led to moral decay and sexual promiscuity as people regularly visited sacred prostitutes. Their sacrificial feasts encouraged drunkenness and their priests were not able to offer moral or spiritual guidance as they could only seek advice from wooden idols (Armstrong 2006:89).

Thus, unlike Amos who spoke out against social injustice and the lack of compassion, Hosea was concerned about the peoples' relationship to God. Hosea felt that people did not understand or know Yahweh and that their religion was superficial in that it lacked the essential deep-seated Axial spirituality (Armstrong 2006:88). What Hosea was attempting to do, was call for this deeper sense of Axial religious awareness and consciousness. He

wanted people to cultivate an inner dialogue and ‘knowledge’ of God, a bond with God – a *‘hesed’* – that should take precedence over ritual and public praxis. Thus, Hosea 6:6 states ‘I desire loyalty (*hesed*) and not sacrifice; the knowledge of God, not holocausts’. Unlike Amos, he saw God as compassionate in that God would give Israel another opportunity to redeem itself (Armstrong 1993:60, 2006:90).

Through their words, Amos and Hosea established an important new Axial perception within the Israelite religion when they stated that ritual praxis without ethical behaviour was of no value. For these Axial Prophets, religion was not a tool that people should use to boost their personal and communal self-esteem and public pride. These Axial sages wanted people to rather use their religion to help them override their selfish egotism.

Hosea’s call for classic Axial reflexivity and spiritual introspection was also mirrored in the Torah, that was being written at the same time in Ancient Israel and Judah (Armstrong 2006:90). This has already been discussed in greater depth, above when I explored Knohl’s work, which connects the emergence of the Torah’s Holiness School to the religious and social requirements of the Axial Age transformation of Ancient Israel (Knohl 2005:213-221).

In Israel, Amos and Hosea both predicted the fall of the Northern Kingdom. Amos was emphatic that Yahweh demanded social justice, compassion and pure monotheism. Hosea was adamant that the Assyrian destruction of Israel was the result of the Jews’ own actions and their reluctance to repent. In the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the words and message of Amos and Hosea, were brought to the fore by men like Isaiah and Micah (Cantor 1994:24).

4.3.3 Isaiah

Isaiah (742 – 701 BCE) was a member of the Judahite ruling class who was called to speak as a ‘nabi’. He was told by Yahweh to go out and speak to men and women who would refute and reject him. Despite the fact that Judah was about to be conquered and its inhabitants deported, no one wanted to

hear that they had brought political ruin upon themselves through their own greed, their selfish and unjust behaviour and bad governance. This, Armstrong notes (1993:54), is because *'humankind cannot hear very much reality'* (italics mine). Isaiah did not comfort by offering refuge in cultic praxis and tradition. Instead he made his 'fellow countrymen look the actual events of history in the face and accept them as a terrifying dialogue with their God' (Armstrong 1993:53). Isaiah's words were bleak and fitting as he delivered the following message while Assyria was in the process of conquering the Middle East:

Until the towns have been laid waste and deserted,
Houses left untenanted,
Countryside made desolate,
And Yahweh drives the people out.
There will be a great emptiness in the country,
And, though a tenth of the people remain,
It will be stripped like a terebinth (Isaiah 6:11-12).

Isaiah's stark message also serves to illustrate how his words were designed to awaken people to the Axial Age realisation that all individual actions have consequences for the present and the future generations.

Like Hosea, he also wanted the people to realise that sacrifice was meaningless. In true Axial Age manner, Isaiah understood that what people needed to do was to restore universal concern and compassion to their religious praxis and to the way that they conducted their daily lives. Therefore, Isaiah told the people that what Yahweh really wanted from them was compassion, not sacrifice (Armstrong 1993:56):

You may multiply your prayers
I shall not listen
Your hands are covered with blood
Wash, make yourselves clean.
Take the wrongdoing out of my sight.
Cease to do evil.
Learn to do good,
Search for justice,
Help the oppressed
Be just to the orphan
Plead for the widow (Isaiah 1:15-17).

What Isaiah wanted, Cantor explains, was that people should understand that their religious praxis must 'be fulfilled by the spirit and sensibility' of social justice (1994:26). Hence, 'a behavioural code without intense moral consciousness is not the [Jewish] way'. Instead, 'law fulfilled by justice is the [Jewish] way' (Cantor 1994:26). By upholding this classic Axial Age principle, the prophets managed to combine the law with the prophetic tradition, producing what Cantor (1994:26) defines as 'a religion of command with a religion of moral commitment'.

Isaiah came forward to speak when the Middle East was caught up in a period of great upheaval and dramatic change. The military forces of Assyria, under Tiglath-pileser III, were intent on extending their empire and creating a uniform culture throughout their empire (Armstrong 2006:94, 96). The Assyrian strategy of disposing of rebellious kings and replacing them with Assyrian governors and of deporting a nation's entire elite ruling class served to completely alter the face of the Middle East.

The violent war with fleeing refugees and widespread deportation not only led to mass spiritual and physical dislocation but raised important theological questions as well. Prior to the Assyrian conquest, god(s) tended to be particularistic and confined to the borders of the nation who chose to worship them. But the Assyrian conquest under the auspices of their god Asshur was troubling. Did this mean that Asshur was now more powerful than the god(s) of the kingdoms that Assyria defeated? For the people of Judah, after the fall of Samaria in 722, did this indicate that Asshur was now more powerful than their Yahweh? (Armstrong 2006:96).

Isaiah, however, was not concerned about this. His response, in the form of a vision, to this dilemma, was a perfect example of Axial religious thought that moved toward the universal, as opposed to particularistic, concept of God. In Isaiah's vision of Yahweh, He proceeds to reveal Himself, not as a particularistic deity, but as a universal deity, literally as 'the king of the whole world' (Armstrong 2006:98). This meant that other nations would be obliged to

accept the kingship of Yahweh as well and to 'hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into sickles' (Isaiah 2:2-4; Armstrong 2006:99).

However, it is also at this moment that we begin to realise that some of Isaiah's key ideas and beliefs belong more to the old pre-Axial cultic world. This is seen in his blind belief in the so-called power of Judah's Davidic tradition, which was essentially a form of pre-Axial 'magic theology' which 'encouraged people to believe that a divine potency made Jerusalem invincible' (Armstrong 2006:96,99):

God is inside the city, she cannot fall.
At crack of dawn, God helps her;
To the roaring of nations and tottering of kingdoms,
When she shouts the world disintegrates (Psalm 46:5-6).

Isaiah, Armstrong (2006:98) notes, also informed the people, that Yahweh (again in keeping with pre-Axial beliefs) was, once again, their divine warrior. Thus Yahweh was not simply just their national God, but their God of history as well. Consequently, Yahweh, by behaving with the greater brute force than Judah's enemies, would defeat Judah's opponent, Assyria (as pre-Axial gods were perceived to do). But as Armstrong (2006:99,101) points out, Judah's patriotic pride and its blind faith in its (chauvinistic) Davidic tradition with its belief in (pre-Axial) magical theology, would cost Judah dearly in the future.

After the fall of Samaria there arose, alongside the new YHWH-alone movement, a new desire to re-establish the United Kingdom of David and Solomon by melding the remnants of the Northern Kingdom with the kingdom of Judah (Finkelstein & Silberman 2002:248-249; Armstrong 2006:100). Finkelstein (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:249) notes that this alignment between a religious factions' desires (in this instance, the YHWH-alone movement that grew into the Deuteronomistic texts of the seventh century) and the political, economic and cultural spheres' desires of the ancient period, was not unusual. These spheres, just like today, could not be that easily separated. This yearning was seen in the reforms of King Hezekiah. Although the Bible chooses to remember Hezekiah as one of the greatest kings of Judah, his YHWH-alone linked foreign policy (with its territorial aspirations)

was catastrophic. Hezekiah's entry into an anti-Assyrian coalition brought the wrath of Assyria to bear down upon Judah (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:251; Armstrong 2006:100, 101).

Finkelstein (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:263-264) points out that archaeological records at Lachish and certain biblical texts (such as Isaiah and Micah) clearly reveal that Assyria's calculated campaign of economic destruction was, despite Judah's belief in their Davidic tradition (or as Armstrong so succinctly puts it above – their pre-Axial belief in their 'magical theology'), tragically successful. Consequently, Finkelstein (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:264) observes that:

For all the Bible's talk of Hezekiah's piety and YHWH's saving intervention, Assyria was the only victor. Sennacherib fully achieved his goals: he broke the resistance of Judah and subjugated it. Hezekiah had inherited a prosperous state, and Sennacherib destroyed it.

4.3.4 Jeremiah

Jeremiah lived between 627-587 BCE. Jeremiah's world was different to the world of Amos and Hosea. Initially Hezekiah's successor, his son, Manasseh, was determined not to repeat his father's errors and remained a loyal vassal of Assyria. Armstrong (2006:157) notes that Judah prospered under his reign. But, Manasseh was not involved with the YHWH-alone movement and he proceeded to place an effigy of Asherah in the Jerusalem temple, to rebuild the rural shrines and altars to other gods, that his father, Hezekiah, had destroyed. He also proceeded to institute child sacrifice outside Jerusalem. During his reign, he brought great wealth to some, but social dislocation and uncertainty to many. In the rural areas discontent began to smoulder and it soon erupted after his death. His successor, his son Amon, was assassinated in a palace uprising, by the social and economic elite of Judah after two years on the throne and replaced by Amon's eight-year-old son, Josiah who at sixteen aligned himself with YHWH-alone movement (Armstrong 2006:157; Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:273, 275).

Josiah's affiliation was strengthened by the 'discovery' of the *sefer torah* scroll by his priest Hilkiah. Armstrong (2006:159) notes that most scholars tend to believe that this scroll contained an earlier account of the book of Deuteronomy. Finkelstein (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:280) agrees and points out that particular and direct similarities between the ideas contained in Josiah's reforms and the contents of Deuteronomy, clearly reveal that they shared the same ideology. As we saw from above, when we examined the historical context of Judah, Josiah's attempts at religious reform were completely unsuccessful as none of his reforms survived his untimely and unexpected death at Megiddo (2Kings 23:29) (Armstrong 2006:166).

Jeremiah's context was ultimately shaped by Judah's persistent dreams of political independence, and by the wrathful Babylonian invasion of Judah, in the wake of another failed attempt, on Judah's part, to gain their independence. It is also worth noting that not all the Israelites subscribed to Deuteronomism in the years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon (Armstrong 1993:68). Jeremiah, Armstrong (2006:168) notes, had always supported Babylon, as he had understood that rebellion was both utterly foolish and futile. Armstrong (1993:69) explains that Jeremiah also reintroduced the iconoclastic perspective of Isaiah, which reversed the triumphalist doctrine of the Chosen people in the sense that God was now perceived as using Babylon to punish Israel and that it was now 'Israel's turn to be put under ban'.

Jeremiah was a reluctant prophet who disliked his calling and yet he appeared to be duty-bound, literally against the constraints of his body and mind, to constantly remind people that they were facing 'violence and ruin'. His continuous and never-ending lament opened him to public ridicule. Yet he felt powerless and all the pain that he experienced was, for him, God's anguish, abandonment and humiliation, and the wrath that he felt in his heart was God's wrath and not his (Armstrong 1993:70; 2006:170). This pain, Armstrong (1993:69) explains, was so intense that she defines it as a *mysterium terribile et fascinans*. At one stage Jeremiah's pain was akin to both rape and seduction at the same time, hence the prophet says:

Yahweh you have seduced me and I am seduced,
You have raped me and I am overcome....
I used to say, "I will not think about him,
I will not speak his name any more",
There seemed to be fire burning in my heart,
Imprisoned in my bones.
The effort to restrain it wearied me,
I could not bear it. (Jeremiah 20:7,9)

This paradox meant that the prophet's highly unique anguish drove him to present himself as a man of mourning, one whose heart was filled with fear, anger and melancholy. This new emerging Axial concept of God was forcing Jeremiah and the people to decouple their cosmological realm and remove themselves from the mythical consciousness of their pre-Axial religious context that was prevalent in the Middle East of that time. Jeremiah was thus driven to experience this radical Axial cosmological decoupling as a painful dislocation and a highly emotional state (Armstrong 1993:69: 2006:169-170). Jeremiah, as an Axial Age prophet, had no choice, as he was compelled to deal with this Axial cosmological decoupling and transformation, as denial is never an option for any Axial Age sage, as it impedes enlightenment (Armstrong 2006:169-170).

Jeremiah did not subscribe to any of the prevailing 'magical theology'²⁵ of his time, which was espoused by other prophets²⁶ and by a large group of the public alike. He told the people that it was entirely useless to go around chanting 'This is the temple of Yahweh!' and expect these specific words to function as a powerful 'magic spell' that would keep the Babylonians at bay. Jeremiah also repeatedly warned them that unless they all radically altered their beliefs and way they conducted their lives, that Yahweh would, indeed, tear down the city of Jerusalem. These words were treason and they almost

²⁵ The prevailing, (and may I add, a typical pre-Axial) belief of this time was based on the idea that Yahweh, literally, resided in (His) Temple In Jerusalem. Consequently, the reasoning went that the neither the Temple nor Jerusalem could thus be destroyed (Armstrong 2006:168). Deist explains that Jeremiah did not subscribe to the Nationalist Davidic Theology, (or 'magic theology' as Armstrong prefers to call it), as he was a proponent of Mosaic theology that stated that national salvation depended on people upholding the terms of their covenant with God. Hence Josiah's death and their defeat were based on the peoples' own actions and that the nation was responsible for its own downfall (Deist & Le Roux 1987:114).

²⁶ Deist & Le Roux (1987:113) mentions Hananiah as one of the prophets who espoused Davidic theology.

led to his execution, but fortunately he was acquitted (Armstrong 2006:168). Jeremiah's grim prophetic words that warned King Jehoiakin of a coming 70 year exile, also served to inflame the king, who grabbed the scroll out of the prophet's hands and is said to have cut it up and tossed it into the fire (Armstrong 1993:68). Although Jeremiah feared for his life and did go into hiding for a period of time, he re-emerged as he felt compelled to continuously walk up and down the city streets and stubbornly persist in declaring his bleak prophecies to all the people (Armstrong 1993:68; 2006:168).

Contrary to popular belief, Jeremiah was not a pessimist, he was a realist and he was right. His undaunted and brave decision forced him to demand that people must all perceive their situation as it really is. This position was a perfect example of one of the basic principles of the Axial Age. Armstrong (2006:168) explains that Jeremiah rightly understood that the people would remain spiritually and physically handicapped if they refused to acknowledge the truth, regardless of how unpalatable and frightening it may be.

This perception of the value of truth also required him to speak out in opposition to the prophets in exile who were providing words of false comfort and hope to the deportees. He felt obliged to send the exiles a written letter where he told the deportees to resign themselves to their fate, and that their exile would probably last for approximately 70 years. He encouraged them to build houses, marry, have families and settle down. Jeremiah told them that Yahweh would destroy Jerusalem, and that his message to them was that they must 'work for the good of the city to which I have exiled you; pray to Yahweh on its behalf, since on its welfare yours depends' and that these exiles would, if they could absolve their hearts of anger and hatred, enjoy a 'future full of hope' (Jeremiah 29:4-20) (Armstrong 2006:170). Armstrong (2006:170) explains that Jeremiah firmly believed that the deportees of 597 BCE, and not the men and women who had remained behind in Judah, would save Israel.

After the fall of the Jerusalem Temple, Jeremiah also began to reflect and comprehend the fact that ritual and the external trappings of religion were

simply 'symbols of an internal and subjective state' and that God's covenant with Israel would now, in the future, be very different as it would become (in true Axial fashion) a more spiritual and internalised concept of God, which would be seen in their moral conduct as opposed to their ritual: 'Deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it in their hearts' (Jeremiah 31:33) (Armstrong 1993:710).

4.3.5 Ezekiel: Israel's Axial Prophet in Exile

The sum of all the anguish, the pain and the loss that the Judahites felt at the hands of the Babylonians made some of the people of Israel turn away from Yahweh completely. Some, like the Jews that Jeremiah visited in the Delta area in Egypt, were certain that Yahweh was to blame for their predicament and decided to return to a pre-Axial religion, and chose to follow Ishtar, the Queen of Heaven, instead (Armstrong 1993:70).

However, many of the people of Israel were beginning to turn within. This war induced reflection and introspection allowed them to finally grasp and embrace the key Axial realisation, espoused by Ezekiel, that each individual person must take sole responsibility for his/her own life (Armstrong 2006:170; Deist & Le Roux 1987:117). This realisation did not lessen the shock of exile and although they were not forced to assimilate, their loss of status and power did induce a sense of powerlessness that they equated with the bonds of slavery. Hence their use of words like: *masserah* (bonds) and *Ziggin* (fetters) (Armstrong 2006:171). Armstrong (2006:170-171) discusses the possibility that the Book of Job may well have been written by Exiles who had lost all faith in Yahweh, and if so, it would indicate that some of the community may well have lost their faith in Yahweh. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter is that many, after reflection, did react positively and creatively to exile, and that they began to revise and re-adapt their religious belief system accordingly. These were people who had lost all that they valued and all their familiar touchstones that had given shape and gravity to their lives: their king, their temple and their land. But they managed to transcend their fear, their pain and their loss and were now prepared and not afraid 'to rewrite their history, revise their

customs, and to find a radically innovative interpretation of their sacred symbols' (Armstrong 2006:172).

Ezekiel, a young priest, was part of the original group of exiles who had been deported in 597 BCE. Initially, he had remained housebound in his home in the village of Tel Aviv, and spoke to no one, for about 5 years. Armstrong (2006:172) observes that his personal spiritual journey, from the agony of exile to the acceptance thereof, was facilitated by a cycle of visions. Ezekiel remained behind closed doors until a powerful, bewildering and life altering Axial vision of Yahweh drove him back into to society as a prophet of Yahweh.

This powerful vision occurred in 593 BCE, in exile, prior to the destruction of Jerusalem or the fall of the Temple (Armstrong 2006:172). This is a is a description of Ezekiel's vision by Armstrong:

Ezekiel had seen a cloud of light, shot through with lightening. A strong wind blew from the north. In the midst of this stormy obscurity he *seemed* to see – he is careful to emphasise the provisional nature of the imagery – a great chariot pulled by four strong beasts. They are similar to the *karibu* carved on the palace gates in Babylon yet Ezekiel makes it almost impossible to visualise them: each one had four heads, with the face of a man and a lion, a bull and an eagle. Each one of the wheels rolled in a different direction from the others. The imagery simply served to emphasise the alien impact of the visions that he was struggling to articulate. The beating of the creatures' wings was deafening, it "sounded like rushing water, like the voice of Shaddai, a voice like a storm, like the noise of a camp". On the chariot there was something that was "like" a throne and sitting in state was a "being that looked like a man". It shone like brass, fire shooting from its limbs. It was also "something that looked like the glory (*kavod*) of Yahweh" (Ezekiel 1:4-25). At once Ezekiel fell upon his face and heard a voice addressing him (Armstrong 1993:71).

The impact that this vision had upon Ezekiel and his understanding of Yahweh took place when:

the voice called Ezekiel "son of man" as if to emphasise the distance that now exists between humanity and the divine realm. Yet again, the vision of Yahweh is to be followed by a practical plan of action. Ezekiel was to speak the word of God to the rebellious sons of Israel. The non-human quality of this message is conveyed by a violent image: a hand stretches towards the prophet clasping a scroll, covered with wailings and moanings. Ezekiel is commanded to eat the scroll, to ingest the word of God and make it part of himself. As usual, the *mysterium* is *fascinans* as well as *terribile*: the scroll turns out to taste as sweet as honey. Finally,

Ezekiel says, “the spirit lifted me and took me; my heart, as I went, overflowed with bitterness and anger, and the hand of Yahweh lay heavy on me” (Ezekiel 3:14-15). He arrived at Tel Aviv and lay “like one stunned” for a whole week (Armstrong 1993:71-72).

Armstrong (2006:172) explains that before Ezekiel could bring this divine message to his people, he was, in his vision, forced to eat it, and in doing so he was ‘painfully assimilating the violence and sorrow of his time’. After the Babylonian invasion and exile God had, in effect, become incomprehensible and alien, in the same way that Ezekiel had experienced his exile in the Babylonian city of Tel Aviv. The trauma of war and exile had destroyed the deportee’s pre-exile concept of the neat and rationalistic God of the Deuteronomists. God was no longer perceived as a companion, a friend or a king.

Ezekiel’s message was no peaceful clear directive like the Deuteronomists’ text, but one that expressed the exiles collective pain and sorrow. This was a warlike vision that contained the frightening and uncertain aspects of warfare. Ezekiel’s message was a warning to the ‘defiant and obstinate’ exiles that he was their prophet whom they should heed. He proceeded to tell them that although Yahweh could offer them no comfort, that he had left his shrine in Jerusalem. God had come to align himself with them, his people in exile. This was despite the fact that the Temple was still standing. Ezekiel went on to explain that after a new set of visions, Yahweh had left Jerusalem and the temple due to the idolatry and immorality of the people who had remained behind in Judah. However, Ezekiel was very clear about the understanding that the exiles, of 597, must realise that their actions were also directly (in Axial fashion) responsible for their current situation. They were not to dream of returning home. They had been sent into exile to repent, and that the full weight of their painful exile should be acknowledged and used to enable them to construct a moral, just and compassionate life in Babylon (Armstrong 2006:173).

Ezekiel’s numerous and highly bizarre experiences as well as his intense anxiety and strange nervous afflictions, may, Armstrong (2006:173) suggests,

have been his unspoken message to the exiles. All his afflictions and certifiable (by today's standards) behaviour, would appear to be what he personally felt was the way that all the exiles should feel. It was as if he wanted the exiles to literally feel their displacement and spiritual dislocation as intensely as he did, so that they would also feel compelled to behave as irrationally and erratically as he did. Ezekiel did not want them to be upbeat about their plight, as an Axial prophet, he had no desire to comfort. He wanted them, as all Axial sages do, to examine their interior lives and to brutally discard all their false hopes and delusions (Armstrong 2006:173-174). Ezekiel wanted the people to see their situation in exile and their Babylonian context for what it was.

Armstrong (1993:72) observes that Ezekiel's highly surreal and vision-packed life in exile also served to illustrate, after the decoupling of Israel's cosmological realm and their exile, how distant and removed the divine world/realm now appeared to humanity. This is a clear, new divide or gap, that Eisenstadt (2006:538) refers to when he speaks about the task of bridging the gap between these two distinct realms, once the cosmological realm is decoupled.

Ezekiel had a series of visions that primarily utilised temple and ritual-related imagery that was familiar to him as a priest. The value of these visions is, however, not confined to the ritual abominations, iniquity, violence and bloodshed that constituted them. Ezekiel's visions were looking well beyond the fall of the Temple and the violence of war. He wanted the people to accept that their current pain and suffering was not only connected to the Babylonian invasion, he wanted them to understand that all this violence was also the result of their own actions (Armstrong 2006:174). This was the core Axial message of Ezekiel's vision – he wanted the people to take individual responsibility for their lot in life and to understand that all individual actions have consequences, for the present and the future generations.

Ezekiel's visions included one of a new life for the exiles as well. In this vision he (figuratively) brought the 'dead bones' (Ezekiel 37:10-11) of the exiled

community back to life, by prophesising over them. These would be the people in exile, whom Yahweh would allow to return home (in the future), when their repentance was complete. Ezekiel, like Jeremiah before him, understood that the people needed to develop deeper inner spirituality, in the core of their being (an Axial religious prerequisite) and he wanted them to change (Armstrong 2006:175, xii, xvi). Only then, when the people had accepted responsibility for their own lives, opened up their hearts and minds to change and concepts of richer spirituality, would they, like the bones in Ezekiel's vision, become human again (Armstrong 2006:175).

Ezekiel's vision of a city called Yahweh Sham²⁷ (Yahweh is there!) was his detailed vision of this restored community. However, Armstrong (2006:175-176) points out that this vision was *not*:

... a literal detailed blueprint for the future or an architectural plan. It was what the people of India would call a *mandala*²⁸, an icon for meditation, an image of the properly ordered life, centred on the divine.

It is most likely that the Axial Age's emphasis on the cultivation of a rich inner spiritual life, enabled Ezekiel's followers to internalise their perception of the Temple and, through reflection and introspection, transform it into an interior, spiritual reality. By contemplating the concentric circles of holiness described in Ezekiel's visionary city, people could, Armstrong (2006:176) explains, find their own spiritual core and the divine spark that dwelt within their being.

Ezekiel was Israel's last true Axial prophet, and is also regarded as the last of the great prophets (Armstrong 2006:176). Although Second Isaiah (also known as Deutero-Isaiah) did express Axial related ideas in four remarkable poems about a man who would shoulder the burden of human suffering, his ideas in the rest of his work heralded the end of Israel's Axial Age. In the first

²⁷ The description of the restored city and community begins in Ezekiel 40 and continues up to Ezekiel 48, where the name of this future city is finally given in the very last line (35) of the book of Ezekiel.

²⁸ Mandala (Sanskrit): a symbolic, pictorial representation of the universe, which is always circular in shape to indicate an all-inclusive pervasion; an icon of contemplation (Armstrong 2006:430).

poem of Second Isaiah's suffering servant, this servant is selected by Yahweh to create universal social justice in a non-violent and compassionate process:

He does not cry out or shout aloud
or make his voice heard in the streets.
He does not break the crushed reed,
Nor quench the wavering flame.
(Isaiah 42:2-3).

This verse reveals the gentle, softspoken, compassionate kindness of the Axial Age where all humans are treated the same. The suffering servant always turns the other cheek and never strikes back. This response is typical of the Axial sages revulsion towards violence and it is also seen in the universal benevolence/compassion of the suffering servant, whose benevolence is typical of the Axial Age and its sages, as it encompassed the whole world. Hence, through the suffering servant's *kenosis* and universal benevolence, the people of Israel now understood that pain was part of the human condition. They also realised that although the servant had restored the tribes of Jacob, Yahweh had demanded more from him, in that he was to be 'the light of the nations, so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth' (Isaiah 49:6) (Armstrong 2006:213-214).

Second Isaiah, however, as stated above, did not embody the central ideals of the Axial Age. He, unlike the Axial Age prophets and sages before him, did not retreat completely from violence and conflict (despite the suffering servant poems), but appeared to embrace and endorse it instead. Armstrong (2006:215) observes that Second Isaiah was clearly not striving for universal peace and compassion, as his words called for violence and war:

Yahweh advances like a hero.
His fury is stirred like a warrior's.
He gives the war shout, raises a hue and cry,
Marches valiantly against his foes
(Isaiah 42:13).

His ideas about the returned exiles safety, was, Armstrong (2006:216) also points out, regressive and pre-Axial, in that they were disturbingly similar to the false prophets who had stated that Jerusalem could never fall to the Babylonians. This pre-Axial perception is seen in the following lines:

Remote from oppression, you will have nothing to fear;
Remote from terror, it will not approach you.....
Not a weapon forged against you will succeed
(Isaiah 54:11-17).

It has become clear, from the discussion above, that these Axial Prophets managed, through their medium of vocal protest, to forge a new Axial-derived religious consciousness for the people of ancient Israel. They achieved this by formulating a new perception of spirituality, within their religious system, that now demanded social justice, individual accountability and universal compassion (Armstrong 1993:69) as well as pure monotheism.

The Axial Age in Israel was, nevertheless, reaching the end. Axial Age transformations usually came about in areas that were in the forefront of radical change and progress. Although Israel and Judah had been at the mercy of imperial powers that had invaded and conquered them, these powers had, nonetheless, extended Israel and Judah's perceptual frameworks and exposed them to different contexts (albeit for many in exile). It is therefore not surprising that ancient Israel's Axial Age peaked, during their exile, in Babylon. Once these exiles returned home and their exposure to new ideas was limited, their worldview shrank accordingly. They were now concerned with the issues and difficulties related to their physical survival, as opposed to their previous concern and quest, which had been their search for new Axial derived religious insights, concepts and vistas. Although Israel's second Axial florescence has only been briefly mentioned, above, (in the section dealing with the Babylonian exile), it is of immense value. Israel's second Axial period of transformation is especially significant to the development of Rabbinic Judaism. It also invaluable and integral to the origin and development of both Christianity and Islam, which were both, built on Israel's Axial Age realisations and insights, from their first and second Axial Age (Armstrong 2006:245, 248). This study will, however, only focus on Israel's first Axial Age, and particularly on its Axial Prophets insights and teachings.

CHAPTER 5: SOUTH AFRICA'S RELIGIOUS CONTEXT PRIOR TO 1652 UP TO THE PRESENT

We have seen from Eisenstadt's work in 2.1.2, that despite their manifestation of certain Axial Age traits, especially in Africa's non-congruent societies, there was no civilization in any part of Africa that participated in a complete Axial transformation, especially on the religious/symbolic level. Eisenstadt (2005:356) does mention the Zulu states (who fall under the group identified as congruent societies), and he does observe that their major centres were organisationally and ecologically well defined and precise. Nevertheless, these centres were not symbolically detached and distinguishable from their outer peripheral limits and although they were formed around elites, these elites were not autonomous. These elites were either enmeshed or embedded in (other) different types of descriptive units. These units, in turn, were marked by a noticeably low degree of tension and by a marked lack of separation between their cosmic/sacred and mundane/profane realms, which meant that they had not succeeded in decoupling their cosmological realm.

5.1 SOUTH AFRICA AND ITS INHABITANTS, PRIOR TO THE INTRODUCTION OF THE AXIAL AGE

5.1.1 The early Bantu-speaking pastoralists

Leonard Thompson (2001:15) along with Davenport and Saunders (2000:8-13) informs us that between the 4th and 18th century CE the ancestors of most of the Bantu-speaking mixed farmers were securing their particular locations in the eastern parts of Southern Africa in the areas with higher rainfall. These people were primarily pastoralists who spread toward the eastern side of this area. They were slowly extending their occupation to acquire more suitable land for agriculture. This move meant that they incorporated or expelled the resident indigenous hunter-gatherers and/or occasionally killed them.

5.1.2 The early Bantu economy and culture

These mixed farmers all had similar economies and cultures and the people had many common cultural identity markers. They also spoke closely related Bantu languages. The people known as the Nguni, who were farmers in the area below the escarpment, spoke dialects of the same language of which the present day surviving languages are those of the Xhosa (in the south) and the Zulu (in the north). The people who reside on the plateau above the escarpment spoke dialects of a different language. The surviving offshoots of this language group are the Sotho (in the south), the Pedi (in the east), and the Tswana (in the west). These two main language groups, that is, those above and those below the escarpment, had a similar syntax and shared a fairly extensive vocabulary. This meant that these people were able to move easily from one community to the next throughout south eastern Africa. Thompson (2001:160) also points out that people who migrated to new areas were thus able to assimilate the local cultures quite rapidly.

5.1.3 The early Bantu mixed farmers

Regional differences did exist, but they were primarily dictated by the varied microclimates. The mixed farmers were more productive than the herders or the hunter-gathers as they owned sheep and cattle. These cattle were their most treasured and valuable possessions and were the yardstick of their wealth. Furthermore, they had access to rich and varied game populations and in addition, the women planted sorghum plus other types of millet, various squashes, a type of tobacco and in some areas grew yams and beans as well. These farmers also gathered indigenous plants and made, used and traded iron weapons and tools as well as copper ornamentation (Thompson 2001:16 -17).

5.1.4 The natural resources

There were rich iron and copper deposits in Phalaborwa in the eastern Transvaal where the people specialised in the working of these metals. In the same area, near the Oliphants river drainage system, there were people who specialised in harvesting the salt crusts formed by the leeching of the saline

springs. These specialisations were responsible for the establishment of complex long distance trade networks that allowed the Xhosa, Nguni and Tswana chiefdoms to exchange iron, copper and cattle amongst themselves. There were also trade networks that permitted the mixed farmers, and the hunters and herders to barter amongst each other (Thompson 2001:18).

5.1.5 Early Bantu relay trade

However, unlike Axial Age civilizations, these people had no professional *merchants* and *no market place*. Their trade was essentially a relay trade and the trade routes were mainly used to move goods from an area where it was plentiful, to an area where a need existed. Furthermore, the mixed farmers mainly used the trade and barter routes to increase their status and their concept of wealth by amassing large herds of livestock, primarily cattle (Thompson 2001:19-20). This practise served to limit productivity, as large herds of cattle were put out on overgrazed pastures that severely handicapped individual cattle body mass and milk production. According to Ralph Austin, whom Leonard Thompson (2001:21) quotes, the rationale behind this African farming praxis appears to be their belief that minimised production would minimise their risks involved in farming with pre-industrial technology.

5.1.6 Early Bantu community structure and settlement patterns

These mixed farming communities were essentially small-scale tribal/societies. Their settlements varied in size and they built non-portable living units out of stone or saplings. These communities displayed individual characteristics, for example, the Sotho who tended to live in villages of approximately 50 – 400 people that included a dominant extended family, perhaps several other families, as well as their dependants. The Nguni however, tended to settle in small hamlets, larger than those of the Sotho that also consisted of extended families and their respective dependants. In the northwest, many villages became interconnected around water sources such as springs or streams. These loosely linked units often merged and grew into fairly large towns, such as the Tswana town of Dithakong which was recorded

in 1812 as a town that was roughly two miles in diameter with an estimated population of 5,000 people (Thompson 2001:21).

These people displayed a strong sense of kinship solidarity and obligation that extended beyond the limits of the nuclear family and included all the members of their small-scale tribal society unit, including the elderly and the ill (Thompson 2001:21). It does not, however, appear to have been universal. Their societies were hierarchal, men controlled women, elders controlled youths, patrons controlled clients and chiefs controlled the commoners. To this end, Thompson (2001:23) quotes the American anthropologist Igor Kopytoff who states that in farming societies throughout sub-Saharan Africa 'there was seldom any equals – one was either a senior or a junior, a superior or a subordinate'. This hierarchal system was reinforced by their education system and life cycle events.

5.1.7 Early Bantu political structures and systems

The political system of the early Bantu developed over a long period of time that began in the 3 or 4th centuries CE when these mixed farmers began to move into southern Africa. The political units were autonomous chiefdoms in that they were territorial units under hereditary chiefs. They varied in size and population and changed over time (Thompson 2001:24).

The chiefs regulated the territorial units' affairs and dealt with the requests and complaints of their people. The main body of conflict was related to issues relating to women or cattle. After a serious debate by all concerned, the chiefs would hand down their judgments. The judgements were based on the tribes' customs, but Thompson (2001:25) points out that the tribes' customs could be adapted to suit the situation. The chiefs' principal goal was always to heal any rifts that appeared in the society and to restore harmony within their communities. This was vital for the continued peaceful existence of their hierarchal structures, both in the visible and invisible world (Sundermeier 1998:21). This was preferable to meting out punishment of a fine or even death when people were found guilty of disloyalty or witchcraft (Thompson 2001:26).

These societies had not reached statehood thus the chiefs had no standing armies. The chiefs relied on the co-operation, respect and goodwill of the people when they required their support for a specific venture. The members of any chiefs' community would simply 'vote with their feet' (Thompson 2001:26) and leave the tribe if specific issues were not satisfactorily resolved. There is no sign of violent warfare amongst the mixed farming communities in Southern Africa before the 19th century. Cattle raids were the most common forms of aggressive display, and were undertaken in an attempt to increase the raiders wealth. The Tswana did, nonetheless, engage in wars of conquest that were mainly fought over limited water sources (Thompson 2001:27).

5.1.8 Bantu mixed farmers encounter aboriginal hunter groups

Over time, the mixed farmers way of life became dominant in the eastern part of Southern Africa. This led to scattered confrontations between the mixed farmers and the aboriginal hunter groups that inhabited these areas. Thompson (2001:28) points out that there is also evidence that, to a certain extent, a friendly symbiotic type of relationship was built up between these two groups, and that it persisted well into the 18th century in the southern highveld on either side of the Caledon River (Thompson 2001:28).

Eventually as the farmers' numbers increased and they began to control the land and the water sources, conflicts arose as the aboriginal hunters began to attack the mixed farmers livestock in their struggle to survive. Thompson (2001:28) tells us that these small skirmishes eventually turned into endemic warfare. Thompson quotes Alberti, who states that the Xhosa lived in 'constant feud' with the hunter/gatherers, who continually stole their livestock (Thompson 2001:28). Thompson also notes that Alberti wrote of a Xhosa, whom he said, 'regards and treats these robbers as beasts of prey', and who kills those that he catches. A German doctor, Henry Lichtenstein is also on record in 1804 as having told the governor of the Cape Colony that 'it was impossible that a *Bosjeman*²⁹ could ever abandon his villainous ways, and it

²⁹ Bushman or hunter-gatherer.

was necessary to destroy such vermin wherever they were found' (Thompson 2001:28).

Nonetheless, the mixed farmers did incorporate and assimilate a substantial number of hunter/gatherers into their societies. This was accomplished when the hunter/gatherers became clients of the mixed farmers and they were eventually assimilated into the mixed farmers community. It also took place when the chiefs began to take these hunter/gatherer women as lower-ranking wives (Thompson 2001:29).

The mixed farmers finally met the indigenous pastoralists when they reached the western limit of the land. These two groups were compatible since they were both livestock owners. Both groups were inclined to merge and they formed mixed communities with cultural and biological roots in both societies, with the mixed farming chiefs finally acquiring control. Not all the pastoralist groups were peacefully and/or voluntarily assimilated as some were incorporated through conquest. Those that were integrated were not removed from their ancient homes and neither were they consigned to a hereditary level of servitude on the basis of their skin colour. These integrated groups became Xhosa, in the sense that they had the full rights to which any Xhosa was entitled. Thompson explains that 'the limits of Xhosadom were not ethnic or geographical, but political: all persons or groups who accepted the rule of Tshawe thereby became Xhosa' (2001:29).

When the Europeans began to settle in the Cape Peninsula, by the middle of the 17th century, the hunter/gatherers and the pastoralists were still the sole occupants of the western part of southern Africa. The mixed farmers and their way of life was primarily dominant in the eastern part with the existence of small areas of unassimilated hunter/gatherers in the mountain escarpment. This was particularly the situation in the Drakensberg range where these people continued to survive until the end of the 20th century. However, as time passed, the mixed farmers became increasingly dominant, with the Tswana chiefdoms in the north and the Gqunukwebe chiefdoms in the south.

The mixed farmers' integration and assimilation of the indigenous hunter/gatherers and pastoralists served to add to the mixed farmers' gene pool. The affect of this is seen in their Bantu languages that began to contain loan words from the hunter/gatherers and pastoralists. Their legacy is also seen in the many non-Bantu River and mountain names in both the eastern and western parts of southern Africa (Thompson 2001:30).

These communities were always changing and they also moved up north, to settle south of the Limpopo, which was previously inhabited by hunter/gatherers and/or pastoralists. The older chiefdoms began to splinter and new chiefdoms came into being. This ongoing process kept producing new chiefdoms whose growth was only checked by the availability of land. The population had almost reached the limits of its viability in relation to its resources by the end of the 18th century. The search for labour, slave or otherwise, the capture and subsequent enslavement of refugees and displaced people due to the Mfecane, as well as the devastation effect of two major droughts, was responsible, along with other factors such as Nguni chiefdom rivalries, for initiating the ultimate collapse of these communities and the redistribution of power among the Bantu speaking chiefdoms. This was a situation that was exacerbated by the arrival of the Europeans and by their move into the interior of southern Africa (Thompson 2001:300; Davenport & Saunders 2000:20, 75).

5.2 EARLY PRE-AXIAL RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF SOUTH AFRICA

Magesa (2002:38-46) provides us with detailed description of African Traditional Religion's (ATR) universal perceptual framework, its hierarchy with a perceived Godhead at the pinnacle, as well the believers' relationship to their Godhead who is intrinsically good, but essentially also remote (2002:43). Magesa also explains that the Godhead has given the ancestors 'a qualitatively more powerful life force over their descendants' (2002:47) and offers a detailed explanation as to how the ancestors came to have this 'force'. Magesa quotes Geoffrey Parrinder (Magesa 2002:47) who explains

that the power of these ancestral spirits is of 'super-human quality', and states that it is this quality and 'not its omnipotence, that makes it so valuable, and some times, so dreadful, to their descendants in any extremity'. Parrinder says that they (the ancestral spirits) are, therefore, more than any other source, the protectors of their society and that they are the real 'authority figures, who maintain the norms of social action and cause trouble when these are not obeyed' (Magesa 2002:47-48). In simple terms, these explanations mean that in ATR belief systems, people believe in a good (as opposed to evil) but remote godhead as well as many supernatural beings (in this instance ancestral spirits), who possess supernatural powers (regardless of where these powers came from); and that these supernatural beings can (and do) intervene in the mundane realm of humans, from the transcendental realm, where they reside.

The above explanation matches Thompson's description of Africa's ATR religious perceptual framework. ATR is a typical example of pre-Axial religious worldview which was perfectly suited to the pre-Axial context for which it was designed. Thompson (2001:27) observes that Africans sought supernatural explanations for any phenomena that they could not account for in material terms. Most importantly, from a pre-Axial perspective, they believed that there are beings (in this instance, their ancestral spirits), in the sacred/transcendental realm who possess supernatural powers and are thus able to intervene in the affairs of human beings in the mundane/profane realm (Thompson 2001:127). Although Magesa (2002:50-51) goes to great lengths to explain the dynamics behind the actions of these supernatural beings, the real issue under discussion here is the pre-Axial idea and belief in the supernatural powers of these supernatural beings and their ability to intervene in the mundane realm.

This study would like to draw attention, at this point, to certain observations that are seldom noted, namely the fact that:

- these beings, with supernatural powers that are referred to as ancestors/ancestral spirits³⁰, in the ATR context, are also recognised by a segment of the mainstream monotheistic religions. They call their supernatural beings saints, angels or even God and these particular beings all exhibit the same trait: they are all perceived as supernatural beings with supernatural powers who are able to intervene in the affairs of human beings and everything else that exists in the mundane/earthly/profane realm, regardless of the religious belief system to which they belong.
- that in some belief systems, such as ATR, *all* their followers believe in supernatural beings and supernatural intervention, whereas in other religious belief systems only a certain number (not all) of people believe in supernatural beings and supernatural intervention.
- The ATR coupled cosmological realm perceptual framework is not confined to ATR belief systems, certain African Christian hybrid churches or to Africa. The continued existence of a coupled cosmological realm within current Christian belief systems is clearly illustrated by the 31% of Americans who believe in an Authoritarian God. This is seen in the statistics, below, from Time Magazine, November 6 2006. (Vol.168:20. pg 32,33).

Time Magazine's *Faith In Figures* survey, from their editorial, *America By the Numbers*, (Adams, Caplan, Dell and Masters 2006:32-33) reveals that 9 out of 10 Americans believe that 'there is something bigger out there'. The report indicates that 68% have *no doubt* God exists, 14% believe in a cosmic, higher power, 11% believe in God *but with some doubts* and 5% do not believe in anything beyond the physical world. Yet, the report shows that although 85% of Americans follow the Christian faith, they clearly do not all believe in the same concepts.

³⁰ Magesa (2002:54) notes that in some West African societies the ancestral spirits extensive power has led people to refer to them as 'gods'.

The report also indicates that the largest segments of believers are Evangelical Protestants, who emphasise the authority of the Bible, salvation through a personal relationship with Jesus and the need to share their faith with others. However, most Evangelicals prefer to be known as “Bible-believing” or “Born-again” Christians.

53% of the believers in an Authoritarian God, are African Americans. These statistics are drawn from a survey known as *American Piety in the 21st Century* of 1,721 randomly selected respondents which was conducted by researchers from Baylor University.

How Americans see God:

- *31% believe in an Authoritarian God.*
This is a God who is deeply involved in daily life and world events. This God is angry at sin and can punish the unfaithful or the ungodly. This view is shared by 53% of the African Americans, as well as by the 56% who strongly believe that God is a “he”.
- *23% believe in a Benevolent God.*
This is a God who is deeply involved in daily life and world events but is mainly a positive force reluctant to punish. Only 13% of people under 30 hold this view.
- *16% believe in a Critical God.*
This is a God who does not really interact with the world but is unhappy with its current state and will exact divine justice. This view is prevalent on the eastern USA (21%), while in the west the figures are 14%.
- *24% believe in a Distant God.*

This is a God who does not interact with the world and is not angry. God is more of a cosmic force that sets the laws of nature in motion. 37% of people with household incomes over \$100,000 a year hold this view. 42% of the Jews subscribe to this view.

- Magesa, (2002:79) observes that this 'intervention' by supernatural being/ancestors from the supernatural realm in human affairs, also includes an African belief in the direct possession of the descendants by their ancestors/supernatural beings. He also notes that is a widely recognised belief and that Africans perceive this as a common event in African Traditional Religion. Africans also believe that their ancestors/supernatural beings intervene in the human realm through their appearance in human dreams and visions, and that these ancestors/supernatural beings are capable of inflicting calamities on their descendants in order to capture the humans attention and to force humans to make the appropriate response. This response in a pre-Axial context is through sacrifice and not the Axial ideals of assuming responsibility for their own actions, the situation or welfare of their fellow humans, or the implementation of Axial-derived universal compassion and social justice.
- many believers also believe that it is possible for certain people, such as African Traditional healers (like the Zulu *isangoma*, or the Xhosa *igqirha*, *amagqirha*) to communicate with and invoke these supernatural beings (by whatever name they choose to identify them or it), to intervene (in a myriad of ways) and exercise their (or its) supernatural power and influence. There are also groups of people who believe that they have experienced these supernatural beings' powers directly in the mundane realm, as a result of certain actions, rituals, incantations and/or prayers.

The type of sacred 'relationship', between believers and their respective supernatural being(s) is often used as an essential defining trait of ATR. For example, in ATR ancestors are *venerated*, while in the three monotheistic faiths, God is *worshipped*. These terms express a religious belief system's specific ideas about the manner in which the believers have chosen to relate to their respective, supernatural beings. It also does not alter the fact that, regardless of how the believers of a particular system may choose to communicate with these supernatural beings, veneration or outright worship, many of these adherents believe that their particular supernatural beings will (and can) use its/their superpower(s) to intervene in the affairs of humans and all that exists in the human/mundane/profane realm.

In doing so, these religious belief systems accordingly subscribe to the pre-Axial religious belief system that is based on a concept of a coupled cosmological realm. This coupled realm shapes the African's view of life which is described by Nyirongo as a perception that 'do[es] not distinguish between the spiritual and physical modes of existence' (1997:25). This key underlying aspect of their religious belief system's perceptual framework *automatically absolves these believers of all concepts of personal responsibility in their earthly/mundane realm.*

5.3 THE PRE-AXIAL RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF SOUTH AFRICA IN THE PRESENT

5.3.1 **The comparison between Pre-Axial Age and Axial Age principles**

Because a pre-Axial perceptual framework absolves believers from personal responsibility in the earthly realm, belief in divine intervention from any supernatural being stands in sharp contrast to the key Axial Age religious principles. These Axial Age religious ideals are based on a decoupled cosmological realm and, most significantly, the central realisation of Axial Age-derived monotheistic religious belief systems (and all other Axial religious belief systems), namely the essential Axial religious understanding that *gods (or any supernatural being(s) with supernatural powers) do not intervene*

directly, in any manner whatsoever, in human affairs in the earthly realm. This Axial Age realisation means that all humans are therefore individually accountable for, and must assume responsibility for their own lives, and for the maintenance of order in the human realm, as well as assuming responsibility for the welfare of all their fellow beings.

This stands in sharp contrast to Magesa's observation about what would befall the world if order was abused and not maintained. He explains that this would affect the transcendental realm or world of the ancestors and God, and then there would 'be no telling what calamity would befall a community as a result of such behaviour. For God and the ancestors desire peace and order above all' (note not humankind) (2002:61). In simple terms, what this means is that human misconduct is not perceived in terms of the absence of universal compassion, social justice and human accountability. It is perceived as a threat to the continued stability and hierarchal composition of the sacred realm (which in turn is reflected by the hierarchy of ATR in the earthly realm). This serious infraction will bring down divine retribution from the supernatural beings with their supernatural powers in the transcendental realm. This perception absolves humans of assuming any responsibility, as the power of supernatural beings and their intervention is not only be inevitable, but also be supreme.

It is therefore unimportant what religious belief systems decide to call their respective supernatural being(s)/gods/God, with their supernatural powers, or how they choose to communicate with them/it. The effect of any pre-Axial religious systems' belief in the intervening power of supernatural being(s) is that it serves to undercut, or in the instance of ATR, *totally eliminate* comprehension of the value of the Axial religious concept of individual human accountability and responsibility in the human/mundane/profane realm. This shortfall means that people, within a coupled cosmological realm context and belief system, are therefore unable to grasp the vital necessity of adopting individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice in their current, modern, scientific and Axial-derived global context. This would

therefore prevent them from applying and utilising the essential Axial realisations as well as the key Axial religious belief ideals.

5.3.2 The effect of a pre-Axial belief system on the earthly realm

These observations illustrate that Africa's ATR belief in its supernatural beings, namely the ancestral spirits, who possess supernatural powers and who intervene in the earthly/material world (Thompson 2001:27), clearly reveal that ATR is a pre-Axial-derived belief system with a pre-Axial coupled cosmological realm perceptual framework that was designed for a pre-Axial world. The ATR belief system, Thompson (2001:27) notes, has produced certain individuals, such as *Dingaka*, who are religious specialists (akin to *shamans*³¹), that the people believe are able to communicate with their respective supernatural beings/ancestral spirits and invoke their intervention or support. This means that these supernatural beings are thus able to intervene, through mediators such as *Dingaka*, in the mundane/earthly realm, as pre-Axial supernatural beings within a coupled cosmological universe are able to do. Thompson (2001:27) explains that these supernatural beings/ancestral spirits are also perceived as being capable of intervention in the mundane realm after humans have offered the appropriate sacrifice to appease them. They also intervene on a personal level in instances such as illness, bereavement, material loss and marital disputes. The ATR spiritual leaders/specialists/healers also, at times, place the responsibility of their clients' misfortune (regardless of what the misfortune may be) at that person's (or communities) own doorstep. Thompson (2001:27) explains how this idea provides us with the concept of witchcraft in that:

Evil was personified in myths of witchcraft: certain persons were believed to have innate powers which they used directly, or through familiars – hyenas, baboons, or the fabulous *tikoloshe* and lightning bird – to injure their neighbours; and other evilly disposed persons were thought to use poison. The beliefs were rooted in nightmares and the awareness of anger, lust and envy in man. These realities were interpreted in material form – envy became a baboon sent by a poor man to suck dry the cows of his rich and stingy neighbour, and lust a demon lover. Hence the

³¹ Shamans are specialised individuals who are perceived by their followers as possessing the ability to mediate between this world and the 'other' world of supernatural forces and spirits (Weil 1996:157). Vitebsky (1995:10) describes 'shamans' as the communities' healers, counsellors, priests and mystics.

“smelling out” and torture of supposed witches and sorcerers (Thompson 2001: 27).

5.4 AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION: CONTEXT AND PERCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Sundermeier explains that African Traditional Religion (ATR) is a very ancient religious system. ATR contains a shared perception of a uniform Godhead but with a multitude of variations in praxis that is unique to each small scale/tribal society.

The major dynamic that still influences the ethnicity, social structures and religious belief systems of the African people is a factor, which Sundermeier (1998:4) identifies as their ‘small-scale societies’ and the subsequent perceptual framework that this ‘small-scale society’ context provides. These small-scale/tribal societies, despite their erosion and integration into larger political structures and religious symbols (i.e. the varied social forms of religious expression), are still relevant today, and have continued to remain meaningful to people in their new urban environments and/or state structures.

This study would like to emphasise that at no point should ATR be perceived as inferior religion because of the continued belief in the intervention of supernatural beings in their mundane realm. The statistics from Time Magazine in 5.2 clearly reveal that certain believers of the so-called ‘higher religions’ (as defined by Hegel) also tend to believe in a form of divine intervention. However, this view should not permit us, at any stage, to ignore or gloss over certain key maladaptive and detrimental beliefs and perceptions of the pre-Axial ATR belief system and its deleterious effects on the African people and their societies; particularly the maladaptive concept of divine intervention by a supernatural beings, nor should we discount, in any way, how this maladaptive belief serves to curtail the ATR believers ability to survive and address their rational, modern, scientific and Axial derived global context.

5.4.1 Pre-Axial African context and religion

Sundermeier (1998: 4-6) describes Africa's context and the religious system it produced before the arrival of Europeans. This matches the pre-Axial Age context of the ancient civilized world and consists of:

- Small scale/tribal societies
Relatively isolated societies with little contact beyond the group which means that life is safe and protected in the group. Members are highly dependant upon each other and close economic co-operation is therefore essential. Limited space means economic interdependence and external activities are also therefore restricted.
- An interdependent and insular lifestyle which fosters a symbolic expression that stresses the unity, real or perceived, of the group (rather than of the individual) which was traced back to one common ancestor. People speak the same language, hunt together, and make the same tools. They develop a culture that does not permit much variation as the people are conservative and both precedent and tradition-bound. Consequently, a single cultural pattern runs through the composition of their lives.
- Economic and cultural, but not social, equality.
- A concept of time which is also pre-Axial Age, similar to that which the ancient Greeks who wrote the Iliad in 800 BCE experienced (Boslough 1990:111). Like these ancient Greeks, traditional African society displays little awareness of time and tends to live in a state of 'timeless present'. Sundermeier (1998:25) explains that the *present grows into the past* and not the future as it does in the post-Axial Age context. This past is represented by the ancestors and is usually limited to a time period of 200-300 years but may extend back only two or three generations due to the absence of written

records. The result is that youth is not a period to be treasured, as it is simply a period of time on the road to more significant time periods ahead. This perception is directly linked to their hierarchal system and explains why a counsel of elders are respected and seen as wise, and why the reputation and status of the dead live on in the ancestors (Sundermeier 1998:25).

- The limited space which in small-scale/tribal societies permits only one religious system. Choice within that system does not exist. Society and religion are intertwined. Each small-scale society produces its own religious perceptual framework that is tribal-specific and as such it has no value beyond the confines of the group. Nor is any attempt made to extend a group's religious perceptual frameworks beyond the group's boundaries or to influence any other group's religious system. People are tolerant of other tribal religions but they demand conformity within their own religious system. The question of truth is not an issue, because it is part of the society's perception of reality (Sundermeier 1998:6).

5.4.2 Hierarchy

ATR is hierarchical and its transcendental realm mirrors the social hierarchy of its believers in the earthly realm (Sundermeier 1998:21). The continuing existence of ATR depends upon the survival and maintenance of the hierarchy both in the visible and invisible world. The result is that life is only seen as stable and safe within the confines of a circumscribed space where their static hierarchy provides them with stability. Hence, 'without the stability of hierarchy, there is no stability of life for the individual', who Sundermeier (1998:21) points out, remains 'devoid of a meaningful life'. This perception completely negates any concepts of equality and/or human rights, as defined and understood within a post-Enlightenment context.

Magesa describes the hierarchy as 'the older force forever dominates the younger' (2002:46-48). This applies to both the visible and the invisible world.

Sundermeier describes ATR hierarchy as follows:

God stands at the pinnacle of powers. He is the source of his own existence, and of that of all other beings; from him come all powers. They include the divinities, the ancestors and the spirits [this would be the invisible world]. The scale descends to plants and animals. Human beings are in the middle of this pyramid. They know what it is all about. They are compelled to adapt their lives to these powers, and at the same time to use them for the well-being of the community (1998: 20).

This perception means that African small-scale/tribal society is not a democratic society in a post-Enlightenment context either. In traditional ATR society, not everyone can enjoy the same rights and privileges. They are, instead, granted according to position, hierarchy and gender, hence Sundermeier (1998:181) explains that men greet other men of higher ranking differently from women, and a child differently from an adult. This is also reflected in the way African people greet each other, men merely need to bow their heads, while women in many African societies greet people by kneeling down and men may sit on chairs while women are expected to sit on the ground. Thus it is clear that gender, age and higher ranking bestow the most respect and power (Sundermeier 1998:180) and except for rare exceptions, the women and children enjoy the least respect and power (Sundermeier 1998:181).

These examples of ATR societal structures therefore cast grave doubts over the wisdom and overall advisability of the repeated call made by the Cape Judge President John Hlophe (Schmidt 2006:2), in our present democratic country, for courts to be allowed to make rulings based on traditional African legal values, where no democratic post-Enlightenment base has ever existed, due to Africa's traditional coupled cosmological realm and its rigid and mainly patriarchal, hierarchal structures.

5.4.3 The group as opposed to the individual

In Africa, the group always takes precedence over the individual. Individuals, Sundermeier (1998:17) explains, only exist because of the community. An individual has no status beyond/outside the group in whom his/her status is embedded. This means that individual life does not possess an infinite value,

thus the individual is nothing but the recipient of life and is duty bound to pass it on (as in replicating). This leads to the perception that childlessness is a failure and a great tragedy, as it breaks the stream of life (Sundermeier 1998:15). Sundermeier (1998:177) also points out that the result of this perception is that 'the whole is represented in the individual and the individual stands for the community'. This distinctly ATR perception also serves (along with their belief in intervention from supernatural beings/ancestors from the transcendental realm in the earthly realm) to gravely impede the African's ability to actualise and accept the value and necessity of the Axial concept of individual accountability in Africa's current Axial-derived context.

For small-scale/tribal societies 'the community creates harmony' (Sundermeier 1998:17). Magesa (2002:78) elaborates when he explains that within the ATR perceptual framework, 'a person can only become truly human in the community, in the context of other human beings in the world, and in some sort of relationship to the dead'. Magesa's explanation, once again, reveals that this ATR belief is directly linked to their rigid mirror hierarchal structure³² as this perfect mirroring supports and retains their perception of the manner in which harmony and balance in their coupled cosmological context is created and maintained. The African coupled cosmological realm, is clearly revealed by Magesa (2002: 780):

Ancestorship is an act of communion in remembrance that is also actualization or resurrection. It constitutes making present among us here and now those who are remembered. Ancestors and their descendants on earth are in continuity. In a sense, as Igor Kopytoff has noted, ancestors are perceived in the same way as the living elders of the society as far as the experience of kinship and communion is concerned and explains that the ancestors "remain in talking and almost tangible terms with their descendants", and that "In no way does the state of ancestorship weaken the bonds of the communion. Far from it, it strengthens them." The state of ancestorship can be characterised in African religion in terms of action. The ancestors and their descendants are in a constant state of exchanging gifts and favours. This is what communion requires; it is what remembrance means, this dialectic strengthens the life force of the world for the sake of living humanity.

³² This means that the human hierarchy on earth must reflect the otherworldly hierarchy exactly - as opposed to the Axial concept of human responsibility for the maintenance of order in the mundane realm.

This study can understand the emphasis placed on ancestor veneration as described by Magesa above, by people in a pre-Axial, oral based society, who practice a pre-Axial oral based religion³³. However the obsolete aspect of retaining this debilitating belief, in Africa's present culture of literacy, is both context inappropriate, and also serves, once again, to impede Africa from embracing the Axial concept of individual accountability and responsibility, universal compassion and social justice.

To maintain and create group harmony, ATR followers also believe that it is essential to suppress all individuality and all solitary introspection. This thesis would therefore like to draw attention to the ATR taboo placed by on solitary introspection. This taboo effectively prevents the essential factor of Axial reflexivity (and that would include second degree thinking) that always accompanies Axial transformation in civilizations and enables critical thought and protest. Consequently, this study, based on the concept of total equality, is interested in the possibility of whether this cultural and religious based ATR taboo (albeit that it may be subconscious for many Africans) on solitary introspection, could be one of the key underlying factors, and cultural perceptions, that could possibly explain why so few African students enter academic fields that require research and original thought, both of which require solitary in-depth introspection/reflexivity and second degree thought from them.

The negative aspect of solitary introspection is also revealed by the ATR understanding that people who meditate alone (which would equate to Axial reflexivity) in ATR societies, are those people who are perceived as being

³³ It is worth noting that ancestor veneration and sacrifice are two concepts that are both absent from an Axial decoupled cosmological realm. Ancestor veneration, like sacrifice, were both part of ancient Israel's pre-Axial perceptual framework as well, and it is interesting to note that the Jewish response to ancestor veneration, once they had acquired literacy, was to place the emphasis on studying their Torah, (as opposed to ancestor veneration) (Friedman 2003:334), which the Jews perceive as the history of their ancestors and their past. This study would therefore propose that the ATR elite should step forward and actively set about recording their rich and vast history of their people, of all their venerable ancestors, as well as all the respective accounts of the ancestors heroic activities and contribution to African culture and ATR. This will enable all Africans to have access to their past and in doing so, they can, through the study of their ATR texts, retain and sustain a constant living memory of their ancestors, just like the Torah still does for the Jews.

chosen by the ancestors to embrace the calling of divining, a calling that expects its practitioners to stand apart, in stark contrast to the group's norms (Sundermeier 1998:177). Sundermeier (1998:177) notes that a young Sotho student told him that this taboo on introspection is also linked by ATR followers to anti-social behaviour, hence this student's father would often 'hit him across the shoulders with a stick if he was [merely] "sitting thinking" '.

5.4.4 Ethics

5.4.4.1 The African body and soul are mutually interdependent

Because of group precedence, ethics of the people are bound to the well-being of the group. Their emphasis on group well-being influences and shapes their codes of behaviour/ethics. Sundermeier (1998:10) points out that in what this study would term the pre-Axial ATR perceptual framework, Africans are not influenced by the 'spirit as the true, imperishable, essential part of themselves; instead their spirit is formed and changed by what the body and the outside world conveys'. Thus, while 'the external and the internal are intimately connected, the external is always accorded priority'. Sundermeier notes that this ATR perception prevents Africans from accepting Luther's claim that outward appearances and signs are not important. Therefore, the reality of Jesus' saying 'it is what comes out of a person that makes them unclean, and not what goes in' (Mark 7:15,20) was not perceived as a negation of outward signs or appearance. This means that the priority placed on the external in ATR is reflected in the Africans preoccupation with material objects such as clothes and food. Hence, clothes literally 'maketh' the people in Africa, in all spheres and serve to reveal and establish their affiliations to specific groups. This ATR perception that focuses on the external, at the expense of the internal, also allows Africans to adopt and mimic the 'outward signs' of others to establish their identity, thus their convictions, ideologies and beliefs are all internalised. Sundermeier points out that to disregard this ATR perception will prevent an outsider from grasping and understanding the ritual and ethics of Africans (Sundermeier 1998:10). Their code consists of the following concepts:

5.4.4.2 *Group socialisation and communication*

Their demand on group socialisation and communication is essential to group harmony and allows elders to teach the young people how to communicate within their group. Sundermeier (1998:175) notes that because ATR is in essence a small-scale society based religion, it usually means that the people in those small-scale societies shared the same context and symbols and did not, at that stage, need to record them. Proverbs were used to interpret situations and to seek answers. Discussions were held to address issues and find suitable resolutions, and the community also consulted their elders (Sundermeier 1998:175). The youth are also encouraged to pay attention to what the elders say, and to compare their views with each other. This was deemed essential in the education of the youth who were meant to acquire the art of public speaking and defence in this manner (Sundermeier 1998:177). Traditional African communities also reveal an acute sense of community mindedness, and where Europeans play hard and compete to win, Africans tend to move towards their goal in non-confrontational unison and chose not to compete with each other. This stands in stark contrast to the modern ideal of facing challenges and opponents head on and striving to overcome them and to ultimately win. The ATR view, by contrast, tends to focus more on amicable interaction than competition, which it perceives as the essential action to reach their goal, in unison. This attitude is linked to maintaining the essential and perfect ATR balance and symmetry between the earthly realm and the transcendental realm's hierarchal structures (Sundermeier 1998:176).

5.4.4.3 *Assisting and sharing: Ubuntu*

Sundermeier (1988:177) points out that the group's concept of assistance is not universal and is limited. Hierarchy and the proximity of the person who needs help dictate the ATR concept of assistance. The ATR concept of compassion is therefore not universal. The closer one is, either through familial, friendship or group ties, the more assistance one receives. The members within the group are obliged to assist each other, and to offer hospitality, particularly to the more elevated members of the family within the

specific hierarchal structure. The neighbours within this small-scale society are perceived as kin and assisting them is seen as a duty. The concept of sharing applies to food, rituals, and life cycle events such as birth, marriage and mourning ceremonies. People are also expected to share at harvest time and to participate in reconciliation rituals, and by providing their share of cattle when it was expected or if familial relationships deemed it essential (Sundermeier 1998:178). People are always expected to participate and those that refuse are seen as the people that upset the balance and symmetry of life the strict hierarchy (above and below) of ATR.

In keeping with small-scale/tribal societies' concept of economic equality, people share all they have both in lean and abundant times. Sharing is also considered to help to maintain group harmony.

5.4.4.4 *Peace*

Peace is also a group effort and is equated with group well-being and social harmony. This peace must be attained within the familial and group context as well as with their surroundings. Their ideal concept of peace allows a person to rest in the 'present' time and enjoy life without 'creating' time by working which along with hardship, directs man's thoughts to the future (Sundermeier 1998:178-180). Thus in the ATR perspective, peace means that time is literally standing still (Sundermeier 1998:179), and peace is not possible on your own (Sundermeier 1998:178). Thus peace is not a 'gift' but an assignment, a social duty, a religious exercise (Sundermeier 1998:179). The ethical concept of peace is also captured, for Africans, in a single symbol, whereas modern Europeans need to resort to broad analytical explanation to attain clarity. Thus Sundermeier (1998:179) explains that for the African 'the colour white and the emotional equivalent of "cool" indicate the ideal. White is the colour of peace and signifies that people harbour no anger in their hearts'. It reveals the transparency of their inter-familial and group relationships. The close proximity of people in small-scale societies also demands that people behave in a strict community-oriented fashion, displaying hospitality and

assistance within their kin group, so that the people of that community may strive to be free from strife, conflict and tension (Sundermeier 1998:179-180).

5.4.5 Respect

This is accorded according to status and age, in keeping with the ATR hierarchical social and religious structures. Respect is not awarded in a modern post-Enlightenment democratic manner. The ATR form of respect is essential for the maintenance of group harmony and well-being. ATR requires specific respect etiquette within the group. For instance, this concept of respect prevents people of the same sex from eating together, or in some instances prevents a daughter-in-law from even looking at, or sharing the same confined space with her father-in-law. A person, who does not accord another person the respect their age and status demands, is seen as one who does not respect his/her ancestors. This is a great offence with serious repercussions from the invisible world (Sundermeier 1998:180-181). This ATR belief once again reveals their belief in the concept of divine intervention in human affairs, which is the norm within the ATR coupled realm.

Respect is limited to the boundaries of each small-scale tribal society and it means that all the members of that society must conform to the limits of the group's perceived norms so that group harmony may be maintained. Consequently, they frown upon and suppress initiative, competition and a striving for excellence. All the members of ATR society are meant to behave 'in a spirit of decorum' and they therefore do not compete against each other. Individual achievement and boasting is viewed with suspicion as the individual is suspected of witchcraft (as opposed to the idea of hard work) and the community unites to drive the achieving individual into isolation (Sundermeier 1998:182). This ATR code of ethics with its suspicion of achievement (or what we may define in the Axial sense as the individual's realisation that he/she is responsible for his/her life and therefore needs to be ambitious to achieve) and the great significance that ATR places on conformity permeates every single facet of ATR lives, thus Sundermeier (1998:182) explains that:

If a woman carries more wood on her head than the others, if she works longer in the fields, beginning earlier or stopping later, she will soon be talked about. On the other hand, if she works less than the others she will soon be isolated.

Thus Sundermeier (1998:182) points out that because of this, 'Adam Smith's principle of the struggle for economic progress through individual effort has no counterpart in Africa' for in Africa 'you adjust to others and behave in the same way as your peer and gender models, in order to act like them again in the next phase of your life' (1998:182). In traditional African society you are not promoted on merit, nor do you work your way to the next level – you are either born into it (through the required ritual) or you grow into it. Thus the ATR concept of hierarchy ensures that each specific stage of a person's life places particular obligations upon that person and that if you are young, it is your duty to obey and comply. The result of the emphasis on a person knowing their place in the ATR hierarchical structure also means that the elders and the aged are obliged to give advice and settle disputes. This means that the aged and elders do not earn respect in the post-Enlightenment sense, but that they not only expect honour as their ATR due right, but that they demand it as well.

5.4.6 Maladaptive ATR beliefs cripple African communities

This study would like to note, along with Sundermeier (1998:182), that in the light of the information provided above about the constraints and taboos that ATR places on peoples' lives in Africa, the concept of a Western democracy therefore becomes extremely difficult to impart and/or implement. Meredith (2005:681) astutely notes and explains that the result of this has been that:

[i]n reality, fifty years after the beginning of the independence era, Africa's prospects are bleaker than ever before. Already the world's poorest region, it is falling further and further behind all the other regions of the world. Its average per capita income is one third lower than the world's next poorest regions, South Asia. African countries have lower per capita incomes now than they had in 1980 or, or in some cases, in 1960. Half of Africa's 880 million people live on less than US\$1 a day. Its entire economic output is no more \$420 billion, just 1.2% of the world GDP, less than a country like Mexico. Its share of world trade has declined to half of what it was in the 1980's, amounting to 1.6 per cent; its share of global investment is less than 1 per cent. It is the only region where per capita investment and savings has declined since 1970. It is the only region

where school enrolment is falling and where illiteracy is still common place: two in five Africans - and half of all African women - are illiterate, compared to one in every eight adults in East Asia or Latin America. It is also the only region where life expectancy is failing. On a list drawn up by the United Nations Development Programme, all twenty-five countries that rank the lowest in terms of human development are African. Africa has also found itself on the losing side of globalization, lacking both the skills and the infrastructure to attract the multinational corporations that drive it.

Sundermeier (1998:184) does however point out that the influence of Axial-derived Christianity and Islam has served to extend the scope of African ethics and compassion, albeit to a very small degree. This is seen in the new understanding by some that Sundermeier mentions that Wilson heard the bride's mother, at a Nyakyusa wedding in Africa, encourage her daughter to remember that she should '[g]ive the stranger something to eat as well. As the girl must not forget that she was now a Christian' (1998:184).

5.4.7 ATR concepts of social justice and guilt

The ATR concept of social justice and guilt is unlike the rest of the world where it is related to actual deeds. In Africa, ethics deals with situations. Hence, this type of small-scale society/tribal ethics, only applies to the community and not to strangers, who are only partially bound by them. Sundermeier (1998:1920) explains that only where the community is actually disturbed 'i.e. where the feelings of an individual in this close circle are hurt – does a deed have an effect – on both the perpetrator and the victim'. Thus adultery that remains unknown does not count as really happening. But should the husband catch the wife and the lover red handed, then his rights have been violated and his feelings would be hurt. The husband will then call upon the wife to explain and shout at her so that the whole community can hear and this would, in turn, disturb the peace and balance of the home and the community at large. Thus, the deed of adultery only becomes evil through the consequences. This will galvanise the community to set about restoring peace, as it is not guilt that provides the catalyst (as guilt demands forgiveness) but shame, which possesses a public face. Thus, any deed that is not witnessed has no impact (Sundermeier 1998:192).

5.4.8 The impediments of ATR, culture and ethics

The observations of Meredith (above) show that the statistics clearly reveal the overall impediment that the ATR perceptual framework presents and the subsequent limitations that it has, and continues to place, on the African's ability to successfully anastomise and utilise the concept of Western democracy in their new modern Axial derived context. Sundermeier also offers insight into how these maladaptive aspects of ATR continue to appear and impede Africa's ability to embrace its Axial transformation in its present context. This is seen in Africa's immediate shift from subsistence farming to modern Western economics, which rendered many ATR and social ethics concepts obsolete. Most notably, modern economic practices are the polar opposite of ATR concepts of conformity, group action and precedence.

Today, in the current context, some Africans are still for the first time being encouraged to move beyond the confines of subsistence farming and to make an individual effort to excel and achieve (Sundermeier 1998:225). The modern idea of wealth that encourages people to save and invest, has also meant that people are severing family and group ties to do so and jettisoning their previous ATR ethic of sharing and assisting within their group (Sundermeier 1998:225-226). The attainment of status in the modern post Enlightenment context that requires individual personal effort, achievement and the pursuit of excellence has also rendered the ATR perception of age and birth related status obsolete (Sundermeier 1998:225).

The ATR concept of time that focuses on the 'past' and the 'present' time with the ATR's Golden Age in the past, does not fit the modern post-Axial Age concept of time. This is described by Nyirongo as "[t]he African does not look forward to a kind of utopia or paradise or end of time' (1997:91).

Time today is shaped by modern economics and this means the Golden Age lies in the future. The emphasis is therefore placed on youth and not on the ancestors or the past as in ATR. People's drive for the future Golden Age means that the real time factor is the future, not the present. This has

produced a work ethic mentality that values industriousness, productive economics and a modest life style. People are focussed on future planning and prospects. This is diametrically opposed to the ATR concept of life and its enjoyment in present time that produced a sense of group economic equality that lead to their perception that all could share in the group's prosperity, lean or plenty, in the instant present. The modern context has also allowed people to realise that individual competition is inevitable, and that, unlike in the ATR context, the nuclear family unit and not the group/extended household is now the most economically viable concept (Sundermeier 1998: 227).

The emergence of new social structures, the focus on individual growth and the concept of 'freedom of choice', has cancelled previous ATR concepts and group affiliation(s). It has introduced new group affiliations such as unions and new non-ATR religious systems (Sundermeier 1998:227). The option of choice in non-ATR religious systems has also served to challenge ATR systems of power and hierarchy (Sundermeier 1998:228).

5.4.9 The nature of ATR prevents an Axial transformation occurring from within

Besides the points raised by Sundermeier above, this study notes that the ATR's limits of conformity and its perception of time, could not have allowed Africa to enter its own Axial Age transformation. Consequently, the arrival of the European settlers (with their Axial Age concepts and modern economy) literally jet-propelled Africa into its current situation. Africa's instant adoption of Axial Age religious ideology (primarily through the zealous activities of Christian missionaries) has, along with its adoption of Islam, aided Africa in its difficult passage from ATR and its social context to the present modern context. But, no system has elucidated the underlying Axial Age catalysts and realisations that produced the Axial Age ideology and ethos. This means that Africa never experienced its own Axial Age 'light-bulb' moment that provides people with their key Axial Age realisations (as described by Armstrong above).

The absence of Africa's own Axial Age 'light bulb' moment means that many people are not fully cognisant of the catalysts, realisations and implications of Axial Age ethos and ideology. This applies particularly to Axial Age religious ideology and especially to the Judaeo-Christian ethics of social justice and compassion. The absence of Axial Age-derived ethics and ideology creates a vacuum which, Sundermeier (1998:226) notes, comes at a great cost to Africa's psychological well-being. People without guidelines and context-appropriate response models are totally overwhelmed by the demands of their new contexts and their respective perceptual frameworks.

This situation manifests itself in a manner in keeping with ATR. People, who cannot cope with post-Axial concepts and perceptual frameworks, are perceived as those who have been bewitched or as those who are possessed by witches and/or demons. Sadly, the result is that instead of moving forward into a new just and compassionate society, people are retreating into archaic beliefs and ideas that foster suspicion and fear.

Arnason (2005:41) is clear about the fact that Axial Age change involves a 'radicalisation of pre-existing ways of articulating the world' which in itself is complicated. Coupled to this difficult transition is the realisation, as revealed above, that the immediate impact of Axial Age change literally blind-sided Africa. This means that South Africa has not had the time or the opportunity to initiate their own context-specific division between their perceptual frameworks of sacred and profane, let alone articulate and comprehend the key Axial Age realisations that facilitate (their) Axial Age transformation as well as their move into modernity. The separation of the sacred and profane realms and the understanding and implementation of Axial Age realisations is imperative for the readjustment of people (and communities) caught up in Axial Age transition and enables them to redesign their religious and social ethics to meet the new requirements of their Axial Age context. In addition, it equips them to deal with the demands of scientific rationalism and modernity.

Coupled to the difficulties that the ATR coupled realm impose is the fact that South African and European cultural exchange (so vital for the regeneration of any social structures in periods of transition), has been minimal. Whether this was initially by mutual choice (Giliomee 1979:327) or whether, prior to Apartheid's blatant racial policy, simply because Europeans in the Cape (1600-1800) considered South Africans (and all other marginalised groups) to be heathen and alien, in short, the blood of Ham (Giliomee 1979:367,377) is open to debate. However what is now certain is that this lack of cultural exchange severely handicapped the ability of South Africa to readjust its perceptions, beliefs and ethics to suit its changing contexts and the new requirements of South African people in a modern world. This was an error that comes at a great cost to their welfare, both then and now.

From the above situation, it is apparent that the exposition, acquisition and implementation of Axial Age realisations are required for an intelligent and coherent readjustment of ATR and ethics. This readjustment would help to provide South Africa's people with the knowledge that they would need to create their own Axial context-specific template(s) that would meet their current Axial needs.

Two factors indicate the viability and simplicity of retrieving and utilising the original classic Axial Age Hebrew prophetic tradition with its timeless ethical template of excellence and its two key features, namely social justice and compassion. They are: a) the uncanny similarities between ancient Axial Age Israel and Judah and South Africa (1600 to the present); b) South Africa's acquisition of the original Axial Age ideology and ethos through its adoption of Axial Age-derived belief systems, initially via Islam and later through Christianity.

The assimilation and anastomosis of Hebrew prophetic ethics would also serve (given the context similarities) to expedite and simplify the reformulation of the required context and time-specific ATR and ethics for South Africa's current perceptual framework requirements, both within its Axial Age context and its move into scientific rationalism and modernity.

The two key features of the original Axial Age ethos and ideology - social justice and compassion, as well as the essential Axial Age realisations, are basic requirements for a successful Axial transformation. These key concepts a) facilitate the transition to modernity and scientific rationalism; and b) allow the optimal implementation of democracy that only functions when people assume human responsibility for maintaining social justice and compassion. Hence the value and application of Hebrew prophetic ethics is clearly apparent within the modern day context of South Africa.

CHAPTER 6: SOUTH AFRICA AND THE MOVE TO MODERNITY

6.1 THE EFFECT OF MODERNITY ON RELIGIOUS BELIEF SYSTEMS

Our current period of transformation began in the 16th and 17th centuries CE in Western Europe. During this time, people developed a new economic system that was technology-driven as opposed to the previous economic system that was based on an agricultural surplus. Technology allowed people, for the first time, to reproduce their resources indefinitely. This transition in the economic system affected all other systems and triggered major perceptual shifts within the social, political and intellectual arena. These new perceptions also produced new perceptual frameworks and a new concept of the nature of truth. This new concept of truth was based on, and derived from, the modern concepts of rational, empirical, pragmatic and scientific thought. This new concept forms the basis of modern society. It is a practical and functional perspective that propels people forward in their quest to uncover new information, construct new realities and contexts and to gain greater control over their environment (Armstrong 2000a:xii-xv).

The result of all this rapid scientific and technological-driven change in society has been that many people have discovered that their pre-modern religious belief systems are, once again, inadequate. Armstrong notes that pre-modern religious belief systems

... cannot provide the enlightenment and consolation that human beings seem to need. As a result, men and women are once again seeking to construct new ways of being religious; like the reformers and prophets of the Axial Age, they are attempting to build upon the insights of the past in a way that will take human beings forward into the new world they have created for themselves (2000a:xii)

Nonetheless, the power of rational, scientific empiricism was, and still is, viewed, by most of the religious elite and other proponents of religious belief systems as a threat to the continued existence of our current conventional religious belief systems. It is often rejected entirely by the religious

fundamentalists. This continuing rejection of (Western) scientific rationalism occurs despite the fact that it cannot be avoided, and that western civilization, along with globalisation has, and will continue to, change the world. Hence, *nothing* can ever be the same again (Armstrong 2000a:xii). This applies particularly to religious belief systems, which were designed for entirely different worldviews and contexts, and especially to those that demand unquestioned faith and brook no inquiry. This perception has, in itself, seriously impeded the essential revision and redesign of maladaptive, anachronistic and context inappropriate religious belief systems.

Carl Sagan (1977:199) rightly observed that human societies in general are hierarchical and ritual bound. Humans are, by nature, not innovative and suggestions for change are greeted with doubt and scepticism as they tend to 'imply an unpleasant future variation in ritual and hierarchy: an exchange of one set of rituals for another, or perhaps for a less structured society with fewer rituals. And yet,' he astutely observes 'there are times when societies must change. "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate for the stormy present" was Abraham Lincoln's description of this truth'. The result of all the change that modernity has brought, has been the emergence of new forms of faith, and it is important to note that fundamentalism is, as Armstrong (2000a:366) has observed, 'just one of the modern religious experiments'.

Surprisingly enough, alterations to the central ideas of the mainstream religious belief systems do occur and have recently done so. The most notable and recent revision of a specific aspect of religious belief was the cancellation of limbo³⁴ by Pope Benedict XVI, of the Roman Catholic Church, in mid December 2005.³⁵ The most telling aspect of this belief system shift was that it served to remind us that all religion is, at the end of the day, man-made. The Vatican's decision appears to most observers, to be a pragmatic choice that is designed to present a new, more aggressive approach in its

³⁴ Limbo is the eternal abode of unbaptised souls, and includes the souls of the Limbo of the Fathers (*limbus partum*) and the Limbo of Children (*limbus infantium*). The Vatican's cancellation of limbo has moved all these souls directly to heaven.

³⁵ Stanford (2006:11). See also BBC NEWS On-Line, Friday 6 October 2006 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5412166.stm>

relation to Islam. Peter Stanford, the author of the article in *The Star* (2006:11), explains that in developing countries, (specially in Africa), with their horrendously high infant mortality rates, Islam and Catholicism are often rivals for the allegiance of the local inhabitants. Catholicism has always comforted bereaved parents with the concept of limbo, whereas Islam's teachings, as written in the Quran, offer these infants paradise instead, with 'angels, fine foods, peace and tranquillity, all under the gaze of Allah'.

This type of announcement is down played by the Catholic Church, who states that it does not change its teachings, as they are 'eternal truths'. It is, nonetheless, a liberating reminder that all religious rules and ideas, such as priestly celibacy, are merely the result of the context in which they were formulated. They are, therefore, open to revision and amendment, so as to allow for the formulation of new context-appropriate responses. This insight should galvanise us so that we may move to institute religious change wherever it is needed. The Roman Catholic Church's abolishment of limbo has, thus, clearly illustrated that change, within a religious framework, is often pragmatic, essential and of course possible. This understanding is central to the aim of this study and we will return to it below.

6.2 SOUTH AFRICA: THE CHALLENGE OF A TRIPLE PERIOD OF TRANSFORMATION

South Africa, like the rest of the world, is also in a period of transition and transformation. But in South Africa, at this time, our period of transition is monumental compared to the rest of the world. We are in a triple transition. Firstly, we moved from Apartheid to independence and are in a period of implementing democracy, secondly, we are part of the globe's struggle to come to terms with modernity and scientific rationalism and thirdly, like Africa, South Africa and the majority of inhabitants are still in the process of their own Axial Age transition. This is because South Africa only entered the Axial Age (along with the move to modernity and scientific rationalism) with the arrival of Europeans in the 1600s and with Africa's adoption of Christianity and especially Islam in the early 17th century Cape (Elphick & Shell 1979:123).

6.2.1 South Africa's Axial Age arrives with the European settlers

It would therefore be fair to note that the arrival of Europeans in South Africa literally thrust their Axial Age transition upon them. Axial Age transition meant that the establishment of urban European settlements began to erode and break apart South African small scale/tribal structures that are typical of pre-Axial societies, along with their pattern of subsistence farming. The European concept of farming also demonstrated that it was possible to move beyond subsistence farming (a hallmark catalyst for Axial Age change), an idea that ATR had prevented prior to European arrival and a concept which current ATR beliefs and hierarchical structures still impede to the present day. These factors allowed people to move beyond the confines of their specific small scale/tribal societies and to trade beyond their borders with other tribes as well as, in this instance, with European colonialists/settlers as early as the mid 1700s, despite VOC company efforts of the time to prohibit this (Giliomee 1979:301).

During this period, (like the initial Axial Age in Israel and Judah), tribal equality was replaced by sharp divisions between landowners and labourers, on whose merciless backbreaking labour all Axial Age (past and modern) societies are built. The shift to a market-driven economy with its accumulation and uneven distribution of wealth also began to divide South Africa into rich and poor and led to conflict between landowners and workers. In South Africa, this situation was also compounded and complicated by official discrimination and racial prejudice. As early as 1820, it was becoming clear to South Africans (and other marginalised groups) that 'to enjoy status, power and wealth in (the new) colonial society one had to be European; to be free was not enough' (Elphick & Giliomee 1979:384; Thompson 2001:64-65).

Coupled to this impediment was the fact that African and European cultural exchange (so vital for the regeneration of any social structures in periods of transition), was minimal. Whether this was initially by mutual choice (Giliomee 1979:327) or whether, prior to Apartheid's blatant racial policy, simply

because Europeans (in the Cape, 1600-1800) considered Africans (and all other marginalised groups) to be heathen and alien, in short, the blood of Ham (Elphick & Giliomee 1979:367,377) is open to debate. However, what is now certain is that this lack of cultural exchange severely handicapped the ability of Africa to readjust its perceptions, beliefs and ethics to suit its changing contexts and the new requirements of African people in a modern world. This was an error that comes at a great cost to the African's welfare, both then and now.

From the above situation, it is apparent that the exposition, acquisition and implementation of Axial Age ideals and realisations are essential for an intelligent and coherent readjustment of the maladaptive aspects of ATR and ethics. This adjustment could help to provide South Africa's people with a new perceptual framework that would allow them to create their own context-specific ethical template(s) that could meet their current needs. Two factors indicate the viability and simplicity of retrieving and utilising the original classic Axial Age Hebrew prophetic response model with its timeless ethical template of excellence and its two key features, namely social justice and compassion. They are: a) the uncanny similarities between ancient Axial Age Israel and Judah and South Africa (1600 to the present) and b) South Africa's acquisition of the original Axial Age ideology and ethos through its adoption of Axial Age derived belief systems, initially via Islam and later through Christianity.

6.2.2 African Traditional Religion and its introduction to the Axial Age

Africa was introduced to the Axial Age and its religious ideals and realisations through its adoption of the Axial derived religions of Christianity and Islam. To help identify and elucidate how these Axial ideas were introduced and assimilated in South Africa, this study will use a selection of essays on the political, social and cultural history of Christianity in South Africa. In doing so, it will follow the introduction of Christianity to the Xhosa in 1799, and trace the adoption and effect of Christianity, within this study's Axial framework. This approach will enable it to identify Axial ideas and realisations, within the Xhosas up to 1910. The study will also examine Christianity and the effect of

its Axial-based Social Gospel during the period of segregation. This is done with the assistance of Richard Elphick who explains how the Christian missionary's Social Gospel's Axial ideas and realisations were accepted, implemented and utilised.

It is worth observing that Wallace (1997:337) draws attention to the fact that religion, particularly Christianity has often been depicted as a 'tool of the dominant classes'. Nonetheless, he points out that religion has been pivotal in moulding the behaviour and social, cultural and political ideas of most of the different classes and groups in South Africa 'in ways that are more complex, contradictory, and changing than this portrayal suggests'. This observation is also applicable in relation to this study's examination of the Axial ideas and realisations that are inherent in Christianity and the power that these Axial concepts wield, their effect on perceptual frameworks and the contextual realities of pre-Axial people. For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on the Xhosas³⁶ and will include an introduction and a response to the transformation of Axial Age religious concepts.

³⁶ The source for this study on the Xhosa and the period of segregation is drawn from *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (1997). This work, edited by R Elphick, is extremely comprehensive and detailed and covers the introduction of Christianity throughout South Africa. This study has nevertheless chosen the Xhosa, as their experience as a pre-Axial community is relatively typical of the way in which the Axial-based ideals of Christianity reached most of the pre-Axial Africans beyond the Cape colony from 1799 onwards.

CHAPTER 7: THE INTRODUCTION OF AXIAL RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS THROUGH THE XHOSA'S ADOPTION OF CHRISTIANITY

The survey of the introduction of Christianity to the Xhosa people is done primarily with the assistance of Janet Hodgson's work *A Battle for Sacred Power: Christian Beginnings among the Xhosa* (1997:68-88). This study uses Hodgson's work to identify the Axial elements during this period.

7.1 THE XHOSA'S EARLY SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Hodgson (1997:68-69) notes that the archaeological evidence appears to indicate that the Xhosa-speaking people may well have moved as far as the Transkeian coast by the 8th century CE. It has now been accepted that by the end of the 16th century CE, Xhosas had settled south of the Mthatha River. Two hundred years later they were a heterogeneous collection of polities which included the Mponda, Mpondamise, Bomvana, Thembu and Xhosa. The Xhosa nation was made up of the people who recognised the royal Tshawe lineage. They were split into two groups, the Gcaleka from the east of the Kei, and Rharhabe to the west. The Rharhabe was divided into two factions which each had their own leaders, Ngqika and Ndlambe. As the Xhosas' natural expansion continued to the west, they began to clash with the white settlers. Internal Xhosa dynastic feuding also allowed the white settlers to advance without too much organised Xhosa resistance. The Xhosa's continual migration and expansion also led to interaction with the Khoikhoi and the San. This produced some conflict as well as an unequal process of mutual assimilation that consisted of trade, intermarriage and patron-client relationships that produced mixed Khoikhoi-Xhosa communities that are on record from the 18th century onwards (Hodgson 1997:61).

7.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE XHOSA'S ATR RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

The basic small-scale society oriented ATR of the Xhosa-speaking people did not make a distinction between the natural and the supernatural realm (Hodgson 1997:69). This clearly reveals the typical pre-Axial coupled cosmological realm of pre-Axial religious belief systems such as ATR. It is therefore not surprising that Hodgson (1997:69) should state that everything was pervaded by divinity as the two realms, the earthly/mundane/profane and the transcendental/sacred were coupled. They also believed that their ancestors and the spirits of their departed members were interested in the lives of the people in the earthly realm and were thus able to intervene if should they chose to so. This meant that these ancestors and departed spirits were the focus of their religious ritual praxis in daily life (Hodgson 1997:69).

They also had a cross-section of ATR religious specialists (Hodgson 1997:69). Dr Weil (1996:156-157) explains that these types of people (that is, Hodgson's 'religious specialists') are common to all the primitive hunting and gathering based religious belief systems, including Africa and ATR, where they are also known as witch doctors, voodoo priests or traditional healers. They are usually trained or apprenticed individuals whose primary task and function is to mediate personally between the ordinary world and the other worlds of supernatural forces which include ancestors and the souls of departed animals and people. Weil notes that most are men but that distinguished women mediators are not unknown and that some cultures regard them as particularly powerful (1996:157). The Xhosa religious specialists included homestead heads, political leaders, rainmakers and diviners (Hodgson 1997:69).

The ultimate Godhead of their belief system was, in true ATR manner, perceived as remote and was only petitioned in times of nationwide catastrophes and disasters such as drought, epidemic illness or war. Hodgson (1997:69) notes that the ancient Nguni God-names such as, uDali, uMdali, uMenzi, uHlanga, iNkosi yesulu tend to express the two main facets of their

concept of their Godhead. One is related to origin and the other to the sky and the natural elements. The Xhosa also appropriated the rain-gods of the Khoisan and the San to help explain their extended worldview that constantly grew with migration and social interaction. Hodgson (1997:69) also draws attention to the fact that the Christian God of the missionaries was used in a similar vein by the Xhosa to help them to construct a much larger and more intricate religious perceptual framework that contained even more complex webs of social relationships.

7.3 THE BRITISH MISSIONARIES' EFFECT ON THE XHOSA PERCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THE COLONY

J.T. van der Kemp was the first Christian missionary amongst the Xhosa. He was sent in 1799, by the London Missionary Society³⁷ to minister to the Ngqika Xhosa of the Rharhabe in the west of South Africa. When van der Kemp arrived, the frontier was seething with rebellion from both the black and the white sides. Van der Kemp was driven by an image of Christ as the conqueror³⁸. His vision of Christ had thus sanctioned him 'to fight the good fight of faith clothed in the armour of God' and he saw his religion as the religion for these troubled times when, he believed, 'Satan roared like a lion'. Given that van der Kemp operated from such apocalyptic and evangelical salvic perceptual framework, it is highly improbable that the Axial ideals of universal compassion and social justice were even mentioned, let alone taught and implemented to and amongst the Xhosa. After van der Kemp left in 1800, the authorities would not allow any missionaries to settle amongst the Xhosa for fifteen years (Hodgson 1997:69-70) because, although the colonial authorities originally approved of him, they later accused him of disseminating radical policies.

Hodgson (1997:71) notes that like most missionaries, van der Kemp regarded the African people as blank slates. This meant that the missionaries did not

³⁷ The London Missionary Society will be referred to as the LMS from now on.

³⁸ Christ as the conqueror is the total antithesis of the Axial religious ideals of compassion and social justice.

grasp the fact that the Christianity, as a religious belief system, was competing for the African's allegiance with their own small-scale tribal specific ATR belief system(s) and its perceptual framework and context. Hodgson notes that this struggle for sacred power began to gain serious momentum after 1912, when the British expelled the Xhosa from the Zuurveld. This loss of land was severely traumatic for the Xhosas. Their land was not only important to them because of its economic value for agriculture, grazing and hunting, but more significantly because their land provided them with a type of mystical attachment to their ancestors and their sacred burial places (Hodgson 1997:71).

7.3.1 The Xhosa's loss of land produces two prophets

The colony's belligerent behaviour and the Xhosa's loss of their land were the key catalysts that produced the two important pre-Axial-style ATR Xhosa prophets, Nxele and Ntsikana. These prophets arose in response to the peoples need for 'new sources of symbolic meaning and power in a rapidly changing world' (Hodgson 1997:71). Both these prophets assimilated and utilised Christian symbols in their own particular way that provided the hybrid template for the two principal models of Xhosa response to the missionary presence amongst them for the next hundred years. The two response models reveal that although the Xhosas were open to cross-cultural adoption and moved away from the quintessential rooting in ancestor ritual, they did not acquiesce to the missionaries' ideal of total cultural reconstruction. The prophet Ntsikana formulated an evolutionary model that enabled black people to control and direct their own transformation, while Nxele's response to all the Axial-wrought change and disruption was a typical pre-Axial model for militant resistance (Hodgson 1997:71).

7.3.1.1 The prophet Nxele and his pre-Axial model for militant resistance

In 1816 the Cape government allowed Joseph Williams of the LMS to set up a mission for the Ngqika Xhosa at the Kat River. Nxele was acutely aware of the constant and increasing threat of colonial expansion and warned his people between 1816 and 1818 in a public announcement, that the white colonials

were going to enter their land and that they would be unable to respond (Hodgson 1997:72).

The prophet Nxele's response model was a pre-Axial militant model. He portrayed the world as a battleground between the God of the blacks and the God of the whites. Nxele had drawn from Christianity by using the concept of corporeal resurrection, but had legitimised it by placing it within the Xhosa creation myth. This enabled him to instruct the people that their ancestors would rise from the grave but that they would do this by following the same path that the first African people had used from below. This resurrection would occur when the appropriate ritual sacrifice of cattle had been fulfilled. Nxele's militant pre-Axial vision altered the people's perception of him and they began to relate to him as a traditional diviner (as defined by Weil above) and a war doctor. He led his people in the spirit of his militant vision (Hodgson 1997:71-72).

He told his followers that he had been sent by the Great Spirit, Ulanga, to retaliate for the colonial injustice and that he possessed the power and ability to resurrect the spirits of their ancestors. These resurrected ancestors would then assist them in their battle against the English and would help them to drive all the English into the sea (Hodgson 1997:72).

Nxele led an attack on Grahamstown in May 1819 after colonial authorities annexed 23,000 of the Ndlambe cattle in 1817. Nxele's attack on Grahamstown was part of the Fifth Frontier War of 1818-1819 (Hodgson 1997:71) and led to his capture. Nxele surrendered and was imprisoned on Robben Island and died a year later while attempting to escape. Nevertheless he had created a militant pre-Axial style model of resistance, which succeeded in incorporating apocalyptic Christian concepts within a Xhosa perceptual framework. He also managed to draw upon the power symbols of the Christian salvation, in the here and now, but under the patronage of an African God, Thixo (Hodgson 1997:71-72). Nxele's model became the classic symbol of militant resistance (Hodgson 1997:73) which was persistent in

times of disaster and would recur within the Xhosa context with disastrous consequences.

7.3.1.2 The prophet Ntsikana and his pre-Axial evolutionary model of response

As a child, the prophet Ntsikana had heard van der Kemp preach and it is possible that he was influenced by Nxele as well. His biblical teachings also reveal the LMS missionary Joseph Williams influence which he acquired when he visited the Kat River mission between 1816 and 1818. Ntsikana continued to live with his own people but he adopted certain Christian beliefs and practices, such as the Christian doctrine of salvation and the practise of meeting in non-kinship groups for worship and prayer. He managed to maintain a sense of cultural continuity by combining Xhosa and Christian traditions. This is evident in his Great Hymn, which used Xhosa music and was sung in the form of a praise-poem (Hodgson 1997:72).

Ntsikana's concept of Christianity was intent on focusing on grace for gradual change within the historical order. His apocalyptic vision, in African form, looked forward to the coming of God's Kingdom, with a Messiah who would usher in a new epoch of peace. This outlook seemed to ignore the current welfare of the people and tended to focus more on the future eschatological aspects of Christianity, most notably the coming of God's Kingdom. This model is not based on the underlying ideals of Axial based religion and does not display any sign of individual accountability and responsibility, universal compassion or a call for social justice. After his death in 1821, he became a symbol of the evolutionary model for change and of non-violent Xhosa nationalism (Hodgson 1997:72-73).

Hodgson notes that these two prophets are credited with 'providing overarching African symbols of sacred power independent of white control' (1997:73). This may well be Hodgson's perception, but it is time that these two prophets' pre-Axial responses to the Axial changes in their society, were evaluated within the emerging Axial framework of their day. It is also time that these two prophets pre-Axial models are recognised for what they are in an

Axial reality, namely flawed and context-inappropriate. These Xhosa prophets' responses to their Axial transformation were not on the same level as the Hebrew prophets, and the high cost of these context-inappropriate responses, both in 1857 and the present will be discussed further on (Hodgson 1997:73).

7.3.2 The establishment of a permanent mission amongst the Xhosa

Williams mission at Kat River in 1816 heralded the start of a permanent mission amongst the Xhosa. Williams was intent on setting up his mission station on the lines of the Moravian model which was subsequently replicated throughout Xhosa territory. Williams was indiscriminately dismissive and highly critical of African customs and it would appear that his views were clouded by ignorance and his own personal prejudice. For him, Christian belief and praxis was unequivocally equated with Western civilization, much to the chagrin of the Xhosa. Williams was placed in an awkward position by the government who basically expected him to inform them about any of the Xhosa rulers' conspiracies and schemes as well as to inform them about stolen cattle. This eroded the Xhosas trust in him. Yet despite this, certain LMS missionaries had begun to display Axial behaviour when they chose to implement the Axial concept of social justice by publicly supporting the call for the rights of black people. This angered both the white settlers and the colonial authorities (Hodgson 1997:74). Although the missionaries' indiscriminately inflexible attitude to African custom did serve to impede the Xhosa's adoption of Christianity, there were still people who chose to embrace Christianity, as the words of a convert reveal:

The Sabbath was made known, and we were called to attend the worship of God. At the time I knew nothing of the Word, and was unwilling to enter the church. By listening to the word a struggle commenced within me, and I felt as if I had two hearts, the one loving the word and the other hating it. After I began to attend to the Word, I became sorry for my friends, who were living in the pleasures of the world and did not see the dangers to which they were exposed. I saw that it was desirable for me to go and remain constantly at the missionary's station (Hodgson 1997:74-75).

7.3.3 The missionary endeavours and perceptions from 1820 onwards

The arrival of the 1820 English Settlers meant that the core of the English constituency moved to the east. It also meant that colonial expansion had become so intense that by 1881, the Cape Colony's boundary had reached that of Natal. Hodgson (1997:75) notes that all the Xhosa-speaking people had been subjugated by this time.

The Missionaries' endeavours however kept abreast with these developments. Like the Methodists, Williams and Phillip, the Scottish Presbyterians were also exceedingly fervent about stressing the value of Axial organization and about their enthusiasm for education. This allowed the Scottish mission to flourish and spread into Lovedale, Burnshill and the Pirie stations, with schools, linguistic work, translations and publishing (Hodgson 1997:75).

However the LMS were still primarily driven by their mutual interpretation of scripture which shaped their missionary message and focused primarily on the 'grand doctrine of salvation'³⁹, as well as the fallen state of man, the wages of sin, and the redemption from eternal damnation. The missionaries who shared this mutual interpretation of scripture, with its focus on salvation and sin, should, and did, choose to portray the Xhosa as 'a rude and warlike people', who had savage practises and customs. These missionaries also stated that 'gross darkness and superstition prevailed in the land', and some even dismissed the Xhosas as 'worshippers of demons' (Hodgson 1997:76). These missionaries were also adamant about their demand for an inflexible standard of personal morality, as the mores of European society defined them (Hodgson 1997:76). It is obvious that these Christian missionaries' perceptions and expectations do not reveal any sign of Axial universal compassion or social justice.

³⁹ This study has chosen to define it as 'salvic based' missionary Christianity.

Hodgson (1997:76) explains that the majority of the early mission station residents were largely composed of the marginal people of African society. It is worth noting that the mission stations did display universal compassion by accepting and caring for all these marginalised people. These unfortunate people included the physically disabled, the misfits and outcasts, political refugees, the aged and any person who was seeking refuge or/and fleeing from violence, their indigenous rulers fury, allegations of witchcraft or intolerable marriages. This meant that the stations residents were not homogenous and that they possessed an array of traditions, skills, and political loyalties. Their pragmatic reasons for seeking refuge at the mission stations meant conversion to Christianity was achieved with great effort. The Xhosa proved to be far more resistant to conversion than the Khoikhoi. Although Hodgson does not mention the reason, it could well be related to the fact that the Khoikhoi culture and personal status had almost been completely eradicated by the white settlers and that the Khoikhoi's adoption of Christianity provided them with a new culture and a new perception of personal status in a rapidly changing world (Hodgson 1997:76).

The explanation, above, would also serve to explain why the Mfengu refugees, after 1820, revealed, what Hodgson (1997:78-79) describes as their notable and marked level of willingness to embrace Christianity, assimilate Western culture, receive education, participate in the Colony's modern economy and involve themselves in the political life of the Cape. All these actions clearly illustrate the Mfengu's acceptance (albeit unknowingly) of the conditions and expectations that Axial transformation imposes.

7.3.4 The missionaries introduce literacy

The missionary focus on the written word and its comprehension for conversion meant that African literacy levels increased dramatically. The arrival of a printing press in 1823 enabled the Scottish missionaries to transpose the previously oral Xhosa language into a written language and allowed them to produce and print Xhosa grammar, spelling and reading books as well as the essential catechisms, hymn books and biblical texts. The

other missionaries soon followed their example and after unlocking the key to Xhosa grammar, the mission teams from various societies published both the Old and the New Testament in Xhosa (Hodgson 1997:77).

7.3.5 The Colony's Axial Age transformation affects the Xhosa

The classic Axial Age characteristic of the Colony's increase in trade and economic expansion led to their need for more land. This affected the Xhosas who were already overcrowded and plagued by chronic drought and internal divisions. Although the War of Hintsa (1834-35) and the Sixth Frontier war were both very important to the closing of the frontier, it was all to no avail and ended with the ensuing colonial invasion of Xhosa territory (Hodgson 1997:78).

An Axial style agricultural revolution was also in progress due to the introduction of new farming methods, while the increased use (and accumulation of money) by the Xhosa cattle traders affected trade. Consequently, the Xhosas new-found, money-based, Axial prosperity meant that the traders were experiencing a sharp growth in the demand for manufactured goods. It is therefore not surprising that all these Axial changes would not only affect the Xhosas' economy but also their political and ideological concepts (Hodgson 1997:78).

A disciple of Ntsikana, Old Soga (c 1790-1897), did not resist all the ideas that Axial change had brought and was open, to certain degree, to cross-cultural adoption. He was the first Xhosa to plough and irrigate his land and to move away from subsistence farming and participate in production for the colonial market. He was also the first to pay his followers wages. But he also managed to combine this approach with his African customs and retained his wives. He lived close to the Gwali mission and attended their Sunday services. Soga also conducted daily religious services at his home but would only sing Ntsikana's hymns. His inability to fully embrace the essential Axial decoupling of the cosmological realm is, however, revealed by fact that he continued to consult diviners and that he still gave his tacit support to the ATR idea of

ancestor veneration (Hodgson 1997:78). His life choices reveal a man who was actively striving to attain a balanced and a practical combination of his old pre-Axial Xhosa ATR beliefs and customs and all the new Axial-derived ideas and change that Axial based Christianity had brought.

7.3.6 Christianity and biblical imagery shapes Boer and settler perceptual frameworks

Selective non-Axial-derived Christian and biblical imagery also shaped the perceptual frameworks of the Boer and British settlers towards the Xhosa. A case in point is the Boers who left the Cape between 1837-38. They did so in reaction to the missionary's influence on British colonial policy and to preserve what they perceived as 'proper relations between master and servant' (Hodgson 1997:79).

7.3.7 Christian mission education produces an educated black elite

The mission stations eventually became focal points of power that encroached on the Xhosa rulers sovereignty and led to the rulers increased hostility and resistance towards the missionaries. Although Hodgson notes that by 1854 most of the Xhosa rulers had become alienated from the Christian missionaries because of the colonial wars and the divisive affect that the missionaries' Western education had on their people (1997:79), this type of reasoning ignores the internal power dynamics of a society. Consequently, Hodgson's reasons ignore the effect that the missionaries' conversion and education drive would have had on the traditional Xhosa leaders power base and their value in a rapidly changing world.

People in power are always reluctant to abdicate, regardless of the reasons involved. The Xhosa traditional leaders were aware that their power base was being eroded by their peoples' conversion to Christianity and their newly found education, but the leaders chose to dismiss the benefits of Christianity and education, and the way that they could assist the Xhosas in their inevitable transformation in a changing world. Instead, the leaders personal ambition and inability to relinquish power would cost their people dearly, as their continued belief in the Nxele model of response reveals in 1856-7. The

leaders personal need to retain their power base would also impede the Xhosa nation's inevitable Axial transformation to the present day. Hodgson (1997:79) notes that only two Xhosa leaders, Dyani Tshatshu and Kama embraced Christianity.

The emergence of the black elite became apparent in the 1840s. This is seen in the words of Rev. James Laing, at an opening ceremony for the Lovedale Institution in 1841. Laing said that the missionaries education principles were 'allowing and enabling the educated native to drink at the English fountain of literature, science and practical godliness' and that these fountains, which included mathematics, were to be spread through the use of the vernacular (Hodgson 1997:80). This statement was, in effect, a defence of the missionaries' socially just principles that encouraged them to provide the black people with what William Govan of the Lovedale Institute described as a Christian liberal education equivalent to any in Britain and one that would facilitate these select Africans' integration into colonial life (Hodgson 1997:80). It would also be correct to say that this type of education would greatly assist any person.

7.3.8 Christian civilization and commerce

It is not coincidental that the Methodist Stephen Kay jubilantly declared that 'Christianity laid the foundations of commerce' (Hodgson 1997:80). The Governor, Sir Harry Smith, initiated this idea in the late 1840s when he strove to actively undermine the Xhosa leaders authority and establish a 'Christian civilization' to develop a money-based economy as opposed to a barter economy, that was done to facilitate labour recruitment and to encourage the rural African farmer to contribute to market production. The governor's ideas met with missionary support, but Hodgson (1997:80) notes that the major obstacle was in drumming up Xhosa support. This is not surprising from the Xhosa's pre-Axial perception, as they were still struggling to come to terms, let alone deal with and implement, market production style farming. This problem was mentioned by Sundermeier above, who explained that ATR beliefs and perceptions consciously discourages and suppresses any sign of

initiative, competition and a striving for excellence. Hence Adam Smith's principle of the struggle for economic progress through individual effort (which) has no counterpart in Africa (Sundermeier 1998:182).

It is also not surprising, in light of the Xhosa's preference for the Nxele model of response, that these unfamiliar Axial transitional demands produced what Hodgson (1997:80) has described as a 'militant resistance'. Thus, the 'Nxele perceptual framework' continued to fuel Xhosa animosity which was also compounded by a severe drought in 1850. The war that erupted was organised by the Xhosa war doctor Mlanjeni and it soon spread. With the Xhosa's continued proclivity for the Nxele model of response, it is to be expected that Mlanjeni's model of response would also be based on the Nxele model. Mlanjeni, like Nxele before him, also borrowed Christian symbols as representations of power within his traditional perceptual framework. Like Nxele, he also used them to create his pre-Axial apocalyptic vision in which the ancestors (ATR's supernatural beings) arise from the dead to drive the whites into the sea.

Like the Xhosa prophets before him, Mlanjeni was also unable to, or reluctant to break out of his pre-Axial mindset, despite his exposure to Christianity. He was therefore unable to offer the Xhosa people a functional and context-appropriate response. Mlanjeni's followers' belief in his magical abilities are also to be expected from pre-Axial people whose perceptual framework is determined by their coupled cosmological realm. Neither Mlanjeni's promise of supernatural assistance and magic nor the support of the Kat River Settlement's Khoikhoi, succeeded in averting their defeat. The Xhosa defeat was compounded by the colonial retributive annexation of Xhosa land and additional legislation that was designed to force black people into the labour market (Hodgson 1997:81).

In 1854 Sir George Grey moved to implement what Hodgson (1997:81) describes as a 'policy of pacification of the Xhosa' which he hoped to achieve with a large grant from England. He planned to use it to set up a long-term programme of socio-economic and cultural transformation. Grey's aim was to

make industrial education the focal point of this programme. The missionaries were very positive in their response to Grey's proposal but the Xhosa response was limited until they suffered the ultimate and extremely tragic cost of their leaders and their attachment to, and their continued belief in, their prophet Nxele and his pre-Axial response model (Hodgson 1997:81).

7.3.9 The result of the Nxele model in the Nongqawuse incident

Hodgson's (1997:81) understanding and opinion of the Nongqawuse incident was that 'the cattle-killing was a call for supernatural aid' and this study concurs. The Xhosa leaders and their people's resistance to transformation triggered this classic pre-Axial response. This response was encouraged by their leaders' reluctance to abandon their pre-Axial perceptual frameworks and power base as well as their inability to accept the fact that change was an inevitable reality. Their fractured understanding and perception of their newly imposed Axial context is seen in the Xhosa's persistent refusal to participate in the Colony's production trade and in the Xhosa's reluctance to diversify and embrace education, different employment opportunities and new trades. This stalemate led to open conflict with the white settlers. This conflict, in turn, led to forced removals and the loss of Xhosa land. It also served to erode the Xhosa's context-inappropriate pre-Axial forms of self-government (Thompson 2001:77; Hodgson 1997:81).

The Xhosa cattle-killing response model of 1856-7 was very similar to the prophet Nxele's response model in that Nongqawuse's vision was also based on the apocalyptic resurrection of the dead. Hodgson (1997:81) notes that this key apocalyptic characteristic of Nongqawuse's vision, like Nxele's before her, once again displayed the Xhosa's incorporation and utilization of Christian millennial concepts that were connected to Christ's second coming, which was then presented within an African perceptual framework. Despite the use of Christian concepts and imagery, this vision was nevertheless, still a pre-Axial attempt by the pre-Axial Xhosa leaders and their people because it continued to call for supernatural aid from resurrected supernatural beings who would, after the prerequisite mass cattle sacrifice and crop destruction:

- end the fatal outbreak of cattle disease (bovine pleuropneumonia) that was decimating the Xhosa herds.
- resurrect all the cattle that were sacrificed.
- return the Xhosa people to the 'mythical golden age' of their past, which they perceived as their 'mythical time of peace, prosperity and eternal life' (Hodgson 1997:81).
- sweep all the white people out to sea.

7.3.10 The validity of the Xhosa's pre-Axial model of response

This study does not deny the many hardships and difficulties that the Xhosas with their pre-Axial perceptual framework and ideas experienced when they encountered the white settlers. But this study queries the merit of:

- the wisdom of the Xhosa prophets and their context-inappropriate response models which they developed in reaction to Xhosa's trauma and hardships.
- the Xhosa leaders constant reluctance and apparent inability to resume traditional group responsibility, let alone individual responsibility for the welfare and continued survival of their people, that lead to
- the Xhosa leaders and the peoples' adoption of their prophets pre-Axial response models that called for supernatural aid from resurrected supernatural beings, as opposed to pro-active human leadership and the need to accept change and adapt accordingly.
- the pre-requisite mass cattle sacrifice and crop destruction, which were based on a vision of a teenage girl, Nongqawuse, and
- the Xhosa's continued predilection for the prophet Nxele's context- inappropriate response model, despite its failure, in praxis, prior to 1856-7.

7.3.11 Axial transformation and the value of a negotiable accommodation

Thompson (2001:77) explains that Nongqawuse's vision was ruinous. The result of the mass slaughter of the Xhosa's cattle in 1857 was disastrous and led to the loss of roughly 40,000 Xhosa lives and to the displacement of approximately 33,000 Xhosa people. This context-inappropriate pre-Axial response model failed to resurrect their supernatural dead, failed to drive the whites into the sea and failed to restore their mythical golden age. Instead, it created a literal 'man-made' famine and induced an immediate disintegration of Xhosa society. Hodgson (1997:82) also draws attention to the fact that destitute and starving Xhosa parents had 'little choice but to hand over their children to missionaries care' and she notes that the rapid white colonisation of the Xhosa culture and its worldview now appeared irreversible.

Axial transformation has always presented non-Axial cultures and societies (in this instance the Xhosa) with two choices, those of accommodation or rejection. Accommodation could be accomplished in two ways (Wittrock 2005:810): 1) non-Axial societies could (and have done so in the past) choose to accommodate Axial change by completely converting to the Axial religious and political order, or 2) they could successfully combine the complete Axial cosmology and mindset to their own non-Axial cosmology and mindset to produce a functional assimilation. This study suggests that, had the Xhosa leaders been less intent on retaining their power base, and more inclined to show a greater sense of traditional group accountability or perhaps even the beginnings of Axial individual accountability and responsibility for their people's welfare, they could have acted in a far more pro-active fashion (as opposed to mass cattle-killing and summoning supernatural assistance). Like the Israelite prophets in the past, the leaders could have chosen instead, to negotiate and construct a successful and functional combination of their non-Axial perceptions and cosmology, with Axial perceptions and cosmology for the Xhosa people. Had the Xhosas and their prophets chosen instead to respond in an Axial manner (like the Hebrew prophets Amos and Jeremiah), their response would not have culminated in a human engineered famine and

the subsequent immediate implosion of Xhosa society. Pro-active context-appropriate leadership and negotiated accommodation would have allowed the Xhosas to actively participate in and to effectively control the extent of their own Axial transformation, of their society, as well as that of their religious belief systems and culture.

7.3.12 The Xhosa embrace Axial change after the Nongqawuse incident

The effect of the mass cattle-killing was far reaching. It was also keenly felt at the religious and social level of the Xhosa psyche. The emergence of Axial ideas and realisations was revealed to the Xhosa survivors in the Ciskei who were exposed to the Christian teachings of Tiyo Soga. He was a Xhosa who was trained as a Presbyterian minister in Scotland. Thompson (2001:79) points out that Soga was teaching the people how they could function as a conquered people in a capitalist economy. Soga's words were remarkable in that they preceded the teachings of Booker T Washington in the USA (Thompson 2001:79):

The country of the kaffirs [sic] is now forfeited and the greater part has been given out in grants to European farmers. I see plainly that unless the rising generation is trained to some of the useful arts, nothing else will raise our people, and they must be grooms, drivers of wagons, hewers of wood, or general servants. But let our youths be taught trades, to earn money, and they will increase and purchase land. When a people are not land-proprietors, they are of no consequence in this country and are tenants on mere sufferance.

This example of Nongqawuse's vision and Soga's Axial-derived response clearly illustrate how the simultaneous arrival of the two periods (Axial Age and scientific modernity) brought radical Axial perceptual shifts to the pre-Axial African context. This Axial perceptual framework shift was also responsible for:

- the growth and interest in Xhosa cultural nationalism and an increased awareness of African culture.
- reducing the Xhosa resistance to education, which allowed for the emergence of a literate black elite as well as for the publication of the first secular Xhosa newspaper in the 1860s.

- fostering a growing sense of black consciousness, under the guidance of Soga and William Kobe Ntsikana. This newfound black consciousness would later continue to flourish within the context of the African political organisations (Hodgson 1997:83).

7.3.13 The Xhosas embrace Christianity after the Nongqawuse incident

After the Nongqawuse incident, the re-structuring of African society induced the Xhosas to embrace Christianity in large numbers. This was particularly evident at the highly successful Methodist Taylor Revival in 1866, where the black Christian converts approached their conversion with the belief that it would advance them (especially those who trained as clergy and the lay leaders) and enable them to gain entrée into colonial society (Hodgson 1997:84). The Africans loss of their pre-Axial small-scale society based structures and kinship ties was also replaced by their new Christian affiliations. Tiyo Soga describes this transferral of loyalty from pre-Axial tribal and kin structures to the African's new Axial-derived Christian denominations:

Our people declare that they would go a distance to drink the milk of the word out of the milk sack from which they had been accustomed to drink it, and if they could not get it from that then they would take the milk that was the likest that of their own cherished milk sack (Hodgson 1997:85).

The church also provided Africans with an avenue for class formation and mobility in their new Axial context. This is seen in the transformation of African clergy and laymen into the leading black elite. They include people like John Tengo Jabavu, Elijah Makiwane, John Knox Bokwe, Pambani Mzimba, Nathaniel Mhala and Isaac Wauchope (Hodgson 1997:84).

Christianity did not manage to dissolve their national identity and it became a bone of contention in 1877 when a war broke out between the Mfengu and the Gcaleka. Although Dukwana, the son of the prophet Ntsikana, had been a leader of the Scottish mission people for nearly fifty years, he opted to enter the war on the leader of the Gcaleka, Sandile's side. He explained that the Christian gospel had become a part of the Xhosa struggle for liberation. It reveals that, for Dukwana, the Christian Axial-derived ideal of social justice

and personal accountability had become a part of his perceptual framework. It also reveals that Axial-derived Christianity was responsible for introducing him to these Axial realisations that motivated him to step forward and implement social justice on behalf of his people. He said:

I am not fighting civilization or Christianity, they have brought me great benefits; and most of all they have taught me how I may be saved. But I am fighting against the English who have robbed us of our own country, and are destroying us as people (Hodgson 1997:85-86).

7.3.14 The Xhosas, education and politics

Hodgson (1997:86) points out that by the 1890s, the colonial system was effectively stifling the attainment of equal economic, social and political opportunities for Africans. This colonial racial prejudice was a major obstacle and severely impeded Africa's desire to design its own style of Axial accommodation that would in turn allow them to retain their identity and combine their pre-Axial concepts with the new Axial concepts that Christianity and education had brought them. Their failure to achieve their transformation on their own terms is seen in their misplaced criticism of the church and education. It is also possible that their recently acquired Axial-derived Christian ideas of social justice provide the catalyst (albeit unacknowledged to the present day) that initiated the rapid growth of nationalism, and the way it was later used in a pro-active manner by the new black political movements (as opposed to their previous pre-Axial response models, such as Nxele's, who opted to call for supernatural assistance) (Hodgson 1997:86).

Initially the black political groups were defined by ethnicity, but this soon altered when the draft constitution of the Union posed a threat to all African rights. This evoked a more cohesive sense of African nationalism and led to the emergence of bodies such as the South African Native Convention (1909), and the South African National Congress (1912), which later became the African National Congress. All these groups saw Christianity as the common bond that would assist them in forming a united African nationalism (Hodgson 1997:87).

The rise of African nationalism and the increased politicization and religious autonomy of the educated black elite was noted with a sense of growing apprehension by the white mission leadership. This trend saw the establishment of new black churches such as the Ethiopian church⁴⁰, which was denounced by mission leaders like Stewart in 1897 (Hodgson 1997:87).

Hodgson (1997:87) points out that the Western form of the institutionalised church was a concept that was unfamiliar to the Xhosa perceptual framework. Their denominational loyalty was more akin to their pre-Axial loyalty to their small-scale society leaders than to any particular type of theological preference. This perception also allowed the Africans to easily move from the restraints of their white mission station allegiance to establish new congregations around their own independent black leadership. Not all the Xhosas converted to Christianity, many continued to follow ATR and continued to maintain their pre-Axial symbols. This assisted these adherents of ATR in their choice to totally reject Axial transformation (and the world around them) and to deliberately remain isolated and removed from the Axial context that surrounded their small self-imposed pre-Axial societies. Nonetheless, these enclaves of pre-Axial societies did eventually assimilate Axial ideas and symbols through urbanisation, migrant labour patterns and continued mission education. When Africans sought symbols that could represent their past, in the absence of written accounts of what is essentially an oral culture and history, they used these pre-Axial enclaves and their partially assimilated framework(s), as their primary source for what they regarded as their unpolluted past (Hodgson 1997:87).

This constant interaction between the pre-Axial world and religious view of the Xhosa and the Axial-derived worldview and religion of the white settlers and the missionaries, continues to the present day. It is also directly linked to all the socio-political and economic movements in South Africa and it has also empowered the Africans to move away from white non-accommodating Axial

⁴⁰ This church, like the early political movements, was rooted in ethnicity. Nehemiah Tile led the breakaway from the Methodist church in Thembuland, in 1883. It was basically an attempt to attain political and religious liberation from colonial control.

religious ideals and has enabled them to set up new patterns of Christian faith that reflect their identity as well. This is an ongoing process and there are still many people who remain locked in their pre-Axial framework and are reluctant to abandon the Nxele model of response. This response has recently been adopted again and will be discussed below.

Hodgson (1997:88) points out that the formation of an independent African consciousness on the Ntsikana model, has also revealed its shortcomings. This study would expect that, in light of the fact that it was also a pre-Axial based response model, and that it was context-inappropriate from its inception.

CHAPTER 8: THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE NONGQAWUSE SYNDROME

Achille Mbembe is a research professor in History and Politics at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He is also a writer and has managed to verbalise the grassroots situation that is occurring amongst the poor and disenchanted black South African youth in his article 'South Africa's Second Coming: the Nongqawuse Syndrome'. Mbembe (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") examines and discusses Moeletsi Mbeki's (deputy chair of the South African Institute of International Relations) comparison that Mbeki drew between South Africa's current response to political disorder and 'The Nongqawuse Syndrome' which Mbeki had defined as a millenarian form of politics that advocates and legitimises the use of self-destructive behaviour or national suicide as an option for salvation.

8.1 MBEMBE'S ASSUMPTION IGNORES THE UNDERLYING HISTORY

Mbembe's definition may well match the self-destructive patterns that have evolved in other post-colonial countries such as Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo and Sudan but it completely ignores the origin and history and the underlying pathology of the Nongqawuse syndrome in South Africa that began with the Xhosa prophet Nxele. Mbembe's description of this 'syndrome' or Xhosa response model (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") (with its prophet and the promise of supernatural aid) is also not accurate.

Firstly, the prophet (what Mbembe terms *maprofiti* [2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse"]) that emerges need not have humble origins as those in the past were thought to have. The prophet Ntsikana was the son of an hereditary councillor to the Ngqika, as well as a famous singer and orator (Hodgson 1997:72), and Nxele showed signs of becoming a diviner, which would have granted him a certain amount of status (Hodgson 1997:71). The girl, Nongqawuse, was also the niece of a man who was a councillor to a powerful

leader (Hodgson 1997:81). There was also no need for any prophet to claim or defend his or her authority or any reason for anyone to question their ancestors as their sources as this was the way that traditional ATR pre-Axial religious perceptual framework of the African people of that period functioned.

Secondly, Mbembe reveals that he is not aware that Nxele's pre-Axial style response model was both well known and accepted by the Xhosas and that its application had failed once before with the 'war doctor', Mlanjeni, in the war of 1850 (Hodgson 1997:80-81). Mbembe also ignores the fact that this response model was specifically designed (along with Ntsikana's, see above) to deal with Colonial aggression (Hodgson 1997:71) and that, in the Nongqawuse incident, it was used as a response to the Xhosas experience of continued colonial aggression, the Xhosa's newly imposed Axial context and as an attempt to counter their cattle's fatal lung infection. This response model was a pre-Axial model that called for supernatural aid from supernatural beings, and was based on the Xhosa prophet's pre-Axial ATR framework with its coupled cosmological realm that negated all human responsibility for the state of the Xhosas affairs in the earthly realm. Their call for supernatural aid from resurrected supernatural beings/ancestors was therefore not simply provoked by violence, *per se*.

Thirdly, there was no display of elite cowardice when the incident occurred. In the cattle-killing incident of 1856-7, neither did the Xhosa elite 'laugh off' the prophecy as they were equally devastated by its aftermath. The Xhosa elite not only suffered as result of their self induced famine but they lost their previous power base structures as well. If Mbembe is referring to the so-called white elite of the colony in 1856-7 as 'laughing' at this incident, there is no record there of anyone 'laughing at, and ridiculing, him' (the 'prophet'). Hodgson (1997:81) notes that this prophet was, in fact, the teenage girl, Nongqawuse, whose credibility was immensely bolstered by her uncle, a councillor of Sarhili, one of the most powerful leaders of the time. By the same token, there is also no record of the elite (black or white, it is unclear who Mbembe is referring to) who knew 'that should things really turn nasty, they could simply pack and leave' (Mbembe 2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse"). Firstly, this

reaction could not refer to the Xhosa elite who were full participants in the events that led to the cattle-killing of 1856-7, and secondly, the devastating repercussions of the 1856-7 event had very little effect on the white colony. Had some white settlers chosen to move, they certainly would have followed their pattern of moving further inland to secure (not abdicate) their position and take over the farms of the dead and destitute Xhosas.

This study is therefore obliged to consider the probability that this incorrect comparison has been drawn for the purpose of political expediency and does not relate to the Nongqawuse syndrome as it occurred in history. It would seem as if this comparison is being used to explain the present day white response to the extremely high levels of crime and violence in the context of a newly independent and democratic South Africa.

8.2 THE REVIVAL OF THIS INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSE MODEL IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT

The current situation in South Africa demands a new approach. Just as Chika Onyeani has reprimanded the black Americans for still attributing all their woes to slavery (1990:4) and has pointed out that racism is not confined to the black arena (1990:20), South Africans need to begin to move beyond blaming Apartheid for all that ails them and assume responsibility for their own destiny. This is especially pertinent in light of the fact that South Africa has been independent, with its own black leadership, since 1994. Mbembe (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") is also concerned about the country's moral decay and questions the intellectual capacity of South Africa to achieve political and social order. However, Mbembe fails to ask why moral decay and intellectual apathy has become rampant, and why our current South African leaders appear to have none of the pre-requisite skills to guide and inspire their people.

Mbembe states that South Africa does not possess leaders of intellect or moral fibre. This study disagrees as there is a present generation of urbane, courteous, well travelled, morally irreproachable and highly educated potential

leaders, such as gentlemen of the calibre of those who were active in the black political arena in our recent past. These include men such as John Dube, John Tengo Jabavu, D.D.T. Jabavu, Walter Rubasna, Dr. Alfred Zuma, and Albert Lutuli. If the ANC is starting to stumble, surely the people within the ANC organisation itself need to grasp that they need to begin to look inward and understand that they need to start assume individual responsibility, in their Axial-based context after 15 years of independence and democracy, for the state of the ANC and for the country that they are governing?

8.3 WHAT THE NXELE STYLE RESPONSE MODEL REVEALS

The most startling and revealing aspect about the South African black intellectuals' decision to identify our country's present political disorder, moral decay, anti-intellectual stance and our other related socio-economic and health issues as a replay of the Nxele model of response simply serves to show how the discontented, disadvantaged and disaffected poor youth who are trapped in their ATR beliefs, are resorting to victimhood. This position reveals the South African youths inability and reluctance to assume individual accountability, and responsibility for their present state and the welfare of their country and its citizens (Mbembe 2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse").

The responsibility for the continued retention and revival of this pre-Axial response model lies primarily with South Africa's religious leaders (traditional and mainstream). These elite have persistently failed their societies, by not acknowledging their Axial context, by not designing South Africa's Axial response model(s) and by not teaching their people how to deal with their Axial transformation. In this study's estimation, the African religious elite has failed their black African societies and communities in every respect in that:

- they have failed to actively decouple the African cosmological realm (that underlies the maladaptive beliefs of ATR) and to assist their people to adjust their perceptual framework accordingly.

- they have failed their people by not teaching them that in the present modern world, and in South Africa's present day Axial context, that their supernatural/ancestral spirits cannot intervene in the affairs of humans, and that the supernatural beings/ancestors are not responsible for the welfare of human life, the creation and maintenance of order, the well-being of the environment, nor do they diminish human suffering.
- they have failed in that they have not told the people that in South Africa's present modern Axial context, that human beings take precedence over spirits in the earthly realm and that all human life is sacred.

8.4 HIV/AIDS AND THE CHOICE OF THE NXELE STYLE RESPONSE MODEL

The current socio-political and economic situation of South Africa is in no way related to any situation or set of circumstances that bears any resemblance to conditions that gave rise to the Xhosa's utilisation of the Nxele model of response to their specific situation in 1856-7. This Nxele response model also known in this instance as the Nongqawuse incident, led to the massive cattle-killing of 1856-7 and the subsequent starvation and death of many Xhosa people. This response model was connected to the Xhosas' pre-Axial belief system which allowed them to call for supernatural aid from resurrected supernatural beings/ancestors, who, they believed, would materialise and drive all the whites into the sea.

South Africa's current socio-political and economic situation is unlike the Xhosa's situation in 1856-7, and is mainly related to South Africa's continued difficulty in accepting the inevitability of their Axial transformation in the present modern global context of the world. It is also incorrect of Mbembe to state that only the poor black HIV/AIDS patients are dying in agony, as this disease knows no socio-economic boundaries, and it is also highly irresponsible and fallacious for Mbembe (Mbembe 2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse")

to compare our current human HIV/AIDS epidemic⁴¹ (mainly a sexually transmitted disease) to the Xhosa cattle's bovine pleuropneumonia in 1856-7. In 1856-6 the Xhosa were powerless when their livestock became infected, but black Africans today are primarily responsible for infecting each other with this HIV/AIDS virus (through sexual contact) and in keeping with their ATR framework, these people refuse to accept that they are individually responsible for spreading the virus.

8.5 THE DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER ARGUES FOR AN AXIAL-BASED RESPONSE TO HIV/AIDS

There are very successful recognised counter measures for AIDS, (besides abstinence and the use of condoms) such as anti-retrovirals, yet President Thabo Mbeki and the Health Minister, Manto Tshabalala-Msimang have been reluctant about assuming individual responsibility for this situation. In *The Sunday Independent*, Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, the Deputy Minister of Health has finally stepped forward and openly criticised the South African government's failure to deal with the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Bevan 2006a:1). She has told the British press (in an Axial fashion) that they, President Mbeki and Tshabalala-Msimang 'must both bear some responsibility for the confusion over the correct treatment for the virus'. She also criticised people 'who promoted traditional medicines as alternative to conventional drug treatment', and said that:

It was irresponsible of leaders to say that people have a choice ... because how do those people chose when they don't have the knowledge backed by science? It is absolutely irresponsible to say to people who are desperate, who want to live, "Oh, go to your traditional healer if you want" because which traditional healers do we know who know how to treat aids? I don't know of any in my country (Bevan 2006a:1).

⁴¹ Dr. Holiday notes that research has revealed that about 4,8 million people (\pm 10,8% of South Africans) are living with HIV/AIDS (2006:11). Charlene Smith (2006:5) also notes that clinics in Kwazulu-Natal are recording infection rates of 66% and higher in pregnant women, although she points out that the national prevalence figures for HIV in pregnant mothers is 30%.

8.6 THE DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER REFUTES AND REPUDIATES AFRICAN TRADITIONAL HEALERS

Madlala-Routledge's admission is true to the spirit of the Axial ideals of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice. This is especially so in the light of an article published in *The Sunday Independent* which called for the inclusion of African traditional healers (*isangoma* in Zulu, and *igqirha, amagqirha* in Xhosa) in the country's attempt to combat HIV/AIDS. The article also took umbrage to the fact that Dr. Anthony Holiday's⁴² statements in his article *Beliefs sap the life of Africa's potential to use science* (2006:11), that the African traditional perceptual framework, belief system(s) and context limits African's ability to grasp the benefits of science and technology. It also produces an inimical attitude towards science.

The article notes that some traditional healers are working in collaboration with Western medicine⁴³, but that others 'have adopted denialist arguments about the pathogenesis of the disease'. It avoids, however, explaining what the traditionalist healers' perceptual framework and belief system is and how this determines their *modus operandi* and the way that traditional healers approach any illness.

The traditional/shamanistic method and approach of these healers across the world, including Africa, as described by Dr. Andrew Weil, below, is especially valuable to this study's call for South Africa to de-couple its cosmological realm, and it also provides an explanation for (some) of our South African leaders perceptual frameworks and their response to HIV/AIDS. Dr. Weil explains that their approach to illness and healing functions

in the mental sphere, either directly by requiring some sort of profession of belief in healing, or indirectly by convincing patients that powerful forces for improvement have been set in motion. They all spring from the common ground of medicine and religion (Weil 1996: 156).

⁴² Dr Anthony Holiday is a philosopher, freelance journalist and associate researcher with the Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche in Paris.

⁴³ The term 'western medicine' is regarded as inaccurate and the correct term is 'allopathic medicine'. It is also known as conventional or orthodox medicine. Allopathic medicine is the dominant system of therapeutics in the world today (Weil 1996:81).

He describes how these healers acquire their knowledge through apprenticeship and that their conception of disease is different from that of orthodox allopathic medicine and of all other forms of alternative medicine such as homeopathy. These healers attribute disease to specific causes, just as allopaths do, but the causes they identify will seem very strange to an allopath. They identify witchcraft, demons and malevolent supernatural forces as the major causes of medical problems in their world (Weil 1996:157)⁴⁴:

Demons and evil spirits may enter human bodies bringing ill health with them. Sorcerers and hostile shamans⁴⁵ may entice souls from bodies, rendering people susceptible to harmful influences. They may also intrude objects of evil power, such as crystals, pebbles or small animals, into victims by magical means, so that the objects cause suffering directly. Certain kinds of dreams may also bring on sickness, as may the violation of taboos or failure to perform required acts; such transgressions being retaliation from gods and spirits (Weil 1996:157-8).

Dr. Weil (1996:158) then proceeds to point out that these traditional healers do not believe in any natural sickness or death:

They may admit natural agencies of illness but see them as secondary. A man may develop an infection from cutting himself with a dirty knife, but what made the knife slip? An evil thought might be the real cause, or a witch's curse, some evil-working enemy is behind every medical calamity and the shaman's⁴⁶ job is to identify the evil power and neutralize it. This is just the way of thinking that Hippocrates tried to lay to rest when he ascribed all disease to natural causes and began to develop a science of rational treatment, but it remains alive and influential in much of the world. Shamans are as fascinated by black-magic causes of diseases as allopaths are by germs (Weil 1996:158).

Dr. Weil's observations are borne out by Nyirongo who describes the causes of illness in Africa being linked to living malevolent relatives, disobeying custom and taboos of the respective tribal clan, the result of a negligent guardian spirit and finally through possession by a particular spirit(s) (1997:170).

⁴⁴ The dark side of ATR healers that is often overlooked is the horrific aspect of muti killings. Bevan (2006b:17) notes that approximately 800-900 children are reported missing each year in South Africa and most are likely to have been murdered for muti. Seal (2007:19) concurs with Bevan about the tragedy of muti killings.

⁴⁵ *Isangomas* or *igqirha* in the African context.

⁴⁶ Shamans include African traditional healers

8.7 THE INABILITY OF TRADITIONAL HEALERS TO TREAT A VIRAL BASED ILLNESS

In the light of Dr Weil's information⁴⁷ it is necessary, firstly to question how African traditional healers with their coupled realm perceptual framework and scant knowledge of science can contribute to alleviating or healing a viral disease that is spread via bodily fluids especially through sexual contact. Secondly, these African traditional healers primarily believe in intervention from the supernatural realm, which is essentially opposed to science (this observation supports Dr Holiday's assessment). In that case, Holiday's assessment can therefore not be seen as a derogatory assessment of African traditional healers. This observation also casts doubts on Wreford's understanding, who contests Holiday's opinion (Wreford 2006:11). Wreford states that the strategy of these healers may supplant allopathic shortfalls and fill the 'gaps' they may produce. Yet Wreford does not explain how these two totally opposing worldviews of the causes of illness, one black-magic and supernatural, and the other rational, scientific based allopathic medicine, could possibly combine and achieve anything of value when dealing with a recognised virus like HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Weil's assessment of the traditional healers perception also grants credence to the deputy health minister Madlala-Routledge's outright admission that the department has *no knowledge of any traditional healer who knows how to treat HIV/AIDS*. The traditional healers perception of illness is not confined to the traditional healers alone, as the people who choose to consult them would need, as Weil notes above, to share the healers coupled cosmological perceptual framework as well. This realisation then serves to

⁴⁷ This study would like to point out that Dr Weil is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Medical School, worked for the National Institute of Mental Health in the United States and was a Research Associate in Ethnopharmacology at the Harvard Botanical Museum for 15 years. As a fellow of the Institute of Current World Affairs, he has travelled extensively throughout the world collecting information about the medicinal properties of plants, altered states of consciousness and all types of healing. He is currently Associate Professor of the Division of Social Perspectives in Medicine and the Founder of the Centre for Integrative Medicine in Tucson, Arizona and the Director of the Program in Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona. Dr Weil practices natural and preventive medicine. There is therefore no way that he can be perceived as being hostile to alternative forms of healing or medicine.

highlight the fact that South Africa's traditional leaders and healers need to share the blame, along with Mbeki and Tshabalala-Msimang, for the rampant spread of this disease and for the soaring death rate and the confusion over the manner in which this illness should be treated.

This observation means that when Mbembe (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") speaks of the radical repercussions of AIDS, he should look at the people who are responsible for this debacle, namely the government and the religious elite. This confusion about the disease and its treatment can therefore be traced back to the Government and the religious elite who are not instigating the essential Axial decoupling of South Africa's cosmological realm and are thus allowing their people to retain their maladaptive beliefs in supernatural causes and intervention, at the cost of losing their peoples' lives to HIV/AIDS.

Mbembe (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") draws a lurid, specious and medically inaccurate comparison between the Xhosa cattle's bovine pleuropneumonia (that could not be prevented or remedied) and human HIV/AIDS. The key difference between the two is that the human illness, HIV/AIDS, can be prevented by assuming individual responsibility for sexual behaviour. Responsible behaviour and accountability can rapidly restrict the spread of this disease. The fact that South Africans continue to choose not to assume individual responsibility for their behaviour should therefore not surprise Mbembe, and nor should he be surprised by the subsequent growing chorus of discontent and the young black people's increased propensity for a belief in supernatural intervention in the earthly realm (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse"). After all, South Africa's religious leaders (traditional and mainstream) as well as their political leaders, have never acted to discount and discourage this pre-Axial context inappropriate and entirely detrimental perception and belief within South Africa's modern scientific context as their current predisposition towards the Nxele model of response so clearly illustrates.

8.8 MILLENARIANISM, NATIVIST REVIVALISM AND POLITICS: DISTINGUISHING FACT FROM FICTION

Mbembe's claim that millenarianism, nativist revivalism and politics, has been the 'backbone of white supremacy in this country' (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") is flawed and inaccurate. Firstly, this statement reveals his ignorance (or denial) concerning the positive and pro-active role of Christianity and the white Social Gospellers in South Africa, especially during the period of segregation. Mbembe's view also completely ignores the contribution of these Social Christian Protestant missionaries and the remarkable benefits of their Social Gospel and their Benevolent Empire (discussed below). He also seems oblivious to these Social Christians and white missionaries' constant struggle for black social justice, and the white missionaries advancement of black mission education and black leadership. It is surprising that Mbembe is unaware of these significant Social Gospellers' contributions, and the fact that this contribution was publicly acknowledged by notable black people such as Dr. D.D.T. Jabavu in 1931 (Elphick 1997:362).

Secondly, Mbembe also seems to be unaware that the so-called ruling 'white supremacists' religious philosophy⁴⁸ was based on the Dutch Reformed Church's (DRC) neo-Calvinist philosophy of lawful creation (Klaaren 1997:372-3). This concept was postulated by H.G. Stoker two decades prior to 1948 and was reaffirmed in 1957 (Klaaren 1997:372). This neo-Calvinist position and philosophy was elaborated in the 1960s and 1970s by J.A.L.Taljard, and was not linked in any way or based on millenarianism as Mbembe claims (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse").

The doctrine of postmillennialism was, however, part of the Social Gospellers' perceptual framework in South Africa during the period of segregation, but it has very positive implications. Mills (1997:337) explains that postmillennialism is 'optimistic about the trend of human history, believing that God will use

⁴⁸ It is assumed that Mbembe is referring here to the Nationalist Party, (especially after 1948), their supporters and the Church that provided the religious base and support for their racially prejudiced perception and subsequent discriminatory legislation, namely the Dutch Reformed Church.

human instruments to perfect human nature and society'. The Kingdom of God (the millennium) will thus be formed gradually, through individual conversions and, most importantly, in direct refutation of Mbembe's understanding of how the white Social Gospel missionaries understood this idea. The white missionaries conversion of the individual was also directly related to the Christian Axial-derived ideals of compassion and social justice, consequently, these Social Christians were also intent, in true Axial manner, on eradicating social injustice (Mills 1997:357).

The heady combination of millenarianism, nativist revivalism and politics was therefore not the 'backbone of white supremacy' in South Africa as Mbembe (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") claims but was instead a combination that the Black South African was drawn to. Mills notes that the emergence of South African political activity tended to focus on the relationship between Christianity and African Nationalism to the exclusion of Africa's own eschatological perspectives, as perhaps Mbembe has done as well.

Along with Hodgson (1997:71-72), Mills (1997:342-343) reviews the African eschatological response models of the Xhosa prophets Nxele and Ntsikana. Nxele's response model combined apocalyptic concepts of battle and total destruction that were drawn from Christian sources but placed in a Xhosa mythical context. Nxele also utilised the Christian concept of corporeal resurrection, but placed it, once again, within the context of the Xhosa creation myth. Nxele then linked these views to the pre-Axial African belief in intervention by supernatural beings in the human realm. His response model also emphasised the pre-Axial necessity of sacrifice, as opposed to the Axial religious realisation of the virtue of compassion which is recognised as the true measure of piety and not empty ritual and sacrifice (Armstrong 2000a:xii). Nxele then linked his response model to a type of millenarianism as well. For Nxele, the Xhosa's 'period of blessedness' would thus arrive once all the whites had been driven into the sea (by the Xhosa's supernatural beings/resurrected ancestors with their supernatural powers), 'and then' said the prophet 'we will sit down and eat honey' (Hodgson 1997:72).

Nongqawuse's vision followed Nxele's response model in that it also used 'Xhosa thought patterns and beliefs, while using Christian Symbols as carriers of sacred power' (Hodgson 1997:81). It contained the concept of millenarianism, in that the execution of this response model would return the Xhosas to a 'mythical time of peace, prosperity and eternal life'. These response models were and still are, despite the inclusion of Christian symbols, strictly pre-Axial and are therefore context inappropriate, both then and now.

8.9 THE COUPLED COSMOLOGICAL REALM ENGENDERS VICTIMHOOD

This brief review of the history millenarianism in South Africa reveals that Mbembe (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") is incorrect when he states that the re-emergence of the Nongqawuse response model is the emergence of a 'democratic mob' that is 'led by self-appointed champions of the poor who claim to speak for the common man'. This response is a total abdication of individual accountability and responsibility for the welfare of people and is in essence nihilistic and destructive. Mbembe (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") is also mistaken in laying the blame for this type of response model and for the African's proclivity for so-called prophets and healers at the doorstep of 'limited democracy, wealth accumulation without purpose and unfinished transformation'. The reality is that Africans are unable and unequipped to allow themselves to abandon their traditional coupled cosmological realm which, in turn permits them to continue to play the blame game (as Mbembe does) and this allows and enables Black South Africans to subscribe to victimhood⁴⁹. This position, enables them to evade the necessity of acknowledging, let alone embracing, South Africa's Axial transformation and the Axial ideals of individual accountability and responsibility, compassion and social justice. The retention of this perception also fails to empower South African blacks and prevents them from stepping forward and pro-actively

⁴⁹ Using excuses like Apartheid, colonialism, rapid urbanization, poverty, crime, white privilege, perceived re-segregation and diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

dealing with the causes of their perceived victimhood. Chika Onyeani (1990:xvii) observes that the appeal of Africa's blame game is that:

The blame game has become a permanent part of our lives to the exclusion of any other solution that could be more viable in solving our problems. It has become the most productive part of our lives, because without it the African cannot really point to much that they are in charge of producing. It is better to blame others than to confront the truth of our being responsible for whatever has happened to us as an African race.

Africa's predilection for victimhood is also seen when Mbembe's mentions (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") the existence of South Africa's present 'culture of corruption, impunity' and most importantly in relation to this study, 'non-accountability'. He perceives this as 'becoming the norm' as opposed to what it really is, part of Africa's traditional pre-Axial ATR-derived perceptual framework of 'group accountability'. The concept of group accountability has remained the norm in most of Africa (and in the African Diaspora as mentioned in the introduction by the black Nigerian, Chika Onyeani), despite the African's adoption (in Africa and in the Diaspora) of other Axial derived concepts, via their adoption of the Axial based beliefs of Christianity and Islam.

Mbembe (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") continues to reveal the insidious nature of black victimhood (albeit unconsciously) by stating that blacks are still at the receiving end of white privilege denial in a country that is run by a black government with its own affluent black elite. Mbembe notes that the blacks are responding to the perceived denial of 'white privilege' in their own black country, by resorting to the position of victimhood. In reality, these young blacks position of victimhood is so easy to resort to as it is directly linked to the absence of the concept of individual accountability and responsibility in their ATR-derived African perceptual framework. The tragic aspect of this statement is that it simply serves to illustrate the continuing inability of Africans, in this instance young black South Africans, to accept and assume Axial-derived individual accountability and responsibility for their own lives and their own economic welfare in their own free and democratic South Africa. It also serves to reveal black African negativity and their inability to mobilise and

to react pro-actively to what they disapprove of, by simply stepping forward and

- vigorously matching 'brain power for brain power with our conquerors',
 - 'Stop playing the blame game' and
 - utilise 'ways to see our own superiority yield fruits of success'
- (Onyeani 1990:13).

8.10 THE SOUTH AFRICAN ELITE ARE FAILING THE PEOPLE

The customary African propensity for illiterate traditional healers is also compounded by the failure of the African literate and educated black religious elite and leaders to actively encourage Africa to decouple its cosmological realm and abandon its pre-Axial beliefs in the supernatural. Where, we may ask, are the black African equivalent of the Deuteronomists or the Holiness School? Neither the black ATR religious elite and/or the mainstream and syncretic Christian elite have ever actively stepped forward to either demolish and/or discount Nxele's pre-Axial response model despite their exposure to and their adoption of Axial-derived religions like Christianity.

The most obvious reason for traditional ATR leaders and diviners (their elite) retention of these maladaptive ancient belief system concepts would be that it would serve to cancel the ATR elites current power base and ultimately signify the end of their role as mediator(s) between the coupled ATR earthly/mundane realm the transcendental/supernatural realm. Their inability to relinquish their power is highly questionable and open to enquiry in light of the fact that certain maladaptive beliefs are not only detrimental to their followers, but also deadly, especially those related to muti killings and HIV/AIDS and its transmission, prevention and treatment. The continued retention and propagation of the coupled cosmological realm therefore reveals that the welfare of the African people has not been a key issue in factoring the continued existence of these maladaptive aspects of the ATR perceptual framework and its belief system.

This subconscious realisation of the intellectual elite's failure to design an African-context-appropriate response to South Africa's Axial transformation may well underpin the recent founding of the Native Club, as well as the call for black intellectuals to 'return' to traditionalism as noted by Mbembe (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse"). It could, however, be counterproductive if the elites response model did not ensure that their ideas and actions were compatible with an Axial decoupled cosmological realm and the key Axial ideals and realisations of Africa's Axial derived context. These African Axial context-appropriate design issues are vital concerns that require the attention of the cream of all the intellectual black elite, including those in the Native Club. This study is therefore mystified by Mbembe's (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") attempt to link this serious concern with his perceived withdrawal of whites and what he regards as their failure to renegotiate their terms of belonging to a new inclusively democratic nation.

The dearth of black intellectual elites in our current post Apartheid democratic context, has also been noted in the print media by Nithaya Chetty who asks in *The Star: Where are our black intellectuals?* (2006:8). In a remarkably Axial fashion, Chetty notes that for him (and this study concurs), 'the ideal intellectual is a person who is objective, rational, scientific and consistent in argument'. Besides decrying the visible absence of strong moral leadership, he also draws attention to the absence of intellectuals within the humanities. Where, Chetty inquires, are our poets, our literary artists, all so essential for the well-being of a nation's soul? Chetty asks if our current South African society's obsession with the pursuit of money perhaps underlies our intellectual shortfall. It may well be the reason, but if so, then South Africa would be wise to heed the words of Wheen (2004:36) who has so astutely observed that 'nothing so gives the illusion of intelligence as personal association with large sums of money. It is, alas an illusion'.

8.11 MBEMBE ASKS PERTINENT QUESTIONS

Mbembe rightly notes that the overall quality of life has decreased (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse"), but, although this is an accurate observation, it skirts the

issue of individual responsibility once again. Mbembe (2006. S.v. “Nongqawuse”) describes the slide into anarchy as ‘suicide’ but that implies a conscious choice. The situation that he depicts clearly reveals nothing more complex than the lack of individual accountability and responsibility. Africans appear to be either reluctant to acknowledge, or unaware of the fact, that all their actions have consequences for everyone, both in the present and for future generations. The state of the nation and its welfare is therefore the responsibility of each member of the nation, and succumbing in the present context, to a pre-Axial response model such as the Nxele/Nongqawuse model would be foolish and disastrous. In response, Mbembe (2006. S.v. “Nongqawuse”) asks how it would be possible to:

- foster a genuine commitment to a democratic premise that common men and women have something valuable to contribute to the formation of public opinion?
- contain populism in the safer channels of electoral politics?
- recapture the ideal of non-racialism and attend to all South African citizens, black and white, in a resolute attempt to build, for the first time on this continent, a truly modern and cosmopolitan society.

8.12 THE REPLY TO MBEMBE’S QUESTIONS

This study’s reply to Mbembe is strongly influenced by Karen Armstrong and the key Axial ideals and realisations. The response to Mbembe is:

- that South Africa needs to move to rapidly de-couple its cosmological realm.
- this decoupling will allow them to understand that gods/supernatural beings do not intervene in the affairs of humans in South Africa’s present modern, scientific and current Axial context.
- this will enable South Africans to finally assume individual accountability for their own lives and for all their own choices and actions.

- This will allow humans to understand that they and not the gods/supernatural beings are responsible for the welfare of their fellow human beings and that humans, not God or supernatural beings/ancestors, create and maintain order in the earthly realm.
- That all human actions have consequences for the present and the future generations.
- That it is every person's duty to display and implement universal compassion and social justice for all.

When all these goals have been accomplished then, and only then, will people be able to:

- Grasp the fact that it is their duty to publicly speak out and commit and contribute to creating and maintaining democracy.
- realise that individual accountability demands a responsible contribution from each person if they wish to conduct their elections in a socially just fashion, that cancels populism.
- Understand that they have no option but to return to an ideal of non-racialism through the peoples implementation of the Axial religious ideal of universal compassion and social justice, as well as Jesus' Golden Rule
- actively create not only a modern and cosmopolitan state, but a truly compassionate and socially just society as well, with their new found sense of individual accountability and responsibility for the fellow humans welfare, plus their Axial derived understanding of human responsibility for maintaining order in the human mundane realm.

CHAPTER 9: THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL IN THE PERIOD OF SEGREGATION

The review of the Christian Missionaries and the Social Gospel in the period of segregation will be done primarily with the work of Richard Elphick, *The Benevolent Empire and the Social Gospel: Missionaries and South African Christians in the Age of Segregation* (1997:347-369). This study uses the work of Richard Elphick to identify all the Axial elements during this period.

9.1 THE EMERGENCE OF THE AXIAL LINKED SOCIAL GOSPEL

By 1916 the Protestant Missionaries in South Africa had linked up with the Africans and white settlers. By this stage, they had all moved to design a Christian response to alleviate the social and cultural ills that rapid urbanisation, the rise in poverty and the problems that racial discriminatory legislation had brought to the newly urbanised black. This included all the other difficulties that black Africans were experiencing in their modern urbanised and alien environment (Elphick 1997:348).

These missionaries were selective in their choice of Social Gospel themes which would serve not only to alleviate social ills but would also become integral to the formation of the response of black and white people to the political situation prior to Apartheid. These Social Gospel themes became a valuable aspect of African Nationalism. The Roman Catholic Church was also actively engaged in the social application of Christianity, particularly in schools, hospitals and agricultural settlements (Elphick 1997:348). These social endeavours were all Axial based in that they are intent on implementing universal compassion and social justice in society.

9.2 THE SOCIAL GOSPEL EMBODIES AXIAL IDEALS

The most remarkable aspect about this Protestant Social Gospel approach was that it was finally moving away from what the Protestant missionaries critics had identified as their previous single-minded aim. This aim had not been 'to save the individual [African] from impending eternal judgement' (what this study has identified as salvic based Christianity). With this Axial Age perspective, critics such as the American Missionary James Dexter Taylor wanted the Christian missionaries 'to go beyond personal salvation and to embrace "the prophet's vision of the social, economic and even hygienic betterment of life that would result from a real filling of life with the spirit of God"' (Elphick 1997:348).

Elphick (1997:348) draws attention to the fact that there were many 19th century missionaries like the Bishop of Colenso of Natal, who were involved in what Elphick calls 'social issues'. These social issues are defined by this study as the Axial-derived concepts of universal compassion and social justice. Elphick (1997:348) notes that certain LMS missionaries and the Bishop of Colenso had even entered the political arena in their attempt to promote social justice for their converts, while the less radically inclined missionaries were also active in dealing with social concerns and problems. This is seen in the missionaries' implementation of the Axial ideals of compassion and social justice, in the education of the youth, the dispensing of medicines, attempts to restructure family life and teaching people of architecture and new methods of agriculture. All these efforts from the missionaries' project of social engineering had also allowed them to build a vast and admirable network of institutions that included churches, schools, dispensaries, hospitals, and agricultural settlements. This type of network is known as the 'Benevolent Empire' (Elphick 1997:348).

By the time the Protestants began to implement their Social Gospel concepts they already had a substantial 'Benevolent Empire' in South Africa. They used this empire as a springboard and a base on which they built their social and political power (Elphick 1997:349).

9.3 THE AXIAL IDEALS OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL ARE REVEALED

The Christians' new Axial-derived sense of Social Gospel ideals led to the establishment of numerous mission stations by both the Catholics and the Protestants. The Protestants were the most numerous and by 1911 there were 1,589 missionaries with 610 mission stations and 4,790 outstations. In Natal they held 127,211 acres in trust from the government as 'mission reserves' for African occupation. The majority of the stations had schools as well as churches.

From this study's perspective, these schools were the only means through which these African people had to acquire a decent education, but it also introduced them to the Axial ideas of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice (Elphick 1997:349). At the centre of the Protestant education system were secondary schools, most notably Lovedale where there were 5,433 students out of which a large percentage of the black elite of the next generation would come. The first and only black tertiary education institute 'The South African Native College' was set up at Fort Hare, Eastern Cape, South Africa in 1916. It was nondenominational but based on Christian ideals and was staffed exclusively by 'professing Christians ... of missionary sympathies' (Elphick 1997:349).

The earlier Christian missionaries 'salvic only' based approach to teaching Christianity in South Africa had cost them dearly in the social context in the past. This cost is evident when comparisons are drawn between China and South Africa in 1911. In China, where there were far less missionaries and conditions were more hostile, a more balanced and less 'salvic only' method of imparting Christianity had been more successful and had enabled the Christian missionaries to establish a much larger 'Benevolent Empire' during this period. This is clear when one compares statistics of the period: China had 18 universities, Fort Hare 1, China had 207 hospitals to South Africa's 5 hospitals and nine dispensaries, and only 0.4% of the missionaries in South Africa were doctors compared to the 4,7% worldwide.

Elphick (1997:349) points out that statistics like these grant credence to the Social Christians claim that South African missionaries had only been intent on saving souls, as opposed to implementing the key Axial ideals of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice. However, unlike their early counterparts, the Social Christians of the early 20th century were aiming to form a united front that would consolidate their Benevolent Empire and assist them in forming specialised ministries that they intended to use to help them combat, in true Axial fashion, what they identified as South Africa's social ills. Some of these were: urbanisation, the newly instituted sharp divide between the rich and the poor which always accompanies Axial transformation, the erosion of small-scale society economic equality and South Africa's increasingly discriminatory racial political legislation.

9.4 THE SOCIAL GOSPEL MISSIONARIES CALL FOR AN AXIAL RESPONSE

Although Protestant 19th century missionaries had rapidly educated and ordained black clergy, there was a certain amount of resistance to the acceptance of the black clergy as pastors. This led to resentment and bitter disputes about money, status and power amongst all the clergy. It also led to breakaway movements from the main Protestant parent body, most notably the Ethiopian secessions of 1880 -1890. This caused a 520% increase in Protestant pastors and by 1938, black pastors outnumbered ordained missionaries. The Social Christians Axial-based ideals of universal compassion and social justice also led to a marked increase in their Benevolent Empire. The number of educational institutions doubled and the number of hospitals went up from 5 to 25, dispensaries from 9 to 76, and missionary doctors increased from 7 to 29 (Elphick 1997:351). Yet despite this social and economic upliftment, the lifestyle conditions of the Africans began, for the first time, to decline.

The racist and socially unjust system of South Africa, especially the Natives Lands Act of 1913 was beginning to cripple Africans. The studies of the

missionary Henderson revealed that African families incomes and expenditure were increasingly entangled in an unending and oppressive legal and economic system created by increasing discriminatory legislation. The legislation also reduced African land ownership to a disproportionately minimal share of land. This led to the deterioration of their land due to overuse and as a result of this, the majority of young men were obliged to seek employment in the white dominated sector.

Discriminatory legislation was also enforced in the labour sector and led to a 'colour-bar' related wage structure effectively preventing black people from advancing. By 1928, Henderson's advanced study concluded 'that whites and blacks were part of a single economy, in which racism and injustice doomed Africans to increasing misery' (Elphick 1997:351). This observation meant that the missionaries and the Africans were not solely responsible for the Africans unjust social and economic situation. Henderson recommended that they should follow the advice of the Hebrew prophet Amos and 'denounce evil in the name of the Lord ... and give warning saying, "Behold the eyes of the Lord are upon the sinful kingdom"' (Elphick 1997:351).

9.5 THE SOCIAL GOSPEL CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES EXTEND COMPASSIONATE CARE TO THE AFRICAN PEOPLE

The unfortunate conditions and calls for aid from the newly urbanised African converts reached the missionaries and by 1894 the American board had sent Herbert Goodenough to assist with the supervision of churches in Johannesburg and Pretoria. With the help of Fredrick Bridgman, Goodenough moved very quickly to acquire land in the cities for churches to help set up new congregations and to open schools (Elphick 1997:351).

The appalling health standards and socio-economic conditions of the African miners in the mine compound system distressed missionaries like Bridgman and induced him to address the situation in an Axial way that would not perpetuate the 'mediaeval fallacy of saving souls while ignoring the body in

which the soul lives' (Elphick 1997:352). Bridgman then proclaimed in a manner true to Axial teaching, 'woe unto me, if I preach not the gospel of social as well as individual regeneration' (Elphick 1997:352). Bridgman's Social Gospel's Axial-based aspiration was transformed into reality with the help of the USA Rev. Ray Phillips. In the spirit of the Social Gospel, the Rev. Phillips stepped forward and organised athletics in the mine compounds and set up the 'Pathfinders', a youth group for young males. Elphick notes that Phillips also founded, in the true essence of Axial religious universal compassion, the first supervised playground in Africa for children of all colours and established the 'Educated Boys Club' for young African men (1997:352).

9.6 THE SOCIAL GOSPEL'S POSTMILLENNIAL THEOLOGICAL CORE

The Protestant move towards the Social Gospel was not perceived by them in a religious Axial sense. The Protestant Social Gospellers sought to teach and implement the Axial ideals of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice all within their postmillennial doctrinal context but were in essence still being driven by their Christian theological ideas as opposed to Axial ideals. These Protestant theological ideas had, Elphick (1997:353) notes, merely moved from stressing God's transcendence to emphasising His immanence instead. God's immanence was nonetheless particularly pertinent to the social and political contexts of the day. Thus, the Social Gospellers did not simply intend to claim a person's soul from individual sin, but intended to do so by coming forward to actively combat social justice. They were, however, still focussed on striving to usher in the Kingdom of God, as opposed to simply establish a socially just and compassionate Christian society.

The Social Gospellers program was basically a continuation of their 19th century postmillennial belief that the Kingdom would come through a historical process before Christ's second coming (Elphick 1997:354). These Protestant Social Gospellers were, therefore, not true Axial sages, who only sought to

teach and implement Axial ideals simply for the benefit and welfare of all their fellow human beings.

Nonetheless, the Social Gospellers postmillennial belief was linked to their concept of 'gradual salvation'. This fortunately enabled them to apply the Axial ideas of universal compassion and social justice (albeit unconsciously) in their move to repair their environment and to implement a just and compassionate society (even if they preferred to describe it as a 'Christian society'). This they achieved through social reform and education (Elphick 1997:354).

In 1908, the Federal Council of Churches which represented 17 million Protestants, all chose to adopt 'The Social Creed of Churches' as opposed to evangelism. The direct result of this in South Africa was that the missionaries at the Lovedale mission station were immediately instructed to set up a Committee on Social Problems and they began to examine issues related to compassion and social justice, such as unemployment, child welfare, housing and other socio-economic related concerns.

9.7 THE SOCIAL GOSPEL: ITS TUSKEGEEAN ASPECTS

The Social Gospel also reached South Africa through the American 'home missions' that sprung up after the American Civil War. A leading figure in the education and regeneration of the emancipated black slaves in the south after the war, was the son of a Presbyterian missionary, General Samuel Chapman Armstrong. He founded the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute that enabled poor black African-American students to work their way through school. The institute taught academic subjects plus agriculture and trades. Hampton's most renowned graduate is Booker T Washington who based a school, 'The Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute' that he established, on Chapman's Hampton (Elphick 1997:354-355).

Washington's model expanded Hampton's themes in a Christian setting, as he was an enthusiastic proponent of practical Christianity. He wanted his students to combine their religious zeal and thrift with the thrift of economy

and carpentry. By 1901, Washington had published his autobiography, *Up From Slavery* which was translated into Zulu and had an immense impact in South Africa. Hampton, Tuskegee and other like-minded schools were supported by a network of northern churches, Christian philanthropists, and also by large corporations. Tuskegeeism was widely praised and eventually recognised as a uniquely American application of the Social Gospel to the problems of race and rural poverty (Elphick 1997:355).

This study notes that Washington also propounded views that were not linked to the key religious Axial ideals of individual accountability, compassion and social justice. This is particularly evident in his belief that the social injustice of social inequality and racial segregation should not be dealt with in a pro-active forthright manner. A pro-active manner would assertively call for an end to all racial segregation and social inequality *on the basis of actively implementing social justice and universal compassion for all*.

This study can only surmise that Washington's pre-Axial style Social Gospel perspective (that abdicated all human individual accountability and pro-active responsibility in the face of social injustice and racial segregation) appealed to the missionaries, to many South African blacks and whites and to the white paternalists. This is because it allowed people to abdicate any individual accountability and responsibility for alleviating the situation, particularly in South Africa's hostile political context. Their abdication of individual responsibility may also have been linked, for some believers (perhaps even for Washington himself), to their post-millennial belief in the coming Kingdom of God, which meant that people could, in a sense, rationalise their abdication of individual accountability and responsibility for rectifying social injustice. This unjust situation would eventually be rectified albeit with the coming of the Kingdom of God. Consequently, this study observes that this type of Tuskegeean-style perspective has a sense of apathy which is far removed from the core Axial religious ideals of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice and suggests a growing sense of nihilism, cloaked in post-millennialism instead.

Either way, the adoption of Washington's views was non-productive and despite Washington's pro-Christian position, his views were not true to the key Axial ideals of Christianity. Elphick (1997:355) notes that the industrial 'socialist' and the rural Tuskegeean strand of the Social Gospel both emphasised Christian charity and reconciliation between contending groups. Both groups would agree to empower the oppressed through education and moral formation, actions which are of little value to a society that remains caught up in a socially unjust context. The two groups, the industrial socialists and the Tuskegeean, had different views on how this should be achieved.

The industrial socialists, who were part of the more powerful and respected churches in Britain and the USA, were not above voicing open criticism about the structures of their society and they openly challenged existing capitalist and prevailing class structures. The Tuskegeean however, did consider the increasingly oppressive and socially unjust situation of the black minority, but they still did not admit individual accountability, and thus did not step forward and pro-actively claim responsibility for actively rectifying their socially unjust situation (Elphick 1997:335).

This study notes that the Tuskegeean seemed to be incapable of empowering black people and of permitting them to assume stewardship for their own destiny. The Tuskegeean sought instead to function, yet again, within a framework of dependence but this time, they chose to depend, not upon themselves, but instead on white patrons, from whom they chose to seek assistance.

When we consider South Africa's politically restrictive and racially antagonistic climate, it is not surprising that the Tuskegeean model would appear to be more attractive to South Africans, both black and white. This model would thus have a greater affect on the racial situation in South Africa than the 'industrial social' model (Elphick 1997:355). The appeal and application of this Tuskegeean model in South Africa, only serves once again, to reveal and highlight the inability of people to comprehend the key Axial religious ideals, and the people's continued reluctance to focus on the fact that all humans,

black and white, rich or poor, Christian or non-Christian, need to assume individual accountability and responsibility for their socially unjust societal contexts and for the welfare of all their fellow human beings.

9.8 THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS' POLICIES IGNORE AXIAL IDEALS

The South African Protestant missionaries began to meet at regular conferences from 1881 onwards. These conferences became known as the General Missionary Conference (GMC) after the 1904 conference (Elphick 1997:355). The social and political predicament of the Africans eventually began to dominate the GMC agenda. Tentative efforts were made to present reports to various ministries, like the minister of native Affairs or the Chamber of Mines. The missionaries were inconsistent in their stand on civil rights. They were conservative in that they wished to abolish the sale of alcohol and censor movies (revealing a paternalistic facet), but they were liberal in their attempts to abolish trials by white juries in interracial rape cases and in their attempt to instigate reformative as opposed to punitive, discipline, when dealing with African criminals. The missionaries Axial-derived Christian sense of universal compassion and social justice was, however, clearly visible in their public condemnation of the Native Settlement and Squatters Bill, a precursor of the Natives Land Act although never passed by parliament. The missionaries described this legislation as an attempt 'to force on the Natives a form of serfdom' (Elphick 1997:356).

The Social Christians' socio-political policies, whether they were liberal or conservative, were all based on the paternalistic assumption of the 19th century Protestant Missions. The missionaries assumed that it was their duty to raise up lost societies, either through direct control or guidance. This meant that their actions were not directly based on the Axial ideals of social justice and compassion but that they were still operating from within their doctrinal framework. They had, by 1912, extended their doctrine of the Kingdom to include the whole of society, but they still assumed that social salvation would initially arise from the salvation of individuals. This doctrinal approach meant

that they were focussed on ensuring that African societies would be transformed in Christ, as this transformation would grant these Africans the right to attain economic prosperity and citizenship. This study therefore notes that this doctrinal approach ignored the key Axial ideal of social justice, as their basic doctrinal drive for individual salvation paid no attention to the social injustice of racial segregation (Elphick 1997:356).

9.9 THE SOCIAL GOSPEL CHRISTIANS AND THE SANNC

By 1912 the Social Gospel Christians had alienated most of the whites and were eager to recruit new allies that also drew inspiration from Social Christianity. They turned to the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), which was later renamed the African National Congress (ANC). The SANNC consisted primarily of Christian mission educated middle class Africans. The majority, due to their mission background, believed that Christianity could not only educate all Africans, but that Christianity would ensure them a socially just and multiracial society in South Africa. This belief had been fuelled in many instances by travel and study abroad. These excursions were coordinated by organisations like the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the American Board Mission and the Phelps Stokes Fund of New York. In this way, many South African politicians such as John Dube, D.D.T. Jabavu and Dr. Alfred Zuma were exposed to, and profoundly influenced by, the Tuskegeean philosophy of self-help and practical Christianity and the possibility of setting up a working alliance with powerful white patrons (Elphick 1997:357).

This Social Christian and predominantly Tuskegeean-shaped perspective led to the formation of a strong body of prominent Christian Africans by 1910. The Cape Christians were led by John Tengo Jabavu, and were joined by the middle class Africans from Natal. The group also included Christian African doctors, lawyers and ministers on the Witwatersrand. These men formed a national elite that historians have identified as the 'African nationalists', because their organisation would fight the social injustice of white supremacy.

Elphick (1997:357) notes that they could also have been called the African Social Christians.

The SANNC was predominantly led by dedicated Christians like the Rev. John Dube (President), Rev. Walter Rubasna and Sefago Mapogo Makgatho (Vice-President), Pixley ka Isaka Seme (Treasurer) and Solomon Plaatjie (Secretary). Dube was influenced by Tuskegeean ideals and believed that Christianity should provide for a person's 'internal' life as well as for the 'external' which includes those more material blessings of mental and social improvement that the missionaries combined (Elphick 1997:357). Thus Dube's war cry was, 'Onward! Upward! Into the higher places of civilization and Christianity' (Elphick 1997:357). Dube's strategy was nonetheless still Tuskegeean, in that it still abdicated individual responsibility and was designed to appeal to powerful patrons. In this instance, his aim was to 'gain the goodwill of the government'. This proved to be unsuccessful. His next appeal, in 1913, was to the United Kingdom⁵⁰ to ask for assistance in repealing the 1913 Land Act, was also futile. These thwarted endeavours undermined Dube's reputation and led to his resignation (Elphick 1997:357).

9.10 THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS, TUSKEGEEISM AND THE WHITE PATERNALISTS

The declining power of the British government obliged the African Christians to continue using the Tuskegeean model to seek assistance. They turned their attention to the so-called white Cape liberal politicians such as Jacobus W. Sauer, the minister of Native Affairs, but he proved to be unsympathetic. The 1924 electoral victory of J. B. M. Hertzog, a major proponent of racial segregation and Afrikaner Nationalism, also served to compound problems. It now became evident from 1910 onwards that parliamentary legislation would be an ineffectual means by which they could alter the existing ingrained racial prejudices and interests of the white electorate (Elphick 1997:358).

⁵⁰ This appeal was also based on the Tuskegeean 'powerful patron' policy, and on the strategy that the 19th century missionaries had used to gain British government intervention against local colonial governments.

The missionaries were very interested in a small new group of powerful and influential white paternalists. This group of paternalists were interested in co-operating with the Benevolent Empire and with the white and black elite members to assist them to work towards a more socially just society.

The paternalists were concerned about two specific options that they regarded as critical and diametrically opposed: firstly, the choice to keep blacks 'repressed' (Elphick 1997:358) in the manner of the former Boer republics; and secondly, the choice of total assimilation, which was what the Cape liberals wanted. The paternalists approved of neither of these options, as they believed that partial segregation was the ideal situation. This meant that they were critical of the missionaries' attempts to promote social justice by preaching assimilation and also of the missionaries' attempts to teach the Christian gospel as a tool for individual salvation. They nevertheless condoned missionary education, on the condition that the missionaries' educational methods diversified and were tailored to meet African needs and ambitions. This was not done in the spirit of Axial compassion but to prevent other rebellious African Christians from seceding from the Protestant parent body, as the Ethiopians had done, and to help curb the spread of Islam amongst black Africans (Elphick 1997:358-359).

The paternalist views slotted in with the missionaries' aims of social regeneration. Yet many of the missionaries, like the black leaders of the 1920s, were open to the suggestion of partial segregation but also opposed to total segregation, which they deemed unjust (Elphick 1997:358-359). This statement contains what this study regards as an inherent paradox.

9.11 THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS FACE COMPETITION

The paternalists, the missionaries and African Christians worked together in the 1920s. They met often and most of their members came from the socially conscious black and white Christians whose views were aligned with those of the Social Gospel. Elphick (1997:359) notes that there were other more

radical political groups, such as the ANC and the black trade union movement, who were also active at this time.

The Garveyite nationalists and the communists however, were hostile towards the mission-oriented Africans and the missionaries, though not to Christianity itself. The national secretary of The Industrial and Commercial workers Union, Clements Kadalie, openly criticised the churches at a GMC conference in 1928. Kadalie accused the churches of always being ‘thoroughly reactionary and drifting from Christ’s teaching’ (Elphick 1997:359). He told the delegates, like a modern day Amos, that the church always sides with ‘the rich against the poor, opposing every effort toward social and economic freedom of the masses’ (Elphick 1997:359). Kadalie’s call for universal compassion and social justice are equivalent to those of the Hebrew Axial prophets such as Amos and Hosea. It is also worth noting that when Kadalie called for the churches to ‘devote more time and effort to the improvement of the material lives of men and women and less to the so-called spiritual side of things’ (Elphick 1997:359), his words were virtually a modern paraphrase of the Axial Prophet Isaiah’s words in 1:15-17 (see 4.3.3). Although Kadalie’s words had upset certain people, his views did subscribe to the Social Gospel agenda and many of the Socialist Christian delegates at the conference agreed with his call for social justice.

The rivalry between the Social Christians and the more radical organisations induced the missionaries to significantly increase their Axial-derived Social Gospel endeavours and they changed the format of the GMC in 1921. They began to focus on social justice and economic issues, as opposed to traditional missionary affairs. To this end they:

- agitated for more facilities for training Africans as doctors and nurses.
- called for equitable wages for Africans.
- publicly decried the anguish and suffering produced by the Land Act.
- called for better African housing in urban areas (Elphick 1997:360).

They passed resolutions on Axial related social reform at the GMC in 1925, where, in the true spirit of Axial compassion, they ordered a commission, with African representation, to investigate ways to reduce the extremely harsh penalties imposed on Africans and to replace them with 'commonly accepted principles of modern criminology' (Elphick 1997:360). Their resolution reflected their growing sense of disquiet in relation to the social injustice of the constantly increasing, racially discriminatory legislation. In their striving for social justice, they proceeded to call on the Cabinet to review the Native Act, the disproportionately high taxes imposed on Africans and the colour bars in industry.

In 1928 the Social Gospel missionaries displayed a marked sense of Axial social justice when they finally stated that 'the Native has the same rights as the White man to combine for the purpose of social bargaining' (Elphick 1997:360). In their attempt to attain social justice, they also asserted that more blacks should be employed in the civil service. During 1932 they also displayed a marked sense of Axial universal compassion as they concentrated on relief measures for African victims of the depression and the dealt with the problem of government's position on supplying medicine and medical education for blacks (Elphick 1997:360).

9.12 THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS AND THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH

The Social Christians realised that they needed the support of the predominantly white Afrikaans speaking Dutch Reformed Church if they were going to attempt to influence the government. Yet, despite the overall sympathy of certain Cape DRC members such as Johannes du Plessis, the professor of Missions at Stellenbosch, towards the intentions of the Social Gospel, the DRC were not open to racial integration. Consequently, Professor D.D.T. Jabavu of Fort Hare and Sol Plaatjie publicly declared the DRC as an 'anti-Native' church, because it supported the Land Act. This study notes that the action of the DRC reveals its blatant and total denial of the Christian religious Axial-derived ideals of universal compassion and social justice, as

well as their total rejection of Jesus' Golden Rule, in relation to Africans. The DRC response was also a clear indication of what lay ahead (in 1924 with the Nationalists electoral victory) as the DRC were already aligning themselves with the government, in a regressive pre-Axial manner. It is therefore not surprising that the honeymoon period between the blacks, the white paternalists, the Social Gospellers and the Afrikaners ceased in 1924 (Elphick 1997:360).

The DRC's total disregard (or perhaps their selective application) of Jesus' Golden Rule and their fierce denial of the core Axial religious ideals that Christianity is meant to embody, namely universal compassion and social justice, is indubitably evident in the correspondence printed in one of their official papers, *De Kerkbode*. In this publication, a disgruntled DRC member wrote in a truly anti-Christian vein that 'our Church ... must realise that her calling in the first instance is to the whites and not to the natives' (Elphick 1997:361). Another disconcerted DRC member wrote that 'it is impossible to fraternise: we must be brothers in spirit only. Blacks stand too far below us in the area of morals. Friendly advances in practical life are impossible and according to God's Word also sinful' (Elphick 1997:361). This study notes that these views show that it is surprising that the DRC could (and did) continue to perceive themselves as Christians, in light of these prime examples of the DRC's distinctly non-Axial, and therefore non-Christian, perceptions and actions.

The growing chasm between the DRC and the English speaking missionaries and their black compatriots, increased with the DRC's adoption of a 'Mission Policy' in 1935. This policy stated that the DRC would support certain aspects of the Social Gospel (such as medical, industrial, agricultural and literary aspects). The DRC also stated that they were in favour of aiding 'Native and Coloured ... to develop into self-respecting Christian nations', but in a clearly un-Christian fashion, they stated that they, in essence, could not embrace the idea of 'racial fusion' and that they were not able to disregard the 'differences of race and colour ... in daily life' (Elphick 1997:361).

This 'Mission Policy' revealed that the Africans, the Social Christians and the DRC were clearly not united in their goals and that the DRC was obviously going in the opposite direction of the Axial-derived Christian ideals of universal compassion and social justice and their implementation into society (Elphick 1997:361). By 1944, the Transvaal DRC, who in the mid 30s had joined the newly formed Christian Council (which replaced the GMC), also withdrew from this Council, under inducement from the Cape synod. Elphick (1997:363) notes that conservative whites were also moving away from the general agreement of research and practical services, especially the racial and social adjustment concerns of the Council of Churches, as were many blacks who were losing faith in the ability of the missionaries and their other white supporters and patrons.

9.13 THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS AXIAL IMPULSE IS REVEALED BY D.D.T. JABAVU

The Social Christians rose to prominence once again in the 1930s as the black extremists slowly diminished. The 1930s saw men like the notable D.D.T. Jabavu set up the All African Convention to assist the Cape African voters in their attempt to keep their vote. Jabavu combined three careers. He was an international Christian leader, an educator and a politician and all three pursuits were based on Social Gospel ideals. He would address churches and speak out against all the socially unjust discriminatory issues related to Africans, like the pass laws, the labour situation, the land act and segregation. At the same time, he would proceed (in the spirit of the Social Gospel's doctrine) to emphasise the evangelistic aspect of the Social Christian's agenda. In this vein, he would also, in the spirit of the Axial Hebrew prophets, call for social justice. Nonetheless, this call was also directly linked to his invitation to people to embrace Jesus, for the Glory of his Heavenly Kingdom and for the salvation of the Bantu race.

Elphick (1997:361) notes that for Jabavu, this combination and praxis of socio-political and spiritual power was a concept that was entrenched in Jabavu's African Traditional perceptual framework. It was, for him, the direct

opposite of the general move towards secularism that was gradually reducing the power of religion in the Western perceptual framework.

Jabavu was also a steadfast and faithful supporter of the missionary movement, and in 1931 he told an American audience:

Every [South African] black man who is a leader of any importance is a product of missionary work. Outside of missionary work there is no leadership (Elphick 1997:362).

This is a very important observation in relation to this study. It clearly illustrates how the missionaries teaching of Axial-based Christianity and Western style education (with its emphasis on individual accountability and the attainment of excellence), did manage to impart key Axial ideals and realisations to people with pre-Axial perceptual frameworks, despite their focus on the coming of the Kingdom of God. This, in turn, equipped Africans with the pre-requisite Axial ideals and realisations so that they could function within Africa's Axial transformation and assist people who were struggling to accept the fact that Axial change was inevitable. Jabavu, as a socially just religious leader, also fits in with the emergence of a new religious elite in an Axial Age transformation, whose tasks include establishing new Axial societal and religious contexts and guiding the people through their Axial transformation.

There were people who sympathised with Jabavu and who established the South African Institute of Race Relations with him. They included the Social Christians du Plessis, Loram, Brookes, the Quaker Howard Pim and the son of a Welsh clergyman J.D. Rhienhallt Jones. The Institute became increasingly prudent and began to avoid party politics and moved, in a distinctly non-Axial and therefore definite un-Christian manner, to accommodate certain socially unjust and uncompassionate segregationist projects (Elphick 1997:362).

9.14 THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS DURING THE 1940S

During the 1940s, two factors were responsible for the radicalisation of African politics: the effects of World War II and the Nationalist party's electoral success in 1948. From 1940 to 1949, Dr. Alfred Zuma led the ANC. Dr. Zuma was also greatly influenced by the perceptions and the beliefs of Washington's Tuskegeean approach, just like other prominent blacks before him. Zuma's Tuskegeean preference had developed during his 14-year stay in the USA, when he discovered the significance of cooperating with white liberals and patrons.

Dr Zuma had acquired a strong belief, from the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), that black people must take charge of their own organizations. Once he returned home, he maintained ties with the AME and worked, in Tuskegeean style, with the whites in the Joint Councils. Zuma was, however, far less tolerant towards with the white paternalists and their inclination to concede to segregation policies. Dr. Zuma's strategy was however confined to the constitutional arena and as a liberal and a proponent of Christian morality, he is recognised for carrying his mission for social justice against white supremacy to the United Nations in New York (Elphick 1997:363).

The Nationalists victory at the polls in 1948 marked South Africa's move to the right and the blacks counteractive move to the left. Yet despite this, the Social Christianity principles of universal compassion and social justice and their implicit concept of interracialism still stood firm. There were also, despite a notable drop in enthusiasm, still many people from all ethnic and language groups, who continued to fraternise. They believed that Christianity was capable of providing a solution to South Africa's socially unjust and uncompassionate perceptual framework and context, particularly its racially discriminatory legislation. After 1948, the influence of the Social Christians declined as the secular groups, many with Social Christian members such as Albert Lutuli, rose to prominence. Lutuli became the president of the ANC in 1952 and despite his public identification with the Axial-derived Christian

ideals of social justice and compassion, upset the missionaries by associating with left wing members of the Congress alliance (Elphick 1997:364).

After 1950, many Christian whites, such as Alan Paton and Edgar Brookes, and a small group of blacks were drawn to the multi-racial Liberal party set up in 1953. The churches and the South African Council of Churches also began to display the Axial ideals of social justice and compassion when they actively chose to become deeply involved in the social injustice of the anti-Apartheid struggle. These groups were soon led by blacks, who were increasingly motivated by the more radical 'prophetic' theologies⁵¹ of liberation. Elphick (1997:364) notes that the Social Christians aim of reconciling the elites from various races and revitalising society through their evangelism, education and social work seemed powerless and futile in the face of the harsh and unyielding apartheid government measures.

9.15 THE MISSIONARIES CONTRIBUTION TO SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, Christians embraced the Social Gospel, with its Axial-derived religious ideals to assist them in combating social injustice and racial discrimination. The South African Benevolent Empire was also more powerful and indispensable than any other empire in any other country because the South African state was too reluctant (and unwilling) to provide and administer to the needs of their impoverished and marginalised sections. This meant that the Social Christians retained their influential position in the South African political and social arena for a much longer period than the Social Christians in other countries who were moving towards secularisation. Elphick (1997:365) also points out that many North American visitors observed and remarked on the prominent role of the churches in South African civic life and the adoption and use of Christian concepts and terminology by all groups who were part of the Apartheid struggle.

⁵¹ Eugene M. Klaaren, in *Creation and Apartheid: South African Theology since 1948*, provides a concise review of the 'prophetic' theologies of revelation (Elphick & Davenport 1997:374-382).

Unfortunately the Nationalist government rejected the social Gospellers demands for Axial-derived social justice and compassion and would not recognise the Africans right to equal opportunity or their right 'to be trained for eventual participation and leadership in South African political life' (Elphick 1997:365). The Bantu Education Act of 1953 marked the end of the Social Christians' Benevolent Empire, the wellspring of the Social Gospels power for instilling social justice through mission education and their preparation of blacks for a future, albeit a future that was separate from whites.

The seizure of church assets and their nationalisation heralded the end of one hundred and fifty years of the importance and value of the Christian missionaries' contribution to South Africa's political and social spheres (Elphick 1997:365). It also extinguished the Social Christians' hope that the mission-educated blacks would attain the full benefits of South African citizenship.

9.16 THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS AND SEGREGATION

The missionaries tended to disagree about the positive and negative social justice and compassionate aspects of segregation yet most were openly critical of the total social injustice of the Natives land Act of 1913 and the Native Representation Act of 1916 (Elphick 1997:366). Elphick (1997:367) draws attention to the fact that when the missionaries were opposed to segregation, they 'were acting on the universalism at the root of their enterprise, their belief in the oneness of all people in Christ'. This translates into a definition of the foundational Axial ideals of an Axial-derived faith such as Christianity and ultimately into a striving to implement them along with the Golden Rule of Jesus. This idea was echoed in the words of a Scottish missionary in 1907 when he moved to refute the uncompassionate and socially unjust arguments for ecclesiastical segregation whilst supporting those 'who have a living faith in [Christ's] power and the indwelling of His Spirit union of Black and White in one Church [which] is the only possibility' (Elphick 1997:367).

Those who were pro-segregation often operated from a paternalistic framework that perceived the Africans as 'child races' who required the missionaries' assistance to 'raise' them through moral uplift (Elphick 1997:367). For example, the Anglican Bishop J. W. Williams of the St John's missionary diocese devised a proposition that combined universalism and segregation in 1920. This paternalistic view basically said that the 'whites owed the blacks opportunity, aid, protection and slow advancement to adulthood' and that 'issues of full equality and total integration could be postponed to a distant future' (Elphick 1997:367).

Many Protestant missionaries embraced the Social gospel with what Elphick (1997:368) describes as 'the assurance that Jesus could transform societies as fundamentally as they themselves had been transformed'. With this belief they confidently set out to educate and to correct social injustice by participating in the social and political arena. This they regarded as an additional aspect and not a substitute for their evangelism that was based on the transformation of individuals in their personal encounter with Jesus. Consequently, African supporters of the Social Gospel like Dube, Zuma, Jabavu and Lutuli (who were second or third generation Christians) were ardent in their support of the Social Gospels' ideals of social transformation.

Elphick (1997:368) notes the Social Gospels' religious doctrinal approach to social issues that combined the sacred (in their evangelism) and the profane (the issues of social justice in the earthly realm). This coupled cosmological realm concept may have accounted for the Africans enthusiastic adoption of this idea as they had not managed to decouple their cosmological realm and, as a result, had retained their pre-Axial perceptual framework.

In retrospect, it would appear that the Social Gospellers seriously misinterpreted the situation in South Africa. However, it is highly improbable that there would have been any Social Christianity in South Africa without the Social Christians missionary endeavours. The Social Gospel missionaries' South African Benevolent Empire, plus their international network of educational institutions, donors, philanthropists and powerful white

paternalists, enabled generations of blacks to gain a Western education through travelling abroad and through study (Elphick 1997:368). This Social Gospel program introduced the black South African to the Axial Age religious ideals and realisations within Christianity, albeit in a contradictory and confusing manner.

9.17 THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS INSTIL AXIAL RELIGIOUS IDEALS AND REALISATIONS

Elphick (1997:368-369) points out that both the black and white social Christians developed what this study would define as an Axial-derived sense of social justice and compassion. This was seen in ‘a South African political ideology of interracial cooperation that took deep root, most significantly, in the African National Congress’. He also draws attention to the fact that

[t]he missionaries’ universalist message, and their optimism about the transformative power of the Christian gospel, emboldened several generations of whites and blacks to contend for universal values in a society pulled powerfully toward hierarchy, segregation, and racial oppression. The Social Gospel in South Africa led, neither to the Kingdom of God, as its advocates had hoped, nor to the “secular city” as critics of the North American Social gospel have charged. But it did inspire a dissenting tradition of faith in human equality and the possibility of ethnic and racial conciliation that, once purged of its paternalism, inspired powerful strands of resistance in the era of Apartheid (Elphick 1997:369).

The significance of this observation is that it reveals that, despite the postmillennial doctrinal and evangelical aspect of the Protestant missionary enterprise in South Africa, the Social Christian missionaries did, to a certain degree, manage to inculcate, through their missionary endeavour and their Benevolent Empire, the key Axial Age religious ideals of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice. They also imparted the Axial realisation that all humans were responsible for their own welfare, as well as for the welfare of all their fellow human beings.

CHAPTER 10: SOUTH AFRICA AND THE NORTHERN KINGDOM AND JUDAH: A COMPARISON OF AXIAL AGE TRANSFORMATION

In this chapter the study examines the similarities, common interests and concerns that this study has deduced and formulated after a careful examination of the available data. These qualities are exhibited by the Northern Kingdom and Judah during its Axial age and subsequently by present day South Africa during its current Axial Age transformation. This is done in a manner that is akin to, but not identical to the work of Susan Niditch, *Ancient Israelite Religion* (1997), and Burton L. Mack, *The Christian Myth: Origins, Logic, and Legacy* (2001).

10.1 VIOLENCE: A KEY CATALYST FOR AXIAL TRANSFORMATION

History and archaeology has indicated that South Africa (1600 to the present), and the Ancient Israelite Northern Kingdom and Judah (800-200 BCE) share and exhibit common concerns, contexts, beliefs and features during their Axial Age transitions. In both groups, Axial transition is linked to the eruption of violence. In antiquity, during Ancient Israel's Axial Age, it was the constant threat and occurrence of warfare, violent conquest and deportation (Armstrong 2006:86). In South Africa, it has been the violent response to the previous white government's brutal implementation of racial discrimination (Apartheid), and the continued violence within a democratic black governed country. This includes the insidious and deadly threat of HIV/AIDS that is serving to decimate the population at an alarming rate.

10.2 THE DESIRE TO RETAIN A UNIQUE CULTURAL IDENTITY

Another remarkable similarity lies in the fact that both groups, despite the difficulties of their Axial Age transformations, remain intent on retaining their

own specific and unique cultural identity. Israel's identity was inextricably bound to its unique, newly defined Axial religion and similarly, in South Africa, identity is also bound to religion. In this instance, though, it is bound to certain (maladaptive) aspects of an ancient pre-Axial African Traditional Religion as well as to the more recently acquired and adopted Axial-derived religion of Christianity (the principal harbinger of South Africa's Axial Age) and to a much lesser degree, Islam.

During ancient Israel's Axial Age transformation the main threat to the Northern Kingdom's identity came from the Near Eastern imperial powers in Assyria. In Judah, it was mainly Assyria and Babylon, and to a lesser degree Egypt (Arnason 2005:126). For South Africa, it is the West, especially the USA, which (along with globalisation) presents a threat to the African Traditional Religion and cultural-derived sense of identity. This risk is also compounded by new socio-economic and political dynamics that have revealed a 'new' threat, more surreptitious and subtle, that is coming from the new emerging world powers in the Far East, such as India and China.

10.3 AN AFFINITY FOR A PRE-AXIAL BELIEF IN SUPERNATURAL INTERVENTION

Both ancient Israel and South Africa reveal their own group specific affinities for a persistent and deleterious pre-Axial-derived belief in direct intervention in human affairs in the earthly realm by supernatural beings/gods/God from the supernatural realm. In the Northern Kingdom there was never a focussed attempt by the rulers to sanction the worship of Yahweh alone (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:247) even though the pre-Axial prophets Elijah, Elisha and the Axial prophet Hosea were actively pro-monotheistic and openly critical of the Israelites worship of other deities such as Baal (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:247; Armstrong 2006:89). Current scholarship is varied over the YHWH-alone movement which originated in the Northern Kingdom. It has been seen by some scholars as the result of a choice made by a group of non-conformist priests and prophets who were horrified by the injustice and idolatry of the Assyrian period. They were thus the originators of the YHWH-alone

movement which they took with them to Judah after their Kingdom fell (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:248).

There are also more complex and significant reasons for the YHWH-alone movement. These reasons are in relation to the overall impact of the Axial Age transformation sequence and its effect on societies' perceptual frameworks and responses to Axiality. Rushkoff states that the concept of monotheism is linked to the Israelites Axial development which was reflected in their various biblical narratives. Consequently, when Abraham smashed the idols, he was paving the way for a more abstract, limitless and compassionate concept of a deity (2003:17). This fits in with the Axial decoupling of Israel's cosmological realm. He notes that the Exodus origin myth is not only about the Israelites freedom from what he describes as their 'indentured servitude' in *Mitzrayim*, (the Hebrew word for Egypt which means 'narrow place'). Instead, Rushkoff explains that the Israelites were also breaking out of their previous 'enslaved and narrow state of mind' (2003:17) which was the narrow particularistic perceptual framework characteristic of a pre-Axial context.

Eisenstadt (2005:538) notes that Axial societies discarded their narrow particularistic framework with Axial change. This allowed them to escape their previous pre-Axial 'enslaved and narrow state of mind', (like the Israelites did in their highly allegorical Exodus narrative), and formulate new Axial perceptions. This enabled them to devise different institutional patterns and visions and served to significantly broaden and open up new conceptions of institutional possibilities and options in all spheres. This includes the political sphere, the design of collective identity(s) as well as the move to reconstruct aspects of mundane life such as social order, culture and personality.

Thus Rushkoff notes that the Israelites gradual Axial linked development of strict iconoclasm eventually served to make 'abstract monotheism the Jews' only possible relationship to a deity' (2003:21). Rushkoff (2003:24) also notes, along with Armstrong (2006:88), that Axial prophets like Amos were subconsciously priming the people for coping with their Axial decoupled cosmological realm by telling the people that their God, Yahweh, was not

reflexively on the Israelites side as he had been in during the period of their Exodus. God, in keeping with their decoupled realm, had now receded. Consequently the Israelites would need to look inward, in true Axial fashion, to experience God once again (Rushkoff 2003:25; Armstrong 2000b:17; Assman 2005:153).

10.4 A NEW REASON FOR THE ORIGIN OF THE YHWH-ALONE MOVEMENT

This study would like to propose that there is another Axial linked reason that has not, to this study's knowledge, been offered before for the origins of ancient Israel's YHWH-alone movement. The reason for the YHWH-alone movement is directly connected to the prophets' principal Axial realisation that the Axial decoupled cosmological realm calls for the Israelites active acceptance and practice of the concept of individual accountability.

The Axial prophets and priests understood that the concept of individual accountability could not be embraced while the Israelites continued to retain a belief in direct intervention by a supernatural beings/gods in the human realm. The words of the prophet Amos were designed to inform the Israelites that their God, Yahweh, had receded and would not intervene directly in their affairs. Nevertheless, the Axial prophets and priests were well aware of the Israelites continued belief in other deities, as the words of prophets like Hosea reveal. The YHWH-alone movement was also designed to prevent the Israelites from having any access or recourse to a belief in any other deity that they could call on, or who could/would intervene directly in the affairs of humans. Consequently, the concept of monotheism, as defined by the YHWH-alone movement, was a deliberate design innovation that served to reinforce the key Axial realisation that no supernatural beings/gods intervene directly in their newly Axial decoupled cosmological realm. Humans, in this instance the Israelites, would in theory have to accept and embrace the concept of individual accountability and responsibility for the welfare of their fellow human beings.

The archaeological remains and the history of the proliferation of other religious belief systems, deities and praxis, bears testimony to the Israelites reluctance to abandon their pre-Axial belief in direct intervention. They reveal that, despite the biblical accounts and the monotheistic position and early efforts of the YHWH-alone movement to achieve monotheism, Dever (2005:290-291) is correct when he states that in reality 'the real religion of ancient Judah consisted largely of everything the biblical writers condemned'.

This persistent refusal, by the ancient Israelites during the first phase of their Axial transformation, to accept the Axial concept of individual accountability has very pronounced parallels within the South African context. In South Africa, the majority of Africans have, despite their exposure to the Axial-derived faith of Christianity since 1799, continued to stubbornly adhere to this maladaptive pre-Axial belief even during South Africa's Axial transformation. This observation serves to support this study's call, not only for the retrieval and re-application of the timeless Axial Hebrew prophets ethical teachings, but for a compelling and renewed emphasis on the concept of pure monotheism, as defined by the Old Testament YHWH-alone movement. This call could be used to swiftly and effectively shut down all maladaptive pre-Axial beliefs in direct intervention from supernatural beings/ancestors in the African religious belief system context, both in the ATR framework and in the Independent Christian Churches and in any other Christian affiliated belief system where this deleterious belief still persists and effectively cancels out the acceptance and practice of the concept of individual accountability.

10.5 THE AFFINITY FOR 'MAGICAL THEOLOGY'

The shared attraction for 'magical theology' response models is seen in the Africans continued affinity for the Nxele response model (even in present times as Mbembe's article [2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse"] revealed) and in Judah's reluctance to abandon its 'magical theology'. This is revealed by the Axial prophet Isaiah, in the so-called power of Judah's Davidic tradition that inappropriately, in a pre-Axial manner, encouraged people to believe that Yahweh's presence in the Temple would render the city to be invincible

(Armstrong 2006:96,99). However, the Axial prophet Jeremiah did not subscribe to any of this 'magical theology' of the period which certain prophets and the people continued to espouse and believe. Jeremiah dismissed this maladaptive belief and in true Axial fashion told the people to accept the fact that their individual actions had consequences for the present and the future, and that if they did not conduct their lives in a just and compassionate fashion that Yahweh would, indeed, tear down Jerusalem. In South Africa, many black Africans still operate within a pre-Axial coupled cosmological realm as well. Their belief in a 'magical theology' response model like Nxele's reveals that they are in dire need of their own Axial inspired African Jeremiah(s) to convince them to relinquish their belief in 'magical theology' and to assist them in formulating context appropriate response models instead.

10.6 RAPID URBANISATION LEADS TO THE DISSOLUTION OF SMALL-SCALE/TRIBAL BASED STRUCTURES

South Africa, like the Northern Kingdom, is also a nation that has recently attained full statehood (as defined by Finkelstein and Silberman)⁵². It has also recently achieved democracy and is entering its Golden Age just as the Northern Kingdom did under the Omrides and Jeroboam II, and Judah did under Hezekiah.

South Africa, like Northern Kingdom of Israel and Judah, has also, due to the changes that accompany Axial transformation, seen major population shifts from rural to urban areas. It has also seen the dissolution of small-scale/tribal society harmony, social structures, kinship ties and economic equality. The shift in power from tribal heads/kings to the market place (what Sundermeier calls 'Western style economy' (1998:225)) has divided people into rich and poor. The plight of African people caught up in rapid urbanisation is revealed in the print media excerpt from *The Sunday Times* article *No escape from*

⁵² The criteria for full statehood are: literacy, bureaucratic administration, specialized economic production, monumental architecture, specialised economic production and a professional army (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:212,245)

hell's fire for grandmother from the Bessie Head Fellowship (Cullinan 2005:33).

The shortfalls of the small-scale society/tribal based traditional pre-Axial ATR derived system of assisting and sharing within a multicultural and diverse context is also revealed in an article by Brendan Boyle (2006:4). Boyle reports that a macro social report released during June 2006 reveals that urban Africans have less effective social networks and fewer friends than their white counterparts. The study indicates that poverty (the sharp divide between rich and poor that follows the erosion of classic small-state societies/tribes during Axial change) served to shatter, along with migration and urbanisation (which also render small-scale society concepts obsolete), certain traditional African support structures and was, in effect, setting a precedent for change in regard to other maladaptive aspects of traditional African social and cultural structures and beliefs. The classic Axial conflict between State (King) and church (priest) in South Africa is also evident in the clash between President Thabo Mbeki and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. This clash occurred when Tutu criticised the government's black economic empowerment policy in the article called *Tutu moves to bury hatchet with Mbeki* (2005).

10.7 THE ELITES DISREGARD FOR THE PLIGHT OF THE ORDINARY PEOPLE

South Africa, like the Northern Kingdom and Judah, has also experienced corruption and bad governance due to the lack of social justice and compassion, which South Africans have witnessed in the Government's 'Travelscam' and the Zuma debacle, aptly titled, 'Sex, Lies and Agendas' by Robin Palmer (2006:14). This selfish and unjust attitude is also seen in the actions of people who act irresponsibly at the expense of the community, most recently by the unrepentant convicted fraudster Tony Yengeni, the Former ANC whip, whose legal representatives have requested that National legislature pay for a constitutional challenge to his criminal fraud conviction (Du Toit 2006:6).

The lack of Axial-derived Hebrew prophetic individual accountability, social justice and universal compassion in ATR, culture, ethics and social systems, will continue to paralyse people until Axial Age-derived cultural change and transformation occurs. The apparent resistance that appears to underlie South Africa's reluctance to open up its systems to new ideas and to discard the maladaptive and anachronistic aspects of ATR and African culture will be examined through a popular black academic response to cross-cultural adoption.

CHAPTER 11: SHATTERING A CULTURAL-CHANGE MISCONCEPTION

The past historical achievements of the adoption of the original Axial Age ideology and ethos of the Hebrew prophetic teaching and its ethics have shown that it would seem to be extremely short-sighted not to retrieve and adopt the Hebrew Prophetic ethic template to bring about a total Axial transformation, especially on its religious/symbolic level, within South Africa. The fact that ancient Israel and Judah's context and South Africa's context are so remarkably similar (indeed most of the rest of Africa as well), it is clear that the continued retention of the coupled cosmological realm and the subsequent belief in supernatural intervention in the human realm is preventing a cultural and ethical transformation, particularly of its ATR-derived maladaptive and anachronistic aspects.

11.1 CULTURAL CHANGE SHOULD NOT BE CONFINED TO THE GROUP

The major objection appears to be the misconceived belief that cultural change should be confined to the group's own dynamics and boundaries. This is seen in Waliggo's words that 'no sane society chooses to build on foreign cultures, values and systems' because to do so would be 'nothing less than communal suicide' (Magesa 2002:xi). This belief is not supported by the work of Boyd and Richerson or by Stephen J Gould. Gould is emphatic in his observation that *'the history of cultural change contradicts this (Waliggo's) perception and shows that not to draw from another culture's ideas and innovation, can be detrimental'* (Gould 1996:222-223). Richerson and Boyd also draw attention to the fact that cultural adaptation and assimilation, even when it follows after defeat in battle, need not result in the erosion of cultural differences (2005:207). To this end, Jared Diamond points out that most societies tend to acquire the majority of their technological and political institutions from other societies, as opposed to inventing these institutions for

themselves (2005:406)⁵³. Diamond then proceeds to draw attention to the fact that societies who have failed to adopt and retain inventions from other societies have been eliminated in the past, and will continue to be eliminated by competing societies in the present and the future⁵⁴.

⁵³ Although Diamond's examples of societies that were receptive and open to cross-cultural adoption (2005:252-254) are primarily connected to technology, they demonstrate the high cost and dubious value of Waliggo's thinking. They include:

- The Chimbu highlanders of New Guinea whose aggressive adoption of Western technology allowed them to go from a classic Stone Age tribe in the 1930's to coffee plantation and saw mill owners by the mid 1960's. The result is that the Chimbu are rapidly 'colonizing' the remaining conservative highland tribes, such as the Daribi, who rejected technology and are assimilating tribes like these and reducing them to the status of a 'labour force' for their (Chimbu) ventures. This example clearly illustrates the high cost of remaining a closed society (in the manner defined by Waliggo), when neighboring societies are open and receptive to cross-cultural exchange.
- The Ibo of Nigeria who were also receptive and adopted Western technology and became the equivalent of the New Guinea Chimbu in Nigeria.
- The Native American Navajo also embraced Western technology and as a result of this, have become the most numerous Native American tribe in the United States today. The Navajo's resilience and receptiveness to cross-cultural adoption has allowed them to utilize Western dyes in their traditional weaving, become skilled silversmiths and modern, truck driving ranchers, who continue to live in their traditional dwellings (Diamond 2004:252-253).

⁵⁴ Diamond (2004:255) provides examples that illustrate how a society's lack of innovation and receptiveness to cross-cultural adoption can be a fatal disadvantage. In his examination of the infamous Maori 'Musket War', he reveals how any closed society runs the real risk of being overwhelmed and replaced if their disadvantage is great enough. This actual situation occurred when Europeans introduced the musket to the New Zealand Maori tribes in the early 1800's. One Maori tribe, the Ngaphui, adopted the muskets and in a brutal 15-year war, known as the 'Musket War', seized the island. The result was that tribes without muskets, or without access to muskets, were subjugated and killed, and by 1833, musket technology had spread throughout New Zealand and all surviving Maori tribes had muskets.

Diamond also provides examples of the disadvantage of any society's rejection and/or prohibition on internal innovation and/or of acquired technology, due to rigid cultural custom and praxis. Diamond's examination of Japan's abandonment of guns after their introduction to Japan by the Portuguese in 1543 CE (2004:257), serves to illustrate this point. Initially Japan embraced guns and their production and by 1600 CE Japan 'owned more and better guns than any other country in the world' (Diamond 2004:257). Yet, Japan deliberately chose to abandon the guns. This decision was driven by Japan's rigid Samurai culture and the inflexible customs and praxis of their sword carrying Samurai warrior class. The foolhardiness of their cultural driven choice was swiftly brought to the fore by the 1853 visit of Commander Perry's U.S. fleet 'bristling with canons' (Diamond 2004:258). This experience persuaded Japan of the necessity to rapidly resume gun manufacture (Diamond 2004:258). To this end, Diamond (2004:257) points out that societies most accessible and receptive to receiving ideas and inventions, are also the societies that developed most rapidly. They include medieval Islam, whose location in Eurasia enabled it to acquire and adopt new ideas and innovations from India and China as well as inheriting and utilizing ancient Greek knowledge and learning.

11.2 CULTURAL CHANGE IS NOT CULTURAL EVOLUTION

The late palaeontologist Gould (1996:215-230) points out that it is incorrect to assume that cultural change occurs in the manner termed 'cultural evolution' although natural and cultural change do share some similarities – 'for all processes of genealogically constrained historical change must share some features in common' (Gould 1996:219) – the differences between the two greatly outnumber their similarities.

The misuse of the term 'cultural evolution' has allowed people to assume that cultural change is essentially the same as natural/Darwinian change. This incorrect assumption has, according to Gould:

Led to one of the most frequent and portentous errors in our analysis of human life and history – the overly reductionist assumption that the Darwinian natural paradigm will fully encompass our social and technological history as well (Gould 1996:219).

Gould explains that what nature lacks, human cultural change possesses in abundance namely, 'explosive rapidity and accumulative directionality' (1996:220). To this observation, Richerson and Boyd (2005:241) add that 'human behaviour, under the influence of evolving cultural traditions, can change enormously without any appreciable genetic evolution'. Therefore it would stand to reason that 'whatever average innate differences might exist between human populations, they must be small compared to cultural differences'.

This is clearly evident when we understand that the current human brain has remained unchanged for the past 100,000 years and that everything that humans have accomplished over the past 10,000 years, 'the entire panoply of human civilization for better or for worse has been built on the capacities of an unaltered brain' (Gould 1996:220). Clearly, cultural change moves at the speed of lightening compared to Darwinian evolution. The reason for this speed is that, firstly, unlike natural evolution, cultural change receives a powerful impetus from the amalgamation and anastomosis of different traditions. Secondly, Darwinian evolution works through Mendellian

inheritance. This means that 'local improvement rises upon hecatombs of countless deaths; we get to a better place by removing the ill-adapted, not by actively constructing an improved version' (Gould 1996:221).

11.3 CULTURAL CHANGE IS PASSED BY DIRECT TRANSMISSION

Cultural change is by contrast Lamarckian. This means that organisms can conceive better options and work towards developing improved features through their own effort in their own lifetime. They can then pass this knowledge and improvement on to the next generation. Humans can do this. It is called education and includes: reading, writing, apprenticeship, learning, filming, practicing and teaching. These are all distinctly human activities that pass on and exchange knowledge between the present and the future generations and, in doing so, 'act as the Lamarckian boosters of cultural history' (Gould 1996:222).

The groundbreaking work of Peter J Richerson and Robert Boyd, *Not By Genes Alone: how culture transformed human evolution* (2005) discusses, traces and analyses the remarkable power of culture in human evolution. Most importantly, the authors point out that most data related to genetic differences in humans indicates that genetic differences cannot be very important as the evidence clearly shows 'that much of our extraordinary behavioural variation stems from differences in cultural traditions [and that] human populations are characterised by durable traditions that result in differences in behaviours even in the same environments' (2005:240-241).

This insight is linked to Gould's observation that Lamarckian-styled cultural inheritance allows cultural change to be potentially progressive and self-complexifying because it accumulates favourable ideas and innovations by direct transmission. The amalgamation and anastomosis of tradition also allows any culture to select the innovations and ideas of several separate societies (Gould 1996:222). Africa, with its ATR perceptual framework, should open itself to the positive and advantageous possibilities of cross-cultural

adoption so that it may decouple its cosmological realm which would then enable it to revise the maladaptive aspects of their ATR perceptual framework (even though these maladaptive aspects may be subconsciously retained).

11.4 EVOLUTIONARY STABLE STRATEGY: ITS ROLE IN A CULTURAL GROUP

Maladaptive culture is the result of what Richerson and Boyd term a 'design trade off'. This transpires because culture (unlike natural selection) permits rapid adaptation to a wide range of environments. Because the process entails design compromises, it does produce systematic maladaptation (2005:188). Consequently, 'culture gives us the ability to imitate things essential to human life, but it also makes us take up the bits that cripple and kill' (2005:188). Dawkins (2006a:321) has noted that there is an array of what he terms as evolutionary stable strategy(s) (ESS). What this term refers to is a strategy 'which, if most members of a population adopt it, cannot be bettered by an alternative strategy' (Dawkins 2006a:69). He explains that this is a very subtle and important idea, that means the best strategy for an individual therefore becomes dependent on what the majority of the population are doing.⁵⁵

From this study's perspective and its call for functional and context appropriate beliefs and behaviour, if a population, or cultural group adopts an ESS that is totally maladaptive, it is completely feasible and ultimately inevitable that the maladaptive ESS could and would drive that group to extinction (2006:321). Consequently, any group that wishes to continue to survive and to thrive, should thus pay close attention to alternative ESS's around them and, open themselves up to cross-cultural adoption so that they

⁵⁵ Human behaviour in relation to the individual human and its group and other individuals and groups, and the individual and the groups continued survival is driven by various options that include aggression. All these options should ideally be preceded by the complex, if unconscious, 'cost-benefit' calculation. This 'cost-benefit' calculation has now been refined in an accessible well-designed way by Maynard Smith, G.R. Price and G.A. Parker who used a branch of mathematics known as 'Game Theory', that enabled Maynard Smith to introduce the concept of *evolutionary stable strategy* (Dawkins 2006a:69).

may continually evolve a successful and stable ESS that suits their ever-changing context.

This means that culture is an adaptation (Richerson & Boyd 2005:99) and because human culture is so remarkably successful (2005:145), this study will argue that it is possible to achieve dramatic paradigm shifts *by altering the belief system(s) that fashion culture*. The most rapid and effective route to achieve this would be the utilisation of Axial-derived religious belief systems that are integral to the particular culture(s) where the desired perceptual framework shift is required.

11.5 EVOLVING CULTURAL TRADITIONS ENGENDER CULTURAL CHANGE

Richerson and Boyd's research reveals that, despite the limits that cultural tradition (and to some degree genetic inheritance) may impose, human behaviour can (and does) alter enormously under the influence of *evolving* cultural traditions, without any appreciable genetic evolution (2005:241,249). This revelation supports the call in this study for the utilisation of the Hebrew Prophet's Ethical Template of excellence in the transformation of any society's context-inappropriate cultural concepts, belief systems and cultural praxis. This idea is particularly valid in this study's examination of the Pre-Axial based African Traditional Religion and Ethics and its current transition into a post Axial context.

This strategy is also supported by the understanding that cultural change is a population phenomenon and by the knowledge that observation and imitation spread innovation. This, in turn, accumulates, and eventually yields (in this instance), transformed cultural beliefs and praxis and the desired alteration in human behaviour (Richerson & Boyd 2005:242), and what Dawkins terms as ESS. The reality of rapidly altering human behaviour and ESS are observations that are invaluable to the main proposal of this study.

11.6 THE KEY TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL BELIEF SYSTEMS

From the above it now becomes clear that Richerson and Boyd and Gould's insight provides us with the key to the transformation of maladaptive and anachronistic aspects of religious and cultural belief systems. The key is that of cross-cultural adoption and the swift dissemination of these new, innovative, viable, functional and context-appropriate concepts, through the medium of education. From this study's perspective, this would happen most specifically through the medium of an Axial-derived religious belief system, such as Christianity. The most essential factors of this adoption and educational process, conducted within the framework of an Axial-derived religious belief system in South Africa, would include the following:

- The realisation of the imperative need to finally decouple ATR's coupled cosmological realm and to clarify the radical division between the new sacred/transcendental and profane/mundane realms. This decoupling along with the abolition of the ATR taboo on introspection, would then allow reflexivity that would enable people to contemplate the essential need for change, which would then facilitate the next step, namely:
- The crystallisation of the Axial-derived religious ideal that humanity, in the profane realm, now takes precedence over all in the sacred realm, in all matters related to humans and
- The Axial realisation that it is not God(s) or supernatural beings (such as ATR ancestors) who are responsible for the maintenance of order in the profane realm and the subsequent welfare of all fellow human beings (Arnason 2005:40).

South Africa's desire to retain its own unique African identity during its Axial transformation would require a conscious 'accommodational' styled response model that would need to be, in the true Axial manner, designed by South Africa's newly emerged African Axial intellectual elite, especially their new African Axial religious intellectual elite. This type of 'accommodational'

response model has been successful in the past when other civilizations encountered Axial change, and was also the way that ancient Israel managed to respond so successfully to the challenges of its particular Axial Age transformation.

11.7 THE ROLE PLAYERS IN THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

The proposed revision and restructuring process of ATR, culture and ethics, would in classic Axial transformation style, now become the responsibility of a new literate group-designated meritocracy and/or elite who will be responsible for the creation of their new written cosmologies (drawn from Axial Age sources such as Christianity or Islam as well as from the newly written ATR sources), new transcendental visions and new conceptions from within and beyond the confines of the group.

This would demand the need for the emergence of a literate African ATR religious intellectual elite and a religious elite from the Independent Christian Churches. This new religious elite must galvanise themselves and finally move their religious belief systems, as Szokolczai (2005:111) suggests, from an oral based tradition to a written tradition; each one with its own specific, selected sacred texts. These would need to be compiled and bound to form their own unique collection of texts. These 'new' sacred texts will record their origin myths and the significant deeds of their ancestors, such as notable battles and great acts of bravery and heroism, as well as their festivals and feasts, their fasts, their holydays, their life cycle events, their customs and their laws. The wisdom value of these newly recorded but ancient ATR teachings need to be revised within Africa's current Axial-derived context and framework. African people, under the guidance of their religious intellectual elite, will need to apply this ancient wisdom in praxis (Szokolczai 2005:111).

11.8 THE CREATION OF NEW PERCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS BY THE INTELLECTUAL ELITE

The proposed revision and restructuring process of ATR, culture and ethics from an oral based culture and tradition, would also provide the pre-Axial, previously oral based groups with their own selected sacred texts. For the African Independent Church traditions, the addition of their own relevant sacred texts to the traditional Christian Bible would enable African Christians to design their own 'accommodational' response to South Africa's Axial transformation. This African Axial based accommodational response to Axial change and Axial religion would allow the South African people to remain more authentically African, albeit in a Christian Axial framework, with the essential Axial decoupled cosmological realm (Szakolczai 2005:111).

It is also incumbent upon the new religious elite not only to formulate these new Axial-appropriate perceptual frameworks, but that they must also understand that it is their responsibility to not only teach, but also to embody, in concrete personalities (as in their newly designated and self elected Axial literate religious intellectual elite) their new Axial ideals within their new Axial transformed communities, through their new African Axial prophets and sages (religious intellectual elite). In Foucauldian terminology, 'the "objectification" of sacred wisdom in books was accompanied by the twin process of "subjectification" ' (Szakolczai 2005:112).

The process of a classic and complete Axial Age transformation now becomes the responsibility of the new literate, educated, group-designated African Axial elite, who will be responsible for the creation of their new written cosmologies (drawn from Axial Age sources such as Christianity or Islam, as well as from the newly written ATR, cultural and ethical oral sources), new transcendental visions and new conceptions. These come from within, and most importantly for the successful adaptation of the group to its new Axial context and for its continued well-being, from beyond the confines of the group, from other successful Axial-based civilizations as well. Eisenstadt points out that the step of drawing from beyond the confines of your group, a

act that this study defines as 'cross-cultural adoption', is absolutely essential for any Axial civilization's context appropriate and successful 'development of (their) new civilizational institutional formations and the concomitant new patterns of collective identity and world vision in these societies' (2005: 540).

11.9 THE ROLE OF THE HEBREW PROPHETS ETHICAL TEMPLATE

The final step in transforming the maladaptive and anachronistic aspects of ATR, culture and ethics, is this study's proposed overlay of the Axial Hebrew prophets' ethical template with its key Axial religious ideals that will provide the new religious elite with instant access to the prime Axial religious ideals and realisations. This will enable the new South African religious elite to move forward and to swiftly redesign their own ethical template in keeping with the values of the Hebrew prophetic teaching and the Axial Age realisations that drive it.

The full implementation of the Axial ideals within the Axial Hebrew prophets teachings, and the subsequent transformation of the maladaptive and anachronistic aspects of ATR, culture and ethics and the current ATR-derived African perceptual framework, lies beyond the scope of this study. This task constitutes a subject suitable for further research, preferably by African students from the African religion and philosophy departments and by any interested and concerned literate African religious elite from the ATR and the Christian communities, both independent and mainstream. These intellectual elites could then begin to implement the core ideas and proposals in this study, to prompt the required Axial perceptual frame work shift within Africa, and in doing so, instill the essential Axial concept of individual accountability in the African psyche.

11.10 TRANSFORMATION THROUGH 'A CONSPIRACY OF DOVES'

The continued retention and propagation of Waliggo's cultural change misconception, in the light of Gould's work above, can only, at best, be

perceived as the continued influence (albeit subconscious for some) of the persistent influence of ATR and its social concepts based on the rigid ATR based concept of hierarchy, strict conformity and subsequent insularity. As such, it should be set aside to allow for a rapid religious and social transformation that will help alleviate inequality, injustice and Africa's merciless struggle for survival.

To this end Dawkins (2006a:200-201) goes one step further and points out that 'the one unique feature of man [sic]... is his [sic] conscious capacity for foresight' and that by contrast, selfish genes have no foresight. We, as humans, possess what he terms 'the mental equipment' to work towards what the Maynard Smiths game theory has defined as 'the evolutionary stable strategy', known as the 'conspiracy of doves'. Humans are therefore quite capable of sitting down together, with other humans, that may well be unlike themselves, to devise a new strategy that works for everyone. Dawkins also points out that we all have the ability to override the selfish genes of our birth or the cultural memes of our indoctrination (usually from religious and cultural belief systems)⁵⁶. The type of choice and action that he proposes, namely a 'conspiracy of doves', will enable people to deliberately cultivate and nurture pure disinterested altruism, which, strictly speaking, has no place in nature and is something that has never existed before in the history of the world. Despite that, the fact that this is entirely feasible and completely possible for humans to achieve, makes it the driving force behind the proposals within this study.

⁵⁶ Richard Dawkins coined the term meme, to refer to a replicator that exists over and above the gene, which is the DNA molecule that replicates all living entities. He points out that genes are not the only entities that form the basis for Darwinian evolution, and that memes are part of self-replicating brain structures, the way genes are part of self-replicating DNA hardware (2006a:192,323). Dawkins explains that 'just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperm and eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation' (2006a:192). This type of imitation, also known as 'cultural transmission', is not confined to humans but he notes that humans provide the best example of the dramatic effect that memes achieve in cultural evolution by citing language, fashion, diet, ceremonies and customs, art and architecture, engineering and technology as prime examples (2006a:190).

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSION

This dissertation is aware that it may appear that too many issues were dealt with in a too brief and simplified manner. However, along with Jared Diamond, this study believes that brevity and simplification and a broad overview yields benefits in that long term comparisons of a variety of issues yield insights that cannot be won from short-term studies of single issues (Diamond 2005:408).

12.1 THE SEARCH FOR THE CONCEPT OF INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

This study set out to discover the origin of the concept of individual accountability within the human consciousness and psyche, and the reason for its apparent absence in the African Traditional Religion-derived African perceptual framework. This search revealed that the origin of the concept of individual accountability and responsibility is inextricably connected to a specific sequence of events (known as decouplings), which occurred during a pivotal period of change in antiquity, known as the Axial Age. From a civilizational transformation perspective, notable current historians tend to agree that this period was a seminal period of cultural transformation in global history. Its effects not only underpin, but are directly connected to, all subsequent civilizational developments. This foundational Axial decoupling process and its subsequent reflexivity sequence was responsible for producing the new Axial civilizational models that were based on the civilizations dramatically revised Axial Age perceptions.

It is clear that the concept of individual accountability first emerged during the original Axial Age in ancient Israel, in the response models of the Axial Hebrew prophets and sages. The origin of the concept of individual accountability is inextricably bound to a specific Axial pattern of decoupling, that begins with the decoupling of the cosmological realm, and reflexivity, that allows for second degree thinking. The Axial civilizational change is also linked to the emergence of new societal centres and a new groups of intellectual elite that are responsible for their societies' new Axial

cosmologies, their new Axial foundations, their new Axial transcendental vision and new world visions.

12.2 SOUTH AFRICA'S INHABITANTS AND THE ARRIVAL OF THE EUROPEANS

South Africa, along with the rest of Africa, did not experience a complete Axial Age transformation, particularly on its religious/symbolic level. Consequently South Africa and its indigenous inhabitants were all living inside their pre-Axial ATR, perceptual framework prior to the arrival of the Europeans in the 1600s. The Europeans had acquired their Axial impulse with their adoption of Christianity and had unwittingly brought their Axial-derived perceptual framework and context with them which they then inadvertently imposed on South Africa and its people. The arrival of the Christian missionaries in 1799 began the formal and concerted introduction of the Axial based faith of Christianity, with its religious based Axial ideals and realisations. These Axial ideals and realisations were unintentionally fractured by the Christian missionaries overlay of evangelism and later by the Social Christians' postmillennial beliefs. In addition, the Christian missionaries were totally unaware that they were competing with an ancient and existing African religion in their midst.

The Africans' response models to the challenge of Axial ideals and a newly imposed Axial context, plus the significant loss of land that the Xhosa people experienced in 1812, triggered the formation of their religious based response models that also drew on Christian concepts. These Xhosa hybrid pre-Axial and, in this study's opinion, maladaptive response models of Nxele and Ntsikana to the challenges of their Axial change, failed to instil, unlike the Hebrew prophets response models, a new Axial derived African religious consciousness for the Xhosa people. Both the Xhosa prophets and their leaders failed to relinquish their ancient ATR beliefs and power base and to formulate new viable African based and Axial aligned perceptions of spirituality that would function within Africa's newly decoupled realm (as

opposed to the ATR coupled realm) and would thus have demanded universal compassion, social justice, individual accountability.

12.3 THE XHOSA PROPHETS RESPONSE TO THEIR CHANGING WORLD

The desire by the Xhosa prophets, Nxele and Ntsikana, to design new response models for their people, was akin to the desire of the early pre-Axial Hebrew prophets, Elijah and Elisha. These pre-Axial Hebrew prophets were obliged to formulate response models in direct response to their rapidly changing world. But there was a notable difference between the pre-Axial (and Axial) Hebrew prophets response models and those of the Xhosa prophets.

Both the Xhosa prophets, Nxele and Ntsikana's, response models to the loss of the Xhosa's land, and their newly imposed Axial context and recently acquired Axial-derived religious ideas, were, despite the Xhosa prophets assimilation and use of Christian symbols and ideas, (such as corporeal resurrection), still unlike the pre-Axial Hebrew prophet, Elisha's and the later Axial prophets such as Amos, Hosea and Jeremiah's response model(s). The Xhosa prophets' response models were essentially Pre-Axial and remained bound to their pre-Axial ATR-derived worldview.

Ntsikana's pre-Axial perception of the concept of sacrifice is revealed in Ntsikana's perception of the crucifixion of Jesus and is the total antithesis of the Axial religious understanding that sacrifice can never alleviate human suffering in an Axial-derived context. It also stands in direct contrast to the Axial religious realisation(s) that universal compassion and social justice, along with the Axial concept of the voluntary caretaking of all the marginalised, oppressed and discarded members of society effectively replaces the empty ritual of sacrifice, and becomes the new hallmarks of Axial religious piety.

12.4 THE RESULT OF THE XHOSA PROPHETS' RESPONSE

The most disturbing aspect about these maladaptive Xhosa prophet response models has been their continued appeal (despite their dismal failure in praxis in the past), to the present day. The continued appeal of the Nxele response model is seen in an article by Mbembe, discussed above, which displays its ignorance of the origin of the Nongqawuse incidents, and the fact that this Xhosa 'magic theology' response model was closely based on the maladaptive pre-Axial response of the Xhosa prophet Nxele. This maladaptive response model of Nxele prevents African people from assuming individual accountability for their lives and their actions in the present context, and in doing so it perpetuates the black African perception of victimhood.

This study therefore moves to dismiss the present belief and credence that has been granted to the two Xhosa prophets' response models, in that they 'provided overarching African symbols of sacred power independent of white control' (Hodgson 1997:73). This study would like to point out, instead, that these symbols were not only maladaptive, context appropriate, pre-Axial response models, but that they were also a form of 'magic theology' that required a pre-Axial mass cattle sacrifice, which signalled the Xhosa's belief in, and call for, supernatural intervention by supernatural beings (in this instance the resurrected Xhosa ancestors), in the human realm.

12.5 THE PROBLEMS INCURRED DURING THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY

The Xhosas flocked to embrace Christianity after the disastrous effects of the mass cattle killing of 1856-7 that was inspired by the Nongqawuse incident. The extensive power that the Christian missionaries had in teaching and disseminating religious Axial ideals and realisations is also seen in the mission education of the Africans. The Social Christians efforts to educate and assist Africans were substantially supported by their extensive

Benevolent Empire network. Yet despite all these efforts, the Christian missionaries never realised that the Africans, despite their conversion to Christianity, had not grasped the fact that an Axial-derived religious belief system does not operate within a coupled realm that supports the belief in supernatural beings/ancestors/god(s) intervening in the affairs of humans in the earthly realm.

The Africans retention of these ATR beliefs meant that they could not comprehend the necessity of embracing and implementing the Axial concept of individual accountability, nor could they grasp the fact that their individual actions would have consequences for the present and future generations. In an Axial context, humans take precedence over all supernatural beings/ancestors/god(s) and humans, not gods, are therefore responsible for the creation and maintenance of order in the human realm. This pre-Axial ATR, cultural and ethical belief and perceptual framework has persisted to the present day due to the fractured perception the Africans tended to receive from their prophets anachronistic pre-Axial response models and from the Christian missionaries, who were the only people who were teaching Africans Axial religious ideals and realisations that are essential for their survival in an Axial-derived context.

12.6 THE XHOSA'S STRUGGLE WITH URBANISATION AND DISCRIMINATION

In the early 1900s, it was the marked social and economic ills among the black South Africans, which spurred the Christian missionaries on in their attempt to design a response that would alleviate these conditions. These social and economic ills were directly related to the black Africans rapid urbanisation. This led to the dissolution of their small-scale/tribal based ATR society's traditional lifestyles, values, affiliations and concepts of economic equality, and saw instead a sharp increase in black African poverty and a growing divide between the black African rich and poor. This divide was compounded by the racial discriminatory legislation, prior to the rise of Apartheid.

The Social Christians successful efforts to educate the Africans and to assist them to acquire the essential Axial ideals were also severely curbed by the short-sighted and bigoted Bantu Education Act of 1953 that marked the end of the Social Christians efforts to teach Axial religious ideals and realisations to Africans. There is no doubt that the Social Christians adoption of the Social Gospel and its Axial based ideals, also had a extensive affect on the Africans religious perceptual framework in the period of segregation, that has been carried through to the present day.

Despite the noble attempts of the Social Gospellers to establish socially just and compassionate societies, they were not, in essence, true Axial religious prophets or sages, who only sought to teach and implement Axial religious ideals for the benefit and welfare of their fellow human beings. This observation means that along with the early Christian missionaries that the Social Gospellers are also responsible for the black South Africans' fractured and incomplete Axial religious ideal perception, past and present, and of the basic ideals that underlie the praxis of an Axial-derived faith, such as Christianity.

12.7 THE RESULT OF MALADAPTIVE RELIGIOUS BELIEF SYSTEMS

This study proposes that the Social Gospellers core postmillennial belief in the coming of the Kingdom of God was the principal religious system belief factor that served to produce this specific state of apathy and that it effectively paralysed its believers (just as Ntsikana's response model did). This study suggests that it is possible to link this postmillennial belief to the Africans continued rejection of the Axial concept of individual accountability and their proclivity for the passive position of victimhood and blame games instead.

This study has also proposed, above, that the pre-Axial Tuskegeean response model appealed to the South African missionaries, and to black and white

people and the white paternalists as it also allowed them to abdicate any active individual accountability and responsibility for alleviating the socially unjust situation in South Africa's hostile and political climate during the period of segregation.

12.8 AXIAL IDEALS AND REALISATIONS CAN TRANSFORM SOCIAL ETHICS

The pivotal role that religious beliefs continues to play in South Africa and the extent to which the missionaries, prior to the Bantu Education Act of 1953, managed to teach and disseminate Axial ideals and realisations, plus the interconnected nature of ATR and social systems and their ethics and Africa's inability (despite the recent acquisition of Axial Age ethos and ideology through its adoption of Christianity and Islam) to transform ATR and social ethics to meet the requirements of Africa's new contexts, would indicate that the utilisation of a more dynamic approach, actively supported by the African Axial religious intellectual elite is well overdue. Consequently these observations all serve to support this study's call for the African Axial religious elite to utilise Axial based religious systems such as Christianity, and retrieve and re-implement retrieve and re-implement the Axial Hebrew prophets response models, especially those of Amos and Jeremiah.

This proposal would enable the African Axial religious elite to step forward and assume their Axial-designated responsibility for designing the long overdue and deeply needed, context appropriate Axial-derived, but African based response model for Africa's people to help them cope in their present Axial-derived, modern scientific context.

12.9 SOUTH AFRICA, THE NORTHERN KINGDOM AND JUDAH: THE SIMILARITIES

The study's recommendation of the retrieval and reapplication of the Old Testament's Axial Hebrew prophets response model to Axial change is related the context similarities, similar beliefs and other related features that

South Africa (1600 to the present) and Axial Age ancient Israel's Northern Kingdom and Judah (circa 800-500 BCE) share. They include:

- a constant threat to their continued well-being, for ancient Israel it was warfare, violent conquest and deportation; for South Africa it has been the brutality of apartheid, African's inability to desist from the continuing maladaptive praxis of violent behaviour, plus the insidious and fatal threat of HIV/AIDS.
- both groups, despite the challenge of Axial transformation, were/are intent on retaining their own specific cultural identities, that are in both instances, bound to their religious belief systems. Israel's identity was inextricably bound to its newly defined Axial religion, whereas South Africa still needs to transform its pre-Axial religion to which most of its people are still bound.
- both groups felt/feel that their specific identities are under siege; for ancient Israel the threat came from their Near East imperial powers, while in South Africa, it is the West, especially the USA, which along with globalisation presents a threat to the African ATR, cultural and ethical linked sense of identity.
- both groups also reveal/revealed their own group specific affinities for a persistent and deleterious belief in direct intervention by God/gods/supernatural beings/ancestors in human affairs in the earthly realm.
- the similarities between Africa's ATR and ancient Israel's proclivity for a vast myriad of group and location specific variations of religious praxis where none conform to the pure monotheistic ideal, is a classic example of chaotic small-scale/tribal based social and religious diversity that inhibits the formation of cohesive large-scale comprehensive societal systems such as economics, politics and social relations (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:249).
- both groups also reveal a shared attraction for 'magical theology' based response models to the challenge of Axial change. In ancient Israel it was Judah's stubborn adherence to the Davidic tradition, which

encouraged the Israelites to believe in the idea that Yahweh's presence in the Jerusalem Temple would render the city invincible. In South Africa we have seen the Africans continued attachment (as revealed by Mbembe) to their 'magical theology' response model such as the Nxele response model that formed the basis of the disastrous Nongqawuse cattle-killing spree in 1856-7.

- both groups are/have experienced rapid urbanisation and the subsequent social dislocation that is the result of the dissolution of previous small-scale/tribal based concepts of harmony, social structures, kinship ties and economic equality that has seen a sharp divide between rich and poor Africans, just as it did in ancient Israel.
- both groups attained full statehood and South Africa has also recently achieved free and democratic status and is also entering its Golden Age, like the Northern Kingdom did under the Omrides and Judah did under Hezekiah.
- both groups reveal that their elite are/were becoming increasingly detached from the situation and plight of the ordinary men and women in their midst. This precise situation is revealed in the Northern Kingdom by the searing criticism of the Axial Hebrew prophet Amos, who castigates the elites for their self indulgent and extravagant life styles at the expense of the poor.

12.10 ATR AND THE PRESENT AXIAL CONTEXT

The pre-Axial coupled cosmological realm and embedded nature of ATR culture and its ethics, has meant that many black Africans have, despite their adoption of Axial-derived religious belief systems such as Christianity and Islam, retained certain anachronistic and maladaptive beliefs from ATR. This is often subconscious for many Africans but it continues to prevent them from fully operating within an Axial decoupled cosmological realm. The influence of certain ATR perceptions is evident in the way that many Africans continue to:

- accord respect according to stage and status, as it was done in pre-Axial small-scale/tribal (rural) societies, as opposed to merit and excellence in a modern post-Enlightenment Axial-derived context.
- emphasise the need for conformity in modern society and remain critical and suspicious of whist tending to suppress signs of initiative, competition and a striving for excellence.
- adjust their perceptions, attitude and behaviour to comply with their peer and gender models so that they may duplicate their perceptions and attitude and behave like them in the next phase of their lives.
- place the group above the individual, to the extent that the individual life does not possess any infinite value. This allows them to
- deliberately disregard (or remain unaware of) Adam Smith's principle of the struggle for economic progress, which is achieved through individual effort.
- accept the ATR-derived belief that promotion is not based on merit, neither does a person work their way to the next level – instead a person is born to into it (through the required ritual), or is grown into it.
- continue to practice pre-Axial ATR-derived *ubuntu*/compassion as defined by the limited concepts of ATR hierarchy and proximity.

These ATR-derived beliefs provide serious obstacles and constraints to the African's ability to accept their Axial-derived context⁵⁷. These perceptions prevent them from understanding the value of the Hebrew prophets' Axial-derived response model and ethical template of excellence. These beliefs also impede their ability to come to terms with the concept of Western democracy, which has had tragic repercussions for Africa during the past fifty years, since the beginning of Africa's independence era.

⁵⁷ The repercussions of the coupled cosmological realm of ATR are perfectly illustrated by former ANC whip Tony Yengeni who turned to his ancestors in a 'cleansing ceremony' after his release from jail (Mafela, Makwabe & Huisman 2007:6).

12.11 THIS STUDY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

These marked concerns, similarities and social and religious contexts all reveal how the adoption of the Hebrew prophetic response model and its template of ethics, that has been so successful for ancient Israel, would therefore be well suited and context-appropriate for South Africa. This observation supports the study's proposal that South Africa and its African Axial religious elite should actively retrieve, amalgamate and anastomise the Hebrew prophetic response model and ethical template of excellence to its ATR, cultural and ethics, as well as to its African Christian context to swiftly alter Africa's present perceptual framework.

This study would also like to stress that the cross-cultural change and utilisation of Hebrew prophetic ethics does, at no stage, require the wholesale rejection of ATR, its origin-myths, its rituals and its deeply felt traditional values. What is required is an intelligent assimilation, designed by the new literate African Axial religious elite, and its application in Africa's Axial context, that never sacrifices the intense moral consciousness and compassion of Hebrew prophets response model and ethical template of excellence. Linked to this must be the universal Axial understanding, that the virtue of compassion now becomes a pre-requisite for the spiritual life.

This study would like to point out that the term 'excellence' applied here to the Hebrew Prophetic template in the article, is used in a sense that the measure of a system is derived by the benefits and goodness of that system in that it must be good and beneficial for all the human beings that live under it at this moment in time (Murray 2003:227). This does not underscore the equal validity of ATR and its ethics in its pre-Axial Age context for which it was designed. But it does recognise the ability, zeal, persistence and vision that produces a timeless ethical template. Hence 'equality and excellence inhabit different domains and allegiance to one need not compete with allegiance to the other' (Murray 2003: 450).

The deleterious effect of the South Africans retention of their maladaptive belief in the ATR coupled realm and their subsequent maladaptive belief in supernatural intervention, is discussed and examined in this study's analysis of Achille Mbembe's recent article *South Africa's Second Coming: The Nongqawuse Syndrome* (2006. S.v. "Nongqawuse") and it is also discussed in relation to South Africa's tardy and fatal reluctance to deal with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, in a responsible Axial based manner and in the correct medical and scientific way in which a recognised and identified viral disease like HIV/AIDS should be controlled.

In the light of the past historical precedent of what the adoption of the Axial Hebrew prophets, sages and their priests response models achieved in ancient Israel, and in the light of the marked similarities between the two groups, it would therefore be extremely short-sighted not to retrieve the Axial Hebrew response model and its ethical template of excellence, to assist south Africa in its present Axial transformation. Contrary to Waliggo's misconception about the dynamics of cultural change and his belief that it should be confined to a group's own dynamics and boundaries, this study has shown that no scientific work supports this maladaptive and unfounded belief. This deliberate move towards cultural change must also include the elucidation and assimilation of key Axial Age realisations as well as modern scientific rationalism. This is particularly relevant in the absence of Africa's own Axial 'light-bulb' moment, due to its unique struggle with a double period of transformation, namely Axiality and modernity, plus the challenge of globalisation.

12.12 THE ROLE OF THE INTELLECTUAL ELITE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S TRANSFORMATION

Therefore this study would like to draw attention, once again, to the fact that South Africa and its intellectual elites, religious and otherwise, continued retention and propagation of Waliggo's cross-cultural change misconception, in the light of Dawkins, Richerson and Boyd and Gould's work, can only, at

best, be perceived as the continued influence (albeit that it may well be subconscious for some people) of the persistent influence of ATR, culture and ethics and its social concepts that are based on the rigid ATR concept of hierarchy, strict conformity and subsequent insularity.

This study recommend that the concepts of hierarchy, strict conformity and subsequent insularity should therefore be set aside to allow for a rapid Axial religious and social transformation, that will help to alleviate the South African African's ability to function successfully in an Axial-derived context and aid them in assuming individual accountability and responsibility for their fellow human beings. This will enable the South African leaders and religious intellectual elite and all their people to consciously move to implement the Axial concept of universal compassion within the South African context, and strive to attain social justice, so that they can alleviate the inequality and social injustice that exists within South Africa, and help their people to break free from their merciless struggle for survival.

This study's call for the prompt emergence of an African Axial intellectual elite who would have to have to assume, like the religious intellectual elite in the past, the vital Axial task of developing their new African-derived, but Axial based cosmologies. These would need to be built on the key Axial foundations, transcendental visions and concepts but based within the South African context as well as South Africa's current Axial framework. This immense task is not only imperative to a successful Axial Age transformation on all levels, but is also invaluable to the formation of context appropriate and functional Axial based African religious and cultural belief system.

The South African religious Axial aligned elites' task is also of crucial importance to the simultaneous development of South Africa's new Axial based civilizational institutions and orders. This undertaking is extremely significant and of immense value as it is directly connected to the associated rise of new South African Axial patterns of collective identity, within the present African Axial context, and with the formation of a new Axial based South African world vision that would also need to be firmly rooted within the

present African context. Arnason describes the Axial Hebrew prophets as true representatives of Axial iconoclastic thought in that they, just as the new African Axial religious intellectual elite should also become, 'the most effective bearers of new ideas against conservative traditions' (Arnason 2005:22-23).

The significance of these observations, in relation to this study, is that South Africa's religious intellectual elite, and specifically South Africa's Axial aligned ATR and Christian religious intellectual elite, need to acknowledge their Axial responsibility, to actively assist their people who are handicapped by pre-Axial beliefs and are locked in constant struggle to adapt to the new demands of their Axial context. The most critical task, facing the ATR and Christian Axial religious intellectual elite, is to swiftly move to publicly declare the necessity of a decoupled cosmological realm and to actively and visibly institute the essential and radical Axial decoupling within all the African religious belief systems that have retained this concept.

12.13 THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN TRANSFORMATION

This study suggests that the present black intellectual elite within the ANC are failing their people due to their persistent belief in the coupled realm and their continued belief in direct intervention by ancestors/supernatural being in the affairs of humans. These maladaptive beliefs, along with their retention of the obsolete ATR-derived concepts of African power and status, all serve to constrain and effectively inhibit the emergence of individually accountable and responsible, morally irreproachable, highly educated and skilled black leaders, that we do possess, within our current democratic context.

In relation to the question of the absence of responsible leadership in our present democratic black government, this study suggests that the time has come for the black South African Axial intellectual elite to step forward and acknowledge South Africa's Axial-derived context and, unlike the Xhosa leaders and their prophets that failed to do so in 1812, to pro-actively engage in South Africa's Axial transformation, by accepting their individual

responsibility for the maintenance and creation of order in our present context; and by designing an African based but Axial aligned response to the changes that confront people in South Africa today.

This study would also like to note that if South Africa's current social and governmental institutes are not up to the challenge of creating a socially just and compassionate society, that it is incumbent on all South Africa's Axial-derived religious belief systems and their literate African Axial aligned religious intellectual elite to step forward. They need to assume the responsibility of initiating the essential Axial transformation on South Africa's religious/symbolic level. They also need to design an appropriate Axial-derived and African based response model so that all the South Africans can all finally comprehend the necessity of adopting the key Axial ideals of individual accountability, universal compassion and social justice.

12.14 RELIGIOUS BELIEF SYSTEMS' ROLE IN TRANSFORMATION

This study calls for open religious belief systems, which should abolish the prerequisite of blind and unquestioned faith. Religious belief systems should, instead, assume a position of transparency, flexibility and adaptability that would open religious belief systems up to public scrutiny, valid criticism and questioning. This must include the subsequent revision of any religious belief systems' anachronistic aspects, and any other maladaptive beliefs such as the present and continuing ATR derived belief in supernatural intervention in the human realm that cancels all possibility of their believers ever being able to accept or implement the Axial concept of individual accountability.

The Old Testament's Axial Hebrew prophets have provided us with an excellent Axial context appropriate response model, as well as the Hebrew prophets' ethical template of excellence. All that the South African leaders, the intellectual religious elite and their people need to do, is to retrieve and re-implement the Hebrew prophets response model and ethical template and

apply it to South Africa's Axial transformation in a religiously literate and rational manner and engage, in what Rushkoff (2003:242), describes as 'the difficult work of making the most ethical, compassionate, life-affirming choice in every situation'. They must remember that nothing that humans can conceive, create or design, including religious belief systems are sacred, and that this perception in itself then creates the essential space, 'that holds open the possibility for the divine to emerge. This nothing is sacred' (Rushkoff 2003:238). This study would also like to emphasise that the attainment of a socially just and compassionate society is always a human responsibility in an Axial-derived context and that we should all strive to attain this because 'it is a frightening moment for a child to realise that his parents aren't gods. Likewise, it is frightening for people to realise their gods aren't parents. We, God help us, are the adults here' (Rushkoff 2003:xvi).

So let us all rise to this challenge and, in the words of Rabbi Kook, 'renew the old, and sanctify the new', so that we may create a new Axial based, socially just, individually accountable and universally compassionate South African community.

APPENDIX 1: PRE- AND POST-EXILE PROPHETS

Pre-Exile Prophets

Amos	C 760 – 750	Israel under Jeroboam II
Hosea	C 750	Israel under Jeroboam II
Isaiah	742 - 701	Judah under Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah
Micah	C 750	Judah under Jotham, Ahaz, Josiah
Nahum	625 – 610	Judah under Josiah
Zephaniah	C 621	Judah under Josiah
Habakkuk	615 – 598	Judah?
Jeremiah	627 – 587	Judah to the fall of Jerusalem

Post-Exile Prophets

Ezekiel	597 – 563	Babylonian Exile
Haggai	520	Jerusalem in post-exilic period
Zechariaiah	520 – 518	Jerusalem in post-exilic period
Malachi	460 - 450	Jerusalem in post-exilic period
Obadiah	460 – 400	
Joel	350	
Jonah		Jonah lived c 750 but book written c 350

(Davis 1998:220, 247, 248)

APPENDIX 2: WAVES OF SETTLEMENT IN THE HIGHLANDS

<u>Period</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Main Characteristics</u>
Early Bronze Age	3500-2200 BCE	<i>First wave</i> of settlement; about 100 sites recorded
Intermediate Bronze Age	2200-2000 BCE	Settlement crisis; most of the sites deserted
Middle Bronze Age	2000-1550 BCE	<i>Second wave</i> of settlement; about 220 sites recorded
Late Bronze Age	1550-1150 BCE	Settlement crisis; only about 25 sites recorded
Iron Age I	1150-900 BCE	<i>Third wave</i> of settlement; About 250 sites recorded
Iron Age II	900-586 BCE	Settlement system develops and reaches over 500 sites (eighth century BCE)

(Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:114)

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