READING THE EXODUS TRADITION FROM A ZIMBABWEAN PERSPECTIVE

by

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the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

BIBLICAL STUDIES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF E H SCHEFFLER

October 2008
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<tr>
<td>AAG</td>
<td>Affirmative Action Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>Anno Domino (After the death of Christ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFCAST</td>
<td>African Forum for Catholic Social Teachings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am</td>
<td>Amos (as in the Bible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress (RSA)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African National Council (Zimbabwe)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATISA</td>
<td>Association of Theological Institutions in Southern Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATISCA</td>
<td>Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATR</td>
<td>African Traditional Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>AZAPO</td>
<td>Azanian People's Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCE</td>
<td>Before the Christian era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP</td>
<td>Blood Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSAC</td>
<td>British South African Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSAP</td>
<td>British South African Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAF</td>
<td>Central African Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAZ</td>
<td>Conservative Alliance of Zimbabwe</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCJP</td>
<td>Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Compatible Disc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cf</td>
<td>confer, compare</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFP</td>
<td>Commonwealth Foundation Publication</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFU</td>
<td>Commercial Farmers Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chr</td>
<td>Chronicles</td>
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<tr>
<td>CID</td>
<td>Criminal Investigation Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIO</td>
<td>Criminal Investigation Organisation</td>
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<td>CNS</td>
<td>Catholic News Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>CYL</td>
<td>City Youth League</td>
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<tr>
<td>DC (as in Washington DC)</td>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>London Missionary Society</td>
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<td>Ltd</td>
<td>Limited</td>
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<td>LRF</td>
<td>Legal Resources Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lv</td>
<td>Leviticus (as in the Bible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCCCD</td>
<td>Ministry of Community and Co-operative Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDC</td>
<td>Movement for Democratic Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mi</td>
<td>Micah (as in the Bible)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Msasa Project</td>
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<td>MSU</td>
<td>Midlands State University</td>
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<td>Mt</td>
<td>Matthew (as in the Bible)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCA</td>
<td>National Constitutional Assembly</td>
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<td>NDP</td>
<td>National Democratic Party</td>
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<td>Neh</td>
<td>Nehemiah (as in the Bible)</td>
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<td>NEPAs</td>
<td>Native Purchase Areas</td>
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<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
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<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version (of the Bible Text)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nm</td>
<td>Numbers (as in the Bible)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>National Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organisation of African Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OED</td>
<td>Oxford English Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-Level</td>
<td>Ordinary Level (Form Four)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OTANES</td>
<td>Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>OTE</td>
<td>Old Testament Essays</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>Pan-African Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>PF</td>
<td>Patriotic Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>page (as in p2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ps</td>
<td>Psalms (as in the Bible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pty</td>
<td>The term is used in conjunction with “Ltd” – (Pty) Ltd. It could carry the same meaning with “Pvt” for Private – often used as (Pty) Ltd, referring to independent business entities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>RANC</td>
<td>Rhodesia African National Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCBC</td>
<td>Rhodesia Catholic Bishops’ Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev</td>
<td>Reverend (for priest, as in Rev Canaan Banana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev</td>
<td>Revised (as in Revised Edition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>Rhodesian Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA</td>
<td>Republic of South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>R$</td>
<td>Rhodesia dollar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSV</td>
<td>Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rt</td>
<td>Right (as in Rt Rev Donal Lament of Catholic Church)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>sa</td>
<td><em>sino anno</em> (Latin meaning “no date”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern Africa Development Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAPES</td>
<td>Southern Africa Political Economy Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARDC</td>
<td>Southern African Research and Development Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sl</td>
<td><em>sine loco</em> (Latin meaning “no place”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sm</td>
<td>First Samuel (as in the Bible)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Sm</td>
<td>Second Samuel (as in the Bible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sn</td>
<td><em>sine nomine</em> (Latin meaning “without name”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPCK</td>
<td>Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRANC</td>
<td>Southern Rhodesia African National Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sv</td>
<td><em>sub verbo</em> (Latin meaning “under the name”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UANC</td>
<td>United African National Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>United Democratic Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDI</td>
<td>Unilateral Declaration of Independence</td>
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<tr>
<td>UFP</td>
<td>United Federal Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNISA</td>
<td>University of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>United Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URP</td>
<td>United Republican Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<td>UZ</td>
<td>University of Zimbabwe</td>
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<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>verse (as in the Bible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAAG</td>
<td>Women’s Aids Action Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WLA</td>
<td>Women Lawyers Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Yahweh (Hebrew for God)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YL</td>
<td>Youth League</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZANLA</td>
<td>Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army</td>
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<td>ZANU–Ndonga</td>
<td>Zimbabwe African National Union–Ndonga</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZANU–PF</td>
<td>Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZAPU</td>
<td>Zimbabwe African People’s Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZCBC</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZCC</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Council of Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZCTU</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZESA</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZIMSEC</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZIPRA</td>
<td>Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZISCO</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZNA</td>
<td>Zimbabwe National Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZOU</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Open University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZPH</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Publishing House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZUM</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Unity Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>AmaNdebele KaMzilikase</td>
<td>Ndebeles from or traced to Mzilikazi – the Zulu king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beobachtungen An Der</td>
<td>Interpretation of Moses narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moseserzahlung</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Die nood lottige band: Keirk en</td>
<td>Fatal relationship: Church and State in old Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staat in Oud – Israel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>erythra thalassa</td>
<td>Red Sea (Greek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gukurahundi</td>
<td>Shona name which means “the rain that washes away the chaff from the last harvest, before the spring rains”. It was a code name for the genocide in Zimbabwe in the early 1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus Classicus</td>
<td>First class and or place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mare rubrum</td>
<td>Red Sea (Latin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missionalia</td>
<td>Title of journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modus Operandi</td>
<td>Method or way of doing something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndonga</td>
<td>Shona suffix to distinguish Rev Ndabaningi Sithole’s party (Zanu–Ndonga), from ZANU–PF (the meaning of the term is unknown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation Murumbatsvina</td>
<td>Shona which literally means the “operation that sought to clean cities of dirt”. It was a code name for the 2005 Clean-up Exercise in Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pr</td>
<td>Egyptian term – it carries the same meaning as “apiru” or “habiru” for Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roora</td>
<td>Bride price (in Shona)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sage</td>
<td>A scholarly journal on black women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scriptura</td>
<td>Title of journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themelios</td>
<td>Title of journal</td>
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DEDICATION

Firstly, this work is dedicated to my family: my wife Judith and our children – Kelvin, Vongai, Arnold and Terrence. Secondly, this study is dedicated to all those who dream for a better Zimbabwe.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

May I take this opportunity to thank the following individuals and institutions, without whom the completion of this study would not have been possible:

Prof Eben Scheffler encouraged me when I had almost abandoned my studies. His invitations to me to visit UNISA first in September 2006 and again in January to April 2008 were very fruitful and helpful. It was through him that I was able to stay in Eaton Hall Residential Hotel (Pretoria) for three and half months. In fact, Professor Scheffler assisted me in many ways which cannot be enumerated here – honour should be given to him for this final product. Without your efforts this study would not have been completed. It is actually a privilege for me to have completed my study under Professor Scheffler’s guidance and supervision. Thank you, Professor!

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SUMMARY

The exodus tradition was passed on for posterity among the Jewish descendants about God who delivered their ancestors from bondage in Egypt, who divided the Red Sea waters and provided them with manna in the desert. The exodus tradition motivated them in many problematic situations about “God of their fathers” who delivered them. The modern post–biblical world has drawn some motivation from the exodus liberation motif, namely: Latin America, USA, South Africa, Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, amongst others.

The topic: Reading the Exodus Tradition from a Zimbabwean Perspective is necessitated by the Zimbabwean experience of oppression. The function of the exodus tradition during colonialism in Rhodesia is discussed because it forms the nucleus from which Zimbabwe was born. Recently, the Zimbabwean people have been subjected to unjust treatments by the Zimbabwean regime. The function of the exodus tradition in the Zimbabwean situation is explored in chapters five and six, respectively.

Key terms:

Reading the exodus tradition; Zimbabwean perspective; Egyptian bondage; Pharaoh; biblical literature; liberation function; post–biblical world; oppression; post–colonial period; socio–political challenge; exodus inspiration.
Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1. EXODUS TRADITION: MOTIVATION FOR LIBERATION

In this chapter I begin my discussion with a Hebrew man called Joseph, who, according to Genesis 37:28–36 was sold into slavery to the Medianite merchants and ended up in Egypt. Joseph became famous in Egypt and occupied a position of prominence in the Egyptian kingdom, becoming a man responsible for the procurement and sale of grain. Meanwhile, there was famine in the region ("world" according to Gn 41:57) which also affected Canaan. The story concludes with Jacob, Joseph’s father and his family, if not clan and livestock (Gn 46:8) coming to settle in the fertile land of Goshen (Gn 47:6).

With the passing of time, a change of dynasty occurred in Egypt. This change of the ruling dynasty is possibly the background to the statement in Exodus 1:8 that: “there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph”. Those who name a “Pharaoh of the oppression or of the exodus” tend to name Rameses II (Gn 47:12) or possible his son Merneptah during the 12th century BCE (Scheffler 2000:58). From then on, the Israelites had served as slaves of an Egyptian Pharaoh for over four hundred years.

According to Van Seters (1998:33) throughout the Hebrew Bible the time in Egypt is remembered as a period of oppression because of the slavery imposed by Pharaoh. God saw the plight of the Israelites and decided to free them from their oppression. According to the exodus narrative, God called Moses to be their leader who, under God’s direction, would guide the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex 2:24–4:17). Moses acted as God had directed him and approached Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to travel a three-day journey to worship their God. Pharaoh’s refusal provoked a series of ten plagues which befall the Egyptians (Ex 7:8–1). Pharaoh eventually relented and agreed to release the Israelites. Exodus 13:17–22 describes Moses leading the Israelites from Egypt into the wilderness.
According to Birch et al (1999:127) God does not liberate without calling human agents to the task of liberation. In view of the exodus narrative, there would have been no salvation or liberation from slavery for the Hebrews if they had not stood up and marched across the Sea of Reeds. In Israel’s situation, we see the plagues are soon over, the tyrant is outwitted and defeated, the Sea of Reeds is crossed and now God, the liberator, is seen to be worthy of praise, as expressed in the song of Moses (Ex 15:1-18).

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

The exodus tradition motivates me to investigate its function in Israel’s own history and see how the exodus motif can function in other contexts other than the originating context of Israel. According to Strydom and Wessels (2000:139) in any kind of study, one of the basic presuppositions is that one has to know exactly what one wants to achieve. It is necessary to have a clear goal otherwise the whole attempt might be futile. The aim of this study is to achieve three main purposes: (1) to inform the reader how I, as a Zimbabwean, interpret the exodus narrative, in consultation with the text itself, first by tracing the function of the exodus tradition in its different periods of time as Israelite generations passed it on, (2) how I can respond to oppressive situations in my context by becoming the voice of the voiceless and (3) to conscientise the audience and the wider public to use their potential to dismantle oppressive systems.

Every reader of the biblical text carries with him or her baggage of contextual bias in which one reads the text. To a large extent, my context has influenced my hermeneutical interpretation of the exodus narrative. Hence, the bulk of the information in this study should reflect this standpoint otherwise the study would not have achieved its goal and main aim. Reading the exodus tradition from a Zimbabwean perspective is an attempt on my part to delineate how the exodus has functioned in its own setting, how it was perpetuated by Israelite generations that followed, and how I, who has become an “Israelite by adoption” (e.g., as a Christian, I use and read the Jewish Bible) can draw meaning from the text that has influenced the post-biblical world. As shall be shown as the discussion develops, the post-biblical world featuring Latin America, United States of America, South Africa, Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, have also drawn some relevance from the exodus narrative.
As the discussion progresses, readers will note that my argument is not based on liberation in a political sense alone, although it forms part of the larger perspective. My perspective on liberation from oppression which derives from my reading of the exodus narrative, is broad-based, that is, liberation in the following sense as well: economic liberation, liberation from evil, liberation from poverty and starvation, liberation from gender discrimination, to name a few.

My other aim is to "sound a trumpet" to the world of readership, as well as the general public about the problems affecting Zimbabweans, in an endeavour to lobby for a concerted effort to put an end to the socio-economic and spiritual dilemma bedevilling Zimbabwe. It is a deliberate attempt to provoke readers and Zimbabweans at large, to find solutions to the causes of the economic woes and suffering they are facing.

It is a deliberate attempt to proffer challenge to Zimbabweans to implement various options at their disposal so as to rid themselves from the "bondage" people are experiencing. In its present form, the ZANU–PF government and its policies are unlikely to change soon, and the longer it stays the more harm it will cause on the people and people’s livelihoods. It is my opinion that Zimbabweans must realise their full potential in fighting for their rights in their beautiful country which God gave them as an inheritance.

3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Research on the topic of liberation is not a virgin field. I am aware that many considerable works on liberation in general have been written previously by many. Thus, I have been selective in my references to other researches, particularly those researches that are relevant to my discussion. However, I am unaware of researches similar to my research topic entitled: "Reading the Exodus Tradition from a Zimbabwean Perspective".

I am indebted to the large volumes of written materials, both articles and books which have sought to shed light on economic and political upheavals affecting humanity under the globe – in both the Ancient Near Eastern world (featuring Israel and her interaction with her neighbours) and in the post-biblical world (e.g, Latin America, USA, South Africa, Rhodesia and Zimbabwe). As stated by Bosman (2005:869–877) for several decades the book of Exodus was the locus classicus for the struggle against colonialism and racial discrimination across Africa.
Although Bosman does have another perspective from the one of this study, he still believes in the function of the exodus narrative in the contemporary socio-political situations. The other perspective by Bosman is the polemical approach to reading the exodus narrative. According to Bosman (2005:873) the Exodus can and should be reread as a narrative that concerns religious origin and monotheistic identity using polemic rhetoric to counter ongoing polytheistic alternatives.

Israel had to remember and keep record in the form of a narrative of how Yahweh delivered them in their encounters with catastrophes or life-threatening situations. Hence, the assertions of the phrase: “the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” (Jos 24; Jdg 6:7). According to Noth (1960:112) the “bringing forth out of Egypt” appears in all kinds of places in the Old Testament tradition, sometimes in formal phrases, sometimes in more or less elaborate statements. It forms a leading theme in the Pentateuch. The function of the exodus narrative can be drawn from the following phrases such as: “I have heard the cries of my people” (Ex 2:23; Is 65:19): “Let my people go” (Ex 5:1): “I brought you up out of the land of Egypt” (1 Sm 8: 8; 1 Ki 8:18): “The land I made an oath to give to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (Gn 48:3–4; Ex 6:3–4).

Scheffler (2000:65) subscribes to the function of the exodus tradition as contained in the phrase, “The Lord who brought you up out of Egypt” (Ex 20:2; Jos 1:3; Jdg 2:12; Is 11:16). According to Boyce (1988:1) the “cry” is vividly expressed in Exodus 3:7. The Lord said: “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and am concerned about their suffering” (Ex 3:7). As stated by Birch et al (1999:27) the exodus tradition concerns God’s justice and redemption at work in the world of economic and political power and in the midst of the living and dying of human communities.

It is this reading of the exodus narrative which has influenced people all over to deal with their situations where they experience some kind of “bondage.” Examples referred to in this thesis are: Latin America (Gustavo Gutierrez) the United States of America (James Cone), South Africa (Allan Boesak), Rhodesia (Rhodesia Catholic Bishops’ Conference, Banana, and Muzorewa), and Zimbabwe (Tsvangirai and Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference). These have been selected as representative examples, firstly because of their relevance to this study and secondly
because of space limitations.

Liberation theology originated in Latin America in the 1960s. Among the proponents of liberation in Latin America is Gustavo Gutierrez in Peru, as an example. According to Gutierrez (1991:32) to conceive of history as a process of liberation of man is to consider freedom as a historical concept. Gutierrez (1973:14) quotes Moltmann (1967:36) where he says that theological concepts “do not limp after reality. They illuminate reality by displaying its future.” Gutierrez (1973:182) further gives Moltmann’s views of history and promise. According to Moltmann (1967:106) the reason for the overplus of promise and for the fact that it constantly overspills history lies in the inexhaustibility of the God of promise.

In that sense, God acts in response to any human experience in any history. In his book: Theology of Liberation, Gutierrez (1973:157) says that the God of the Exodus is the God of history and of political liberation more than he is the God of nature. Gutierrez says that the liberation of God is political action. Gutierrez makes use of the tradition in the exodus narrative and this is the common feature which we have seen throughout the Bible text, particularly the Old Testament; the “bringing out of”, hence “God who brought you out of Egypt.” Gutierrez refers to Exodus 29:45–46 where it says: “Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.”

There is a message which is drawn from the exodus narrative which Gutierrez sends across to both the societies, believing communities in Latin America as well as to readers in general. This message is: rejection and abolishment of any form of injustice. People’s respective histories should propel them toward the eschatological hope that God will intervene in their specific situations of oppression. According to Gutierrez (1973:265) in Latin America to be church today means to take up a clear position regarding both the present state of social injustice and the revolutionary process which is attempting to abolish that injustice and build a more human order. Due to constraints of space in this study, I have not been able to discuss every work on liberation written by various scholars in relationship to the exodus narrative. The function of the exodus narrative in the USA is represented mainly by James Cone’s writings, which I have chosen as an example, although other theologians will feature as well.
Like the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh’s oppression of the Israelites, the English spirit of colonisation for its enrichment took them as far as the lands of the Americas. The Americans exacerbated an oppression atmosphere through their slavery of the African people. African Americans were motivated by the exodus narrative, from which, when the narrative was read and preached in the church, black people would draw some similarity with their condition of enslavement in a foreign land, where they were continuously turned into objects of advancement and human resources for money-spinning projects and infrastructural development in America. According to Grier and Cobb (1969:122) the black person was brought to America forcibly and was completely cut off from his past. He was robbed of language and culture. This view will be developed in due course in this study.

Black Theology in America developed from the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements as a response to experiences of racism and oppression, in which “people of colour” regarded themselves as superior to the black people; hence the blacks were marginalised in every respect. According to Song (1979:568) the experience of the exodus does become alive and real for the black people in the United States. Hopkins (1989:9) states that Black Theology arose from black pastors who had participated in the Martin Luther King’s Civil Rights Movement. When people engage themselves in the process of self-examination, they also begin to reject the stereotypes about their community created by their oppressors.

Young (1986:2) says that Black Theology in the United States is sharply political, condemning the institutions and attitudes that exacerbate black suffering. Roberts (1986:32) reveals an interest in uncovering the significance of the African roots of slave religion. Despite their record of life through hardship, Africans have survived by creatively adapting to African patterns.

Cone is impressed by Moltmann’s position. According to Moltmann (1968:53) Yahweh is the God who leads his people out of the house of bondage. Thus, he is a God of freedom, the God ahead of us. One requires social, political, and world-surpassing freedom from God, not against him. According to Cone (1970:17) Christian Theology is a theology of liberation. Cone has consistently developed the biblical claim that God came in Christ to set the captive free. The stories of the Israelites and their liberation from Egyptian bondage were told and preached by a black preacher. These stories provided hope for those who identified with the freed Israelites. Cone (1985:181) acknowledges the usefulness of Karl Marx’s social analysis for Christians in
the United States, where “white American churches have presented the gospel of Jesus as opium for the oppressed so that they would not challenge unjust conditions in society”.

In his book entitled, For My People, Cone (1985:8) says that black Christians have always known that the God of Moses and of Jesus did not create them to be slaves or second-class citizens in North America. According to Cone (1985:10) black Christians believe that the God of Moses and of Jesus is first and foremost the God of love and of justice who is “ever present in time of trouble”. In Cone (1985:63) the freedom song “Go Down Moses,” is a revolutionary song clamoring for freedom of the oppressed black Americans. Cone (1985:63) further says that while black Americans from Harriet Tubman to Martin Luther King have been identified with Moses, almost all blacks in America – past and present – have identified Egypt with America.

In his book entitled, My SoulLooks Back, Cone (1986:47) says that freedom is not a gift, but a responsibility, and thus must be taken against the will of those who hold others in bondage. On the basis of the exodus and the idea of salvation history, Cone (1986:49) claims that God has elected the oppressed to be the chosen people.

In his book, A Black Theology of Liberation, Cone (1990:2) says the election (of Israel) is inseparable from the event of the exodus: “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now, therefore, you will obey my voice and keep up my covenant, you shall be my possession among all peoples.” (Ex 19:4–5). Cone says that God’s liberating acts are seen in the exodus.

According to Cone (1990:47) the exodus of Israel from Egypt was a revelation. Cone affirms that God is a warrior. In this revelatory event, Israel came to know God as a warrior. He says that biblical writers expressed Israel’s view of God’s revelation by describing Yahweh as a warrior. Crystal (1990:702) states that accepting a Marxist analysis of society, liberation theology stresses the role and mission of the church to the poor and the oppressed in society, of which Christ is understood as the liberator. Black American society had a dream that a day would come when whites in America would treat them as equals. Banks (1972:87) says that the Evangelical recognises that the world system is in the lap of the devil, and that injustice, war, poverty, and
prejudice are all parts of the system.

In the South African context, the function of the exodus tradition is represented by Allan Boesak. I have selected Boesak because of his theological views which are relevant to my discussion on the exodus. In his book, *Farewell to Innocence*, Boesak (1981:17) says that Yahweh’s greatest act of liberation forms the content of life and faith, the history of confession of Israel. As a liberator, Yahweh has revealed himself to Moses and Israel, and by this name, he wants to be evoked for all generations to come (Ex 3:15). Boesak draws his motivation from Exodus 3:7, 8: “I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave drivers. Yes, I am well aware to their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians” (Boesak 1981:17). According to Boesak, the theme of liberation can be traced in Genesis 15:14. Boesak says that the liberation motif is also evident in the preaching of the Old Testament prophets. The book of Daniel also shows the liberation motif in Exodus. The “bringing out” or the “I brought you up out of Egypt” is also reflected in the book of Daniel. Boesak quotes Daniel 9:15 which says: “Lord our God, who, by your mighty hand, brought us out of Egypt” (Boesak 1981:18).

For Boesak (1981:19) Black Theology, taking its clue from this biblical message, refuses to let go of the truth that one cannot speak about God’s love without also speaking of his righteousness, his justice, which become concrete in relation to human beings and the relations amongst themselves. Boesak quotes Exodus 19:4 where it says: “You have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.” Boesak does not mince his words when he addresses both oppressors and the oppressed. According to Boesak, Yahweh demands justice not only from the Pharaoh who oppressed Israel, but also from the rich and the powerful within Israel who would not give justice to the poor.

In *Farewell to Innocence* the “bringing out” feature which is common in the exodus narrative is vivid. Boesak quotes Exodus 19:4; 20:1 and Hosea 1:1 all of which clearly make mention of God who “brought you up out of Egypt.” According to Boesak, every earlier attempt as well as the new consciousness and self-affirmation whose purpose is the liberation of blacks must be interpreted by Black Theology as the work of God. Black Theology rejects every understanding of God which does not include God’s full and unreserved identification with the purpose of black people.
In this study, *reading the exodus tradition from a Zimbabwean perspective* is a culmination of the modern reading of the exodus narrative, especially taking cognizance of the oppression and suffering of the people of Zimbabwe, who have gone through turbulent periods in their history from Cecil John Rhodes’ colonialisation of Rhodesia in 1890 to Ian Douglas Smith’s colonial rule from 1965 to 1979.

As stated by Dube (2000:63) in Exodus, the God–given land is characterized positively. It is described as “a good and broad land” (Ex 3:8, 17; 34:2), and also “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex 3:8). The same trend of giving the description of the land to be colonized was noted during the colonization of Rhodesia. The colonizers likened Rhodesia to Canaan after the wilderness because it was “flowing with milk and honey” (Mlambo 1972:13). Mlambo (1972:1) further says the constitutional and political development of Southern Rhodesia was reshaped by the revolt of the Ndebele and the Shona people in 1896–1897 against the rule of the British South Africa Company, which resulted in a bloody war. Exodus 6:2–5 says:

> God also said to Moses, I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant.

The above text suggests that Canaan was long promised to Israel’s ancestors. Does this text justify or condone invasion of one’s land in the context of one remembering what the ancestors once said regarding the issue of land? Was this tradition the motivating factor in Western ideology of colonising Africa in general and Rhodesia in particular? Certainly not. Literature published so far has not idealized the colonial spirit to God’s calling of the British colonialists to occupy Rhodesia. God’s covenant to Israel for a land was unique and specific, and so cannot be epitomised in terms of modern occupation of another person’s land. If the Israelites occupied land which already belonged to other peoples, it was by God’s instruction.

The motivation drawn from the reading of the exodus narrative influenced people like: the Rhodesia Catholic Bishops’ Conference (RCBC), Rev Canaan Banana, and Bishop Abel Muzorewa, among others. After about sixteen years of the armed struggle, Zimbabwe got
independent from Britain in 1980. In a new Zimbabwe, the exodus tradition was also embraced by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC).

Rodesia Catholic Bishops' Conference = RCBC (1977:2) commenced with these words, *you shall liberate my people*. God told Moses to free his people from their political and social slavery and to help them go their own spiritual way. These were but political statements, such that having been said in the context they were said is an indication that the Church Fathers were motivated by their reading of the narrative to fight for justice for the oppressed people. Quoting the statement made by Pope Paul VI, RCBC (1977:2–11) said that the church has the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings of assisting the birth of this liberation, of giving witness to it, of ensuring that it is complete.” So, it does not come as a surprise that some churches supported the guerrillas in the liberation war in Rhodesia.

As stated by ZCBC (2005:1) the prophet Isaiah reminds us “to share our bread with the hungry, to shelter the homeless poor and clothe the man seen to be naked” (Is 58:5–7). ZCBC (2007:1) drew similarities between human rights violations by state agents in Zimbabwe and the oppression of biblical pharaohs and Egyptian slave masters.

For the ZCBC (2000:1) the country must never go back to war. Instead we must go back to reconciliation. According to Dachs (2007a:2) after the elections all citizens should join forces to build the Zimbabwe we want. We appeal to all citizens to adopt a spirit of oneness and solidarity. According to ZCBC (2005:1) the Old Testament prophets continually stated that prayers and sacrifices are of no value unless there is concern for the poor and the needy (Am 5: 21–24). ZCBC (1984:3) further says: “it is up to us who believe in Christ to inspire our evolving socialism with the Christian vision. In that sense, it is up to us as social beings, to stand up against challenges that are threatening social beings”.

In *Theology of Promise*, Banana (1982:15) quotes Genesis 12:1 in which God tells Abraham: “Leave your country, your family and your father’s house for the land I will show you.” This passage is reminiscent of the tradition which later grew and which the Israelites constantly referred to, to enforce the Egyptian Pharaoh to Moses’ demand on God’s instruction to get the people to another land because God had made a covenant with Israel’s ancestors (Ex 6:3–5).

In *The Gospel according to the Ghetto*, Banana (1990:1) quotes Exodus 3:7, 12 in which God said to Moses: “I have seen the miserable state of my people….and so I have resolved to bring
you out of Egypt where you are oppressed.” Banana made reference to the Rhodesian oppression which gave rise to the liberation motif during the colonial period. Banana (1990:21) says that God sent Moses with this message to Pharaoh: “Let my people go” (Ex 5:1). Banana (1990:44) says that in the midst of the Hebrews' hopelessness and weakness, a man named Moses answered the divine call to provide much-needed leadership and direction. Moses was viewed by his people as a saviour sent to rescue them from their misery and degradation under the Egyptian Pharaohs. In the case of Moses, the reader realises that God also used a man to fulfil his purposes.

In his book entitled: *Rise up and Walk* (1978) Muzorewa contributed immensely towards the motivation of those on the liberation front. Muzorewa (1978:185) says: “sermons on the Exodus stories are received with rapt attention in Zimbabwean churches. We believe that as God led His children out of bondage in Egypt into a promised land, so He will lead his children into Zimbabwe if they are faithful to Him.” According to Muzorewa, his congregation listened to the sermons on the exodus narrative attentively and were motivated by the exodus narrative that the pharaoh could be replaced. It is in this context that many revolutionists emerged from the church circles.

Christian Care – the social welfare arm of the churches (both protestant and Catholic) – carried out a major part to relieve the suffering of the people in political restriction and detention in Rhodesia. According to Muzorewa (1978:89):

> Quietly working behind the scenes, Christian Care provided allowances for families of detainees and restrictees, paid school fees for their children, gave clothing, money for correspondence studies for the men held, and travel money for their families to visit them.

Christian Care has continued to provide humanitarian assistance to needy people in independent Zimbabwe. According to Jaka (2001:77) Christian Care was finding ways of being proactive in light of looming disaster on the nation. Christian Care has been and continues to play a leading role in providing food to starving people in Zimbabwe. At the time of completing this study (October 2008), Zimbabwe’s economy is the weakest in the world. Mugabe’s rule in Zimbabwe has subjected the Zimbabwean people to various forms of oppression, from coercion to intimidation to hunger to corruption. If Morgan Tsvangirai and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’
Conference (ZCBC) cannot stand out as prophets of our time as they have always done, to challenge the government on its injustices upon the people of Zimbabwe, then God may raise another Moses’ figure from among our people to motivate the downtrodden to begin their “march” to their own “promised land”.

The people of Zimbabwe are groaning and their cries have risen up to God who has heard them. It is my belief that God will soon deliver his people and perhaps Zimbabwe will once again recapture its glory of being a breadbasket of Southern Africa as well as having enough to feed its own people. Zimbabwe could fittingly be described as a good and spacious land; a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex 3:8). The church which is convinced of the value and importance of every human being must speak up for those normally neglected and considered not important in the power struggle: the poor, the marginalised and the disadvantaged (Wermter 2005:11).

According to Mann (1977:130) but you will not live in haste or go in flight; for the Lord will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard (Is 52:12) (NIV). The Israelites in Egypt cried out because of their oppression and their cries rose up to God (Ex 3:7–10). Zimbabweans are God’s people in the same way that God regarded the biblical Israelites who were oppressed in ancient Egypt. Zimbabwe’s hope is underpinned in the unlimited power of God to deal with seemingly unpredictable situations. Goldingway (1993:5) says that the stimulus and the help we can receive from the renewed study of the text of Scripture itself is a powerful aid to our being grasped by its message. The suffering people of Zimbabwe are groaning in agony: “Watchman, how much longer the night”? (Is 21:11).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology seeks to provide a description of the tasks which have been undertaken to analyse the problems of injustice and oppression encountered by humankind in various situations, in order to draw some parallels deriving from the modern reading of the episode of the oppressed biblical Israelites in Egypt as contained in the exodus narrative.

In this study the rhetorical–narrative approach has been used to expedite the function of the exodus narrative in Israelite literature itself and extricate how the tradition has influenced the modern post–biblical periods involving countries such as Latin America, United States of
America, South Africa, Rhodesia, and Zimbabwe as examples. Due to space, it has not been possible to discuss oppressive situations in other contexts.

Smith (2004:19) says that it is not professionally responsible for historians to give more credence to the historical value of the Bible simply because it is the Bible (the Word of God). I understand very well that for some time there have been critical and scholarly questions on the historicity of Exodus and Joshua – which is highly debatable – since the departure and occupation of Canaan are hardly verified in extra-biblical sources. According to Dube (2000:58) the historical factuality is not necessary. What is important is the literary–rhetorical function in sanctioning or rejecting imperialist oppression on the part of ancient Israel and her interaction with the surrounding nations.

Readers may be informed to keep in mind that I have deliberately avoided a historical–critical analysis of the exodus narrative in preference for the literary–rhetorical approach because my original intention of discussing the function of the exodus narrative was streamlined along the literary theme in the exodus narrative, and that theme is the liberation of the oppressed people. It is a discussion on the theme of liberation of the oppressed communities in the post–biblical world, drawing its motivation from the liberation motif of the exodus narrative.

According to Scheffler (2007:772) historical criticism is often criticized for confronting the text to the extent that it no longer has a positive message for the present–day world. This is not to imply that the role of historical–critical approach is insignificant. I personally appreciate historical criticism in which historical–critical questions may arise such as the historicity and authenticity of the exodus narrative if read as history to enlighten the implied reader on the contexts and the audience to which the narrative was addressed during ancient times. Despite the fact that the exodus tradition was never written as history and that the audience of the author was never the modern reader but the Israelite communities themselves, readers will realise that situations of oppression undercut across cultures. It is a common phenomenon of every time and space. It actually defies geographical and anthropological setting of particular space and time. In this study, the historical–critical approach is not the modus operandi (Oxford English Dictionary = OED 2001: s.v “modus operandi”). Therefore, responses to questions of historicity that readers might expect are not adequately provided for in this study.
My reading of the exodus narrative becomes relevant to me as an individual and I feel that others have appropriated the text the same way in their contexts of oppression. It is in this understanding that I read the exodus narrative from my own perspective where liberation from oppression is inevitable.

This study is a deliberate attempt to present to the “informed readers” another perspective of interpretation of an already-known text so that they themselves can make an informed decision on how to integrate the exodus narrative within their respective contexts of oppression.

The research methodology applied here can be divided into two categories, namely: qualitative method and quantitative method.

4.1 Qualitative method and quantitative method

According to Thomas (1998:4) qualitative research compares the characteristics of one entity with those of another, with no concern of amounts or frequencies of the characteristics being studied. On the other hand, quantitative research compares the amounts or frequencies of the characteristics that are being investigated.

4.1.1 Qualitative research methodology

Neuman (2006:149) says that qualitative researchers are more concerned about issues of the richness, texture and feeling of the raw data because their inductive approach emphasises development insights and generalisations out of the collected data. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2):

> Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety materials – personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives.
4.1.2 Quantitative research methodology

According to Housier (1998:15) quantitative research is defined as research that is based on measurement and quantification of data. There must be a way of transforming it into numbers. The quantitative research is used to analyse data that is obtained from different documents dealing with the topic under study. In quantitative research rigour is reflected in narrowness, conciseness and objectivity and leads to rigid adherence to research designs and precise statistical analyses.

4.1.3 The use of the qualitative methodology in this study

In this study, the qualitative method has been used to gather data, in which interviews were conducted. The following data have also been used for this study: information extracted from the media and academic studies. Besides conducting interviews, my personal experience on the problems discussed, namely, oppression, suffering of humanity, including various oral and written sources, articles and books, have been used extensively in this study, as well as information gleaned from scholars who have undertaken studies before in areas of interest such as on: the exodus, oppression, colonialism, democracy, apartheid, starvation, the land, political and economic issues.

4.1.3.1 Interviews

For this study, interviews have been conducted, especially for chapter five on Zimbabwe. These interviews have been carried out in their own specific setting, that is, the Zimbabwean context. The interviews have been conducted in Gweru, Zimbabwe, and have been electronically recorded. Readers will appreciate that the interviewees have been selected from an environment of being victims of suffering as a result of the oppression in Zimbabwe. Hence, these interviews do not reflect discussions from other situations of oppression elsewhere, such as Latin America, United States of America and South Africa (where mainly secondary sources have been consulted).

Interview respondents were people who actually experienced the agony of suffering resulting from bad governance in Zimbabwe. In some cases, actual names have not been given, due to the
nature and the sensitiveness of the discussion because of the unfriendly political environment in Zimbabwe. About forty interviews have been conducted. Not all names of interviewees have been reflected in the text itself due to varying reasons. First, it is due to limited space and secondly, it is due to the fact that some of the responses were similar so much that it would sound monotonous to repeat a response already given earlier on in the text. The interview names in the text are reflected in the List of Sources Consulted.

About twenty-six names of the forty-one respondents have been included in the text. Some respondents chose to remain secretive and in that case these have been indicated as “anonymous”. Anonymous respondents may not have been indicated in the text itself in the same way as other sources were used. Because of the unfavourable political environment in Zimbabwe, some interviewees have chosen to provide only one name (e.g., surname or first name only) for fear of victimisation. Where only one name is given, abbreviations [s n] have been cushioned in to replace the “missing name” in the List of Works Consulted (although traditionally, this may not be an academic way of addressing this anomaly).

About twenty-nine structured questions have been used in the interview, not necessary in the order they appear at the back of this document. The CD on which interviews were recorded electronically has been made available.

5. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This discussion comprises six chapters, all of which collectively form an integral part of the whole thesis. This research study has been presented as follows:

Chapter one is an introduction, in which the intention was to delineate all the four functions of the exodus narrative in their respective categories, namely: (a) in biblical literature (e.g., settlement period, monarchical period, exilic period and the Persian period) (b) in post-biblical world (e.g., Latin America, USA and South Africa) (c) in colonial Rhodesia and (d) in independent Zimbabwe.

Chapter two looks at the function of the exodus tradition in biblical literature. In this chapter, focus is on the dynamics of liberation of the Israelites from within themselves in diverse contexts
of bondage throughout the Israelite history as contained in the exodus tradition. In my discussion of the function of the exodus tradition in this chapter, emphasis is placed in the following periods: the settlement period, the pre-monarchic (the judges) period, the monarchical period, the exilic period and the Persian period. Due to limited space, the function of the exodus tradition during the Hellenistic period and the Roman period has not been discussed.

*Chapter three* examines the function of the exodus tradition in the post-biblical period or the contemporary world, in which the following countries have been chosen as representative examples: Latin America, the USA and South Africa. The function of the exodus narrative in Europe, Asia, the Caribbean and other African countries has not been discussed – not because they are insignificant for this study – but I deliberately left them out in my discussion because of space, limiting my discussion to only a few situations.

*Chapter four* discusses the function of the exodus tradition during the colonial period in Rhodesia. In this chapter issues of racism and discrimination during colonialism have been highlighted.

*Chapter five* discusses the possible functions of the exodus narrative in the post-colonial period in independent Zimbabwe. In this chapter, I have examined the concrete parallels of the exodus tradition to the Zimbabwean situation at the moment where the economic and socio-political conditions need immediate attention.

*Chapter six* comprises conclusions and recommendations. This chapter gives concluding remarks about the discussions covered in the dissertation as a whole. It forms the culmination of the discussion on the topic: *Reading the Exodus Tradition from a Zimbabwean Perspective.*
Chapter Two

THE FUNCTION OF THE EXODUS MOTIF IN THE BIBLICAL TRADITION

1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter one was simply an overview of the discussion as a whole in which an introspection of everything covered in this thesis was discussed in brief. In that chapter readers could have a glimpse of what would follow up in chapters two through five showing the possible function of the exodus tradition in each respective situation as contained in the heading under each chapter.

In this chapter, my discussion looks at the function of the exodus tradition in biblical literature, focusing on four key periods as representative examples: (1) during the period of the judges, (2) in monarchical period, (3) during the exilic period, and (4) in the Persian period.

Noth provides for the function of the exodus narrative in Israel, where he mentions the “bringing out” or “brought out of Egypt”, which as we shall see below, are phrases which appear frequently in most Israelite literature. According to Noth (1960:111) one of the original articles of Israel’s faith was that it had once been “brought out of Egypt” by its God Yahweh (Nm 23:22; 24:8; 1 Sm 4:8; 2 Sm 7:23; Jdg 6:13; Ex 20:2 and Dt 26:5–9). As shall be noted, I have also made use of Gottwald’s contribution in the area of the exodus tradition which I found to be relevant to my study, just like I have treated any other scholarly work consulted on the exodus tradition.

The main purpose or function of the exodus tradition which can be deduced from operative and recurrent constituencies of the exodus narrative itself was to instil memoirs of “remembering” so as to sustain loyalty to God because of his deliverance acts on the part of Israel. Israel had to remember and keep record in the form of a narrative of how Yahweh delivered them in their encounters with catastrophes or life-threatening situations. Hence, the assertions of the phrase “the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt” (Jos 24; Jdg 6:7).

According to Noth (1960:112) the “bringing forth out of Egypt” appears in all kinds of places in the Old Testament tradition, sometimes in formal phrases, sometimes in more or less elaborate
statements and it forms a leading theme in the Pentateuch. As it were, the narrative can be described as a "continuous attempt to instil memory of past events and experiences of Israel and her relationship with God." Some considerations towards the function of the exodus narrative can be drawn from the following phrases as contained in the text itself:

(1) The cry: "I have heard the cries of my people" (e.g, Gn 4: 10; Ex 2: 23; 3: 7–8; Is 65: 19).
(2) "Let my people go" (e.g, Ex 5: 1; 8: 1).
(3) The bringing out: "I brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (e.g. 1 Sm 8: 8; 1 Ki 8: 18)
(4) The Promised Land: "The land I made an oath to give to your (Israel's) ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." (e.g, Gn 48: 3–4; Ex 6: 3–4)

In my view of the function of the exodus narrative in Israel's own literature, I perceive the above phrases to constitute the locus on which the whole discussion is mounted. It is my assertion that the development of my discussion will have to track on the route trekked by these phrases.


It appears that the term "cry" emerges frequently in the context of those oppressed. According to Oosthuizen (1988: 16) the word of the oppressed is the "cry" (Ex 3: 7; 6: 5) that utter from within their context of alienation. This "cry" may not be understood as a mere passive lamentation. Rather it reflects the process of "conscientisation" that arises from the Israelites' intention to set in motion the programme of liberation (Croatto 1981: 18–20). It can thus be deduced that the urgency to respond in deliverance, God was usually moved by the "cry" on the part of Israel. According Boyce (1988: 1) at the beginning of the primeval history one encounters the "crying" and "hearing" of Abel's blood (Gn. 4: 10) and at the end of salvation history, the prophet Isaiah envisions the cessation of the "cry" (Is 65: 19). In between, "the red thread" binds together the history of this God with this people (Ex 3: 7, 9; 14: 10, 15; Nm 11: 2; Dt 26: 7–9; Jdg 3: 9, 15; 1 Sm 12: 8, 10).
Sometimes the exodus tradition is detected in the phrase: “The land which the Lord swore an oath to give to Israel’s ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (Ex 6:8; Jos 21:43–44). In some cases, the exodus tradition is vivid in terms of repetition of or similarities of incidents, which would have been narrated in two different texts (Daube 1963:11). For example, the drying of the waters of the Red Sea (Ex 14:21–22) and the drying of the waters of the River Jordan (2 Ki 2:7–8). The same observation is noted in Joshua 3:7–4:18 where the Jordan River runs dry as people crossed over. These will be expanded in due course under relevant periods of their function (i.e., period of the judges, the monarchical period, the exilic period, and the Persian period). Discussed below, is the background information to the exodus narrative followed by the episode of oppression of the Israelites in Egypt.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE EXODUS NARRATIVE

According to the exodus narrative, Abram was believed to be the ancestor of the tribe of Israel. Israel’s ancestors are believed to have originated from Mesopotamia, from a city called Ur of the Chaldeans. According to Millard (1999:132–133):

> The city of Ur was already very ancient by the time Abram was born. The city was the centre for international trade, and had two busy harbours joined to the Euphrates by canals. Most of the inhabitants lived in single-storey houses made from bricks of baked mud, although some two-storey houses existed.

*OED* (2001: s.v “city of Ur”) the city of Ur reached its peak in the late 3rd millennium BC. Israel’s ancestors have been moving. God says to Abraham: “I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess” (Gn 15:7). As stated by Dube (2000:61) Exodus is a text that commands and authorizes travelling from one land to another. Its very title “exodus” means “going out.”

In my view, the background information about Israel’s ancestry is important because it enables the reader to literally “move” with the biblical narrative, particularly where references of God’s promises to the Israel’s ancestors by the exodus narrative are made in many instances (Ex 6:2–5; 13:5, 11). Scheffler (2001:33) describes these stories as “legends” and “sagas.” These legends and sagas preserve the old reminiscences about Israel having once been of (at least partial) semi-nomadic stock and having had originated from Mesopotamia (Scheffler 2001:33). According to
Gottwald (1993:272):

The term “exodus” is used to designate the exit of the Israelites from Egypt in their crossing of the sea. More extensively, exodus designates the whole complex of events described in the Book of Exodus, from oppression in Egypt to law-giving at Sinai, and – ever beyond – to encompass the events of Numbers through Joshua, as far as relocation of the Israelites in Canaan.

According to Dube (2000:61) Genesis frames the narrative within God’s long term plan for the Israelites, explaining their coming to Egypt and point out their ultimate travelling to and taking possession of Canaan. The book of Exodus picks up these themes and begins to actualize them. To me, the narrative of Israel’s patriarchs gives a continuous thread which refuses itself to be detached from the culmination of Israel’s settlement into the land “already promised.” As the biblical narrative presents itself, the patriarchal tradition, the Sinai tradition and the exodus tradition are inseparable. One is integrated to the other.

In view of the exodus tradition, the family of the Hebrew patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) is depicted in the Bible as having had its chief seat in the northern Mesopotamian town of Harran (mid–2nd millennium BCE) belonging to the Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni. The Hebrews were semi-nomadic herds people and occasionally farmers, ranging close to towns and living in houses as well as in tents. According to Genesis 12:1–9, the legend says that God instructs Abram to: “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to a country I will show you.” To Abraham, this moving towards a promise was a step of faith in Yahweh. From there Abraham – the founder of the Hebrew people – is said to have migrated to Canaan (comprising roughly the region of modern Israel and Lebanon), throughout the biblical period and later ages a vortex of west Asian, Egyptian, and east Mediterranean ethno–culture.

As stated by Long (1997:25) the story of Abraham indicates that the forebears of the Hebrews once lived in the land of Canaan, and even possessed the land. As the exodus narrative portrays, it meant that, through the Exodus from Egypt to Canaan, the Israelites were simply returning home. According to Exodus 6:2–5 God remembers the covenant he had made with Israel’s ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. According to Scheffler (2000:68) in other words they (Israelites) need not doubt their right to live in the land (Gn 12:1) because God had given it to them (Gn 12:7). Sheriff (1990:49–60) says that the prefiguration of leaving to inherit the promise is in the exodus of Jacob’s funeral cortège (Gn 50:4–14; 48:21; 49:29–33) for his body
to be laid alongside those of Sarah and Abraham, Isaac and Rebecca, and that of Leah in the plot of ground near Hebron.

According to the patriarchal tradition, Joseph is the man associated with the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt because Israel's tribe went to Egypt while Joseph was administrator there. The narrative sequel of exodus is explicitly bound together with the promise of Genesis by the figure of Joseph. In Genesis 50:24–26 the body of Joseph is last to be taken to Canaan for burial. Exodus 13:9 records that Joseph's embalmed bones joined the trek from Egypt to the Red Sea and beyond. Joshua 24:32 records the burial of Joseph's bones at Shechem. It is in this sense that the "walking" metaphor of Genesis spirituality links knittingly with Israel's covenant spirituality in Exodus (Weinfield 1970:184–203). In view of the narrative, Van Seters (1998:32–33) says:

Joseph – the youngest son and the favourite of his father Jacob – is sold into slavery by his brothers and ends up in Egypt. Through various circumstances and adventures he rises from slave to vizier of the realm. When a famine forces the sons of Jacob to go Egypt to buy grain, they encounter Joseph who, after a series of tests, reveals himself to them, and the whole family of Jacob migrates to Egypt to be cared for by Joseph.

According to the exodus tradition, the Hebrew ancestors of the people of Israel (named after the patriarch Jacob, also called Israel) migrated to Egypt where they lived in servitude and a few generations later returned to occupy part of Canaan. A brief discussion about the origin of the Israelites is worthy of giving. There are hypotheses which suggest that the "Habiru" or the "outlaws" could be the same people as the Hebrews. According to Scheffler (2001:40) the Amarna letters mention the same group of people residing in Palestine, namely the habiru or "apiru."

Scheffler further says that between the terms habiru and Hebrews is far too conspicuous as to be overlooked. The term "habiru" represented a social category referring to the dislodged or "outlaws" of society. The same applies to the Hebrews mentioned in the Bible (e.g., Gn 14:13). To support his view, Scheffler makes reference of 1 Samuel 14:21 which says: Those Hebrews who up to now had been under the Philistines and had been with them in camp changed sides and joined the Israelites under Saul and Jonathan. These habiru are therefore perceived to be the same as the Hebrews, possibly making scholars to hypothesize that the habiru could form up the
origins of Israel. Still others think that they might have represented two groups. According to Noth (1960:113):

These Israelites lived in Egypt in circumstances of which we have no details, as people with inferior rights who were usually called “Hebrews,” and the fact the Old Testament often uses the word “Hebrews” when referring to the Israelites in Egypt (Ex 1:19; 2:3, 7, 11, 13 and elsewhere) is entirely in accordance with the actual situation.

Noth further says that the Egyptians were quite familiar with this foreign term which they transliterated as ‘pr. These ‘pr overtook and were compelled to undertake all kinds of service and in Egypt all service was directly or indirectly for the state. This is mentioned in various Egyptian texts. This analysis by Noth, among others, suggests that at some point there existed a group of people called the Hebrews.

However, Genesis blazes the trail by presenting the story of Abraham as an exodus from Ur to the Promised Land: “I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess” (Gn 15:7) coinciding with Exodus 20:2 and Joshua 24:2–4. As stated by Van Seters (1975:263) this connection of two journeys to the inheritance invites us to see moving on with God as a pattern of obedience. In both cases there is a “leaving” in order to “receive” what is promised.

As stated by Le Roux (1992:141) ancient Israel obviously cherished wonderful ideals about the “Promised Land”. The land was visualized as a land of plenty, God’s gift to Israel, who should enjoy its fruits. Deuteronomy 8:7–8, and 11:11 express this explicitly. This tradition is also envisioned in Jeremiah 2:7. According to Hebrew tradition, a famine caused the migration to Egypt of the band of twelve Hebrew families that later made up a tribal league in the land of Israel. According to Noth (1960:113) lack of food had persuaded them to try to “preserve their life” in Egypt. According to Hamlin (1990:56):

The land flowing with milk and honey (Ex 3:8) already appears at Bochim (Jdg. 2:5), not as a paradise of continual life under God’s blessing, but as a place of testing where powers of death as well as of life are always present where adversaries remain to oppress, and where culture gods persist as snares.
Israel's perception of her history is characterised by oppression and captivity by superpowers of the ancient Near East world such as Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Babylon and the Romans. The oppression and genocide mentioned in Exodus 1:6–22 makes the Israelites' hopes of the Promised Land to diminish. Exodus 1:8 describes a new king who had emerged in Egypt who did not know Joseph, and it is the tenure of office of this new king that the Israelites experienced the groaning by subjecting them to oppression by forced labour (Ex 1:11). As we shall see, the crises Israel experienced throughout her history almost threatened her existence as a nation, as well as extinction from her religious life, following destruction of centres of worship, such as the temple in Jerusalem.

The exodus tradition gives the account of the birth of the nation. According to Sheriff (1990:49–60) the whole exodus story is about leaving and arriving and what happens in between. There is the physical trek and the geographical arrival to be sure. At the Exodus from Egypt (13th century BCE) YHWH showed his faithfulness and power by liberating Israel from bondage and punishing their oppressors with plagues and drowning at the sea. At Sinai YHWH made Israel his people and gave them the terms of his Covenant, regulating their conduct toward him and each other so as to make them a holy nation.

According to Durham (1987:30) "when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain" (Ex 3:12). An encounter with God at Sinai was indeed the announced goal of the exodus. Central to these events is Moses, who was commissioned to lead Israel out of Egypt, mediate God's Covenant to them, and bring them to Canaan. God, who needs human vessels to deal with human problems, chooses Moses to be the instrument through which God's redemptive act on Israel could be realized. Below, I shall discuss the man, Moses, as the liberator to the oppressed; but first, the Israelite slavery in Egypt.

3. SLAVERY OF THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT

According to the biblical narrative, the ancestors of Israel were in bondage to the pharaohs of Egypt during the thirteenth century BCE. The biblical narrative says that the Israelites were made slaves in Egypt when a new king who knew not Joseph came onto throne (Ex 1:8–22). The Israelites were in bondage probably under Egyptian king named Ramses II (Scheffler 2000:58) a view supported also by De Vaux (1978:325). According to Moon (1991:241) the Hebrews
were being forced to serve as slaves under the repressive rule of the Egyptians.

As the oppression of the slaves grew worse, so the reed for deliverance grew stronger. Borg (2002:94) says that Israel was enslaved by an imperial power. Now in bondage to the lordship of Pharaoh, she is condemned to unremitting hard labour. Noth describes the fate of the Hebrews in Egypt. According to Noth (1960:113) under Rameses II ‘pr – people appear who “haul stones for the god Re, the Re of Rameses, the beloved of Amon, in the southern quarter of Memphis” – they were used as labourers in the building of cities and temples. The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labour. They were ruthless in all the tasks they imposed upon them (Ex 1:13–14).

Noth further furnishes us with details on the condition of the Israelites in Egypt. According to Noth (1960:113) under Rameses III we hear of ‘pr – people who had settled in the lower Egyptian city of Heliopolis, and under Rameses IV we come across ‘pr–people among the workers in the quarries wadi hammamat east of the Pharaonic city of Thebes. Noth (1960:113–114) says:

This is entirely in accordance with the tradition of the compulsory labour to which the Israelites were subjected in Egypt and, in particular, with the strikingly concrete information in Exodus 1:2, that the Israelites were used in the Building of the cities of Pithon and Raamses in the eastern delta.

According to Noth, all this merely forms the concrete background to what is the essential content of acknowledgement of the “bringing forth out of Egypt,” from which the mighty hand of God delivered them.

According to the narrative, God saw the plight of the Israelites and was determined to free them from their oppression. God called Moses to be their leader, who, under God’s direction, would guide the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex 2:24–4:17). The deliverance was an impossible dream, which finally became a reality through the dynamic leadership of a man called Moses (Drane 1983:40). According to Nicholson (1973:xiv) it can scarcely be questioned that the Exodus from Egypt and the making of the covenant at Sinai are central in the Old Testament’s presentation and understanding of Israel’s faith.
4. MOSES BECOMES A LIBERATOR OF THE OPPRESSED ISRAELITES

The whole account of liberation from Egyptian bondage forms an indisputable unity. It is above all an account of a deliverance, which God wanted and brought about, using Moses as a mediator (De Vaux 1978:321). God raises young Moses to liberate the enslaved Israelites from that bondage. The deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt was brought about by God using human vessels (for example Moses and Aaron).

The initiatives of Moses’ mother, the Hebrew midwives, pharaoh’s daughter and Moses himself were significant contributions towards the liberation of the oppressed people in Egypt. The divine plan included the initiatives of these people. However, ultimate liberation comes primarily from God, with or without the work of people. God interferes because of the mere outcry of the oppressed people. God is near where there is suffering (Gous and van Heerden 2006:126). The narrative communicates that there is time when God responds to human cries and suffering.

God’s instruction to Moses opens with a reason for sending him to pharaoh in Egypt – it was the “cry” of the oppressed Israelites which rose up to God (Ex 2:23–24). According to Von Rad (1967:13) Moses was the one called by God. “Let my people go” (Ex 5:1, 8:1), was the message Moses needed to carry to pharaoh. The language of the afflicted is an immediate and underlying motive by which Yahweh’s mighty acts are provoked. According to the biblical traditions (e.g., Gn 18:20–21; 21:17–18, 1 Sm 7:8–9, Jdg 3:8–9; 1 Ki 17:20–22, etc) it is the language of “crying”, which God responds to with divine intervention. The cry of the Israelites because of their slave drivers rose up to God, and he was determined to rescue them (Ex 3:7–10). According to Kim (2008:1) the outcry to God of every suffering people, like that of the Hebrews in Egypt, operates as the place where humanity meets God through the dialogical interaction of human lament and divine intervention.

According to Deist (1977:67) the exodus theme is always accompanied by the “cry” of the oppressed. In Genesis 4:10, the passage expresses God’s disappointment over Cain’s murder of his brother Abel, and the blood of Abel was crying before God. The judgment that followed upon Cain by God was a result of the “crying” blood of Abel, indicating that God responds when the cry of humanity reaches him. In Genesis 18:20 God hears the “outcry” of Sodom and Gomorrah and decides to go and see if the “outcry” justifies his deliverance. In this case, the
passage informs the reader of the nature of the “cry” which would draw attention from God’s divine intervention.

In the exodus narrative, God hears the “crying” of the Israelites because of their slave drivers, and would want to come down to rescue them (Ex 3:7–8). The whole exodus exercise had its source on the “crying” on the people of God. Other crying narratives warranting God’s attention could be detected in other books where the narrative has functioned (e.g., Jdg 10:10; 15:18–19; 1 Sm 7:9; Ps 107:6; Neh 9:27 and Is 26:17; 65:14–19). It is in this context that we can deduce that God always heard the cries of the Israelites and in many instances, delivered them. The exodus tradition concerns the “crying” of the people and the “redemption” by God.

According to the exodus narrative, Moses became the instrument through which Israel could be delivered. Moses led Israel out of Egypt; he mediated the revelation given at Mt. Sinai, and he led the people through every danger until they reached the steppes of Moab. The importance of the person Moses to the entire complex of the exodus traditions is strengthened by the possibility that he grew up with first-hand knowledge of both Canaanite and Egyptian practices (Boadt 1984:165). Moses is shown spending years among the nomadic Midianite tribes, learning the desert life and the ways of its people. It is here, in the story of the burning bush, that Moses first experienced the unique revelation of God. At the burning bush, God revealed to Moses both his plans to save Israel and his own personal name. In the powerful scene of Exodus 3:14–15 confused and uncertain Moses questions God:

When I go to the Israelites and say to them, The God of your Fathers has sent me to you, and they say to me, ‘What is his name?’ What shall I answer them? And God said to Moses: I am who I am; and thus you will say to the Israelites, I AM has sent me to you.

And God spoke again to Moses: “Say this to the Israelites: Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever; this is my title generation after generation” (Boadt 1984:166). Moses acted as God had directed him, and approached Pharaoh with a request to set the Israelites free and to leave for the Promised Land. Pharaoh’s refusal provoked a series of ten plagues, which befell the Egyptians. According to Van Seters (1998:34):
Moses subsequent actions are more like those of a prophet than a military leader. He confronts Pharaoh, not on the battlefield, but as a prophet would confront an irreligious king with the divine word of threat and judgment. He is also given three signs (Ex 4:1–9) to prove to the people that God has appeared to him.

Moses does not resort to violence in his attempt to carry out God’s mission to liberate Israel. The long debate between Moses and Aaron on one hand and Pharaoh on the other hand, and the infliction of the plagues one after the other, is indicative of the God who demanded compliance, through his divine power, on the part of the oppressor to release the oppressed. Moses emerged as the liberator of the Hebrews and brought about the confrontation between himself and the Pharaoh that eventually led to the Hebrews’ liberation (Moon 1991:241). Exodus 13:17–22 describes Moses leading the Israelites from Egypt into the wilderness. Those fugitive slaves who experienced the Exodus deliverance entered into a covenant with Yahweh at Sinai.

5. THE ESCAPE AND THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

On the event of the exodus, the Passover is instituted (Ex 12:43–50). The deliverance from Egypt became the heart of Israel’s confession of faith, which, according to the narrative, Israel regarded as her history. However, the power lies in the narrative irrespective of historical facts. If Israel saw in this act the hand of God, the historian has no evidence to contradict or to prove it (Bright 1981:122).

The crossing of the water has traditionally been located at some point on the Red Sea. But, the Old Testament does not make this identification. The Hebrew words speak of the “sea of reeds”, which would be an unlikely name for the Red Sea. According to Noth (1960:115):

This incident certainly occurred on the eastern border of the delta where the Israelites were bound to to attempt to leave the sphere of direct Egyptian suzerainty. It is impossible to ascertain the locality of the incident more precisely and it would still be impossible even if we had exact information regarding the extent of the arms of the sea and the lakes in the modern Suez Canal area at the time in question. There is no reliable information about this in the Old Testament. It is true that in Exodus 14:2, there are some very precise references, and these are sufficiently clear to enable us to say with fair assurance that they concern the district of what was called the Sirbonian Sea in the Hellenistic and Roman times, i.e., the modern sebkha berdawil, the lagoon which was about a day’s journey east of the north–east corner of the delta, and it is quite possible that these references are accurate.
In any case, the area of Goshen where the slaves had lived was much further north. The biblical account does not view the escape of the Israelites from Egypt as a human achievement but as a miraculous event due to divine intervention. According to the exodus narrative, the escape of subdued slaves from a powerful nation would have been impossible without divine initiative. The escape was an effort on the part of Israel hoping for a "better and free world." As Gottwald (1979) put it, the Pentateuch in general and particular books, such as Exodus and Deuteronomy, reflect the hopes, dreams, ambition, and manifesto of a band of run-away slaves imagining for themselves a new way of being in the world.

Several of the Psalmists sang praises to God for what he did in the Exodus (e.g., Ps 135:8–12; 136:10–15). According to the biblical narrative, the Israelites were delivered from the pursuing Egyptians by the miraculous parting of the Red Sea. Exodus 15:1–15 and 21, are pieces of songs which were sung by Israel in praise of Yahweh for his miraculous deeds which delivered Israel.

In Deuteronomy 26:1–10 and Joshua 24, we read of summaries of the exodus tradition in which it is stated how Yahweh used Moses and Aaron (and Joshua) to lead the way in the liberation of the Israelites from the plagues in Egypt, the escape, the crossing of the Red Sea, the wilderness experience and the settlement in Canaan. These views are also echoed in Psalms 77:19–20 and 78:42–55. The Israelites were led through the wilderness, sustained by divine gifts of water, manna and quails and protected from their enemies, to Mt Sinai, where God made a covenant with them and revealed his law. The specification of the tabernacle, where God's presence dwelt in the midst of his people, was given. Exodus ends with the construction of the tabernacle and the descent of the glory of God (William 1990: s.v. "Exodus"). The Sinai Tradition forms part of the whole tradition as contained in the exodus narrative. Here, it is where Yahweh appeared to Moses, made a covenant with Israel and gave them the laws by which to live when they became a national unity.

According to Scheffler (2000:6) following up on Noth's views, the Sinai tradition played an important role in the period of the judges. As the community grew, it became necessary to have laws and institutions to govern society. At Mount Sinai, three annual festivals were given. In Exodus 23:1–15 the narrative reintroduces the exodus motif, by providing the reason why God gave Israel these feasts: "because I brought you up out of Egypt," which is repeated in Exodus 34:18. The following feasts formed part of the statutes for Israel: The Feast of Unleavened
Bread, The Feast of Harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering.

While God was still speaking to Moses at Mount Sinai, it seems as though the Law-giving ceremony had to be long, hence stretching the patience of the waiting Israelites at the bottom of the holy Mountain. And as Moses delayed, the Israelites, led by Aaron, had to make a symbol of golden calf to worship to, saying “as for this Moses, who brought us up out of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him” (Ex 32:1). Despite all these provisions for the maintenance of the relationship, Israel apostatised in the incident of the golden calf. Following that incident, God wanted to destroy Israel for the sin of idolatry, but Moses defended them by reminding God saying: “Whom you brought up out of Egypt with great and mighty hand” (Ex 32:11). Aaron further elaborates the exodus motif in Exodus 32:23. Nonetheless, the covenant was remade on the former terms.

For the ancient Israelites and for Jews ever since, this was the most important story they knew. It was the primary story shaping their understanding of the divine–human relationship, their identity, their togetherness as a community, and their vision of the character of God. According to De Vaux (1978:321):

The people of Israel interpreted the event as God’s will to deliver or bring his people up out of Egypt, the “house of slavery.” This affirmation occurs again and again throughout the Bible, from the Pentateuch to the latest books of the Old Testament, Daniel and Wisdom, and every literary form found in the Old Testament – in the historical books, the prophetic books, and the Psalms. It is, in fact, the basic article of Israel’s faith.

As stated by Gous and van Heerden (2006:83):

Even today Jewish families gather around the dining table for the Seder on the eve of Passover to tell the story of slaves who fled from Egyptian bondage. In doing this, they do what in one form or another Jews, and Israelites before them, have done for millennia. The story is relived as it is told, and the community of Jews is reformed and rebuilt at Passover.

Though God continued to be revealed in subsequent history, further understandings and actions of God were always seen in light of this primary event of revelation. According to Brueggemann (1994a:45–46) it is the most simple, elemental, and non-negotiable story line, which lies at the
heart of biblical faith. As stated by Scheffler (2000:67):

The earlier tradition of liberation from Egypt was now ideally suited to motivate the Israelites, now that they had entered the land, to throw off the Egyptian and later also the Philistine yoke. Thus, it is logical that the Exodus tradition would also then become a source of inspiration. In fact throughout the ages the tradition developed the ability to encourage and inspire the people of Israel whenever there was a crisis.

In the years to come, Israel’s recital of the Exodus liberation was most centrally celebrated every year in the spring. It was an important event on the Jewish religious calendar, indicating the continued up keeping of the covenant by Yahweh, established with Israel’s ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and renewed with Moses at Mount Sinai. According to Noth (1960:119):

The confession of faith in the God who had manifested himself so gloriously by delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians became the common property of the whole of Israel and one of the foundations of the faith which was vital in the institution of the sacral confederation of the twelve tribes under the protection of the binding law of God.

The narrative of Exodus 12:1–28, 43–49; 13:1–16, reflects the liturgical practice through generations of Passover celebration. According to Sheriff (1990:49–60) in the fullness of time, eating the New Covenant meal would reinforce the symbolism of communing in a rite, which connects the Passover and the Sinai. The journeying component then has to be transposed to metaphor only because no literal walking to a geographical promised land accompanies the New Testament inheritance. Passover celebrations continue in the Jewish community until the present (Birch et al 1999:122). Exodus 13:14–16 is an instruction on the upkeep of the tradition to the children of Israel and the future generations. Even after the exodus, this tradition of liberation continued to influence the Israelites (cf Scheffler 2000:65).

6. ISRAEL’S OCCUPATION IN CANAAN AND THE FUNCTION OF THE EXODUS NARRATIVE

The occupation of Canaan was remembered as a culmination and a fulfilment of God’s promises to Israel as contained in the exodus tradition. The Jordan River was split asunder, Jericho’s walls fell at Israel’s shout; the enemy was seized with divinely inspired terror; the sun stood still in order to enable Israel to exploit its victory. The entry into or occupation of the land of Canaan is
associated with Moses’ successor, Joshua. The function of the exodus tradition can be detected in many instances as the Israelites prepare to enter the Promised Land.

In Joshua 1:15 the death of Moses is mentioned in the context of emphasising the fact that God would still maintain his relationship with Joshua, as he did with Moses and Israel. The tradition seemed to have spread in the region as Israel marched towards occupying Canaan. Rahab mentions the event of the Red Sea crossing by Israel, and the deliverance from the mighty Egyptians, which the Lord did for Israel (Jos 2:8–13). Rahab said this after she had given hostage to the Israelite spies who had been sent to Canaan by Joshua.

Joshua 3:14–17 repeats the exodus narrative where the waters of the Jordan River got dry as the Israelites and the priests carrying the ark crossed over. This is reminiscent of the past tradition in which Moses had used the “staff” to divide the waters of the Red Sea and the Israelites crossed on dry ground (Ex 14:21–28). The tradition is repeated in Joshua 4:10–18, 23–24; and 5:1. Further more, Joshua 5:4–6, makes mention of the death of all the men of military age who had left Egypt because they had not obeyed the Lord. Interestingly, according to the narrative, only those men born in the desert had to enter Canaan.

According to Dube (2000:67) God’s chosen people, those qualified to enter the Promised Land are those born in the wilderness (Jos 5:2–7). It is almost like the identity and destiny of Israel as a holy and chosen nation are foreshadowed by this view. But it can also be substituted by the tradition of God’s promise of the land to the forefathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) (Ex 6:8), which they themselves did not realise during their lifetime nor Moses’ lifetime; let alone the offspring, described as the descendants or as remnants (Is 11:16). These descendants included those born in the desert.

6.1 Theories of occupation

Modern scholarship has struggled to get grips with the biblical explanation on Israel’s occupation of Canaan. According to Scheepers (1992:131) what complicates the issue concerning the conquest is that there is no agreement in the biblical texts as to what happened. Scheepers mentions two accounts in relationship to Israel’s settlement in Canaan, namely, (1) the Book of Numbers to the end of the Book of Joshua, and (2) the Book of Judges. Both the book of
Joshua and the book of Judges do not give us a clearer picture of what actually transpired on the settlement of the Israelites into Canaan. In an attempt to reconstruct the mode of occupation of Israel into Canaan, scholars have developed theories of occupation, defined as models (e.g., Scheffler 2001:42).

Due to space, in this study I will discuss two of these theories or models of Israel’s occupation into Canaan, namely: the peaceful settlement and the conquest model, as representative examples. This introspect is necessary because there are quite a number of other models that have been advanced by scholars as referred to in this chapter (e.g., Scheepers, Scheffler, Gottwald, Noth, Mendenhall, etc) about Israel’s entry into Canaan. Due to limited space, I am unable to discuss all models here, such as the social revolution model and the symbiotic model. As readers shall see, this background is necessary in light of my own judgment about the possibilities of Israel’s entry into Canaan.

6.1.1 Peaceful settlement model

A popular proposal among scholars sees Israel’s invasion of Palestine as peaceful (Boadt 1984:2001). It is traditionally believed that the separate groups of tribes did not all enter at once. Some had come out of Egypt with Joshua and Moses and attacked across the Jordan, others infiltrated from the south into the areas of Beer–Sheba and Hebron, still others moved into the northern areas of Galilee. A few had never left the land nor been among those in Egyptian slavery, but joined the invading tribes upon their arrival. These were moved by many motives, including religious conversion to Yahweh, forced union by the power of the invaders (Jos 9), and dissatisfaction with the Canaanite oppression of peasants and small villages.

Scheffler (2001:43) among other proponents, says that, the Israelites are, however, not primarily seen to be coming from Egypt, but some were semi–nomads, who following the changing of seasons and in search of pasture, infiltrated Palestine, occupied uninhabited areas and in course of time did not return. Instead of wandering about as nomads with their flocks from season to season, the Israelites began to stay for longer periods in particular places. Then they eventually penetrated the structure of the few power centres that were to be found in the hill country, until they became a significant element of the settled population. According to Scheffler (2000:60) there was a group of oppressed slaves from Egypt who trickled into the land (Canaan) and
probably settled in the uninhabited mountain areas (Jdg 1:19). However, Scheffler’s view is that various elements formed Israelite exodus group (the nomads, peasants, apiru, etc).

As stated by Scheffler (2001:44), Mendenhall (1962) rejected the widely held opinion that the Israelites originated from outside Canaan. He held that they had mainly developed from the apiru (Hebrews) or outlaws who associated with the Canaanite city–states. Inspired by the exodus group, they had amalgamated with the suppressed slaves from Egypt, who supplied them with an ideology motivating them to rid themselves of the oppressive yoke, laid on them by the Canaanite city–states. Local dissatisfied Canaanites joined this group and settled in the high lying areas. The centuries thereafter saw many a battle with the Canaanites as well as the Philistines, until they eventually had gained control of Palestine and established a monarchy under David.

6.1.2 The conquest model and the function of the exodus narrative

A complex process of occupation, involving both battles of annihilation and treaty arrangements with the natives, has been simplified in the biblical account of Joshua's wars. Gradually, the unity of the invaders dissolved (most scholars believe that the invading element was only part of the Hebrew settlement in Canaan; other Hebrews, long since settled in Canaan from patriarchal times, then joined the invaders' covenant league). Individual tribes made their way with more or less success against the residue of Canaanite resistance.

According to Soggin (1984:361) the account in Joshua 1–12 suggests that the land promised to the Israelites by God be conquered from the east in a rapid expedition with powerful thrusts southwards (e.g., Lachish) and northwards (e.g., Hazor). According to Joshua chapter 21:43–45:

So the Lord gave Israel the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the Lord handed all their enemies over to them. Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

The conquest of Palestine is reflected in the books of Joshua (1:14) and Judges (1:4–6). As stated by De Vaux (1961:247) the first wars in which Israel took were of conquest and the biblical tradition shows the people taking possession of the Promised Land by force of arms and with the
help of God. They then systematically subjected the Canaanite cities. In this manner they re-conquered the area which according to their genealogies (18th century BCE) had once been inhabited by their forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Scheffler 2001:43). The mentioning of iron chariots employed by the Canaanites does not only suggest that we are here dealing with the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age, but furthermore logically explains the reasons for the conquest not having actually taken a smooth course. Archaeological research does not support the notion of a whole scale conquest, which may not be ignored by any person defending the conquest model. Dever (1990:57–58) illustrates that of the 19 cities reported by the Bible to have been conquered or destroyed by the Israelites. Archaeological evidence only confirms the destruction of Bethel, Hazor and Lachish (Scheffler 2001:43). A quick reading of the stories in the Old Testament book of Joshua can give the impression that the land of Canaan became the land of Israel almost overnight, as a result of a series of spectacular battles and conquests.

Nevertheless, the success of Joshua’s armies form the core of the Old Testament story, and many scholars believe that the successful settlement of the Israelite tribes in Canaan owed more to this than to any other cause (Drane 1983:54). Some biblical scholars have tried to accept this theory on the basis of archaeological findings. However, according to Boshoff (1991:174):

Archaeology is not much more helpful, since information from those times are hard to interpret and can hardly be linked to specific events in the days of the occupation of Canaan or the age of the Judges. Excavations have actually complicated matters further, for instance by indicating that places like Jericho and Ai were reduced to ruins long before the occupation.

Joshua 10:12–14 describes the tradition among the Israelites in which humanity with the power of God, would command nature to treat Israel with compassion in catastrophic situations. Because they had always believed in a miracle God, the Israelites could convey the tradition of God who stood for them always and everywhere. So, the tradition is that the Lord, who divided the sea waters, would also make the sun stand, for Israel to take vengeance on her enemies.

In Joshua 18:3 Joshua is challenging the Israelites to take possession of “the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you.” The motif of possession of land by Israel as “promised by the Lord to Israel’s fathers as inheritance” is repeated in Joshua 21:43–45, which had to be fulfilled to the descendants (Ex 6:8). Joshua 24 is a summary of the exodus narrative and
deliverance from Egypt until the Israelites settled in Canaan.

The view of Israel being involved in battles both towards occupation and while they were settled in the land, cannot be described in terms of modern military involvement, nor should the reader view it in the absence of God’s ordination. Some scholars are also opposed to the view that Israel was actually on a war campaign to invade the land of Canaan. Some of the scholars opposed to that view are Pierre Gilbert and Ferdinand Deist. As stated by Gilbert (2001:76–87):

The purpose of confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh extends far beyond gaining a military victory over Pharaoh and the kingdom of Egypt. The significance of this conflict is primarily theological; it will reveal the true divine conqueror. Yahweh acts in order to demonstrate his absolute superiority.

According to Deist (1977:59) the exodus tradition itself stresses the fact that the people brought out from Egypt were a subdued and enslaved minority, who could do nothing for their own salvation, but to cry out to the “God of the Fathers” (Ex 3:9). As stated by Deist (1975:15) it is therefore not strange to find that the first federation of tribes brought together at Shechem was not a political unity at all, but primarily a religious community agreeing to obey but one God (Jos 24). Deist goes further to say that the liberation of the oppressed from slavery was not brought about by military intervention or a revolution of any sort, but was brought about by the mighty hand and outstretched arm of Yahweh, by tokens and wonders.

Judges 1:1–2:5 seems to suggest that Israel occupied Canaan through a gradual process. Judges 1:27–35 indicates that the newcomers failed constantly to drive the tribes they found in Canaan, where as Joshua 10 and 11, Israelites took possession of the territories through military conquest. According to Wessels (1992:176):

Judges 2:3 has something positive in mind: Yahweh refrained from driving out these nations to enable his people to learn the skills (and virtues) which are brought about by war and the experience of war (the same idea of not driving the nations out at once is also found in Exodus 23:29–30 and Deuteronomy 7:22. In both instances the reason for this action is the fear that wild animals might become a threat to the Israelites if the land is cleansed too 'quickly' of the foreign nations).

Wessels' assertions, to which I also subscribe, are that there are several contradictory reasons why Yahweh left these nations or did not drive them out of the Promised Land quickly. But,
when one reads the Book of Joshua as we shall see below, one is compelled to conclude that the earlier report by Joshua on the occupation of Jericho and other parts that support the conquest (though in contradiction with other passages as already noted above) seem to suggest the probability that Israel's occupation of Canaan was a result of military campaigns, in which God was of course the architect. By and large, it could have been a result of a combination of all other theories. Chapter six will explore further on this subject under the heading: *Hermeneutical Conclusions: Israel's Occupation of Canaan.*


According to the Biblical narrative, during the early period of Israel's settlement in Canaan, there was no one central authority. Most of the judges mentioned in the book of Judges ruled over limited areas, many of them simultaneously in different parts of the country. The deepest conflict of the time was a religious conflict. According to De Vaux (1961:92) at Shechem the twelve Israelite tribes joined in a pact which sealed their religious unity and established a certain form of national unity between them (Jos 24). The members formed one people and shared one worship, but they had no common head.

In Deuteronomy chapter 16:18–20 the Lord tells Moses to appoint judges for each of the tribes in every city God was giving to Israel, and to judge the people fairly. Verse 19 says: "Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the Lord your God is giving you".

According to Scheffler (2000:69) the Sinai tradition (God's appearance on the Mount Sinai when he made a covenant with Israel and gave them the law (Ex 1–20), played an important role in the period of the judges. Israel's judges were responsible for the upholding of this law. It was the judges that after the settlement in Canaan, Israel knew as a superior magistracy, to whom were entrusted the maintenance, superintendence, and proclamation of this law (Von Rad 1967:32). According to Soggin (1984:172) the judges were never involved in activities connected with the administration of the law.
The form of government under judges had not worked to establish total freedom in favour of Israel. As stated by Borg (2002:112) for about two centuries after the Israelites settled into the Promised Land, they lived, as a “tribal confederacy” with no centralised government. So, God raised up Samuel to unify the nation under a king. Samuel was the last of the judges. His influence extended to all the tribes. The people had united under his leadership and were able to drive back the Philistines. But, the relief was only temporary.

However, the exodus tradition played a significant role during the time of the judges. In Judges 1:35 the Israelites were once again subjected into pressed labour by the Amorites. But, Judges 2:1–5 at Bokim, the angel of the Lord reminded the Israelites about the covenant and the exodus tradition of Israelite deliverance from Egyptian bondage, which is emphasised in verse 12 where it says: “they forsook the God of their fathers, who had brought them up out of Egypt.”

In Judges chapter 4 and 5 we find that the judges, Deborah and Barak, saved Israel from the Canaanites. The Canaanites had been subdued by Joshua, but had become powerful again. With their chariots of iron, the Canaanites were grinding out the life of Israel. Judges 4:3 (coinciding with “oppression” and “crying” in Ex 3:9), elaborates Canaanite oppression, from which Israel became victors in a battle at Megiddo. In chapters 6, 7, and 8 we find Gideon as Judge, liberating Israel from her oppressors, where the exodus motif of bringing us up out of is mentioned: “Where are the wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?’” (Jdg 6:13).

According to Birch et al (1999:122) the exodus story is part of the identity of Israel known to the Philistines who faced Israel in battle (1 Sm 4:8). 1 Samuel 6:4–6 narrates the Philistines having captured the Ark of the Lord. The Philistine priests and diviners said that the plague that had hit Philistine was due to the ark of the Lord of Israel. The “plague narrative” and the “hardening of heart” were nuances which were still dominant in Israel’s own narratives and even in Israel’s neighbourhood. The phrase “Why do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did” is expressed in 1 Samuel 6:6.

Meanwhile, the Philistine menace upon the Israelites never ceased. According to Ceresko (1992:131) all that the Israelites had struggled for generations to develop was in danger of disappearing. This would mean a return to the former days of slavery in which their ancestors
had turned their backs. The only way open seemed to be through some drastic changes and realignment in Israel’s organisational structures.

The time came when the Israelites asked Samuel for a king “to rule us as other nations” (1 Sm 8:4–5). The Lord reminds Israel through Samuel how he had delivered them up out of Egyptian bondage, now Israel was forsaking their God (1 Sm 8:7–8).

Prior to anointing Saul as Israel’s first king, Samuel is facing a protest and a serious challenge from the Israelites who continuously demanded for a king: “then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and fight our battles” (1 Sm 8:20). Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the Lord at Mizpah and said to them: “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: ‘I brought you up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you’. But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your calamities and distresses. And you have said: ‘No, set a king over us’. So now present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and clans” (1 Sm 10:17–19).

The international situation was a decisive factor that caused the monarchy to come about. According to Soggin (1984:41) the biblical tradition is unanimous in affirming that in the last ten years of the second millennium BC, and the first years of the first millennium BC, a single monarchical state was formed in Palestine and the surrounding territories, modelled on the great empires of the Ancient Near East. The Israelites thought that a king would facilitate their efforts in keeping their enemies at bay. According to Ceresko (1992:131) the stories associated with the rise of Saul as king in 1 Samuel 8–12 are ambiguous as to the desirability of the institution of monarchy.

As shown in 1 Samuel 12:6–10 Samuel is not ignorant of the circulating exodus tradition, mentioning Moses and Aaron, who were appointed by God and brought Israel’s ancestors up from the land of Egypt. However, Israel usually forgot about these deliverance episodes and after they have sinned, they are subjected to their neighbouring overlords and each time cried to God for deliverance. Samuel then anointed Saul as Israel’s first king and it is under Saul that the new dispensation of the monarchy began.
8. THE FUNCTION OF THE EXODUS TRADITION DURING THE MONARCHIC PERIOD (1000–587 BCE)

Leadership under the judges did not in real sense help to quell or help Israel to defeat her perennial enemies (especially the Philistines). According to Deist (1991:112) this weakness eventfully compelled them to establish a state with a central government and permanent army. And once this happened the entire community changed drastically. As stated by Scheffler (2000:77) the period of the United Kingdom represents approximately 100 years of Israel’s history (1020–922).

As stated by Von Rad (1967:39) Israel, whose defence Yahweh had formerly reserved to himself, by raising up in the time of the war charismatic leaders with whom he personally went into battle – this Israel had now become a state, determining for itself the extent of its own territory and its internal war-potential alike.

Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, became the first king over Israel. Saul’s reign began very successfully, with convincing victories over the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Philistines and Amalekites (Scheffler 2000:78). Saul’s successes and fame rapidly began to decline due to a number of mistakes, namely: due to pride, he offered sacrifice which was the exclusive function of priests, his order of the army to abstain from food, his sentence to death of Jonathan and disobeying God. At the death of Saul at the mercy of the Philistines, another king was needed to replace him. Samuel went to a home in Bethlehem and anointed David son of Jesse who became Israel’s greatest king. David became king of Judah. When David became king of Israel, all the wars were fought in the name of the Lord. According to the exodus narrative Yahweh was the one who made kings such as David victorious in every battle (2 Sm 8:14).

After the death of David, Solomon became king of Israel at the time of its greatest material prosperity and splendour. The people were united and had peace with one another, as well as with surrounding nations. This was truly the greatest “Golden Age” for the people of Israel. “Boom” times had come. The nation dwelt in security from outside enemies and the culture of the people began to flourish. Biblical scholars believe that many portions of the Old Testament were written during this period of flowering of cultures that developed while Solomon was king (e.g, Scheffler 2001:87).
According to Soggin (1984:189) we know that the united kingdom of David and Solomon did not last long; even if the empire that Solomon left to his successor seemed powerful and splendid from the outside, in reality the state was economically on the verge of collapse, with many sectors of the population, especially in the North, oppressed and exploited. Soon after the death of Solomon the United Kingdom which had existed for two generations will have needed a leader endowed with more than usual capacities.

While David was king over all Israel, he wanted to build a house for the Lord. But, God was opposed to the idea, and sent a prophet Nathan saying: “From the time I brought the Israelites out of Egypt until today, I have not lived in a house” (2 Sm 7:6). Solomon succeeded his father David onto the throne of kingship and had built the temple of the Lord and all Israel were gathered on the day of consecrating this house to the Lord, including the ark.

According to 1 Kings 8:9 nothing was in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had put there at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant a with the Israelites when they “came out of the land of Egypt.” On that day, the glory of the Lord filled up the temple and King Solomon repeated the exodus tradition when he reminded the people how the Lord spoke to his father the same words: “since the day I brought my people Israel, out of Egypt” (1 Ki 8:16) and also mentioned in Solomon’s prayer in before the entire congregation of Israel (1 Ki 8:52–53).

In 2 Kings 2:7–8 the prophet Elijah used his mantle to strike the Jordan River which “parted to the right and to the left. Then the two of them crossed on dry ground.” The same tradition can be found in Exodus 14:21–22 where Moses had used his staff to strike the waters of the Red Sea for the Israelites to cross on dry ground. The situation deteriorated to the extent that when Solomon died the people demanded relief. As stated by Scheffler (2000:116):

Solomon’s demands of taxes imposed on smaller nations subject to him, and taxes and forced labour imposed on the inhabitants of Israel, gave rise to the discontent in the northern kingdom. After the death of Solomon, this culminated into a final schism between the northern kingdom and its Southern counterpart.

The exodus situation can be realised in the monarchical period, especially soon after Solomon’s tenure of office as king. Pharaoh figure can be anyone from among one’s own people. Solomon himself could be regarded as a Pharaoh figure. The fact that after Solomon’s death and when Rehoboam came onto the throne, the people appealed to Rehoboam for lenience in the latter’s
leadership style as opposed to his father’s cruelty and hard labour, reflects that the ruled no longer enjoyed life under Solomon’s leadership. According to Soggin (1984:41) it seems that the division of the monarchy to have been an ethnic and political one, in that it probably existed before the dissolution of the united monarchy on the death of Solomon.

According to Birch et al (1999:256) the luxurious life of the court and extensive building programs placed a heavy tax burden on the people, and many were forced into labour gangs to carry out Solomon’s projects. In fact, the division of the monarchy could be attributed to Solomon’s tenure of office. Following Solomon’s death, the prophet Ahijah predicted that Jeroboam would become king of the larger part of a future divided kingdom.


Rehoboam had now become king over Judah, while Jeroboam was king over Israel. Scheffler (2001:88) says:

> After the death of Solomon (probably in 922), his son Rehoboam inherited the throne. Immediately delegates from the tribes of northern Israel gathered in Shechem to protest against the heavy taxes which had been introduced upon them in Solomon’s time. The northern kingdom then broke away and led a separate existence as "Israel" from 922 up to 721, when Samaria fell.

In an attempt to stop people from drifting to Rehoboam’s kingship, Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom, made two golden calves for the people to worship (we have seen already a similar act in Exodus 32:1–4 where Aaron led the Israelites in worshipping a golden calf which they had moulded). Jeroboam said: “Going to Jerusalem is too difficult for you. Israel, here are your gods who brought you up out of the land of Egypt” (1 Ki 12:28). Jeroboam set up worship centres at Bethel and Dan (1 Ki 12:29–33). Jeroboam’s action stood in the exodus tradition of the golden calf (Ex 32:4). This tradition of the golden calf is also present in other situations (e.g., Hs 8:6; 10:5–6). According to Kessler (2005:881):

> For the northern kingdom, the separation from Solomonic Judah is stylised as the exodus from slavery. Solomon is the pharaoh. The forced labour that he conscripted out of Israel (1 Ki 5:13), is the Egyptian slavery. Jeroboam the liberator, who had to flee after the first unsuccessful attempt and who then came
back to deliver his people, is in the position of Moses.

Kessler further says that, the stories are filled with new historical experiences. They no longer tell about real Egypt of real pharaohs. They reflect the self-understanding of the kingdom of Israel as opposed to Judah. In reference to Jeroboam, 2 Kings 13:5 says: “The Lord provided a deliverer for Israel, and they escaped from the power of Aram. So the Israelites lived in their own home as they had before.” According to Birch et al (1999:257) God will give him the kingdom and he shall reign; God “will be with” Jerobeam and “build” him an enduring dynasty. God sees his potential, that he has the strength to resist the oppressive forces at work under Solomon and Rehoboam.

The northern kingdom of Israel was a kind of a national administration where the Law governed the nation and kings would be answerable to the people through Yahweh. If leaders failed to rule well, the people would request that they be replaced. On the other hand, in the southern kingdom of Judah, the Davidic dynasty was vivid, where leaders would be guaranteed to come from the house of David. For the southern kingdom, the Zion tradition and the Davidic tradition were their myths of origin (Kessler 2005:881).

The northern kingdom was idealising the exodus tradition much more than the southern kingdom, because the law constituted their every day political, social and economic life. When the people of the northern kingdom were exiled, they interpreted it as God punishing the nation because the kings did not obey or follow the law righteously. Hoshea was Israel’s last king. It was during his tenure of office that Israel was captured by Assyria (2 Ki 17:6). According to the tradition as contained in 2 Kings 17:7, the captivity happened because the Israelites had sinned against their God who “brought them up out of the land of Egypt from the power Pharaoh king of Egypt and because they had worshipped other gods.” According to 2 Kings 17:13–14:

Yet Yahweh warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer saying, “Yet from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.” But they would not listen, but were stubborn as their fathers had been, who did not believe in Yahweh their God.

The above quotation shows that Israel and Judah were warned against their apostasy by the prophets, and that the consequence of their disobeying Yahweh’s law through the prophets
would be disastrous, ending in deportation and captivity. According to Clements (1975:50) it was the function of the prophets, who are regarded as a recognisable group, to warn both Israel and Judah to repent and to keep the law (torah), which had itself been given to the people by prophets.

The deportation of Judah carried with it a huge blow because it then meant that the people’s expectation of the continuity of the Davidic dynasty was affected and that to accept any other leader or ruler outside the house of David was difficult for Judeans. According to Kessler (2005:881):

Lots of northern traditions (and including some texts) finally came to be part of the south after the end of the northern kingdom. Judah’s main political experience was the absolute dominance of the Assyrians. These experiences are now projected into the old exodus traditions.

Prophets played a key role in both the northern and southern kingdoms in exposing the wickedness and challenging injustice on the part of kings of the period. According to Mendenhall (1975:159) when Israel became a monarchy, and thereby political power, the social situation changed rapidly. The community now became highly stratified: there were rich and poor people, the rich taking advantage of the underprivileged, enslaving them with their debts. This situation forms the background of Deuteronomic theology (Dt 10:17–22) on the one hand and of the prophetic protest on the other (Is 1:23; 3:14; 32:7; 8:9–10), Mi 2:1; 3:3–4), (Jr 7:6–7; 2:5).

As stated by Boshoff (1991:179) the period immediately after the division of the empire gave rise to circumstances which caused the prophets to take up arms against injustice and exploitation. “Arms” in this case does not refer to weapons for military action, but symbolically refers to the nature of how the prophets vigorously condemned injustice upon the people by the kings.

According to Richards (1987:275) all Old Testament prophets – those sent to Judah as well as Israel – had a deep concern for justice. It is one of the repeated themes of the Old Testament. According to Kessler (2005:881) the exodus tradition is found in the northern kingdom prophet Hosea and in Amos who prophesied in Bethel. The keeping of the Sabbath was vivid in
Jeremiah. The Lord said to Jeremiah: “Do not bring a load out of your houses or do any work on the Sabbath, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your forefathers” (Jr 17:22).

Following the change of events as regards the people’s living standards and exploitation by Solomon’s oppressive administration, the prophet Ahijah declared that because Solomon had not walked in the way of God, the Kingdom would be torn from him. In I Kings 21, the prophet Elijah challenges King Ahab for taking Naboth’s vineyard. Verse 18, says: “Arise go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession”. As implied in Naboth’s story of the land (1 Ki 21:1–3), wealth came from the land, and the land had been shared out between families, each of whom guarded his property jealously. The fact that prophets emerged onto the scene and stood up against injustice perpetrated upon the poor and the oppressed by the kings, renders enough ground to suggest that the exodus tradition inspired people to challenge these evils on behalf of God.

According to Scheffler (2000:149) the prophet was mainly active during the last years of the Southern Kingdom, a period during which he prophesied the fall of Jerusalem if people did not apply the justice and submit willingly to the Babylonians. Although Jeremiah functioned as a prophet in the Southern Kingdom, traces of northern kingdom traditions are discernible concerning the kings. According to Strydom and Wessels (2000:90) Jeremiah often challenged the powers of his day and criticised their leadership practices, their decisions, their international relationships and reliances and the underlying ideology on which they based their kingship.

Isaiah and Amos mention the malpractice of selling people as slaves/debt slavery by name. Strydom and Wessels (2000:194) further state that Deutero–Micah declared that the people of the Northern Kingdom, especially the inhabitants of Samaria, have become so corrupt that no pious and upright people could be found in the land any more. Micah 3:2–3 observes that the rich leaders and landlord are tearing the people’s skin from them and their fresh from their bones; chop them up into pieces, like meat in a pan. Israel had sinned before Yahweh in spite of the great works of deliverance Yahweh had performed for Israel’s ancestors.

The exodus tradition functioned explicitly in Micah. Micah 6:4 says: “I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.” The closing of Micah shows the Israel pleading with God for mercy, even “reminding”
Yahweh about his covenant to Israel’s ancestors (Abraham and Jacob): “You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged an oath to our fathers in the days long ago” (Mi 7:20). In Hosea Israel is referred to as “child” or “Son.” Hosea 11:1–2 says: “When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and offering incense to idols.” According to God they betrayed their exodus experience (Hs 1–2). According to Boshoff (2000:122) the book of Isaiah is one of the comprehensive prophetical books in the Bible, next to Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The first 39 chapters are linked to the Isaiah of Jerusalem and concentrate on events preceding the Babylonian exile.

The exodus tradition functioned in Isaiah’s writings. Isaiah 10:2 explicitly mentions that widows and orphans are sold as slaves. The prophet Isaiah talks of the return of the chosen people from the Assyrian captivity in which God would deliver his people as he did for them in the same way when he delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt. Isaiah says: “O my people who live in Zion do not be afraid of the Assyrians who beat you with a rod and lift up a club against you, as Egypt did” (Is 10:24). Further, Isaiah 10:26 says: “The Lord Almighty will lash them with a whip, as when he struck down Midian at the rock of Oreb; and he will raise his rod over the waters, as he did in Egypt.” The Isaiah of Jerusalem prophesies about the Judeans living in captivity, when he said:

The Lord will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea; with a scorching wind he will sweep his hand over the Euphrates River. He will break it up into seven streams so that men can cross over in sandals. There will be a highway for the remnant of his people that is left from Assyria, as there was for Israel when they came up from Egypt (Is 11:15–16).

The captivity of Judah will soon end, says Isaiah, and they will return to their land given to Israel’s ancestor Jacob. Isaiah 14:1 says: “The Lord will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land. Aliens will join them and live in the house of Jacob.” The condition or features of the poor, orphans and widows in the majority of prophecies, were taken over from the exodus tradition. The Israelites who were released from Egyptian bondage had been subjected under similar conditions, which the Deuteronomic historian tried to address and from which background many prophets got their motivation. The victims (the majority of the population) were Israelites, but now the elites at the top were also Israelites.
The Lord, through the prophet Amos, declares judgment upon Israel for four sins: trampling on the heads of the poor; denying justice to the oppressed; and father and son using the same girl (Am 1:6–7). It is in this context that the Lord reminds Israel about the exodus tradition: “I brought you up out of Egypt, and I led you forty years in the desert to give you the land of the Amorites.” The Lord further announces his intention to punish Israel for her sins. Amos 3:1–2 says, Hear this word the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel—against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt: “You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.”

Scheffler (2001:109) further states that when Rehoboam ascended onto the throne, he made the mistake of not accommodating the grievances of the northern tribes. Trying to portray a strong image, he lost the ten tribes. According to Bright (1981:229) the ancient and original dualism existing between Israel and Judah dominated all other considerations, in a short space of time producing two second-rate states. This was clearly a case where blind “power politics” prevailed, but in the end the ultimate price was to be paid: the split of the kingdom into two, and subsequently the invasion and siege by Assyria and Babylon of the two kingdoms. The peoples of both Israel and Judah were captured and taken to exile. Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple demolished. The kingdom collapsed, leaving traces only in the memory and imagination of posterity.

10. THE FUNCTION OF THE EXODUS TRADITION DURING THE EXILIC PERIOD (586–539 BCE)

The exodus narrative has contributed in a great way to our knowledge of the proceedings for the people of the two divided kingdoms, as well as for the deportees and exiles in Babylon. In 587–586, BC Jerusalem was besieged and taken by the Babylonians. It was a culmination of a long period of military, threat, political treaties and an internal tug of war between pro–Egyptian and pro–Babylonian Israelites (Boshoff 1991:184).

On the international scene, Assyria was a major power, as important as Egypt was at some stage and later the Babylonians too (Strydom and Wessels 2000:74). The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the captivity itself had their own share of deadening effect upon the people of

This destruction marked the turning point in the Old Testament history. For six hundred years this community had enjoyed a degree of autonomy and a sense of control over its own history and future. All that came to an abrupt and brutal end with a finality that stunned and shattered this people and threatened to send them down the path of historical oblivion.

Suffering at the hands of one's own rulers was not the main problem any more. Being in exile in a foreign country was the new reality (Gous and van Heerden 2006:130). The Psalms are full of utterances that reflect the condition of the exiles in Babylon. Psalm 137:1–4 especially the last three verses of the psalm, express the anger of the exiles, beseeching God to avenge the Israelites and blessing those who will smash the children of their enemies against the rock. This was an expression of anger and frustration on the part of the captives, which is understandable. However, this cannot stand as an example of how the oppressed in the modern post-biblical period could resort to in an effort to free themselves from oppressive regimes.

Isaiah 40–55 is known as Deutero-Isaiah (or Isaiah of the exile). This was the prophet who prophesied about the situation of the Judeans during the period of the Babylonian exile. We can trace the function of the exodus during this period through Deutero-Isaiah’s utterances. Earlier on, we have seen how Isaiah 43:16–17 had made reference to the Babylonian captivity of the Israelites by drawing examples from the exodus tradition, in an attempt to recapture God’s acts of wonder in the past, involving Pharaoh and the Egyptian bondage, and that in the same way God is able to deal with Israel’s present situation of captivity under the Babylonians. The prophet mentions these phrases: “a way through the sea; a path through the mighty waters” (v 16), “which drew out the chariots and horses” (v 17). The prophet is quite informed about the exodus experiences by Israelite ancestors, because one can trace the same story in the exodus narrative (Ex 14:27–28).

The wilderness experience of the escaping Israelites is narrated in Isaiah 48:20–21. First, the prophet is urging the captives to flee from the oppression of the Babylonians and the Chaldeans (v 20). Stories of the desert journey, water gushing from the rock for people to drink are all vivid in his utterances (v 21). The hazards of the desert crossing will be overcome by the supply of pools of water and luxuriant vegetation (Is 41:18; 48:21 and 49:9). These are but nuances which can be evidenced to have been part of the exodus narrative because such details can be
traced in Exodus 17:5–6 and Numbers. 20:7–13. Analysis of Deutero–Isaiah indicates that the combination of exodus and creation is illustrated when Isaiah 51:9–10 says:

Awake, awake, put on strength, o arm of Yahweh,
Awake as in the ancient days
In the generations of old
Are you not it that has struck Rahab?
Wounded the dragon?
Are you not it that has dried up the sea?
The waters of the great deep,
Who made the sea–bed into a road for the redeemed to pass over?

According to Mann (1977:130, 253) there would be an unchaste exodus for the Judeans because Yahweh would go before them and the God of Israel would be their rear guard. Isaiah 52:12 says: “For you shall not go out in haste, and shall not go in flight, for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard” (RSV). These traditions could be motivating factors on the part of Israel to begin to have faith in their deliverance from captivity in Babylon, in the same way that Israel’s ancestors were delivered by Yahweh from Egyptian bondage.

Jeremiah gave hope to the Israel and Judah in captivity in many instances. According to Jeremiah 23:7–8:

Therefore, behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that they shall no more say: As true as Yahweh lives, who brought Israel out of Egypt, but: As true as Yahweh lives, who brought up and led the seed of the house of Israel out of the northern country.

According to the exodus tradition, the land of Canaan had been promised as inheritance to Israel’s ancestors – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This understanding had been cherished by every Israelite and the prophets such as Jeremiah captured to become part of their utterances. Jeremiah envisioned a time when the children of God (Israel and Judah), would be be restored back to their homelands from captivity. Jeremiah 30:3 says: “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess,” says that Lord. The covenant made to Israel’s ancestors, which has already explained in this chapter to have been part of the exodus tradition, and a motivating
factor for Israel’s descendants, is also epitomised by Jeremiah. According to Jeremiah 31:31–32:

The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of house and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, declares the Lord.

Jeremiah prays to the Lord in which he stratifies the exodus narrative and the reason why God allowed the disaster of the captivity upon the people of Israel and Judah. Jeremiah 32:20–23 says:

You performed miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt and continued them to this day, both in Israel and among all mankind, and have gained the renown that is still yours. You brought your people Israel out of Egypt with signs and wonders, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror. You gave them this land you sworn to give their forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey. They came in and took possession of it, but they did not obey you or follow your law; they did not do what you commanded them to do. So you brought all this disaster upon them.

In Jeremiah aspects of “the covenant made to Israel’s forefathers when I brought them out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery,” is recurrent (Jr 34:12–13; 35:15). The exodus narrative always reminded the Israelites and motivated them to stand firm in their time of need with the full knowledge that the God who delivered them from oppression in Egypt and who divided the Red Sea waters and enabled them to cross on dry land, will deliver them in their new contexts of oppression or captivity.

Most of the psalms describing Israel’s situation in exile was traditionally attributed to King David, just as the Pentateuch was attributed to Moses. Other psalms that most likely reflect the experience of the exile are: Psalms 42–44; 74; 77; 80; 85 and 126. As stated by Von Rad (1967:81) Psalms 44 and 74, in particular give us a glimpse of the national ceremonies of lamentation inaugurated by those who remained behind in the land. In contrast to the Egyptian Pharaohs who purposefully used the Israelites based in Egypt as slaves, the intention of the Babylonians was not to use the Israelites as slaves, but to prevent them from mustering a national movement that would restore Judah as an independent country (Scheffler 2001:136). But, that on its own does not imply that the Israelites in Babylon enjoyed being in the foreign land, as reflected in Psalm 137:1–4. According to Kessler (2005:881) with Deutero–Isaiah and other
texts, the exile is compared with the time in Egypt and the end of the exile is announced as a kind of new exodus.

11. THE FUNCTION OF THE EXODUS TRADITION DURING THE PERSIAN PERIOD (539–333 BCE)

The post-exilic period comprised events involving the Persian Empire. According to Scheffler (2000:168) the Babylonian domination of the Ancient Near East was a short duration. The Persians quickly established the most comprehensive Near Eastern empire that had existed until that time (Miller and Hayes 1986:437).

The freedom and return of the Jewish deportees came with the ascension and conquest of Cyrus. Cyrus’ attack on Babylon was only a few years in coming. According to Von Rad (1967:85) in 539 Cyrus, King of Persia, overthrew Babylonian Empire and, without a blow being struck, succeeded in gaining possession of the city of Babylon. According to Scheffler (2000:144) this presaged the end of the Babylonian empire and the liberation of the Judean exiles (Is 40–55). Many years of captivity in Babylon culminated into a restoration of the Jews and the chosen people returned to their homeland when Cyrus, the new Persian king had ordered a decree for the release of the Jews and their return to Judah through Zerubbabel and Ezra.

This meant that king Cyrus was welcomed as a “liberator”, the “Anointed One of God” (Is 45:1–7) typifying Moses, the liberator of the oppressed Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Not one Old Testament prophet had a bad word to say about the Persians. Under Persian Empire, the Jews continued to strive towards maintaining their religious and national identity. The Israelite returnees and the elders were led into a confession ceremony by Ezra (Ezr 10:11) and again the exodus tradition is repeated in prayer form to the Lord (Neh 9:5–25). Nehemiah 9:9 says:

And thou didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and hear their cry at the Red Sea, and dist perform signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for thou knewest that they acted violently against our fathers; and thou didst get thee a name, as it is today. And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land; and thou didst cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters (RSV).
Psalm 135:8–12 is a praise narrative in which the destruction of the first born in Egypt, people and animals, acts of wonder against Pharaoh and his officials and the giving of the land of Canaan as inheritance to his people Israel, are all part of the exodus tradition during that period. The same is recorded in Psalm 136:10–22 in a love poem, but emphasising God’s acts on behalf of Israel.

The tradition about Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage is also expressed in the context of the Babylonian exile, highlighting the fact that in the same way, the Lord would deliver his people from captivity in Babylon. Isaiah 63:12 says:

Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people – where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them, who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses’ right hand, who divided the waters before them?

The prophet Isaiah envisions the cessation of the “cry” among the (Is 65:19). The Israelites are challenged and warned of their backwardness, despite the Lord’s effort to send his prophets to whom the Israel did not listen or pay attention (v 26). The exodus tradition can also be detected in other utterances by Jeremiah, for example: on the covenant (Jr 1:3–5; 31:31–32; 34:12–14), on the return from Babylonian captivity (Jr 16:14–15; 23:7–8; 30:1–3), on Jerusalem and the temple (Jr 32:20–23). In Ezekiel 20:4–12 the bringing out of the land of Egypt is vivid, including other aspects such as: the wilderness, the statutes (the laws) and the keeping of the Sabbaths (v 12). Other references where citations of the exodus narrative were made are found in Ezekiel – on the return from captivity to Israel (Ezk 20:36–38) and on curses against Egypt (Ezk 29:1–9).

As noted earlier in this chapter, the phrases “bringing you out of” or “I brought you up out of Egypt”, “the oath I made to your ancestors”, “the land I promised to give to your forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”, and the narratives about the “law” and the “Sabbath”, form essential elements of the exodus tradition, in which God was delivering the Israelites from oppressive situations.
12. CONCLUSION

The life of the Israelites, religiously and politically, just like every human experience of life today, was full of twists and turns, ups and downs; in sum, it was full of crises. According to Gous and van Heerden (2006:11) a life crisis is something that disrupts the normal flow of events, or unexpectedly changes the stable state of affairs in the life of a person or any group of people. It appears that God does have specific plans for specific individuals or societies. Joseph’s struggles beginning with disputes with his brothers up to his prison life in Egypt was a blessing in disguise and working according to God’s design.

Ceresko (1992:307) says that the story of the Bible is, at its heart, the story of a people striving to achieve and maintain a life-giving community. It embodies the record of their belief that their God was present and active in the midst of that struggle; indeed God was revealed as one who stands with and defends them in that struggle. During a time of famine in Canaan, Joseph’s brothers went to Egypt to seek food. The story concludes with Jacob, Joseph’s father and the whole family coming to stay in Egypt where they were enslaved by Pharaoh. Although the period of slavery was a real evil, it was also the period of great triumph. In these traditions, God does not liberate without also calling human agents to the task of liberation. The Israelites were oppressed in many ways in Egypt (e.g., forced labour and genocides). Exodus 1:11 and 6:9 describe Pharaoh’s cruelty and use of slave labour for his own building projects. Exodus 1:8–22 describes how Pharaoh was committed and determined to kill all Jewish babies in order to thwart a possibility of an uprising by the increased number of the Israelites. According to De Vaux (1978:324) the oppression of the Israelites is attributed to a new king “who knew nothing about Joseph” (Ex 1:8), in contrast to the pharaoh who had welcomed Joseph and his brothers. God hears the outcry of his chosen people Israel and decided to liberate them.

As has been discussed in many instances throughout this chapter, the exodus narrative provides for phrases like “let my people”, “I brought you up out of Egypt” as well as what I would describe as the “cry” narrative which can also be detected, because God responds when he hears the crying. Noth (1960:111) gives passages of Scripture where the “I brought you up out of Egypt” or the “bringing forth out of Egypt” are common phrases in the exodus narrative found in texts such as: 2 Samuel 7:6, 23; Judges 6:13 and Deuteronomy 26:5–9.
At the height of oppression of Israelites in Egypt, God raised up Moses. Moses – reared and brought up in the household of Pharaoh – was a human agent, spared from the deadening effects of oppression and benefiting from the resources of the privileged, who identified himself with the fate of the oppressed and the exploited. Joshua had to assume leadership at the death of Moses. God used and led Joshua in the conquests of the cities and the hostile inhabitants of Canaan. Whatever theories propounded by scholars regarding Israel’s occupation of Canaan (although others have proposed the conquest model), what is significant is that the Israelites finally settled in the land promised to their ancestors by Yahweh. Israel invaded the land as an effective occupying force and seized much of the land. Various theories have been propounded about Israel’s entry into Canaan, such as the conquest or militancy amongst others. Some scholars (e.g., Ferdinand Deist) dispute military action on the part of Israel upon entering Canaan. According to Deist (1977:67) political and military action is excluded from the responsibility of the oppressed.

The Old Testament denounced the seeking of military aid when Israel was surrounded by foreign nations (e.g., Is 7:1; 20:3–6). When Israel occupied the Promised Land, it was the judges who were administering the social, political and economic affairs in the new settlement. Samuel was the last of those judges. Compared to their neighbours who had kings ruling the people, their system could not withstand their opponents in battles under the monarchy and their new setup in the *land of milk and honey*, threatened them politically. After the period of the judges, the monarchical period emerged, hence the people’s request to Samuel for a king to “rule us like other nations.” Saul was chosen as Israel’s first king. Later, David was anointed to replace Saul, who killed himself after sustaining severe wounds during Israel’s battle against the Philistines. The United Kingdom was soon divided following the death of Solomon. The Israelites are again oppressed with slave labour under Solomon. 1 Kings 7:1–12 and 9:15–19 describe Solomon using the Israelites in building shrines and houses for his many wives as well as public buildings of may types. When Solomon died this oppression forced the revolt (1 Ki 11:27) on the part of the northern kingdom, who endorsed Jeroboam as their leader. The northern kingdom of Israel became an independent entity from the southern kingdom of Judah where Rehoboam was ruler. Both Israel and Judah were besieged and destroyed by Assyria and Babylon and many were taken into exile in these countries.
The prophets of the tenth, ninth, eighth centuries, such as Amos 5:2–24; Isaiah 10:1–2; Micah 3:9–10; Hosea 4:1–2; and Jeremiah 8:21–22, to name a few, sought to address the injustices and suffering perpetrated by kings upon the people of God. In many cases, “I bought you up out of Egypt” featured quite prominently in the prophetic utterances, indicating that many prophets had cherished the exodus tradition in their various periods of prophetic work. The term exodus means “going out.” Israel has been going out ever since. Or the other hand, Israel had to go out of oppression from Egypt to a land promised to their ancestors by Yahweh. While the Jews were in exile God used the Persian king Cyrus who facilitated the return of the exiles to Judah through Jewish teachers such as Zerubbabel and Ezra, who taught the people God’s commands.

In many periods of Israel’s political, social, economic and religious life, the prophets – as contained in the biblical literature – played a major role in their utterances which helps modern readers to establish how the Israelites cherished the tracion handed down by their ancestors. As we have seen, Joshua, Samuel, the judges, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Psalms, to name a few examples, have maintained nuances such as: “I brought up out of Egypt”, “the land as promised to your fathers”, “the Law”, “the Sabbath”, etc, which have formed up a thread running through in many instances in the periods covered in this chapter for the reader’s grasp.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the function of the exodus narrative in the modern post-biblical world, featuring countries such as: Latin America, United States America and South Africa, as representative as examples. The function of the exodus narrative in colonial Rhodesia and independent Zimbabwe will be dealt with separately in chapters four and five, respectively.
Chapter Three

THE FUNCTION OF THE EXODUS NARRATIVE IN THE MODERN POST-BIBLICAL WORLD

1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I examined the function of the exodus motif in the biblical tradition itself. I made an effort to trace the function of the narrative in Israel’s own situations, with emphasis on the pre–monarchic (time of judges) period, the monarchic period, during the exilic period and during the post exilic period, respectively.

In this chapter, my discussion focuses on the function of the exodus narrative in the liberation situations of the post-biblical world. According to Gous and van Heerden (2006:149) liberation theologies come in at least three main forms, namely: Latin American theology, American theology and South Africa black theology. As the heading entails, this chapter will discuss the function of the exodus narrative in situations other than the ancient biblical world, which include the following contexts as representative examples: Latin America, the United States of America and Southern Africa (featuring South Africa). However, this does not render insignificant other contributions made in similar situations. The function of the exodus narrative in Zimbabwe shall be dealt with separately in chapter five.

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, the time in Egypt is remembered as a period of oppression through slavery by Pharaoh (Van Seters 1998:33). God saw the plight of the Israelites and was determined to free them from their oppression. God called Moses to be their leader who, under God’s direction, would guide the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex 2:24–4:17). Exodus 13:17–22, describes Moses leading the Israelites from Egypt on their way to the Promised Land. The deliverance from Egypt became the heart of Israel’s confession of faith. According to Von Rad (1971:579–588) in the deliverance from Egypt Israel saw the guarantee for all future deliverances, the absolute surety of Yahweh’s will to save, something like a warrant to which faith could appeal in times of trial (Ps 124:2).
Oppression can be viewed in terms of forces of evil affecting humanity. Forces of evil affecting and devastating humanity are numerous. These forces of evil can take various forms, such as undemocratic and unjust government, oppressive legislations, rape, murder, robbery, slave trade, corrupt state institutions, terrorism and many other crimes. Humanity has been making frantic efforts to free themselves from all such forces of evil. Therefore, in the context of commonality of oppressive circumstances the world over, the need for liberation derived from our reading of the exodus tradition becomes inevitable. Freedom is one thing that every individual deserves. According to Mandela (2005:145) to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.

The rise of Third World theologies and theologies of the poor in rich countries is a theological witness to a global liberation process of self-definition. Abraham (1982:x) asserts that the economic, political and social factors in Europe have been the root causes of the tragic drama of slavery and colonialism that took place in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The Israelites served as slaves in Egypt. Slavery and colonialism work in collaboration. Abraham (1982:viii) says that the history of slavery and colonialism must be viewed as a consequence of an intellectually, technologically, economically and even culturally superior race carrying the torch of civilisation to the “inferior” black heathen.

According to Kalilombe (1991:398) liberation theology is of practical use only in the measure in which these ordinary people practise it; otherwise it remains a merely intellectual activity indulged in by comfortable academics. The language of liberation is so deeply imbedded and woven into the tradition that it has not been difficult for the proponents of liberation theology to rediscover again this aspect of the biblical tradition. Oppressive conditions are perpetrated on human beings by fellow human beings, especially at a time when the power equation favoured those at the helm of authority.

As stated by Wilmore and Cone (1979:445) an indispensable aspect of the process of liberation is the people’s responsibility to seize control of their history so that they themselves can define their identity as a people. When people engage themselves in the process of self-examination, they also begin to reject all the stereotypes about their community created by their oppressors. Much of Africa has been under colonial rule and exploitation by the Western powers from around the 1800s. According to Colleta et al (1996: ix) Africa was among the battlefronts and
final casualties of the cold war. Wars and genocides have also devastated Africa in the post-colonial eras. Africa has not stopped shedding blood and tears as a result of these post-independence conflicts.

Caute (1970:21) says: "when you make men slaves you deprive them of half their virtue. By them, you set an example of fraud, rapine and cruelty and yet you complain that they are not honest or faithful." Unfortunately, this is basically the experience of an African which has provided the essential raw material for black protest expression. And it is this environment which provides the common take-off ground for all black dissidence regardless of where, how and when (Abraham 1982:23). As the discussion develops in this chapter, we will examine how individual scholars have contributed in their own ways, where the exodus motif was a motivating factor in addressing oppressive situations in their respective contexts. In this discussion the following names will appear: Gustavo Gutierrez (Latin America), James Cone (USA) and Allan Boesak (South Africa).

2 THE FUNCTION OF THE EXODUS NARRATIVE IN LATIN AMERICA

Although the roots of the sociopolitical dependence of Latin America were planted in the 15th and 16th centuries when Europeans colonized that part of the world, it was actually in the 1960s that liberation theology originated. When we talk of Latin American countries in this study, we are referring to countries such as, Peru, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Uruguay, to name a few. In this study, special attention will be paid to Peru and its liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez whom I will discuss last under this heading. The writings of the German, Jurgen Moltmann, especially the Theology of Hope (1967) influenced the theological thinking of many people in various parts of the world. Among these people is Gustavo Gutierrez. I shall discuss Moltmann's standpoint on the exodus in relation to his influence to Gutierrez's writings on the exodus tradition. Meanwhile, let's examine other perspectives elsewhere.

Yahweh is the God of the poor. Through Israel and the exodus tradition, Yahweh had presented himself as a God of the poor, promising their liberation (Pixley 1991:240). As stated by Gutierrez (1991:32) to conceive of history as a process of liberation of man is to consider freedom as a historical concept. As stated by Bonino (1984:105) God is clearly and unequivocally on the side of the poor. He goes on to say that theology must stop explaining the
world and start transforming it. Sobrino (1984:105) says that the poor are the authentic theological source for understanding truth and practice. Poverty is an evil. However, poverty cannot be abolished totally. But, where necessary societies should make individual and collective efforts in poverty reduction. We have to understand that people have always been hating and trying to get rid of poverty, but the phenomenon still exists. Some Westerners have ignored their calling of God to show and live love, justice, harmony and peace with other peoples of the world whose access to means of wealth and of development is limited due to prohibitive historical sociopolitical landscape. According to Tamez (1991:61):

Long ago when the Latin American poor burst on the scene of Church life in Latin America, the consciousness of a large number of people was stirred. The Bible took on a new meaning. The Bible became the simple text that speaks of loving, just, liberating God who accompanies the poor in their suffering and their struggle through human history.

What virtually all the documents so far published agree on is that the point of departure of a theology of liberation is the present historical situation of domination and dependence in which the countries of the Third World find themselves (Assmann 1978:132). As stated by Munez (1978:140) liberation theology does not consist only of critical, sociological analysis of the Latin American situation. It includes much more than a description of economic, social, and political reality. Praxis prevails over orthodoxy. Concrete orthodoxy is an expression of praxis (Munez 1978:149). According to Miranda (1978:154): “God is not known in abstract. Rather we know him in his acts of justice on behalf of the oppressed.”

It should also be understood that challenging someone on issues of justice does not imply that one hates someone. It is simply an outward and emotional self-expression against ill-treatment by someone. Miranda goes on to say that social justice is carried out by means of faith which can also be a reality of social dimensions. Without doubt, God presents himself as the defender of the oppressed, the widows, the orphans, the strangers and all the needy. Segundo (1978:191) says that theology must change its casual interpretation of the Holy Scriptures to answer the new questions that arise from the present reality.

The exodus tradition functioned in the context of the Latin American oppressive situation when the consciousness triggered by liberation theology demanded self-emancipation. The resistance and the consciousness that arose in the 1960s are represented by Israel’s cry and protest for
freedom from the Egyptian pharaoh. Latin America’s Moses would then be writers, theologians and protest movements that sought to engage the oppressor in a debate for self-identity, hence liberation theology.

Because God was on the side of the oppressed Israelites in Egypt who were liberated in the exodus, it was Latin America’s hope that the role of the theology of liberation would be to mobilize the oppressed people so that they realize their full potential to challenge the oppressive systems. Once the Christian community has committed itself to the reality of the poor and their achievement of God’s promised justice, it can only move forward. Liberation theology has to move towards that direction. Already noted by Gutierrez, the church and its leadership should challenge oppressive situations in the Latin American situation. Parishioners who read the Bible, particularly the Old Testament’s exodus narrative, cannot remain unmoved by the very nature of it being liberative. This motivation from reading the exodus tradition has proved to be the fertile ground for the emergence of theologically-sound individuals, whose works continue to influence their environments and that of others in circumstances of oppression.

Among many theological works on liberation theology – deriving from people’s reading of the exodus narrative which influenced society and even the church to reject any form of stereotypes and Western culture – I have selected to discuss Gutierrez’s views. But, first, I will discuss Moltmann’s theological thinking and his influence on Gutierrez. Space has limited my efforts to discuss other authors’ views.


In this section, in my discussion of Gutierrez’s writings, especially his Theology of Liberation (1973) I would want to highlight a few insights about Jurgen Moltmann’s influence on the Latin American author and Catholic priest. Jurgen Moltmann authored the Theology of Hope (1967).

In Theology of Hope (1967:108) Moltmann talks of God’s promises to Israel. He says that the ancient historic traditions give expression to experiences which Israel had of its God and this promises. But, if these promises reach out into that future which is still ahead of the present, then the historic narratives cannot merely narrate experiences of the past. The peculiar Israelite tradition is still dominated by the hopes and expectations kindled by Yahweh’s promises.
Moltmann (1967:109) further says that in the Hebrew and Christian view of history the past is a promise to the future. According to Moltmann (1967:36) theological concepts do not give a fixed form to reality, but they are expanded by hope anticipating future being. The history of Israel shows again and again that the promises to which Israel owes its existence prove amid all the upheavals of history to be a continuum in which Israel was able to recognise the faithfulness of God. In that sense, the promise of God in Israel’s tradition forms a linkage with God’s promise to the Christian church.

Moltmann (1967:304) speaks about the exodus church. According to Moltmann, the title “exodus–church” or the exodus community is meant to focus attention on the reality of Christianity as that of the “pilgrim people of God.” In this sense, Moltmann sees Christianity as an exodus through which people’s freedom could be realised. Moltmann speaks of the social responsibility of the church–exodus. According to Moltmann (1967:304) Christianity must continually present itself and does de facto always present itself in the weekday obedience and the worldly callings of Christians and their social needs. Moltmann (1967:313) describes it as a theology of existence, for which existence is the relation of man to himself as this emerges in the “total reflection of man himself.” Moltmann says that Christian communities and groups, too, can become a kind of Noah’s ark for men in their social estrangement (Moltmann 1967:320). The Christian church is the church of God where it is a church for the world (Moltmann 1967:327).

### 2.2 Gustavo Gutierrez and the function of the exodus narrative in Latin America

On his drawing of Moltmann’s theology, Gutierrez (1973:14) quotes Moltmann (1967:36) where the later says that theological concepts “do not limp after reality. They illuminate reality by displaying its future”. Gutierrez (1973:182) further gives Moltmann’s views of history and promise. Moltmann (1967:106) asserts:

> The reason for the overplus of promise and for the fact that it constantly overspills history lies in the inexhaustibility of the God of promise, who never exhausts himself in any historic reality but comes ‘to rest’ only in reality that wholly corresponds to him.

In that sense, God acts in response to any human experience in any history. In his book: *Theology of Liberation*, Gutierrez (1973:155) the liberation from Egypt – both a historical fact and at the same time a fertile Biblical theme – enriches this vision and is moreover its true
source. Gutierrez says that, the creative act (of God), is linked, and almost identified with, the act which freed Israel from slavery in Egypt. Creation and liberation from Egypt are but one salvific act. According to Gutierrez (1973:157) the God of the exodus is the God of history and of political liberation more than he is the God of nature. Gutierrez says that the liberation of God is political action.

Gutierrez quotes Exodus 3:10, 17; 6:6–9 and 8:18, where God says: “I will release you…I will rescue you… I will adopt you as my people…I will lead you to the land. I will give it to you for your possession.” Gutierrez makes use of the tradition in the exodus narrative and this is the common feature which we have seen throughout the Bible text, particularly the Old Testament; the “bringing out of”, hence, “God who brought you out of Egypt.” Gutierrez gives references of the Exodus 26:11–12; 29:45–46, where it speaks of the first covenant. God says: “I shall dwell in the midst of the Israelites; I shall become their God, and by dwelling among them they will know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of Egypt, I am the Lord their God.”

According to Gutierrez (1973:191) the land of Canaan was initially designated as Yahweh’s dwelling place. It was the Land promised by him, and he was not to be found outside of it. David feared exile because he did wish not to be far from Yahweh (1 Sm. 26:19–20). In Theology of Liberation (1973:294) Gutierrez says that Moses led his people out of the slavery, exploitation, and alienation of Egypt, so that they might inhabit a land where they could live with human dignity. The worship of Yahweh, says Gutierrez, and the possession of the land are both included in the same promise as contained in Exodus 16:6–8.

On the other hand, Gutierrez finds the prophetic utterances important in his view of the function of the exodus. According to him, in their rejection of poverty, the prophets, who were heirs to the Mosaic ideal, referred to the past, to the origins of the people; there they sought inspiration for the construction of a just society. To accept poverty and injustice, Gutierrez says, is to return to the conditions of servitude which existed before the liberation from Egypt. Gutierrez (1973:295) refers to this as being retrogressive.

Alienated work, instead of liberating man, enslaves him even more, say Gutierrez. And it is that when just treatment is asked for the poor, the slaves and the aliens, it is recalled that Israel also was alien and enslaved in Egypt (Ex 22:21–23; 23:9; Dt 10:19; Lv 19:34). The other reasons for
the rejection of biblical poverty have their roots here. To oppress the poor is to offend God himself. To know God is to work justice among men (Gutierrez 1973:295). There is a second line of thinking concerning poverty in the Bible. The poor person is the “client” of Yahweh; poverty is the ability to welcome God, openness to God, a willingness to be used by God, humility before God” (Gutierrez 1973:296).

However, there is a message which is drawn from the exodus narrative which Gutierrez sends across to both the societies of believing communities in Latin America as well as to readers in general. This message is rejection and abolishment of any form of injustice. People’s respective histories should propel them toward the eschatological hope that God will intervene in their specific situations of oppression. According to Gutierrez (1973:265) in Latin America to be Church today means to take up a clear position regarding both the present state of social injustice and the revolutionary process which is attempting to abolish that injustice and build a more human order.

3. THE FUNCTION OF THE EXODUS NARRATIVE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

3.1 Slavery of the Israelites in ancient Egypt: slavery of the Africans in the Americas

Genesis 37:28–36 says that Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers to the Medianite merchants and ended up in Egypt, where he performed household duties in the home of the Egyptian Portipher. When he had become a person of authority in Egypt and when famine struck Canaan (Gn 41:57), Joseph invited his father, his brothers and all other members of his household to come and settle in Egypt – where the then Egyptian Pharaoh ordered Joseph’s family to settle in the fertile land of Goshen (Gn 47:6). The oppression of the Israelites in Egypt only began later when a new Pharaoh who did not know Joseph ascended onto the throne of kingship (Ex 1:8–22). The oppression continued until the time of Moses – who was led by God to liberate the Israelites from Egyptian slavery.

The history of slavery and slave trade of the African people by the Anglo-Saxons dates back to the periods of the agonizing drama in the scramble for Africa around the 18th century, when the English trader John Hawkins, brought slaves from West Africa to England and sold them as
households servants (Abraham 1982:3). Since then the Africans were subjected to all kinds of
torture, abuse and hard labour. More and more black people from the African continent were
captured and shipped to the Americas where they were sold as slaves to merchants – the bidding
market price depended on the quality of the slave.

Like the ancient Egyptian Pharaohs’ oppression of the Israelites, the English spirit of
colonisation for its enrichment took them as far as the lands of the Americas. During the 17th
century, the English established colonies in the Caribbean and North America that became the
foundations of the British Empire. In the West Indies, the English established sugar plantations,
and in 1655 they conquered the Spanish colony of Jamaica, the first English colony taken by
force. The English established a string of colonies along the eastern seaboard of North America,
and the British white community established in these lands became the masters in every respect
and oppressed both the natives of those lands and the slaves they had bought from many parts of
the world, particularly Africans, who became known as African Americans.

Meanwhile, the British–Americans exacerbated an oppressive atmosphere through their slavery
of the African people and more often, African Americans could not resist the urge necessitated
by their involvement in the church where reading of the exodus narrative made reference to their
condition of enslavement in a foreign land, where they were continuously turned into objects of
advancement and human resources for money–spinning projects and infrastructural
development.

The impact of slavery, colonialism and racism in the oppression of black people further clarifies
the black religious experience as a designation for African–Americans, especially those who
represent the Black Church tradition in the United States. According to Grier and Cobb
(1969:122) the black person was brought to America forcibly and was completely cut off from
his past. He was robbed of language and culture. He was forbidden to be an African and never
allowed to be an American.

Black theology in America developed from the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, as a
response to experiences of racism and oppression in which “people of colour” regarded
themselves as superior to the black people; hence the blacks were marginalised in every respect.
According to Song (1979:568) the experience of the exodus does become alive and real for the
black people of United States. According to Young (1986:2) Black Theology in the United States is sharply political, condemning the institutions and attitudes that exacerbate black suffering.

Crystal (1990:702) concurs that accepting a Marxist analysis of society, liberation theology stresses the role and mission of the church to the poor and the oppressed in society of which Christ is understood as the liberator. As stated by Wilmore and Cone (1979:343) Black Theology is a political theology. Martin Luther King Jnr in Montgomery in 1955 was leading fifty thousand people in boycotting the bus service (Banana 1982:90). This protest was the result of the white community’s attitude towards the black commuters with whom they felt would not share the same seat in the public transport. Certain seats were predominantly reserved for whites. Luther stood up to challenge this racism. Roberts (1986:32) reveals an interest in uncovering the significance of the African roots of slave religion. Despite their record of life through hardship, Africans have survived by creatively adapting to African patterns.

Young (1986:26) says that until his assassination in 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr, articulated the goals and ethics of this movement (Civil Rights Movement). Drawing upon the spirituality of the black church, King was regarded by many as the Moses of his people. As stated by Hill (2005:39) Martin Luther King Jnr once said: “One has got a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.” According to Warrior (1991:292) Native American theology of liberation has a nice ring to it. The black experience in America has certainly conditioned black interpretation of the Bible. Even though influenced by oppressive psychological, social, economic and political forces, blacks have displayed a tremendous transcendent spirit that has enabled them to confront the biblical text creatively.

Bennett (1971:422) says that as the tale of sorrows of people awaiting deliverance, the black narrative has a message consistent with the biblical witness though not found in that witness. However, even though communities of faith have got their shortcomings in terms of putting into practice what both the biblical teachings on justice and black people’s experience of their history and past teach as far as justice is concerned; it does not imply that such teachings are irrelevant. There are some people who are trying to live a life of justice and they try to deliver justice for others. According to Banks (1972:87) the Evangelical recognises that the world system is in the lap of the devil, and that injustice, war, poverty, and prejudice are all parts of the system.
This is how African Americans most of whom had become Christians have interpreted the context of bondage as contained in the exodus tradition. The message has continued to motivate the African Americans in their oppressive situations. Liberation theology, particularly Black Theology, was born out of this context as a protest against the domination and oppression in North America.

Black American society had a dream that some day would come when whites in America would treat them as equals. The situation of racism and oppression has not improved significantly in America, except the fact that what we hear and volumes of publications on liberation theology seem to suggest that strides continue to be made towards addressing this anomaly. Like I have mentioned already, it should be understood that the road to freedom is a long and winding one and it has to be understood as a process. But, obviously with the publication of voluminous literature, theologically oriented individuals and institutions as well as pressure groups on the abolition of violence, slavery, racism, murder and oppression, to name but just a few topics, the situation is improving.

I cannot overemphasize that total freedom takes long to be envisioned. It may be a bit betraying to be precise and exact in terms of time frame, to talk of a complete paradigm shift to the phenomenon of oppression. The seed of revolution in the way of liberation theology will continue to portray the exodus motif in every sphere of life in America. The abolition of slave trade, for example, is a resounding success story of what could be achieved in future if pressure groups, churches and individual contributors continue to see the future (the Promised Land) and a new era, in hope and in a positive way, where the present life burdens and injustice (the bondage) perpetrated by those on positions of authority (the pharaohs) will be a thing of the past.

However, in the context of colonization, justice has to be noted in terms of acknowledging some positive developments that took place during those eras, especially as far as the church’s role is concerned. Early modern Europeans, especially Catholics gave high priority to converting people with other beliefs. The Spaniards in particular incorporated religion as a vital part of their colonial movements and they sent many missionaries to the Americas as did the Portuguese. The exodus tradition describes how Moses benefited from the house of Pharaoh, although later he realised that he needed to be of relevance to his own race, the Israelites (Ex 2:10–11; Heb 11:24–25). The suffering that one experiences within the environment of oppression cannot always be
viewed negatively. If put to good use, such experiences could be used as beneficial resources or weapons with which to dismantle the oppressor’s strongholds and at the same time exploiting opportunities to one’s advantage as well as that of the community in which one lives.

In the context of the exodus motif and motivated by the Israelite rebellion against the Egyptian rule, the Native Americans revolted against British domination. As a colony of settlement grew in population, and especially as more people of European descent were born in the colony and considered it their home, the colony formed an identity distinct from the mother country. As this happened, the mother country faced increasing resistance from the people in the colony.

The main causes of the American Revolution were economic. Colonists opposed British attempts to keep the colonies in a dependent relationship based on mercantilism. They also opposed British taxes to pay for the colonial British army in North America. The colonists faced a formidable enemy. The British government, including King George III and Parliament, was willing to pay large military and naval costs to suppress the rebellion. American colonists were able to defeat the British because they enjoyed the advantages of fighting on their home ground and because they had support from the French navy. The American Revolution left a powerful legacy of ideas, particularly the Declaration of Independence and its principle of the equality of all people. These ideas influenced other colonial resistance movements, particularly in Latin America.

The function of the exodus narrative in the United States of America is represented mainly by James Cone’s writings, although as already noted above – other theologians in their own right – played significant roles as well.

3.2 James Cone and the function of the exodus narrative in the United States of America.

In his book entitled, *For My People* (1985:8) Cone says that black Christians have always known that the God of Moses and of Jesus did not create them to be slaves or second-class citizens in North America. According to Cone (1985:10) black Christians believe that the God of Moses and of Jesus is first and foremost the God of love and of justice who is “ever present in time of trouble”. In Cone (1985:63) the freedom song “Go Down, Moses,” is a revolutionary song clamouring for freedom of the oppressed black Americans. Cone (1985:63) further says that
while black Americans from Harriet Tubman to Martin Luther King have been identified with Moses, almost all blacks in America – past and present – have identified Egypt with America. Cone further says that Pharaoh and the Egyptians are likened with slaveholders and subsequent racists and blacks with the Israelite slaves. This is expressed in the spirituals below, called “Go Down, Moses.” According to Cone (1985:64) the spirituals were as follows:

Go down, Moses,  
Way down in Egyptland,  
Tell old Pharaoh,  
"To let my people go".

When Israel was in Egyptland,  
"Let my people go",  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,  
"Let my people go".

Go down, Moses,  
Way down in Egyptland,  
Tell old Pharaoh,  
"Let my people go."

Thus saith the Lord, bold Moses said,  
"Let my people go ";  
If not I’ll smite your first-born dead.  
"Let my people."

Go down, Moses,  
Way down in Egyptland,  
Tell old Pharaoh,  
"Let my people go!"

In his book entitled: *My Soul Looks Back* (1986:47) Cone says that a moral or theological appeal based on a white definition of morality or theology will always serve as a detriment to our attainment of black freedom. Freedom is not a gift, but a responsibility and thus must be taken against the will of those who hold us in bondage. On the basis of the exodus and the idea of salvation history, Cone (1986:49) claims that God has elected the oppressed to be the chosen people.
In his book: *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1990:2) Cone says that the election of Israel is inseparable from the event of the exodus: “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now, therefore, you will obey my voice and keep up my covenant. You shall be my possession among all peoples (Ex 19:4–5). Cone says that God’s liberating acts are seen in the exodus. He further says that God is revealed as the God of the oppressed, involved in people’s specific history for God to liberate them from bondage.

It can be deduced that the exodus narrative motivated people like Cone to advocate for justice and freedom on behalf of the oppressed people of his time and of his historical period. Cone does not only make use of the exodus tradition at its primary inception as the people of God experienced it, but he further makes use of the prophets, who too were influenced by the exodus tradition. Although Cone does not make reference to specific prophets by name, he speaks of the prophets of Israel being prophets of social justice, reminding people that Yahweh is the author of justice (Cone 1990:2).

Cone’s understanding of liberation theology, among others, derived from his reading of the Bible, especially the exodus narrative. According to Cone God was not the author of the Bible, nor were its writers mere secretaries. Efforts to prove verbal inspiration of the scriptures result from the failure to see the real meaning of the biblical message: human liberation! What is important, Cone says, is whether it can serve as a weapon against oppressors. By “weapon” Cone does not refer to violence or military engagement in the modern sense of the word weapon. Cone refers to the writings and expressions of rejecting domination and oppression.

According to Cone’s view of the above quotation, God’s revelation means political emancipation, which involves destruction of the enemy. What does this mean to Cone and the readers and people of his time? It means that the entire history of the Israelites is a history of what God has done, is doing and will do in moments of oppression. In this view, it is only God who can fight a battle for his chosen people.

Cone is well acquainted with the function of the exodus tradition in Israel’s own history. He mentions the Conquest and the role of judges. Cone asks how we can speak about God’s revelation in the exodus, the Conquest of Palestine and the role of the judges of Israel without
seeing parallels in black history. What Cone means is that people need to embrace the roles of the Old Testament judges and see judges among the blacks, as it were, who would execute justice for their own black people. Cone thinks that efforts must be made to rekindle human freedom by revolting against oppression (Cone 1990:93). Cone is impressed by Moltmann’s position. According to Moltmann (1968:53) Yahweh is the God who leads his people out of the house of bondage. Thus, he is a God of freedom, the God ahead of us. One requires social, political and world–surpassing freedom from God, not against him.

In view of the exodus, Cone says we must also say that the task includes participation in the freedom of God in the liberation of God’s people (Moses was chosen by God to liberate Israel from Egyptian bondage). It is motivating to read of Cone’s instruction in which he says that in the world in which persons are oppressed, the image is human initiative in rebellion against the structures of oppression. It is humanity involved in the liberation struggle against the forces of inhumanity.

According to Cone (1990:93) through Christ blacks are able to perceive the nature of black being and destroy the forces of non–being (white racism). The transformed existence is the new sense of self–evaluation and a new determination to say no to oppressors, and mean it. This is the meaning of special revelation for Black Theology. In many other writings, Cone has maintained his argument of Black Theology emerging as a vehicle through which black emancipation can be realized.

Cone (1985:181) acknowledges the usefulness of Karl Marx’s social analysis for some Christians in the United States, where “white American churches have presented the gospel of Jesus as opium for the oppressed so that they would not challenge unjust conditions in society”. Cone (1985:187) further asserts that the struggle for justice in this world is not the ultimate goal of faith. According to Cone (1970:17) the Christian theology is a theology of liberation. Cone has consistently developed the biblical claim that God came in Christ to set the captive free. These stories provided hope for those who identified with the freed Israelites.

4. THE FUNCTION OF THE EXODUS NARRATIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Oppression is a global phenomenon and the need for righting the anomaly cannot be ignored.
The exodus tradition, which inspired the Latin Americans and Black Americans in USA, found its function in South Africa, where liberation theology or Black Theology, to be precise has now become a major topic in both the educational curriculum, on the pulpit and in public addresses. According to Bell (1986:73) throughout Africa colonial rule was established by a combination of persuasion and coercion. Various oppressive situations and abusive treatments resulting from the colonisation of Africa have necessitated the rise of liberation movements in Africa.

South Africa emerges as an example of how the exodus tradition was used both to motivate people to realise their potential in working towards freedom as well as to challenge powers that be. Liberation of the oppressed was indispensable. At the beginning of the 18th century, the Afrikaners would also view the Great Trek as a type of an “exodus” following their abduction by the British. Although my discussion will dwell much on the function of the exodus narrative particularly among the native black South Africans, I will also highlight the Afrikaners’ oppressive situation and the Great Trek in brief, before I turn on to Boesak’s theology. For me, Allan Boesak’s book, entitled: Farewell to Innocence (1981) made a remarkable contribution in elucidating the function of the exodus narrative in the South African context. I will also highlight briefly, the theological thinking of people such as: Tutu, Goba, Mofokeng, Maimela, Buthelezi, Liga, Makhathini and Mosala, among others. Last, but not least, I shall discuss Boesak’s theological thinking under a separate heading.

4.1 The Afrikaners’ Great Trek and the exodus narrative

Colonial settlers had used South Africa as the port of entry into Southern Africa. First, it was the Afrikaners – people of Dutch origin (from the Netherlands) – who migrated into Southern Africa and occupied the Southern part of South Africa, the Cape, earlier than the British. According to Fisher (1969) Afrikaners are white South Africans whose mother tongue is Afrikaans – the earlier form is “Afrikanders”. Boers were literally “farmers”, but later extended by the British to include anyone who fought the British. In the 19th century, the British appeared on the scene and subdued the Dutch and subjected them to British rule.

The British conquests of 1795 and 1806 extended the rights of British subjects to Afrikaners, even as they took away the Afrikaners' political autonomy and confirmed an economic and cultural subordination that was only partly alleviated by their dominance of South African
politics in the latter part of the twentieth century, which demographically squeezed between far more numerous Africans (and other non–white groups) and their more affluent and culturally confident English compatriots, the Afrikaners forged a language–based national identity in which die–hard defence of privilege and opposition to various forms of British domination were inextricably intertwined with fears about cultural and even physical group survival.

According to Mbeki (2006) within a few years after the discovery of diamonds in the 1860s the British imperial government embarked on a policy of expansion in southern Africa. British and colonial troops engaged in war against a number of chiefdoms and overpowered one after the other in quick succession. As stated by Fenwick and Rosenhain (1991:22) the British were the next wave of white Europeans who attempted a successful settlement of South Africa. Following the turmoil of the Napoleonic Wars of 1796–1814 which saw France threaten Holland, both the British and the Dutch feared the extension of French interests to South Africa. Fenwick and Rosenhain (1991:22) further say:

The Dutch ruler, William of Orange, agreed to British occupation of the Cape as a guarantee against French colonization in 1795. The British returned the colony in 1803, after the Treaty of Amiens, but remained there until the territory was permanently ceded to the British in 1814. They paid six million pounds for the colony.

As stated by Harrington (1972:15) the arrival of 4,000 British settlers into the Eastern Cape in 1820 and the introduction of English as the sole official language, precipitated a series of political, social and economic developments. These might be regarded as having contributed to the decision of the Trek.

Afrikaners would regard the Great Trek as a type of an “exodus.” According to Walker (1934: ix) the Trekkers were a people with little political experience, but with flair for politics. They undertook to found a State and society in the wilderness and they did. According to Ransford (1972:xi–xii) the Great Trek was an abrupt bound into the continental interior by settlers mainly of Dutch origin living in the Cape Colony at the beginning of the Victorian era. The march into the wilds was made by a few thousand men armed with muskets and Bibles, together with their women and children. According to Walker (1934: ix):
The Great Trek is the central event in the South African history. The folk who went out of the Cape Colony a hundred years ago went because their ideas and mode of life were threatened by the changing circumstances. They gained a fifty years' respite in the interior. Thereafter, the Afrikaners' mode of life was steadily broken down by new and incompatible forces but their ideas, confirmed and invigorated during those fifty years of grace, have permeated the Union of South Africa and extended their influence as far as Kenya.

According to Fisher (1969:63) the Great Trek, during which more than ten thousand men, women and children – nearly a quarter of the European population of the Cape Colony – left its borders for good, is rightly regarded today as the most significant event in the history of the Afrikaners. According to Fisher (1969:63):

- The Great Trek was not one single movement with a Moses in command. It was a series of individual enterprises though encouraged often enough by influential farmers in each district. Trekking was an infectious fever. Even some of the English who, like John and Thomas Montgomery, were married to Afrikaner girls, joined groups setting off across the pathless veld.

The Afrikaners thought that the exodus tradition functioned in their situation when they were subdued by the British. The Afrikaners had grown and developed nationalism in order to shackle themselves from oppressive British domination. Mlambo describes this growth of nationalism. According to Mlambo (1972:14) the growth of Afrikaner nationalism and the stability of the Rhodesian Government led Sir Godfrey Huggins, later Lord Malvern, to rule out any idea of a federation with South Africa. As noted above by Fisher (1969:63) the perspective of the Afrikaners was that the Great Trek of the 18th century was a kind of an exodus in which the Dutch felt they needed to escape British rule because the British had ill-treated them just as the pharaohs of ancient Egypt had held the Israelites in bondage.

This nationalism underlay the Great Trek in which Afrikaners opposed the abolition of slavery and legalized racial discrimination by the British, the irony of their becoming the twentieth century's first fighters against imperial domination in the Boer War. The Afrikaners rose to political dominance over their English rivals and non-white South Africans alike, even as they remained economically and culturally subordinate to the former. This same language-based nationalism spawned the blunders and horrors of apartheid, but it also led the Afrikaners to relinquish power peacefully when this seemed the safest route to their survival as a people.
The British "invasion" of the land founded and settled by the Afrikaners as it were, provided the take-off ground for what is commonly described as the Great Trek. From this point onwards, both the Afrikaners and the native South Africans were under the control of Britain. But, to disassociate the two groups of newcomers from oppression and apartheid, from an African's perspective, needed to be the role of a physician. It is interesting to note that even after the Great Trek as a protest revolution by the remaining Afrikaners, the Dutch found themselves in a peaceful settlement with the British and had remained on the colonial side as opposed to being an opposition revolutionary movement such as ANC. The Afrikaners, instead had their "tails up" against African resistance clamouring for self-rule.

4.2 Apartheid and native South African Nationalism

During the period of apartheid, the Afrikaners and the Britons set the foundations for the systematic oppression and exploitation of the indigenous black people of South Africa. Against this background, the liberation movements were formed such as the African National Congress (ANC). According to Fenwick and Rosenhain (1991:93) the African National Congress (ANC) had its origin in 1912. But between its formation and the election of the Nationalist Government in 1948, the ANC had made little progress in the struggle against racial discrimination led by Nelson Mandela, Pan–African Congress (PAC) and others, which pitted themselves against apartheid for more than a century. Although the ANC was established in 1912, a more militant and vigorous movement was needed to spearhead the struggle against apartheid.

According to Fenwick and Rosenhain (1991:93) it was in 1943 when the Youth League (YL), the brainchild of ANC, was formed, with two hundred members aged between twelve and forty, who hoped to promote the spirit of African nationalism. The leader then was Anton Lembede. Some of them included: William Nkomo, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, Ashyby, P. Mda and Nelson Mandela. Whether one speaks of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) or the United Democratic Front (UDF), all posit a holistic analysis against apartheid. The revolutionary movements and revived ANC pressing for change of apartheid oppressive systems began to be vibrant and resistant during the 1970s, a good example was the 1976 Soweto Student Rebellion in South Africa. According to Maimela (1989:87) that revolt forced the government of South Africa and its supporters to go back to the drawing board in order to draft a new blueprint to suppress the ensuing resistance movement in the country. Mbeki further asserts that, in the latter
half of the twentieth century a fertile ground was laid, in which the struggle for national liberation took root.

Many South African nationalists were imprisoned, assassinated, and persecuted, the list of which include, among others, Buthelezi, Oliver Tambo, and Nelson Mandela, who spent twenty-seven years in prison. South Africa’s independence from apartheid only came in 1994. According to Meredith (2008:97) in South Africa the release of Nelson Mandela from prison and the lifting of the ban on the African National Congress opened the prospect of a more democratic era there. Nelson Mandela became the first president of South Africa, but soon decided to hand over power to Thabo Mbeki. After Mandela’s departure from presidency, Thabo Mbeki was elected as President and he has been in the hot seat until 2008 and calls for his resignation from among South African citizens have mounted. On the other hand, Mandela has received world and international recognition for his policy of national reconciliation. However, a downturn of events within the camp of ANC reveals that Jacob Zuma has been elected as president of the party in Polokwane in 2007, subsequently enabling him to compete for presidency in the forthcoming polls.

Despite South Africa’s political independence from the colonial regime, the majority of people remain poor. Crime, too, involving firearms is rife in South Africa. State laws on possession of firearms and their use are being abused. At present the hard-won freedom is being compromised, and many are living in fear of the unknown: what would happen next and to whom? According to Anglin and Shaw (1979:205–206) Kaunda appreciated the fact that until South Africa, the citadel of white power in the region, was itself liberated, Zambia’s own liberation will not be guaranteed. The relevance of this statement to South Africa was the era of apartheid which was so strong that it posed a threat to the Southern African region, including Zambia which was already independent from foreign domination. Zambia got independent in 1964.

The exodus narrative has been read by many people in Africa, who could interpret it in the context of their environment, especially in cases where racism and apartheid were painstakingly experienced. Mosala insists that, any theology that is not founded on materialist economic analysis will prove “heretical and false prophecy” (Mosala 1989:133). Speaking of economic exploitation, West (1989:77) says that the first economic exploitation deals with the emergence of the capitalist mode of production. According to Goba (1989:126) the struggle against white
domination is also the center of our concern in theological reflection. As we struggle to reassert our God–given dignity we shall continue to fight the monster of racism.

Goba (1989:127) asserted that: “we are also becoming aware as an oppressed people that (land) must be given very high priority in our theology especially because land to us black Africans has a sacred character.” However, it cannot be overemphasized that the longer the South African authorities take to address the fragile and delicate topic of land, the more difficult it may become to reverse the consequences that would have occurred following disputes associated with it. Available government land could also be used to resettle and provide land to the landless people in South Africa.

Mofokeng talks of the black cultural trend’s concern with the land’s sacredness. Mofokeng (1989:137) advocates liberation of the land from white control to achieve black people’s humanity. Planning and logistics must be put in place with the aim of addressing and resolving the sensitive issue of land in South Africa, sooner than later.

According to Green (2004) the church must take the lead in both promoting the positive effects of globalization and responding to the negative ones. Green further says that Ibrahim Gambari was under-secretary–general and special adviser on Africa for the United Nations. In his remarks to the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry on 9 October 2004, Gambari addressed globalization and the role of a global church. A Nigerian, he played an important role in South Africa’s transition from apartheid to democracy.

Black Africans in South Africa went through turbulent periods in the history of their country since the invasion by the colonialists. Because many people accepted Christianity and the Bible, they embraced the liberation motif drawn from the exodus narrative. The contribution of the church during the apartheid era in South Africa can neither be ignored nor overemphasized. The rise of black consciousness resulting from a new dispensation of liberation spirit hovering over Africa for self–emancipation was a grand environment around which South Africa’s freedom was anchored and later achieved. Mosala (1989:132) advocates for a liberation theology which deals with the oppressive apartheid economic system in South Africa. The exploitative South African economy comprises an increased accumulation of wealth for the benefit of the white few in proportion to the increased poverty of the majority of the black population. Tutu (1989:138)
attacks the assault on African indigenous values. The elevation of missionary and colonial values simultaneously brought a denigration of “things African, and by definition, therefore, things black”. Tutu (1989:139) says:

Black was the colour of the devil, white the colour of angels, of Jesus Christ, and perhaps even of God. The black races were devoid of light, wallowing in the gloomy darkness of ignorance and superstition. If you started from this premise, then your missionary policy logically was mapped out for you.

Therefore, South Africans, especially the African natives could not remain silent at the height of humiliating racism and oppression, hence the liberation struggle which brought majority rule in 1994. The exodus gave Africans in South Africa the motivation and determination to fight the tempo of colonial and apartheid aggression. However, there was a shift in politics in South Africa against which the settler–ruling party, then, The National Party (NP) – purely dominated by whites, cannot be ignored for the equation to balance. President De Klerk, who had become the last white president should be credited for facilitating self-rule to the black people in South Africa. According to Boesak (1977:13–16) Black Theology is a passionate call to freedom, and although it directs its voice to the black people, it nonetheless hopes that white people will hear and be saved. Blacks in South Africa have been and continue to be victims of racial oppression. The implementation of the liberation motif contained in the exodus tradition will only have a meaning and serve its purpose in the practical sense, when all people of South Africa, regardless of colour or creed, would treat each other as equals.

On the other hand, some theologians made some attempts, to represent the church on matters of politics and economy, in the context of apartheid colonial system in South Africa. These were Desmond Tutu, Lediga, Buthelezi, Makhathini and Brown, to name but a few. Each of these shall be discussed and referred to below. Although these people are believed to have contributed towards the liberation of the Africans in various oppressive circumstances in South Africa, I categorically register my despondency on the fact that some of their contributions, in many respects, lacked, not only the clarity in their discourses, but also provide the impression that they did not make an impact as expected. As we shall see below, Boesak, for me, made a resounding contribution by his use of the exodus narrative in his theological writings. But, first, let me support my argument.
Firstly, my argument is not only on the fact that some of these theologians did not address the suffering and oppression perpetrated by the colonial regime upon society, but also that, in my view, they looked at these issues in relation to people within the church circles, neglecting the fact that the church belongs to a larger society, which, alongside the church, suffered from the apartheid system, too. My point shall be clear when I discuss their views below as representative examples.

Secondly, if these aspects were dealt with as I feel, then the “how” aspect should have been addressed, in which case some options would be provided as to how such liberation initiatives could bring about liberation to the oppressed masses in South Africa. I am left without a choice but to conclude that more elaborate pronouncements on liberation motives within the South African context could come through other vessels such as the politicians or other revolutionary-minded Christians. Perhaps, this was so because of the context and the era in which these contributions were made (in 1972) during which period the tide of apartheid was at its peak. To substantiate my point, I have drawn a few examples of contributors from the book entitled Relevant Theology for Africa (1973).

Firstly, Brown (1973:79) talks of the necessity for a Black South African Church History. Of particular interest are details on page 91, where at least, Brown explains the oppression perpetrated by the British upon the Afrikaners and the latter’s response in the Great Trek. This discussion carries with it the fundamental aspect of doing theology, that is, self-expression and self-identity. The denial of Egyptian oppression on the part of the Israelites is the Dutch’s denial of the oppressive British rule in South Africa. Brown’s deliberations have at least drawn readers closer to appreciating the function of the exodus narrative and it’s parallel to the South African political context during the apartheid era.

In his Black Theology, Makhathini (1973:10) speaks of black person’s strong feeling against white domination. Like Israel, who were liberated after they cried to their God, and the Lord responding by rising up Moses, readers need to be motivated by a pragmatic piece of information pertaining the situation in question. Makhathini’s hard feeling towards the white man does not seclude his hard feeling towards a fellow black man who would behave the same way as the white man, and should not be allowed to spill over into this era where everyone is trying to find means to bring peace – not only in South Africa – but in the entire African continent as well as
the world over. This hard feeling towards someone on the basis of skin pigmentation does not only create deep hatred towards certain individuals, but also cuts open healing wounds, because past grudges and previous political experiences, carries with them retrogressive tendencies which would derail development and progress which are vital for nation-building.

In *African Theology and Black Theology*, Buthelezi (1973:18) says that Black Theology is a rallying cry for the consolidation of black power forces calculated to the neutrality, not to destroy, the power which the white man has accumulated around himself. In my view, this neutrality has come, but the majority of South Africans still remain poor, while most white people cannot be described as being "poor."

Another view is that given by Tutu (1973:40) in *Some African Insights and the Old Testament*. Here, I see the Bishop really addressing issues contained in the exodus tradition. Most Africans are liberated today precisely because of the missionary efforts in providing education for the black people. Above that, the missionary liberation initiatives included providing food and building of hospitals and procurement of medicines for sick people. To this Tutu pays tribute, in which he emotionally expresses his gratitude.

Lediga (1973:26) talks of the God of a white man who is sectarian, selfish, and allows injustice perpetrated by a white man upon the black man. Lediga is a hardliner, but at least he elaborates on the exodus narrative from the burning bush to the sacrificial blood of the goats to ward off the scourge of death. The implication in Lediga's theology is that God therefore, should not be part of the Africans and is advocating for a God who understands the Africans and their way of life. That is African Theology and that is the exodus motif, where one denies the regime which controls him and aspires for another life “beyond the river.” Topping the list among these theologians of liberation, in relation to the exodus narrative is Allan Boesak, whose views are discussed below.

### 4.3 Allan Boesak and the function of the exodus narrative in South Africa

In his book, *Farewell to Innocence*, Boesak (1981:17) says Yahweh’s greatest act of liberation forms the content of life and faith, the history of confession of Israel. As a liberator, Yahweh has revealed himself to Moses and Israel, and by this name, he wants to be evoked for all generations
to come (Ex 3:15). Boesak draws his motivation from Exodus 3:7, 8: "I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave drivers. Yes, I am well aware to their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians."

According to Boesak, the theme of liberation can be traced in Genesis 15:13–15, which says:

Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know of a surety your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and they will be oppressed for four hundred years; but I will bring judgment on the nation which they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.

Boesak says that the liberation motif is also evident in preaching of the Old Testament prophets. According to Boesak (1981:18) the book of Daniel also shows the liberation motif in exodus. The "bringing out" or the "I brought you up out of Egypt", is also reflected in the book of Daniel. Boesak quotes Daniel 9:15, which says: "Lord our God, who, by your mighty hand, brought us out of Egypt."

The exodus was a liberation movement in which the people of Israel were moving with God away from meaninglessness and alienation, away from uncertainty and misery, from pain and humiliation, toward service of the living God. If the exodus tradition is a liberation movement as Boesak puts it, then in all liberation movements, God is involved. As we have read in chapter two of my discussion on the topic of the function of the exodus in Israel’s own history, the judges, the monarchy, and the exile, Boesak is tracing the function of the exodus even through the writings of the prophets and the Psalms. Boesak (1981:18) says that time and again, the exodus–event is reiterated in the Psalms; it functions as the legitimisation for the proclamation of social justice and the actualisation of the exodus–event is doubtless of the prime importance in the proclamation of the prophets.

Deuteronomy forms part of Boesak’s understanding of the function of the exodus tradition. Boesak quotes Deuteronomy 7:7, where it says:

If Yahweh sets his heart on you and chose you, it was not because you outnumbered other people. It was for love of you and to keep the oath he swore to your fathers that Yahweh brought you out with his mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the power of the Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.
But, what does all this mean to Boesak and the people to whom he wrote his book (his audience)? It means inspiration on the part of the people and the readers that the exodus narrative could typically address oppressive situations in the South African context. According to Boesak (1981:19) Black Theology, taking its clue from this biblical message, refuses to let go of the truth that one cannot speak about God’s love without also speaking of his righteousness, his justice, which become concrete in relation to human beings and the relations amongst themselves.

Boesak says that Yahweh comes openly to the aid of his downtrodden people for all the world to see and to know that he lives with and for his people, but he is the liberator of the oppressed and the One that uprightly defends the poorest, who saves the children of those in need and crushes that oppresses (Ps 72).

Boesak quotes Exodus 19:4, 5 where it says: “You have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.” Boesak does not mince his words when he addresses both oppressors and the oppressed. According to Boesak, Yahweh demands justice not only from the Pharaoh who oppressed Israel, but also from the rich and the powerful within Israel who will not give justice to the poor.

By way of a conclusion, in Farewell to Innocence the “bringing out” feature which is common in the exodus narrative is vivid. Boesak quotes Exodus 19:4; 20:1 and Hosea 1:1 all of which make mention clearly of God who “brought you up out of Egypt.”

All these views affirm the context out which Black Theology arose. According to Boesak, every earlier attempt as well as the new consciousness and self-affirmation, whose purpose is the liberation of blacks, must be interpreted by Black Theology as the work of God. Black Theology rejects every understanding of God which does not include God’s full and unreserved identification with the purpose of black people. According to Boesak, in his quotation of Cone (1990:52) Black Theology is a theology of liberation because it is a theology which arises from identification with the oppressed. It believes that the liberation of black people is God’s liberation. Liberation, therefore, is liberation from white domination, making blacks free to define themselves and their own world.
Boesak on his own cannot be described as having achieved the liberation of the South African people single-handedly, politically, religiously or economically. Whatever achievement which has been underscored and realised by the South African citizens, it has been actually a result of corporate and collective efforts by many people who have played a role towards the freedom of the oppressed in South Africa. South Africa’s independence from apartheid and colonial rule should not be described in terms of a won armed struggle, but more so in terms of peace talks by reaching a compromise, not overlooking the crucial role played by the “oppressor government”, particularly during the tenure of office of President De Klerk, who willingly handed over power to Nelson Mandela, representing the black majority. It is correct to surmise that Boesak made a remarkable achievement through his theological writings as has been noted above, but names such as Tutu, Buthelezi, Lediga, Makhathin, Mandela, De Klerk, Brown, to name a few feature prominently towards the achievement of independence and freedom, as well as the abolition of apartheid in South Africa.

4.4 South Africa and the future

Although South Africa has been liberated politically, the majority of people still remain extremely poor. According to West (1991:129):

Inasmuch as the generality of human experience is that of suffering, wretchedness, sin, and oppression, it is not difficult to recognise that the most adequate “ownership” of the Bible, the most adequate “pertinence” for rereading the kerygma of the Bible, is with the poor.

South Africa must make strides towards generating employment for its people so that they may have an income, the bulk of whom are unemployed. Economic failure of any country will exacerbate unemployment, price increases and in the process creating an environment of thuggery and criminality. According to Rugwiji (2008a:9) when unemployment escalates, crime increases because people have no income to survive on. The recent xenophobic attacks on foreigners were a summation of reaction and frustration on the part of the South African citizens disappointed by an economy which does not rise to growth levels to create jobs, forcing nationals to compete for limited job opportunities with foreigners.

South Africa can never be truly free as long as crime, murder, racism, xenophobia and poverty remain problematic phenomena in the land. Murder cases are on the increase. About eighteen
thousand people are murdered every year. This terrifying phenomenon of murder is making life
counterproductive and profitably without fear of threats of death resulting from gunshot. Most murder crimes in South Africa have been committed for mere small items such as a cell phone or a computer, or other minute items. This is a very serious crisis, which paints an ugly and gloomy picture of South Africa’s security system, in view of the first ever Soccer World Cup to be held in the African continent in 2010, hosted by South Africa. Maybe the South African government does not fully realise and perhaps is unaware of the impact of violence and the high level of criminality and their negative effect on trade and on the economy as whole. These past ugly facets of behaviour on both stakeholders – the public and government – should be a burden weighing heavily on every South African’s back which they need to work hard to change the past for a better tomorrow for both the present generation as well as for the one to come. According to Botha (2008:10) countries build, grow and develop their future on lessons learned in the past and South Africa is no exception.

In fact, life would be meaningless and liberation would incomplete if the present generation does not have an objective and the objective of the present generation is to live for others to come. Liberation of South Africa can only be described as having been achieved if poverty, unemployment and crime are combated with the seriousness and urgency they deserve.

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter, as a whole, was an attempt to examine the function of the exodus tradition in the modern post-biblical world. According to the exodus narrative, the Israelites served as slaves in Egypt. Young (1977:62) asserts that from this bondage no human deliverer could set them free, but only God. With reference to the above assertion by Young, I hasten to say that human beings should make themselves available and take part in the programme of liberation. Oppression can be viewed in terms of forces of evil affecting humanity. As noted earlier on, forces of evil can take various forms, such as undemocratic and unjust government, oppressive legislations, rape, murder, robbery, slavery and slave trade, corrupt state organizations, corrupt army and police, terrorism, and many others.
The need for the application of the liberation motif in the exodus narrative as well as of the Gospel for the Christians, a social action is required. In many oppressive situations, for example, African Americans in USA, Latin Americans, and Africans, have received their fair share of the function of the exodus narrative in their own respects. Although one cannot be absolute to talk about total independence and freedom from oppressive circumstances, the fact that liberation theology and other protest movements have emerged, explains that the exodus motif cannot be taken for granted. All of us have got a responsibility to strive to lift society toward God's ideal. According to Scheffler (1992:220) Deut–Isaiah communicates the message that:

"God is Creator of Israel and the whole earth... God is in control of creation, and if he has the power to create and sustain everything, he certainly also has the power to save Israel, from her afflictions. This salvation is itself an act of creation (=creation redemption)...As far as Israel herself is concerned, the Israelites should realise that they are instruments in God's hands in the process by which he alleviates suffering in this world."

In the USA, Latin America, and South Africa, many people have been advocating for liberation of the black people and challenging the government policies through their writings. As we have seen, examples of prominent proponents of liberation theology surfaced, such as: Gustavo Gutierrez (in Peru), James Cone (in USA), and Allan Boesak (in South Africa); these have just been discussed as representative contributions. Many others have contributed a great deal in dealing with oppressive situations in their own respective contexts. Burns (1987:17) says that the wilderness is a wild territory where survival requires that travellers have a sense of direction. The wilderness experience was a trying and difficulty time for the Israelites. Talking of South Africa, the "wilderness" of economic upheavals and poverty which people are wading through has a negative and unpleasant impact, which people, individually or collectively, must deal with. According to Achebe (2005:25): "If we want to climb out of the hole we are in, it is a job for all the people". Everyone is accountable when society suffers.

In this chapter, I have discussed the function of the exodus narrative in the post–biblical world. The purpose of the chapter was to extricate how the exodus tradition has functioned in the modern post–biblical contexts other than the ancient biblical era. In the next chapter, namely chapter four, I shall be discussing the function of the exodus tradition during the colonial period in Rhodesia, in which issues of oppression, racism and discrimination will be examined in light of the exodus narrative.
Chapter Four

THE FUNCTION OF THE EXODUS NARRATIVE DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD IN RHODESIA (1890–1979)

1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, namely chapter three, I looked at the function of the exodus tradition in the post–biblical world, with emphasis on the exodus motif in contexts such as: Latin America, USA and South Africa.

In this chapter, I am examining the function of the exodus tradition during the colonial period in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Examining the function of the exodus narrative in this chapter on Rhodesia is necessary because it forms the background from which Zimbabwe was born (Zimbabwe was formally called Rhodesia). Zimbabwe got independence from Rhodesia in 1980. Discussion about the colonial situation in Rhodesia is on the agenda, highlighting how Africans were oppressed, the emergence of the liberation movements, as well as the role of the missionary church during that period (Snyder 1962:211).

Among the theologians who contributed in writing against the imperial domination and resistance, I will discuss the views of Rev Canaan Banana, the Rhodesia Catholic Bishops’ Conference and Bishop Abel Muzorewa because of their use of the exodus narrative. Works by Bishop Skelton, Rev Ndabaningi Sithole and others, will be discussed even though these do not make a direct quotation or use of the exodus tradition. I will also give my own view of the function of the exodus narrative in colonial Rhodesia, followed by a conclusion.

In some instances, readers will notice that the exodus narrative may not have been explicitly used in some respective encounters with oppressive situations during the colonial period to which the discussion refers. Where no mention has been made about the function of the exodus tradition, in that scenario, the motif has not been used. However, my own assessment will help to highlight on the theme which permeates through all human endeavours in an attempt to redeem themselves from oppressive situations. In Exodus chapter 3:6–11 we read:
I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob...I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey....And now the cry of the Israelites have reached me and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So, I am leading you to go to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.

In the exodus tradition, there is a leaving in order to receive what is promised. The people of Israel were singled out under a divine providence, not only to present themselves to the rest of the world as the nation through which God’s redeeming love would be mediated, but also to be a symbol of how God would also deal redemptively with other nations (Verstraelen 1998:89). This view is supported by the biblical text found in (Gn 12:3) where God says to Abraham, “...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you,” and Amos 9:7 where references of the Philistines from Caphor and Arameans from Kir, are made.

2. THE BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COLONISATION OF RHODESIA

Pharaoh was the oppressor of the Israelites in Egypt. According to Setel (1992:30) scholars identify the Egypt of the exodus narrative as an empire. The colonisation of Rhodesia by the West is viewed with varying opinions. It must be noted that not everything was bad during the colonial period. There were both advantages (gains) and disadvantages (losses) associated with colonialism. Note that these gains and losses shall be discussed in due course as the discussion develops so that critical views and hermeneutical analysis about the behaviours of some of the characters in this thesis are balanced.

To some, David Livingstone was linked with earlier imperialism, although this fact cannot be directly substantiated, save alone a few fragments of literature about his involvement. One may not need to doubt David Livingstone’s mission in Africa. Livingstone’s intentions might have been purely to propagate the Christian message in Africa, in which according to him and others, Jesus Christ had not been preached and the Christian Church had not been established. Hence the description of this part of Africa as being a “Dark Continent.” Cecil John Rhodes’ involvement in the colonisation of Southern Africa in general and Rhodesia in particular is clear. He needed to subdue the Africans and their attachment to land. This was evidenced by what Rhodes said about his aims. According to Holmes (1993:15) in a letter addressed to an influential colonial
figure, Rhodes wrote:

My objectives, I may state, have something more than what meets the eye. They are not merely exploratory, for I go with the intention of benefiting both the African and my own countryman...I tell to none but such as you in whom I have confidence.

After Rhodes, an influx of white foreigners continued to arrive until much of Sub-Saharan Africa, including Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) was occupied. As stated by Todd (1982:17) on 12 September 1890, the Column (the regiment or team of colonizers who were the first pioneers to arrive in Rhodesia) reached Salisbury (now Harare) unmolested, hoisted the Union Jack, dispersed and began the scramble for gold. Towering over those pioneers who came to this Southern African country among them all stands Cecil John Rhodes.

According to Todd (1967:16) Rhodes was urged on by the vision of the Union Jack fluttering over the entire African continent, ruthlessly crushing any individual or people who threatened the realisation of his dreams and leaving a legacy of questionable desires and dark deeds to brood over this land. According to Todd, the success of Rhodes cost Lobengula his land and his life. One of the last despairing messages from the King to the Amandebele nation was a telling indictment of the pioneers. According to Todd (1967:16) Lobengula said:

Matebele! The white men will never cease following us while we have gold in our possession, for gold is what the white men prize above all things. Collect now all my gold...and carry it to the white men. Tell them they have beaten my regiments, killed my people, burnt my kraals, captured my cattle, and that I may want peace.

By definition, colonialism is the extension of a nation’s sovereignty over territory beyond its borders by the establishment of either settler colonies or administrative dependencies in which indigenous populations are directly ruled or displaced or would in turn be construed as “modern slavery” (Mlambo 1972:1). Colonialism is a contact of peoples (Maunier 1949:1–5). In some cases, there seemed to be a general feeling that there was need for Africa to be colonized otherwise civilization would not have been established as we have it in modern day Africa. Blaut seems to develop this idea. According to Blaut (1993:1–43) those to control distant and inhabited lands should be well-deserving above their victims. Economic exploits and gains resulting from colonisation of Africa are exacerbating, the bulk of which have been used for the construction
and building of empires overseas. As stated by Abraham (1982:10) economic, political and social factors in Europe, more so the economic factor is the basic motivating force to imperialism on the part of most of those who colonised Africa. According to Gailey (1972:197):

The basic impetus, which propelled European powers into Africa, had been economic. The economic reasons for any European power’s territorial expansion in a given area had been either to dominate assured markets or mineral wealth, or to be in a position to control future discoveries.

As stated by Bell (1986:73) throughout Africa, colonial rule was established by a combination of persuasion and coercion. If one thinks that criminals ought to make some genuine financial restitution to the victims of their crimes, why would the whites not think of repaying for illegally seizing land from the Africans and using it for over a century? The Bible says that: “If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.” (Ex 22:1–2) (NIV). Although the above text is referring to cattle and sheep, the underlying fact is that one must pay back what he would have taken, forcibly or otherwise. Africans who had been expropriated of their land and cattle during colonialism in Rhodesia have not demanded repayment or compensation from their colonisers.

2.1 The establishment of colonial rule in Rhodesia

According to Gale (1950:11–12) European missionaries, traders, hunters and adventurers had traversed Rhodesia long before the occupation of the country by the British South African Company (BSAC), but had not – as a rule – established permanent residency in the country. As stated by Mlambo (2002:1):

The first large group of white immigrants who were to provide the foundations of the subsequent white settler community comprised the seven hundred or so members of the Pioneer Column who entered the country from South Africa in 1890 at the behest of Cecil Rhodes.

Makunike (1998:1) says that Cecil John Rhodes seized the land from the Africans and named it after himself “Rhodesia.” Because Cecil John Rhodes was a Briton and he had migrated to this part of Africa under the British ticket, subsequently Rhodesia became a British colony. As explained already above, the term “land grabbing” on the part of the whites from the blacks could be an appropriate description, because people have also experienced land grabbing on the part of the blacks from the whites in the context of independent Zimbabwe, to which we shall
refer later on in this study.

The conquering motif as well as the economic agenda which the colonisers had calculated on their arrival in Rhodesia from Europe cannot be overemphasized. Campbell (2003:45) states that the establishment of Rhodesia was conceived in blood when the military conquest of the indigenous people by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) laid the foundations of a society based on the settler form of colonialism. According to Mlambo (1972:2):

In 1893, after the Anglo-Matebele War, the British South African Company annexed Matabeleland. To appease humanitarians at home, the Anglo-Matebele War was claimed to be a crusade designed to end the “slavery” imposed on Mashonaland by the Ndebele. The War, however, had motives other than humanitarian. After six years of the Company rule in the country, both Shona and Ndebele revolted against white rule. Many died, black and white.

By 1893, the Ndebele kingdom was gone forever as Lobengula fled to the North. According to Ranger (1967) the claim by the Company that their 1893 war was meant to save the Shona from the Ndebele was soon proved false because the revolt was co-ordinated by both Shona and Ndebele leaders, and resistance to the Company was more bloody in Mashonaland than in Matebeleland. Hence, colonial rule established itself through violence, which – as shall be noted as the discussion develops – was responded to with the “language of violence” through the armed struggle by Africans in Rhodesia.

2.2 The Moffat Treaty – 11 February 1888.

According to Moffat (1921) Reverend John Smith Moffat (1835–1918) was a British missionary and imperial agent in southern Africa, the son of missionary Robert Moffat and brother-in-law of missionary explorer David Livingstone. According to John Smith Moffat (1886:5) Robert Moffat was born in Scotland in 1795 and became a gardener before taking up the call to missions. Like his more famous father, John Moffat was a Congregationalist minister affiliated with the London Missionary Society (LMS) but he became involved in British colonial expansion particularly in Matabeleland, later part of Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe.

According to Blake (1977:43) on 11 February 1888 in the company of a priest named Rev C D Helm, Moffat obtained Lobengula’s signature to what has come be known as the Moffat Treaty.
By the first agreement, negotiated by John Smith Moffat (son of Robert Moffat) and signed in February, 1888, Lobengula agreed that "peace and unity should reign between Britons and Matabeles" and that he could not "enter into any correspondence or treaty with any foreign state or sell or cede any part of his dominions without the previous sanction of Her Majesty's High Commissioner for South Africa".

In Rhodesia and in independent Zimbabwe, the land issue has conceived a multiplicity of indefinable problems. Ordinances concerning the land were passed. Ordinances allowed for inequitable distribution of the land that provided Rhodesia's large population of farmers with sustenance. Under these ordinances, six thousand whites seized the best half of the land while the worst half was left to the six hundred thousand black peasant farmers (Chung 1989:211). During the colonial rule that extended from 1890 to 1979, the white minority dominated and oppressed the native population and divested them of their land.

Foreign oppression was not the only problem. Soon oppression and exploitation arose from within Israeliite community. As most of the time in human history the rich and the powerful were inclined to abuse their leverage in the pursuit of self-interest. The story of King Ahab and Naboth's vineyard in 1 King 21, is vivid illustration of what kind of atrocity could be committed by people in high places in the name of God.

The land issue is central in the exodus narrative. According to Dube (2000:61) the Exodus' very title means going out; hence "let my people go," which appears in the first fifteen chapters of Exodus clearly underlines it as the main theme. As stated by Dube (2000:61) the intense repetition of these phrases and sentences undoubtedly underlines that travelling is central to the book of exodus. The major question, however, is how does Exodus justify the command to travel out of Egypt to Canaan, an inhabited land? The land question is at stake here.

Africans were chased off their fertile land and pushed to areas where rainfall patterns were erratic. Even though it could be argued by some that white commercial farmers in that scenario, boosted the economy with agriculture and provided employment for farm workers, the act itself in the first place was unjust. As stated by Dube (2000:60) the book of Exodus attributes the enslavement of the Israelites to their threatening population growth, resulting in insecurity over land control (Ex 1:7–8). There is a general agreement among most people who have written
about the Rhodesian society that it was organised on the basis that defended white interests. Vast stretches of the best land, mineral concessions, ownership of the industry that had grown up in the last fifty years, freehold rights in the urban areas, professional, managerial and skilled jobs, the advantages of sound education, were all preserved predominantly, some extensively, for whites (Cliffe 1981:9–10). According to Lamont (1959:8):

History proves with relentless uniformity that land hunger has always been the most effective motivating force in nationalist movements for independence, and there is no reason to suspect that its aptitude has changed or has been forgotten today.

According to Magaramombe (2001:16) Zimbabwe’s colonisation in the 1880s created the conditions that still influenced the pattern of income and wealth distribution in the country. A settler minority took control of the country’s resources of wealth, in particular land and associated mineral resources. Africans provided cheap labour to the mines and farms, and as house servants. Also, the creation of native reserves in 1898 gave birth to the dual agrarian structures that exist today. Magaramombe further asserts that, the Land Apportionment Act of 1931, which divided the country into white land and black and native land, further consolidated the colonial legacy. On the other hand, Gundani talks of inequality in land ownership. According to Gundani (2003:469) the colonial land policy was characterised by gross inequality in terms of access and ownership of land.

2.3 The Rudd Concession – 13 October 1888.

Rudd was a business associate of Cecil John Rhodes and he obtained the concession as his agent. According to Todd (1967:17):

Three men, Rudd, Maguire and Thompson negotiated a concession from Lobengula, King of the Amandebele. They were colleagues of Rhodes, although Lobengula did not realise the significance of this, and the document known as the Rudd Concession, was a cornerstone of the edifice Rhodes was to fashion out of a country. The concession, signed later, repudiated by Lobengula, was of the greatest importance.

The Rudd Concession was an agreement between Lobengula and Rudd in search for gold, which gave the later the mining claims. The Rudd Concession was a written mining concession or agreement that Charles Rudd secured from Lobengula, King of Matabeleland on 13th October
1888. According to Todd the Rudd Concession signed by Lobengula read as follows:

I, Lo Bengula, King of Matebeleland and Mashonaland and other adjoining territories, with the consent of my Council of Indunas, do hereby grant and assign…complete and exclusive charge over all metals and minerals situated and contained in my kingdoms….and whereas I have been much molested of late by divers persons seeking to obtain concessions….I do hereby authorise the said grantees….to take all necessary and lawful steps to exclude from my kingdom…. All persons seeking land, metals and minerals (Todd 1967:17).

In return for these rights, Lobengula was to be paid as follows:

- Money lump sum per month for his lifetime = 100 Pounds Sterling,
- Martini-Henry rifles = 1000, and 100,000 rounds of ammunition,
- Cash (in lieu of a gun-boat for the Zambesi river) = 500 Pounds Sterling.

The signing of the Concessions was a later development. What preceded it was the invasion itself. According to Mlambo (1972:1):

An examination of the Rudd Concession shows clearly that only mineral rights were granted by Lobengula, but the Charter also provided for administrative, legislative and judicial powers which were not included in the Concession. The Charter further empowered the Company “to improve, develop, clear, plant and cultivate any lands”, even though the Concession had never allowed the acquisition of land.

The question may arise, therefore: where is the land–grabbing by the white settlers if there was a commercial deal that was entered into between Lobengula and Rudd, where money was paid in exchange for these concessions, metals and minerals? This may be answered by saying that, the signing of a Concession and money deal were a later development. What happened first was the “invasion” into the country by the West and the colonisation of Rhodesia that ensued.

Rhodes and Rudd also used deceit, assuring Lobengula that no more than ten white men would mine in Matabeleland, but this was left out of the actual document Lobengula signed. Furthermore it stated that the mining companies could do anything necessary for their operations. According to Selous (1969) in the months of negotiations, Rhodes also used Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, whom Lobengula regarded as his friend having previously been treated by him for gout, to help persuade Lobengula.
In July 1890 Rhodes therefore sent the Pioneer Column of white settlers protected by well-armed British South Africa Police (BSAP), the BSAC's own paramilitary force, to Mashonaland, using the Rudd Concession as the justification. It turned out that the Rudd Concession was somewhat disappointing in mining terms, as the gold deposits were much scantier than those of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. However, the mineral resources of the country proved to be considerable, although scattered in relatively small deposits. The farmland taken by settlers was valuable, and after putting down two more uprisings, a new order was imposed that mobilised the people of the territory into a supply of cheap labour. A prosperous white settler society was established that segregated it from the indigenous inhabitants whilst controlling and overseeing the development of the territory.

2.4 The United Federal Party (UFP) (1958)

According to Rasmussen and Rubert (1990: s v "United Federal Party") the first party to be formed in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was the United Party in 1934. The United Federal Party (UFP) was a result of the change of names of three political parties which preceded it in the previous years – United Party (UP) (1934), United Rhodesia Party (URP) (1953) and United Federal Party (UFP) (1958). The United Party was first led by Sir Godfrey Martin Huggins. The second party – United Rhodesia Party – was founded and led by former UFP premier of Southern Rhodesia, Sir Garfield Todd, during the time in which Southern Rhodesia was one of three territories within the Central African Federation (CAF). In 1958 URP merged with the UFP following Todd's defeat in the territorial elections and the victory of the UFP, led at the time by Sir Edgar Whitehead.

The UFP – campaigning on majority rule in the general elections of 1962 – lost dismally to the more conservative Rhodesian Front (RF). According to Mlambo (1972:47) the Rhodesia Front (RF) party took over in 1962. The 1962 general election was a watershed for the country, since it resulted in the election of a Rhodesia Front government led by Winston Field that was committed to independence without majority rule and to the continued separate development of white and black communities in Rhodesia. On 13 April 1964, Ian Douglas Smith became Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, succeeding Field. Soon he declared independence from Britain through his UDI on 11 November 1965 (Muzorewa 1978:60).
2.5 Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) – 1965: Smith’s Rhodesia Front (RF)

Ian Douglas Smith was born on 8 April 1919, and died on 20 November 2007 in Cape Town. Since assuming the position of Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, Smith operated as a viceroy of the British government. According to Mungazi (1981:17) the Rhodesia Front (RF) took office in January 1963. Smith, Prime Minister then, had this to say: “We have a mission here, and this is to save Rhodesia, and I think I am prepared to get on and give a lead and make decisions... I am not one of those people who equivocate, tolerate fools easily” (Mungazi 1981:17). On 11 November 1965, Smith declared independence from Britain with his famous UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence). The ruling party then became to be popularly known as Rhodesian Front (RF). UDI policies grew that Britain did not interfere in matters within the competence of the Rhodesian Legislature. On 11 November 1965, the day Smith officially declared his UDI, with the presentation of its Constitution, thanked Almighty God for the freedom and independence from Britain (Todd 1967:112). As stated by Todd (1967:112):

Now, therefore, we, the Government of Rhodesia, with humble submission to Almighty God who controls the destinies of nations... and seeking to promote the common good so that the dignity and freedom of all men may be assured we, by this proclamation, adopt, enact, and give to the people of Rhodesia the Constitution annexed hereto.

The colony took full charge of its internal affairs. The RF’s government made its own laws, was judged in its own courts, raised its own revenues, recruited its own civil servants, controlled and mobilized its own defence forces, and was under the jurisdiction of its own police force, as well as its monetary unit, the Rhodesian dollar (R$). According to Oliver and Atmore (2005:279):

The Rhodesian UDI produced a crisis with world-wide ramifications. Here, almost at the end of the long story of African liberation movements, was a minority of two hundred and fifty thousand white Rhodesians asserting their right to rule in independence over more than four million Africans.

According to Dayton (1987:53): “our understanding of our world is greatly shaped by our own culture.” By culture Dayton meant the total ways of life of a particular people. Goba (1998:19) asks: “What happens if the ways of life of a people have been demonised, repressed and ridiculed for centuries with unmitigated savagery?” According to Needham, Mashingaidze and Bhebe (1984:194) the settlers in Zimbabwe, unlike the British government, were not influenced
by world opinion or the desire of the Africans to govern the country where they formed the majority of the population.

The colonial government made a radical change of many things, and legislations after legislations were introduced in favour of the newcomer, but weighed heavily upon the black person. Zimbabweans were treated with contempt and denied freedom of expression, impartiality was the order of the day. Western culture and religion were imposed on Africans. African understanding of a Supreme Being was ridiculed. They were marginalised and many forms of injustices were legalised, which included imprisonment without trial. The whites felt no need to give up their privileged positions as minority rulers. Smith said that the best of white and black should go on ruling Zimbabwe.

It had generally become a norm that Western people are culturally born to be the masters and Africans are born inferior and destined to remain slaves. The identity of the colonized assures the colonizer of his own humanity. According to Williams and Chrisman (1994:17) the politics of superiority race, or in this case, whiteness, is dependent of the adverse of othering of Africans. Holderness (1985:5) concurs that “White” is regarded as civilised, good, beautiful, intelligent, and rational. “Black” is regarded as primitive, bad, ugly, unintelligent, and irrational. Not withstanding present Western views of Africans, some whites in colonial Rhodesia would not invite an African to sit with him in the front seat of his car. He preferred his dog instead, and an African would be ordered to sit on the back of the bakkie (pick-up vehicle) (Banana 1991:35).

2.6 The land question

The Africans were now under white rule. According to Blaut (1993:3–26) postcolonial methods show that most imperial narratives characterise their targeted lands and people either positively or negatively. In the Exodus, it is described as “good and spacious land” (Ex. 3:8, 17; 34:2). Blaut (1993:3–26) says that colonial narratives define the land and its inhabitants to validate its occupation.

As stated by Dube (2000:63) in Exodus, the God–given land is characterized positively. It is described as “a good and broad land” (Ex 3:8, 17; 34:2) and also “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex 3:8). The same trend is noted in the colonizaton of Rhodesia. According to Mlambo
(1972:13) colonisers likened Rhodesia to Canaan after the wilderness, because it was “flowing with milk and honey”. As stated by Mlambo (1972:13) the spirit of the pioneers must have been inspired by the type of publicity which made them feel that Rhodesia was another Canaan.

According to Mlambo (1972:1) the constitutional and political development of Southern Rhodesia was reshaped by the revolt of the Ndebele and the Shona people in 1896–1897 against the rule of the British South Africa Company, which resulted in a bloody war. In his description of the black people, However, literature published so far has not idealized the colonial spirit to God’s calling on their part to occupy Rhodesia, as opposed to the Israelites of which we read in the exodus narrative, about God giving them land promised to their ancestors (Ex 6:3–5). The “land issue” is central in this discussion, because colonisation had something to do with the land (Dube 2000:59; Chung 1989:211).

The theme of the Promised Land of Canaan is basic in the book of Deuteronomy and permeates all parts and levels of the book (Dt 1:8; 4:37–38; 11:8–12; 12:1; 13:1; 15:4, 15; 16:1; 18:9; 19:1–2; 20:1; 21:1; 24:18, 22; 25:19; 26:1, 4–10, 15). The present literature about the colonialism of Rhodesia is silent about the white man perceiving Rhodesia as the “promised land” to them by God, as Canaan was promised to the ancestors of the Israelites. The land of Canaan is regularly spoken of as “Promised by oath to the fathers” (Van Seiers 1998:19).

The exodus narrative gives the picture of Israel invading a land which was already occupied by other tribes, the Canaanites and others. Scriptures could be misused by other people to manipulate situations to their advantage.

After occupation of Rhodesia, the colonialists divided the land and apportioned into areas, and pushed the black people further into mountainous and unproductive zones with poor rainfall. The Native Purchase Areas Act was established for the purpose of creating native reserves in the face of mass land apportionment by white settlers. Native Purchase Areas were so designated so that Africans who had the resources to purchase land would only do so in marginal areas designated Native Purchase Areas. According to RCBC (1970:1) the State has not first divided up the races and then set aside the land which they may occupy, but it has first divided up the land, and then decided which race may occupy it.
Readers will bear with me that, below I have just outlined a brief sketch of measurements of the land that the newcomers expropriated from the Africans in Rhodesia. I categorically find it beyond the scope of this discussion to get into details on such information. For detailed information of such a data, there is need to consult other sources which have adequately discussed about the land expropriation in Rhodesia.

Mlambo (2002:19) says that the Land Apportionment Act (LAA) legalised the racial division of land and barred Africans from purchasing land outside “Native Reserves”, except in marginal agricultural areas designated Native Purchase Areas (NPAs). This resulted in native reserves created haphazardly in low potential areas and which subsequently became Communal Areas. As stated by RCBC (1970:1) it is apparent that the Constitution Act No. 54 of 1969 and the Land Tenure Act No. 55 of 1969 are designed to separate Rhodesia and to separate them on the basis of race alone.

The following table shows the apportionment of land after the Land Apportionment Act was passed in 1931 (Mlambo 1972:17):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1931 (Acres)</th>
<th>1962 (Acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European areas</td>
<td>49,149,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native reserves</td>
<td>21,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native purchase areas</td>
<td>7,465,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special native areas</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unassigned or unreserved areas</td>
<td>17,793,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wankie Game Reserve</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest areas</td>
<td>591,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undetermined</td>
<td>88,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>=99,686,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN COLONIAL RHODESIA

The question whether the church has a role in politics may be answered in both the positive and the negative. On one hand, the church was very positive and sympathetic with the oppressed Africans. But, on the other hand, the church was found tethered to the colonial regime, perhaps
because its initial existence and founding initiatives emerged from an association with the imperialist will power to colonise distant and the so-called Dark Continent. According to Dube (2000:19) the arrival of the Bible in the hands of a white man and the taking of land is a phenomenon intimately tied to the last few centuries. Until now, to an African, the Bible is perceived with selectivity, especially those passages (like the exodus narrative), that seem to have analogy to the present situation of suffering from which they derive a liberation motif so as to identify with their situation of oppression, alienation and discrimination.

One of the prominent missionaries was John Sheriff, who arrived in Rhodesia in 1898. Sheriff established Forest Vale Mission on the outskirts of Bulawayo for the purpose of raising up and training national evangelists (Reese 2001:64). Some may argue that the missionary activities among the Africans in Rhodesia did not by any means constitute an economic gain. The Church’s main mission in Africa was purely to propagate Christianity and to undertake social and developmental initiatives among Africans.

According to Shaw (1996:129):

> At the heart of these evangelical revivals were three powerful convictions. The first was the centrality of the death of Christ for salvation. A second was the necessity of the new birth. The third was a new eschatology that envisioned the spread of Christianity around the world as a prelude to Christ’s personal return.

Quite often, the approach by Africans to the Bible either in liturgical or in contemporary interpretation of the text is that it is usually contextual. There are some positive roles as well as the negative roles played by the church (perhaps by some church leaders – to be precise), during the colonial era. However, the positives outweigh the negatives.

3.1 The negative role of the church in colonial Rhodesia

As stated by RCBC (1970:1) when we speak of the church’s mission to permeate and elevate society, there is no question of entering into the field of politics. According to Ngugi (1986:9–18) imperialism was established through both the church and the English department of schools. How could one relate the Christian message of love and freedom, to the attitude of some white missionaries who were in the company of those who colonised Africa, particularly Zimbabwe?
Does God favour the whites, and allows deprivation of the black people? No. God is the creator of all peoples.

As stated by Mishra and Hodge (1994:288) colonialism was accomplished through Christian mission in Africa. An epic among the Africans has circulated itself about the seizure of African land by the white people through use of the Bible. Mofokeng (1988:34) says: “when the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us, let us pray. After the prayer, the white had the land and we had the Bible.” This is also constantly referred to by many people in Zimbabwe. The implication of this coined story is a summation of the ploy on the part of some missionaries and fellow white counterparts, who came to Africa in general and to Rhodesia, in particular, who preached Christianity and later grabbed land from the Africans. According to Mudimbe (1977:44) missionary Pringe said:

Let us enter upon a new and nobler career of conquest. Let us subdue Savage Africa by justice, by kindness, by talisman of Christian truth. Let us thus go ‘orth, in the name and under the blessing of God, gradually to extend the moral influence...the territorial boundary also of our colony, until shall become an empire.

The above quotation illustrates how naïve some missionaries were and the double standards which they demonstrated, on one hand being God’s messengers to bring light to the unborn world and on the other hand carrying economic and political ambitions. This misrepresentation on the part of missionaries has had a long and outstanding negative impact on modern generation of scholars who have been trying to understand and seriously come to terms with the teachings of the Bible. This is the reason why in Rhodesia and even in South Africa, the Bible has not been able to establish itself as a subject of relevance, in the same way subjects such as History, Geography, Sociology, Social Studies, Mathematics and other humanities or other social subjects would be regarded.

Language can affect both the mind and culture of an individual. Achebe (1989:1–20) talks of the imposition of the foreign literature on a colonised nation to convert it to the culture of imperial powers, and that is, assimilation or colonisation of the mind. In Zimbabwe, the English language was elevated and became mandatory to speak when in the school yard. Breaking this rule carried the punishment in which one would spend the whole school day doing manual work. Shona and Ndebele, the major native languages in Zimbabwe, were always discouraged. At present (at the
time of completing this study in October 2008) one cannot enrol in any tertiary institution in Zimbabwe if English has not been passed among the high school subjects. I think that as much as English language can be elevated, so should vernacular languages such as Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe. One cannot expect a former oppressor to undergo a decolonisation process. Can the master’s tools dismantle his own house? (Lorde 1984:112). According to Phillips (1993:26) the moment of imperialism is also the moment of education, since education was the central strategy of colonising in modern imperialism. I cherish the expression of Donaldson (1992:105) when he talks of “the global theatre of a world at war intertextually.” This view means that English taught in schools has had advantages on its own as people can write and communicate in English internationally. But, on the other, English language “brought by the oppressor” must not be superior over the local or vernacular languages of the indigenous black people.

3.1.1 The church against African cultural belief systems

Ancient biblical peoples also looked down upon cultures of the peoples whose land they had invaded. When Israel invaded Canaan, they were discouraged from imitating the cultures of the inhabitants they already found in the land. According to Kwok (1995:108):

The condemnation of cultures, religions, and peoples in Canaan can be seen as a forerunner of discrimination against peoples who do not share the beliefs of Jews or Christians. The Canaanites were portrayed as worshipping idols, as promiscuous, and as having lower moral standards.

To conquer a people effectively, subjugation is done through the use of ideas. Ideas rule the world. Some of these ideas are found in the teachings of the church. Some people, who know about this hidden treasure in the church, would use this sacred institution for personal gain. Most people have used the Church’s teachings and continue to do so, to dissuade and assuage irrepressible anger against perceived injustice, and suppress the weeping voices calling for freedom. The notion that the church condemned injustice during the colonial era depended on who was oppressed, because the colour of the skin mattered a lot during that time.

According to Kato (1975:23) the term “primitive” comes from the Latin word “primus” which means “first”, and then it came to mean “elemental” or “natural”, or “relating to a relatively simple people or culture”, “self-taught”, or “unschooled”, or “untutored”. These were but
derogatory and insulting terms formulated and used by people who assumed unquestioned superiority and authority. Africans were to a large extent, not regarded as humans. Mbiti (1970:220) asserts that the Bible is so close to the African peoples because of the many items in common, between their cultural life and the cultural life of the Jewish people. As stated by Dickson (1975:13):

We believe that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Lord of history, has been dealing with humankind at all times and in all parts of the world. It is with this conviction that we study the rich heritage of our African peoples, and have evidence that they know of Him and worship Him.

As stated by Stephanson (1995:6–7):

The colonisers talk of themselves as exceptionally chosen beings, while they also construct tales of derogation against their targeted victims, human beings who deserve to be invaded, dispossessed, subjugated, and annihilated if need be.

Western, and especially Protestant mission, has been profoundly influenced by the Enlightenment world view, and in that world view there is no place for such things as sorcery. A parable that can help to illustrate this is the account in Exodus of the magicians of Egypt throwing down their sticks, which turned into snakes. Aaron responds by throwing down his stick, which turns into a snake too, and then devours the other snakes (Ex 7:10–12). Aaron's response was a model used by many Christian missionaries until the Enlightenment. Since the Enlightenment, Western missionaries would not usually behave like Aaron.

By and large, African names were also discouraged once an individual joined the church, at mission school or in the village. African names were considered pagan. Dropping his/her African name was seen as a sign that one had abandoned his or her heathenism and savagery. The so-called Christian names such as: Amos, Benedict, Caleb, David and Jacob replaced the Shona names, like: Muchada, Rangarirai, Mandida, Rumbi, Tcnderai, and Tsungi, to name just a few.

3.1.2 The church against African traditional medicine

Christianity forbade its adherents, the bulk of whom were black Africans, on the use of African herbs. African traditional herbs and African way of dealing with ailments were described as evil
and satanic. Traditional medicine before colonial rule at the end of 19th century was a very prestigious enterprise. Not only were traditional healers regarded as the only medical specialists, but they were expected to deal with a wide range of social problems as well. Chavunduka (1994:1) describes the role of a traditional healer aptly when he says, “in addition to being a medical practitioner, the traditional healer was a religious consultant, a legal and political advisor, a marriage counsellor, a police detective and a social worker”. The introduction of a Western medicine by colonial governments and missionaries saw the discouragement and denigration of traditional medicine as an effective way of curing many forms of African illnesses.

According to Chavunduka (1994:5) traditional healers were perceived as “rogues and deceivers” in a context where modern medicine chests brought by missionaries primarily for their own use could not be accessed by the majority of Zimbabweans. The later centuries saw some amount of tolerance in the trend of Western perception about African cultures. African peoples, their cultures and their religions, began to be regarded by missionaries and anthropologists as primitive, heathen, and pagan.

3.2 The positive role of the church in colonial Rhodesia

Despite some negative factors associated with the church as has been noted above, with regards to the relationship with the oppressed in Rhodesia, there were lots of positive factors which the church underscored in many spheres of human existence. These include: building of schools, hospitals and clinics; providing humanitarian assistance to needy people, among others.

The church owned a number of enterprises, printing presses, magazines and papers that were mouthpieces, through which the church addressed political and economic issues, which challenged both government and people. The Roman Catholic Church owned such a paper called Moto Magazine. According to Makunike (1998:33) the Catholic monthly newspaper, Moto, published by Mambo Press in Gwelo under the direction of Fr Michael Traber, a prophetic Swiss priest, had become the voice of the African voiceless. Makunike further states that:

In 1964 liberal foreign white missionaries who opposed the policies of the government (Rhodesian government-TR), like Bishop Ralph E. Dodge and Mr. Robert Hughes of the United Methodist Church
were deported. Many others from other denominations were similarly deported as undesirable immigrants (Makunike 1998:33).

The Rhodesia Catholic Bishops challenged the Rhodesian government on legislation and policy issues, in relation to the proposed new constitution. According RCBC (1970:1) in *The Land Tenure Act and the Church*, the Government of Rhodesia by its new legislation was committed politically to a policy of racial separate development. In this, the Catholic Fathers were expressing their concern for a government that sought to divide people on the basis of race through legislation. RCBC (1969:1) further pointed out that:

The proposed constitution offered no certainty to any section of the population that their opinions would be represented. African representation would be so limited that legislation could be passed and even the constitution amended without the consent of the vast majority of the population. No safeguard of African opinion was provided by an initial representation of sixteen out of sixty-six members of the House of Assembly with only eight elected by direct vote. The arbitrary selection of income tax as a criterion of the number of seats open to Africans was unjust. It represented neither their contribution to the total tax revenue, nor the contribution of their labour to the economy as a whole.

As stated by Muzorewa (1978:82) in June 1970, the Church leaders met with the then Rhodesian Prime Minister, Ian Smith, to oppose the Land Tenure Act, which sought to discriminate upon the African people. The leaders involved were: Rt Rev Paul Burrough (Anglican), Rev Christopher Chikasha (African reformed), Bishop Abel Muzorewa (United Methodist), Rt Rev Donal Lamont (Catholic), Rev Andrew Ndhlulela (Methodist), and Fr Richard Randolph (Catholic). The negotiations seemed to have not reached a consensus as Smith went on to implement the Act.

The education system in Rhodesia was church and mission-oriented. Missionaries established learning centres, such as schools, at which the bulk of African nationalists attended school and obtained both their elementary and secondary education. It is at these mission schools where most African nationalists who resisted against colonial policies, received their education. A few examples are worthy mentioning: Kutama High School in Kutama, Zvimba (owned by the Roman Catholic Church), where President Robert Mugabe attended school. It was also at Kutama, where President Robert Mugabe had trained as a teacher. Others are Gokomere High School in Masvingo (Roman Catholic Church), Regina Mundi High School in Gweru (Roman
Catholic Church), and St Patrick’s High School in Chiundura, Gweru (owned by the Anglican Church) and Sanyati High School in Sanyati (established by Baptist Church). Most of African leaders, if not all, came through the missionary schools. According to Muzorewa (1978:17):

Church schools were noted for rigorous discipline and high standards. Zimbabwe owes a debt of gratitude to those missionaries and other church leaders who pioneered African education in the country. Until recently, most educated Zimbabweans received all their schooling and scholarship for advanced studies through the Church.

The Catholic Church also owns a printing press in Senga, Gweru, named Mambo Press. Most literature and story books, especially by African writers, were published by Mambo Press during colonial days. These are just a typical examples, otherwise there are so many other centres dotted across the country established by various churches. Key activities played by the church are too numerous to mention. For example, social development initiatives in: education, health, communication networks and establishment of other humanitarian facilities all over the country.

### 3.2.1 The church’s position on war and violence

Involvement in wars on the part of the Church in modern times is not unique. What is unique is what I would like to describe as intentional and aimless violence and barbaric killings in the name of war. According to Wuthnow (1998: s v “current events in context: terrorism”):

War is a state of hostility, conflict, or antagonism between peoples and is usually defined as armed conflict between two or more governments or states. Religion and warfare are ancient partners that remain inextricably bound. Virtually every war in human history was supported by at least one religious institution, as were movements of opposition to warfare. The widespread peace movements of the twentieth century were largely initiated and nurtured by the same religious institutions that promoted history's bloodiest wars.

In Genesis 14: 8–20 we read that Abram’s nephew, Lot, had been captured along with others in the vicinity of Sodom and Gomorrah. Verse 14, mentions of “318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan.” It further states that during the night Abram’s men attacked and routed the enemy (Gn 14:15). Here, Abram rallies troops to rescue Lot and his family and goods from invaders who had snatched them. From the passage itself, Abram always
kept trained men in his household.

Moses had killed an Egyptian and escaped to Median (Ex 2:12). There is no record in Scripture where it shows God's inquisition and condemnation of Moses for such an act to demand his repentance. One can see in the commandment against killing included in the Decalogue given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex 20:13). But, there is a contrast between the demand of the Decalogue and human behaviour in terms of murder.

Moses had gone up on Mount Sinai, and had seemingly been gone for too long. When he returns to the camp he finds the Hebrews engaged in forbidden worship practices. Moses was annoyed by this behaviour and angrily shatters the tablets (Ex 32:19). According to Exodus 32:27 Moses instructs the Levites: "Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbour" (NIV). That day about three thousand people died (v 28). Certainly this cannot be regarded as an ethical example by which modern people would want to live. As stated by Gushee (2001:2) God's liberation of the Hebrew slaves in Exodus is by no means free of death, and yet is distinctive in that the Hebrews themselves did not lift a finger or a sword in their own behalf. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians (Ex 14:31).

The God of the Torah (the Jewish scripture) is perceived as the champion of the oppressed who wages war against the powerful. Joshua 24:8–13 says that the Lord told the Hebrews that: "I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan; they fought against you, but I delivered them into your hands; you took possession of their country and I destroyed them for your sake". According to the tradition Yahweh later destroyed the Israelites because of their injustice. Yahweh was perceived as a God who used violence on behalf of justice. Yahweh is a warrior and can possibly involve people in his wars (e.g., Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Saul and David or a nation, such as Israel).

The Philistines continued to be a menace upon the Israelites, who were defying the armies of the living God (1 Sm 17:26). But, David goes to fight Goliath in the name of God (1 Sm 17:45–47). Saul and his army are instructed by God to kill and destroy everything that belonged to the enemy, the Amalekites (1 Sm 15:1–3). In yet another incident, the ancient Hebrews were instructed to "destroy every living thing" in city after city, leaving no survivors to prevent the
taking of slaves and other forms of booty (Jos 10:39). God had his army among the Israelites.

Although it is not Christianity’s aim to initiate or enhance the spread of armed conflict, Wuthnow (1998: s v “current events in context: terrorism”) argues that religions (Christianity included), were involved in bloodshed in many respect, citing the Christian Crusades in their fight against the Muslims. Wuthnow (1998: s v “current events in context: terrorism”) gives an example of Martin Luther King Jnr., who obtained a gun to protect his family after his house was bombed during the non-violent Montgomery bus boycott and struggled mightily with the issue before deciding with the early Christians that it was not moral to use violence even in self-defence.

The church contributed immensely through provision of humanitarian assistance such as food and clothing as well as medicine, besides other necessary war items, both to the general public as well as the freedom fighters in the bush. Quoting the statement made by Pope Paul VI, RCBC (1977:2) said that the church has the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, of assisting the birth of this liberation, of giving witness to it, of ensuring that it is complete. So, it does not come as a surprise that some churches sympathized with the guerrillas in the liberation war in Rhodesia.

However, it is important to note that, to a large extent, churches had always preached peace and justice in Rhodesia, showing that the absence of peace in any nation creates a clique of an ungovernable society, and which in the end attracts violence. According to RCBC (1977:5):

In Rhodesia for many years there have been various factors which have combined to produce a climate of division, violence and injustice. Today, we ask the people of Rhodesia to remove any obstacles which may stand in the way of permanent peace. We ask them not to create new obstacles, or to commit errors which might be irreparable.

As stated by RCBC (1978:2): “destroy the war before the war destroys the country.” War is powerless to eliminate the deep-seated causes of all wars. They went on to say that violence is not the normal way of bringing about justice, and that it is at best a last recourse in unavoidable necessity.
Liberation from aggressors and regime governments in the post–biblical contexts, especially in Africa, has been a very sensitive undertaking, in which the majority of the oppressed have opted to take the violent way – using arms – to liberate themselves. Unfortunately, this method has always been costly due to loss of lives and the huge expenditure involved, which could be put to good use and developmental initiatives in a stable and peaceful environment. In Rhodesia, the sixteen years’ civil war – which could have been avoided, had the warring parties opted to address the political and colonial imbalance in a dialogical manner – left multitudes homeless and thousands of deaths. Many others have been made physically handicapped for life as a result of war. War and militancy cannot be the best formula to address both economic and political grievances. In the Rhodesian context, no warring party won the war in a real sense – it was finally done when the parties on the battlefront agreed to compromise for initiatives towards peace, which was facilitated by Britain at the Lancaster House Agreement in London in 1979.

3.3 The clergy and the struggle against oppression in colonial Rhodesia

Theological colleges and seminaries during the colonial era in Rhodesia played a key role by raising up and inspiring theological students on the political and economic imbalance that existed during that time. The ministers who graduated from these colleges emerged as prophets in challenging the colonial government and in condemning racial practices exerted on Africans. A few of these are worthy mentioning, namely Rev Canaan Banana, the Catholic Church Fathers, Bishop Skelton, Rev Ndabaningi Sithole, and Bishop Abel Muzorewa. Because of the scope of this study, I will only discuss the works by Rev Banana, the Rhodesia Catholic Bishops’ Conference and Bishop Abel Muzorewa, whose works seemed to have fairly treated the function of the exodus tradition during the Rhodesian colonial rule.

3.3.1 Rev Canaan Banana

According to Meldrum (2004) Banana was born in 1936 in Esiphezini, in the Essexvale district (now Esigodini), east of Bulawayo in central Matabeleland. He was the son of a Malawian migrant worker and a Zimbabwean woman. Banana was past deputy president of the African National Council of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) (Banana 1974:4). When Mr Mugabe became prime minister, and when Nkomo refused Mugabe’s offer, Banana was chosen to serve as president in a
largely ceremonial post when the British colony attained independence in 1980. Banana studied to become a teacher at the nearby Tegwani Training Institute, and was ordained as a Methodist minister in 1966, following periods at Epworth Theological College in Salisbury (now Harare), the Kansai Industrial Centre, Japan, the Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington DC, and the University of South Africa, Pretoria.


Due to limited space, only the following books by Banana will be discussed: Theology of Promise (1982), The Gospel According to the Ghetto (1990), and The Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe (1996). Other literature by same author shall be mentioned in passing in the text. Allied to this is the fact that only some of Banana’s writings do carry some relevance to the topic under discussion, namely: reading the exodus tradition from a Zimbabwean perspective.

In The Gospel According to the Ghetto (1990:45) Banana elucidates the exodus tradition of an oppressed people (the Israelites), under an imperial authority (the Pharaohs) and how those people were liberated by God. Moses was used by God as the vessel through which Israel’s deliverance could be realised. Despite being brought up under Egyptian lifestyle, Moses did not forget that he was an Israelite. This is taken as a clear indication that God does validate the use of liberating violence. As indicated in Exodus, we can read that God uses violence to liberate his people, as opposed to people using violence to liberate themselves. The people of Israel obeyed Joshua and kept the commands that the Lord had given them through Moses (Ex 34:9). In the above cases God was showing the people of Israel that they had nothing to fear because God would always give them a new leader. It is this new leader who led the children of Israel across the river Jordan and entered Canaan.
Rev Canaan Banana is one such person who extensively made reference to the exodus tradition in his writings on the liberation struggle in Rhodesia. His works sought to challenge the imperial structures that were oppressive in every respect. Banana (1990:44) says that in the midst of the Hebrews' hopelessness and weakness, a man named Moses answered the divine call to provide much needed leadership and direction. Moses was viewed by his people as a saviour sent to rescue them from their misery and degradation under the Egyptian Pharaohs. God was intervening directly in human affairs to put a stop to man's inhumanity to man. Banana sees the war of liberation in Rhodesia as God's way of intervening to secure and ensure the black people's dignity, freedom, self-determination and happiness. What is important about the Moses-Exodus event is that God can get involved in conflict resolution, and can fight on the side of the oppressed. In the case of Moses, the reader is made to see that God also used a man to fulfil his purposes.

In Theology of Promise (1982:15) Banana quotes Genesis 12:1 in which God tells Abraham: “Leave your country, your family and your father’s house for the land I will show you.” This passage is reminiscent of the tradition which later grew, and which the Israelites constantly referred to, to enforce the Egyptian Pharaoh to Moses’ demand on God’s instruction to get the people to another land because God had made a covenant with Israel’s ancestors (Ex 6:3–5). The Israelites had always cherished this promise made to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for a land. Banana (1990:21) says that God sent Moses with this message to Pharaoh, “Let my people go” (Ex 5:1). According to Banana (1990:21):

When Pharaoh failed to respond positively to the language of persuasion and argument, God had no alternative but to use the language that Pharaoh himself spoke, the language of force and violence. This is taken as clear evidence that God does vindicate the use of liberating violence.

Banana (1990:1):

God has spoken to us as he spoke to Moses and his people in Egypt: “I have seen the miserable state of my people...and so I have resolved to bring you out of Egypt, where you are oppressed” (Exodus 3:7, 17). In Zimbabwe, we have also heard a call. We also experienced agonies of oppression. Through the armed struggle, we attained independence and started to move towards the Promised Land, a land where there would be equality and mutual understanding, cooperation, prosperity and a better life for all.
What we see here is that Banana makes a careful analogy of the exodus narrative to the Zimbabwean situation during the colonial era, and the exodus motif played a role in the mobilisation and motivation of the nationalists during the war of liberation in Rhodesia. On the other hand, Banana mourns about the missionary church playing down on the culture of the indigenous people of Zimbabwe. Banana (1996:19) says:

When Western Christian missionaries came to Africa, their main objectives were to supplant African traditional religion with Christianity and to civilise the so-called pagan natives of the Dark Continent. To many of the missionaries, what was of material concern to them was to preach the spiritual gospel without much regard for African experience and history.

About the missionary church, Banana (1996:53) further expresses his position:

We should not at all underestimate the racism among European missionaries, whether operating in multiracial or uniracial contexts; they have all worked under the dominant Rhodesian colonial racist ideology, which prescribed European behavioural norms towards Africans and effectively ruled out power sharing in Church administration and Government before being forced to do so by the irresistible tide of militant African nationalism in the 1960.

A few insights need to be highlighted on Banana’s viewpoint on violence. It is a bit construed to comprehend what Banana meant by “liberating violence.” If Banana by that expression meant using violence in the liberation activity, some clarity is needed to shed more light, as that statement might make readers feel sucks into a vortex of frustration. Maybe he meant using force in order to liberate the oppressed or the captured (e.g., using violence to free people who have been taken hostage by their captors). Violence itself as the term entails should be condemned in strong terms, except when God, as in the exodus narrative, initiates violence for the purpose of liberating the oppressed.

3.3.2 Rhodesia Catholic Bishops’ Conference (RCBC)

Rhodesia Catholic Bishops’ Conference (RCBC) – an institution whose organization was composed mainly of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church – was a very influential Christian institution which rendered significant social contributions toward human development in Rhodesia. According to RCBC (1961:4) every person irrespective of his or her race or social condition has a right to intellectual training in accordance with his capacity and the opportunities
offered. The Bishops said this with reference to the Rhodesian society of the day which discriminated upon, among other things, the right to education and other facilities in the country on the part of the black people. Hence, the bulk of the education institutions in Rhodesia was erected by the Roman Catholic Church where many prominent people today attended their schooling, teacher training courses or other disciplines which had been established for communities.

According to RCBC (1965:1):

The function of the State as the administrative arm of the nation is to serve all the people, without favouring one group more than another, working to achieve that complex of conditions in which all men live, irrespective of race, religion or political affiliation. For the Catholic Bishops, this would create a conducive atmosphere for peace and tranquility.

As can be witnessed as a common feature in most African governments at present, laws in Rhodesia were passed with an intention of oppressing the black people. But, quite often the Catholic Church stood their ground to challenge the government of the day to review such laws. On the economic issues and the exploitation of the poor, orphans and widows, the position of the Catholic Bishops was clear. As stated by RCBC (1977:9) Rhodesia needed to make an immense effort to produce the economic solidarity and soundness in which all could properly share. According to the Catholic Bishops prophet Isaiah echoes it better where he says: “Learn to do good, search for justice, help the oppressed, be just to the orphan, and plead for the widow” (Is 1:17). According to the Catholic Bishops, even Amos words are linked to that, where he says: “Let justice flow like water and integrity like an unfailing stream” (Am 5:24).

The Rhodesia Catholic Bishops’ Conference played a positive role in the liberation of the Africans in Rhodesia. According to RCBC (1977:2):

God told Moses to free his people from their political and social slavery and to help them go their own spiritual way. These words can be applied to our society today. In trying to answer the call of the book of Exodus, one realises that evangelical justice demands not only the liberation of oneself, but also the liberation of one’s fellow citizens. The just man is one who works to obtain rights for his fellow men. Since we are all children of one and the same divine Father, we should value the common good above individual interests.
This view is echoed by Lamin Sanneh. According to Sanneh (1989:123):

Missionary translation was instrumental in the emergence of indigenous resistance to colonialism. Local Christians acquired from the vernacular translations confidence in the indigenous cause...with subject peoples able to respond to colonial events in light of vernacular self-understanding.

The Catholic Bishops were always anti-violent in their efforts to lobby for justice and removal of discriminative pieces of legislation on the part of the Rhodesian government. According to RCBC (1972:5):

The equality of all men is based, as is well known, on their common origin and destiny as members of the human family. Since all men possess a rational soul and are created in God’s likeness, since they have the same nature and origin, have been redeemed by Christ and enjoy the same divine calling and destiny, the basic equality of all must receive increasingly greater recognition.

As has been shown elsewhere in this chapter, Rhodesia Catholic Bishops’ Conference in many instances challenged the government of the day against its discrimination of the black people, and hence their use of the exodus narrative was fundamentally a motivating factor on the side of the oppressed that God was on their side and that he would lead them in their endeavours towards freedom. The Catholics wrestled with issues of injustice in their writings. However, they did not condone violence in their efforts.

3.3.3 Bishop Abel Muzorewa

In both the political front and in theological circles, Bishop Abel Muzorewa made a memorable mark. In collaboration with Desmond Tutu of South Africa, Muzorewa believed that Africans could govern their own nations responsibly and the two argued that the political development of Africans was essential to the security of the white settlers and that whites should seek the promotion of political development of Africans as a condition of their future security. In his own book entitled: *Rise up and Walk*, Muzorewa contributed immensely towards the motivation of those on the liberation front. According to Muzorewa (1978:185):

> The predominant spirit of our people, however, sees the hand of God in our liberation struggle. Reading the Bible, we find that our struggle parallels that of the children of Israel in Egypt. Sermons on the Exodus stories are received with rapt attention in Zimbabwean churches. We believe that as God led His children out of bondage in Egypt into a promised land, so He will lead his children into Zimbabwe if they are faithful to Him.

According to Muzorewa, his congregation listened to the sermons on the exodus narrative attentively, thereby instilling some motivation and confidence in the fact that the same God is still the God of the oppressed in Rhodesia, and that the pharaoh, could be replaced. In this sense, Muzorewa referred to Smith as a pharaoh. It is in this context that many revolutionists emerged from the church circles.

So during the 1970s Muzorewa emerged as a spokesman for some urban blacks. He had formed the United African National Council (UANC), whose formidable mandate was to bring justice and freedom to the Zimbabwean majority in Rhodesia. A moderate who rejected violence, Muzorewa took part in the 1978 Executive Council government with the white Prime Minister Ian Smith and after the elections of 1979 replaced Smith as prime minister. Muzorewa, however, was defeated (1980) in the British-supervised elections that resulted in political independence for a black–ruled Zimbabwe. Thus, Muzorewa’s theological or liberation works, in which the exodus motif was quite often used, made their mark in motivating revolutionaries to liberate themselves from colonial systems in Rhodesia. It is not clear whether Smith genuinely wanted to work with the blacks or it was simply due to pressure because of the escalation of the civil war which he thought would come to end if he incorporated a black leader in the Zimbabwe–Rhodesia government. On the other hand, Smith might genuinely have wanted to work with the black people in his government.
3.3.4 Bishop Kenneth Skelton

The church had never remained silent against oppression and "colour bar" in Rhodesia during Ian Smith's tenure of office. According to Skelton (1985:7):

The churches' leaders were beginning to speak more openly — disquietingly so. The Roman Catholic Bishops, in their Pastoral Instruction of 1961, *Peace through Justice* had spoken of "laws of men which are a direct contradiction with the natural law" and of "the stigma of segregation".

As stated in Skelton (1985:7) the Anglican Church's Toronto Congress Report of 1963 had stated unequivocally that "segregation and other forms of discrimination are sin". According to Skelton (1985:7) if the State had to entrench its segregationist policies still further, the white clergy were in a most difficult position — with their leaders saying one thing, and their government another. Of Smith's rebellion through the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) of 1965, Skelton, in his Sunday sermon said:

I think it would be true to say that the only circumstances in which the church could condone such an act (UDI) would be if it were carried out at the will of the great majority of the people as the means of ridding them of the quite intolerable and tyrannical oppression. The Church might have to advise its people that they were under no obligation to carry out the commands of a government which had committed such an act (UDI) and what an agonising position this would be for us all (Skelton 1985:8).

However, Skelton did not directly make reference to the exodus tradition in view of the prevailing situation during the colonial period. But, that does not make his contributions insignificant, because he also fought for the liberation of the African people in a great way.

3.3.5 Rev Ndabaningi Sithole

Rev Ndabaningi Sithole was born on 31 July 1920 in Nyamandhlovu, Southern Rhodesia. According to Bute and Harmer (1997:58) Sithole was a Zimbabwean politician who studied at US Divinity College from 1953 to 1956 and was ordained a Methodist minister in 1959. The publication of his book *African Nationalism* and its immediate prohibition by the minority government of Ian Smith motivated his entry into politics. Sithole founded the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) party in 1963, subsequently becoming its president. The party
was banned by the British colonial authorities in 1964 and Sithole spent the next ten years as a political detainee, alongside fellow-black nationalist leader Robert Mugabe, now president of Zimbabwe. Sithole lost the leadership of the party (ZANU) to Mugabe during an internal rift after the two were released from prison in 1974. While in prison, Sithole was tried and convicted for plotting to assassinate Ian Smith. Sithole joined a transitional government of whites and blacks in 1979, but his small breakaway opposition group failed to win any seats in independent elections, which Mugabe won in 1980.


Among Sithole’s writings, I will briefly discuss *African Nationalism* (1959 1st ed and 1969 2nd ed.). Sithole's reputation as the author of *African Nationalism* launched his career as an African nationalist leader in Southern Rhodesia, when in 1960 his fame as an author helped him rapidly to attain eminence within the National Democratic Party (NDP). Since then his prominence as a politician has stimulated interest in the books that he has published. In the second edition of *African Nationalism* Sithole did not explicitly advocate a violent overthrow of the Rhodesian regime. He came close to endorsing the use of violence when peaceful methods had failed. In 1969, the year after the publication of the revised edition of *African Nationalism*, Sithole was convicted of smuggling a letter from prison which urged his supporters to have Ian Smith assassinated.

As is clear from the above, Rev Canaan Banana, Rhodesia Catholic Bishops’ Conference and Bishop Abel Muzorewa have been able to articulate in writing, the function of the exodus narrative in view of the oppression prevailing in Rhodesia during the colonial era. Even though other writers such Skelton, Sithole, among others, have not directly used the exodus narrative in their deliberations about oppression and colonialism in a direct way, it does not render their contribution insignificant; the underlying factor of an oppressed people and how they were liberated was essential. It is also important to note that the exodus liberation motif operates across boundaries and defies time and space. The exodus tradition is about the Israelites who
were oppressed in Egypt. Their oppressor was the pharaoh. During the colonial period, the Africans were oppressed in Rhodesia, and the oppressor was the colonial white government. The themes of oppression and liberation run through both cases and these are: the oppressed and the liberated humankind. The Israelites and Africans in Zimbabwe are both God’s creation and are all human beings who needed liberation from oppression in their respective contexts.

4. THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE DURING COLONIAL RHODESIA: THE EMERGENCE OF REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS

The war of liberation in Zimbabwe was a culmination of rapidly moving events that began to unfold with the inception of the colonial government in September 1890 (Mungazi 1992:12). Following the state of affairs as noted above, Africans were engaged in an armed struggle which took many years to force the racist regime to change its policies. According to Wilmore and Cone (1979:343) black theology is political theology. The encounter of black people with God takes place in the arena of history and involves ethical judgments and decisions having to do with liberation from racism, poverty, cultural and political domination and economic exploitation. Black people see the hand of God not only in a personal salvation but also in social and political deliverances. In my view – as an African – there should never be a dichotomy between religion and politics. The preaching from the pulpit on the message of salvation from sin should carry the same significance and meaning as the denunciation of oppression and demand for justice. The God of the sacred is also the God of the secular.

The genealogy of various liberation movements in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), can be traced to the early 1940’s. Some of these movements never lasted up to the period of the independence in Zimbabwe. Some merged with more revolutionary ones. The main revolutionary movements which began to be active are as follows: the City Youth League (CYL), the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC), the National Democratic Party (NDP), the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF), the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) and United African National Council (UANC). Briefly discussed below, are the liberation movements under separate headings.
4.1 The City Youth League (CYL) (1955)

The City Youth League (CYL) was founded by James Chikerema, Dunduzu Chisiza, George Nyandoro, and Edson Sithole in 1955. Chikerema served as President and Nyandoro as Vice President. The CYL led in the boycotting of United Transport Company’s buses and succeeded in preventing the planned fare changes. CYL was soon dissolved to become Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC). According to Mambo (1972:117) leaders in the SRANC in 1957 were Joshua Nkomo (President), James Chikerema (Vice–President), G B Nyandoro (General Secretary), Jason Moyo, Joseph Msika, Francis Nehwati, Peter Mutandwa and Mudikwane as committee members. This movement sought to achieve independence by a constitutional means, which prepared the ground for the armed struggle.

4.2 Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC)

According to Bhebe (1999:10) the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC), was organised in Salisbury (now Harare) on the 12th September 1957, becoming the first mass political party, initially led by Joshua Nkomo. From that time onwards, a number of political movements were formed following the ban of initial protest movements by the colonial masters. It was banned in 1959 (Stearns and Langer 2001: s v “the first major engagements in Sinoia in 1966”). Following the banning of the SRANC by the regime government of southern Rhodesia, Nkomo, Mugabe, Chitepo, and Sithole, then established the National Democratic Party (NDP), headed by Joshua Nkomo, through which they would collectively continue to oppose racism and oppression perpetrated upon the blacks in Rhodesia.

4.3 The National Democratic Party (NDP) (1960)

According to Dabengwa (1995:25) the National Democratic Party (NDP) was formed in 1960. By the beginning of the 1960's, the nationalists' vision of freedom became more radical. They now demanded an overthrow of the minority rule if their rights were to be fully recognized. The National Democratic Party (NDP) was founded with the goal of achieving African rule by gradual means. Its members demonstrated, rioted and committed acts of arson in hopes of attracting the attention of England and compelling the British to intervene and force a white hand–over of power in Rhodesia (Gann 1981:42). The NDP was banned in December 1961.
4.4 The Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) (1961)

After the NDP was subsequently banned in 1961, and its leaders arrested, Nkomo, who by that time was out of the country, formed a new party called the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), ultimately becoming its leader. According to Nyangoni (1978:50) ZAPU's aims and objectives included: the establishment of one-man-one-vote as the basis of government in Zimbabwe, the unification of the African people so as to allow them to liberate themselves from imperialism and colonialism, the elimination of oppression in all forms and the development of the best values in the African tradition to facilitate the establishment of a desirable order.

The white Rhodesians also recognized the revolutionary nature of ZAPU's goals and in September 1962, ZAPU was banned by the Whitehead administration. ZAPU did not dissolve and Nkomo moved ZAPU's headquarters to Tanzania, where it operated underground. However, in 1963 internal conflicts within the party led to a split. The split was followed by a formation of a new party named Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in August 1963 under the leadership of Rev Ndabaningi Sithole. The split occurred loosely along ethnic lines, with ZANU being more strongly aligned with the Shona and ZAPU with the Ndebele.

4.5 United African National Council (UANC) (1970)

Bishop Abel Muzorewa established the United African National Council (UANC) in 1970, subsequently becoming its president. Banana, who had spent a year travelling in South-East Asia and Japan (where he obtained a diploma at Kansai Industrial Centre), returned from abroad and became an active nationalist, joining the newly-formed United African National Council (UANC). This is the party that propelled Muzorewa to power in the short-lived Zimbabwe-Rhodesia government following the internal settlement, in which in 1978, and at the height of war, the Rhodesian government tried to undercut the Patriotic Front (PF) and started negotiations with UANC's Abel Muzorewa and Sithole.

4.6 The Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF)

Rev Ndabaningi Sithole, together with others, initially established the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Following the loss of the post of president of the initial ZANU by
Sithole in the early 1970s, when Sithole (who by now was serving a jail term), denounced violence in order to be released from detention, Mugabe assumed the post of President of ZANU–PF, to distinguish it from the original ZANU. Sithole had lost grip of his ZANU party and immediate contact and control with his fellow comrades in the fighting zones. His former ZANU party had been taken over under a new president, namely Robert Mugabe, which later became known as the ZANU–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF). Meanwhile, the brutal civil war ravaging Rhodesia continued to intensify, with Mugabe’s ZANU–PF on one hand and Nkomo’s ZAPU on the other hand. ZANU and ZAPU had emerged as the only revolutionary and more militant parties fighting the Rhodesian government in the armed struggle that stretched over a period of about sixteen years. ZANU operated from Mozambique and ZAPU from Zambia. Many revolutionary leaders were arrested and imprisoned, who included Mugabe, Nkomo, Msika, Tekere, Sithole, Takawira, Tongogara, and many others (Makunike 1998:33). Some died in cold blood, such as Leopold Takawira (killed by a bomb placed in his car) and Josiah Tongogara (who died in a mysterious car accident soon after the announcing of a ceasefire in 1979). In both cases, some anonymous views suggest that the untimely deaths were a result of an in–house plot for the struggle of supremacy and power.

In the meantime, the liberation war had mounted to a greater extent, with battles and casualties recorded country–wide, involving Smith’s Rhodesia Front on one side, and the two liberation forces, Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People’s Resistance Army (ZIPRA), on the other side. The white minority regime’s defiance of international opinion and the subsequent armed struggle waged by African nationalists to gain black majority rule were traumatic episodes in the country’s history.

5. THE FUNCTION OF THE EXODUS NARRATIVE TO THE OPPRESSED DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD IN RHODESA

The exodus continues to be a refrain and a function of every time and space. The exodus narrative of Israel’s Egyptian bondage did present some relevance in the period of colonialism in Rhodesia. Ian Smith had pledged that no African will rule in Rhodesia, but Muzorewa did in the internal settlement (1978–79), followed by Mugabe (1980–2008). The collective fight by Africans against imperialism and the Smith regime brought about freedom and independence to the black people in a new Zimbabwe. According to Mugabe (1983:7) when it came to procedures
and personal relationships, he (Mugabe) was the reconciler and the peacemaker. Zimbabwe’s post-colonial life shall be discussed in detail in chapter five.

Since the occupation of colonial settlers in 1890, the land in Rhodesia had been divided on a racial basis, with the colour of one’s skin determining which part of the country one could farm. The Commonwealth Foundation Publication (CFP) (2000:2) states that the colonial government only benefited a minority of white settlers at the expense of the black majority. Rhodesian colonial society emphasised the prevalence of white settler racism and discrimination against Africans. As stated by Shivji (1998:5) colonialism too produced its ideologies of domination and ideologies of resistance. The slave had no soul; he could be bought and sold. This attitude on the part of colonial masters, culminated into the growth and development of African protest and resistance (Mlambo 2000:139).

According to Strydom (2000:206) when a person is sold as a slave he is as good as dead. The exodus narrative functions in every context and it is an irresistible phenomenon. Like Moses who denied enjoying the luxuries of palace privileges, moved out on a walk to witness the hard labour experienced by his own people, leading him to commit murder. What followed in Median exile was God’s revelation to liberate his people. It was when the sting of colonialism and oppression had reached its height among Africans in Rhodesia, that the atmosphere of self-examination grew (Mlambo 2000:139).

A number of African nationalists felt they had no choice but to undertake the role and risks taken by Moses. In the 1960’s, however, the African people, under their leaders, waged a protracted armed struggle through guerrilla warfare from neighbouring countries (Makunike 1998:1). The exodus narrative during this era functioned in that the nationalists were motivated by how other people managed to liberate themselves from the oppressor in the past. Many people, young and old, who felt despondent about the regime in Rhodesia trekked out in their numbers, in Zimbabwe's own exodus, to Mozambique and Zambia, where they became involved in the armed struggle for independence. Thus, as the right wins, so will the wrong lose. At long last, on 18 April 1980 Zimbabwe got her independence from Smith’s colonial rule and expectations were high at the dawn of this new dispensation.

At the height of the civil war in Rhodesia, Smith sought for an agreement with the nationalists which could not be reached. By mid–1977, the war had spread across the whole country, and Smith believed that his only hope of holding on to power lay in coming to an agreement with some of the more moderate black leaders. This arrangement became to be known as the “internal settlement” in which case Smith decided to incorporate some influential blacks in government, having calculated that it would put to an end the liberation war and African resistance.

In November 1977 Smith announced he was prepared to accept the principle of one–man–one–vote as a basis for discussions, and invited Muzorewa, Ndabaningi Sithole and Chief Chirau to meet him for talks. Banana did not take an active part, but was against the Smith–Home Settlement Proposal from 1971(Banana 1991:17). This internal settlement introduced a new constitution and a new country name called “Zimbabwe–Rhodesia”. Bishop Abel Muzorewa was orchestrated and maneuvered to become the head of state in the Zimbabwe–Rhodesia government in 1979. Meanwhile, Mugabe and Nkomo, representing ZANU–PF and ZAPU, respectively, rejected the internal settlement and the guerrilla warfare was intensified by the liberation forces of ZANLA (for ZANU–PF) and ZIPRA (for ZAPU). They rejected it because the internal settlement did not involve these main political movements.

7. THE LANCASTER HOUSE AGREEMENT

It seems that plans on the part of the Rhodesian government to foster an agreement with the blacks had been conceived. According to Blake (1977:43) the British policy in Southern Africa had reached an impasse. Now there was a chance to get out of it. As a result, the protracted armed struggle waged by both ZANU–PF and ZAPU had escalated to a level, which needed to be reconsidered.

In the fall of 1979, Britain called for a peace conference in London to which all African leaders were invited. The conference has come to be known as the Lancaster House Agreement. Eventually a new agreement was acceptable to everyone. According to Meredith (2008:8), Christopher Soames, under Margaret Thatcher's UK government was chosen as governor to mediate and to broker a peace deal towards elections of a black–majority government in
Zimbabwe. The Lancaster House Agreement stipulated that control over the country be returned to the United Kingdom in preparation for elections to be held in the spring of 1980. Some school of thought says that Mugabe was not satisfied with the arrangement, but he conceded on pressure by Samora Machel of Mozambique.

7.1 Elections, new Zimbabwe and a new era (1980)

After Lancaster House talks, the opposing parties came to the drawing board. The Lancaster House Agreement played a crucial role in facilitating dialogue in Rhodesia’s civil war. Elections were held in the country and on 18 April 1980, the first Zimbabwe’s independence was celebrated when Robert Mugabe emerged the winner and became Prime Minister of the Republic of Zimbabwe, with Canaan Banana becoming the President, after Nkomo declined the offer of presidency. Two years later, the capital city, Salisbury, was renamed Harare.

Zimbabwe’s independence was a result of sacrifice, commitment, and unwavering support of both Mozambique and Zambia. When Zimbabwe got independence in 1980, many former white military personnel crossed over to South Africa. According to Meredith (2008:51) South Africa recruited five thousand former Rhodesian military personnel into their defence force, including Selous Scouts, and set up establishing a network of agents, informers, spies and saboteurs inside Zimbabwe. According to Meredith (2008:51) South Africa’s principal objective was to keep Zimbabwe in a weak and defensive position, to destabilise it to ensure that it presented neither a security threat nor an example of a stable African state.

According to Bhebe and Ranger (1995:1) Zimbabwe needs to remember and to understand the war of liberation. They need to understand it at the level of high analysis and understand it at the level of suffering and trauma. Bhebe (1999:10) asserts that:

The liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, which between 1964 and 1980 took the form of guerrilla warfare, was actually the culmination of a long process as far back as 1893 and which in the years had developed through various distinct stages. The initial stages of the struggle were characterised by a total rejection of western imperialist capitalism, so that the Ndebele in 1895 and later the Ndebele together with the Shona in 1896/7 strove not to reform white rule but to throw the whites and everything they stood for out of the country.
Makunike (1998:1) says that the liberation of Zimbabwe was a mass effort of determination by all the oppressed people from all walks of life to restore their human dignity from racial dehumanisation. More about the developments with the new government will be discussed in chapter 5. But, worthy mentioning is the following statement to the new government by one of Africa’s statesmen, Julius Nyerere, who also attended the independence celebrations in Harare on 18 April 1980. Nyerere greeted Prime Minister Robert Mugabe with these words: “You have inherited a jewel. Keep it that way” (Scholz 2004:19). Simply put, Nyerere’s statement meant that Mugabe was inheriting a country endowed with lots of resources for development and for the country’s continued sustenance and so all these needed to be safeguarded. At independence in 1980, the Rhodesian economy was good.

Although Rhodesia had undergone a period of sanctions by Britain and the European Union following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), the country’s economy had not totally collapsed by the time of Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980. Other countries had bilateral relations in Rhodesia. Besides, when things promised to improve following the Lancaster House Agreement, sanctions were immediately lifted and many countries channeled investment in Zimbabwe.

8. CRITICAL REFLECTION

It is also on the basis of this realisation of the particular alternatives of its time that liberation motifs in which biblical figures like Moses as contained in the exodus narrative, give their readers a liberating message. In Rhodesia, although many Africans were instrumental to the end result of the liberation struggle, I will deliberately choose Mugabe as a type of Moses and the Rhodesian Smith as the Egyptian Pharaoh. The exodus narrative is being used to highlight the racial divide that existed in colonial Rhodesia and that which is being perpetrated by some politicians in independent Zimbabwe.

The upbringing of Mugabe is similar to that of Moses (Ex 2:1–10). Moses grew up in an Egyptian palace. Mugabe grew up and in benefited from the colonial system where he was educated at a mission school (Kutama, in Zvimba, near a town called Chinhoyi “Sinoa” during the colonial era). Moses discovered that he was not an Egyptian but a Hebrew while Mugabe on the other hand also discovered that he was not a Rhodesian, but a native African. They both
rebelled against the systems that had brought them up. Both at the end managed to lead their people to freedom, although in the exodus narrative the name God is central to the freedom epic. Moses ended up fighting for the release of his people from Egyptian bondage, while on the other hand Mugabe fought to remove the Rhodesian colonial yoke. My delimitation of these similarities are a deliberate attempt to reconstruct the liberation motif of ancient Israelite tradition so to motivate modern readers of the Bible to see that the oppressive situations of ancient times permeate through all periods of human existence.

Moses left Egypt to go into the land of the Medians and only came back on God’s revelation and instruction to lead his people to freedom (Ex 3:9). Many people particularly the young, left colonial Rhodesia and went into Mozambique and Zambia and came back to fight for their freedom.

Because of time and space between our time and that of ancient Israelites in which case modern technology was not yet invented, Moses and the children of Israel did not have the blessing of modern weapons to engage Pharaoh with them, otherwise they could have used them. This view comes as a result of later wars fought by the children of Israel against the Philistines, the Amalekites, etc, in which weapons such as swords were used (e.g., 1 Sm 11:11; 15:8; 17:49; Jdg 7:25) while still maintaining that God was leading them in such battles. My assumption in that regard is that, for as long as a nation is held in a struggle to liberate itself from an oppressive regime, the first thing that comes to mind is “how to get out” of that situation by using any means at one’s disposal. That is the human point of view in response to crises. But, in the exodus narrative, God fights his wars as he desires. In fact, the “cry” of Israel for God’s intervention, is indicative of humanity’s failure to deal with threatening crises. Further still, Canaan was across the Red Sea and on the other side of the Sinai Desert, while for the Blacks in colonial Rhodesia the Promised Land (Canaan) was the same land they were leaving behind but were to come back and fight for it. So in the context of Zimbabweans, there needed to be the going out (in terms of actually moving – the exodus). Many people had been misplaced by the armed conflict; others had fled to neighbouring countries because of the harsh colonial regime and its oppressive systems.

Those who had braved the colonial imperialism could also celebrate with others over the fact that their promised land which had been robbed from their ancestors, had now returned to them. The
songs of joy that were sung by the liberated Israelites when they crossed the Red Sea (Ex 15:1–18) and also by Miriam (Ex 15:21), were an expression of victory over an enemy who, for many years, had wrought imperialism in the land and thought he would not be dismantled. When independence came in 1980, Zimbabweans had to celebrate the return to their mother land in songs and in dances. All-night celebrations were conducted in many parts of the country, and deservedly so.

The crossing of the Red Sea, the manna and water from a rock in the desert, were all miraculous acts performed by God on behalf of the Israelites. According to the Collins English Learner’s Dictionary (1985: s.v “miracle”) a miracle is a happening which cannot be explained naturally and is due to God or other super-natural power. Anderson (1988:74) defines a miracle as a supernatural act, which is an act by God but is not necessarily a complete manifestation of God’s act and will. A few examples are worthy noting. In the exodus narrative, miracles include: acts of wonder (e.g., the plagues Ex 7–11; Moses’ staff turns into a snake Ex 4:3–4; Moses’ hand becomes leprous 4:6–9), the feeding miracles: water from a rock (Ex 17:5–7), manna and quails (Ex 16:10–35) and the dividing of the sea water and the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14:29) and the fall of Jericho (Jos 6:1–21).

9. CONCLUSION

The context of oppression and suffering as emphasised by the Hebrews’ own outcry symbolises the liberating activity of God. In the exodus tradition, God’s people were mistreated. The cries of the Israelites in Egypt reached God, who responded by raising the man Moses, to deliver the people of God from bondage in Egypt. Much of Africa had been colonised by the West. The Western colonisers have been masters over the African people for over a century. In Rhodesia Cecil John Rhodes colonised this piece of land south of the Sahara in the late 1880s, and since then, as already noted above, Africans in Rhodesia were subjected to all kinds of abuses, marginalisation, injustices and oppression. Africans went through a hell of torture in Rhodesia. Most privileges in colonial Rhodesia, such as good education, good farming areas, health facilities, positions of authority and decision-making, were all a preserve of the white community. In many cases, the church in Rhodesia demonstrated ignorance of the richness in African culture, and this increased the fear and suspicion among nationals that the Christian church would want to see a further erosion of African culture, and hence would consolidate
white oppression and seniority upon the black people in Rhodesia. Banana (1991:40) states that relevant theology should not be divorced from the experiences of the people, past and present and from their vision of the future.

On the other hand, the church played a central role in bringing literacy to the African people by establishing institutions of learning such as schools and vocational training centres, as well as building clinics and hospitals, particularly in rural Rhodesia, where the majority of the black Africans live. Christianity has never justified war, but in the past events where battles for liberation were fought for self-rule, the church has always taken its central position to broker peace initiatives in a non-violent manner, although this would always have been an uneasy undertaking. As cited by Makunike (1998:41): “our church, the United Methodist Church, like many other church denominations, supported Chief Tangwena in his just fights against the Rhodesian Government.”

Meanwhile, Zimbabweans could not remain silent forever, given the situation at their disposal in colonial Rhodesia. Realising that Rhodesia was not prepared to give the black people their independence, the African nationalists sacrificed their lives through guerrilla warfare, which started in the early 1960s, but was intensified in the 1970s. Many political leaders from both ZANU and ZAPU were detained, and others died in detention. As opposed to the Christian teachings of socialism and peace, Zimbabwe’s struggle for independence took a violent route. Unfortunately, that route simply exacerbated the suffering and the deaths of the people, most of them innocent civilians. The ceasefire and the peace that followed were not necessarily due to either Mugabe’s or Nkomo’s victory over Smith’s army. It was actually due to a negotiated agreement at Lancaster House in England in 1979. The internal settlement between Smith’s Rhodesian Front (RF) and Muzorewa’s United African National Council (UANC), did not yield any meaningful result, as the internal settlement which gave the country a new name called Zimbabwe—Rhodesia, was short-lived (about six months). The main nationalist parties, ZANU and ZAPU, did not recognise the internal settlement, hence the war continued. A negotiated agreement at a Lancaster House Conference in 1979 was reached, which ended the war and brought cease-fire resulting in the independence in 1980. Hopes were high among Zimbabweans at the dawn of a new day in a post-colonial era.

Among those that wrote about the liberation struggle, Canaan Banana, Bishop Abel Muzorewa
and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference have not only made use of the exodus narrative in their efforts against colonialism, but have also been able to give reference and similarities between the liberation of the Israelis from Egyptian bondage and the liberation of Africans from the Rhodesian domination. Banana (1990:44) says that in the midst of the Hebrews’ hopelessness and weakness, a man named Moses answered the divine call to provide much needed leadership and direction. Moses was viewed by his people as a saviour sent to rescue them from their misery and degradation under the Egyptian Pharaohs.

Banana gives reverence of the African plight when he sees the war of liberation as God’s way of intervening to secure and ensure the blacks’ dignity, freedom, self-determination and happiness. According to RCBC (1977:2) in their pastoral letter in trying to answer the call for the book of Exodus, one realises that evangelical justice demands not only the liberation of oneself, but also the liberation of one’s fellow citizens. By, this the Catholic Bishops did not intend to influence people to use force or violence. As has been shown in their other writings previously, the Catholic Bishops condemned violence and war to achieve noble ends. According to The Rhodesia Herald (9 Nov 1970) the Reverend Fred Rea was quoted as saying:

However, I do not believe that in Rhodesia the interests of freedom will be served by a policy of violence, nor am I able to reconcile its advocacy with the way of Jesus Christ. …I recognize that my criticism of the World Council of Churches (WCC) will anger and grieve many of my African friends…having watched for over fifty years the continuing heritage of violence bred by violence in my own country, Northern Ireland, I feel justified in saying to my brethren, both black and white, this must not be our way in Rhodesia. Here we shall overcome evil with good.

Because the exodus narrative is a story about a people who were once oppressed and were liberated by God, the analogy drawn from the ancient Israelite narrative will inspire readers to realise that God is still at work in modern life and can intervene in any situation where people are being oppressed, suffering, discriminated against or exploited. Kim (2008:1) explores it much clearer by saying that the outcry to God of every suffering people, like that of Hebrews in Egypt, operates at the place where humanity meets God through the dialogical interaction of human lament and divine intervention. Virtually, almost all the works which have been written – both religious and secular – compiled together have emerged to address key fundamental issues in the existence of humanity and these fundamentals are of social, political and economic nature. The exodus tradition is plotted around the phenomenon of oppression.
Chapter Five


1. BACKGROUND TO THE PRESENT AFFILIATION IN ZIMBABWE

In the previous chapter, I discussed the function of the exodus narrative in Rhodesia, in which the experiences of the Zimbabweans during the colonial era were highlighted. I demonstrated as well both the positive and negative roles played by the church during the colonial period up to the time of Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980.

This chapter discusses the function of the exodus narrative in an independent Zimbabwe, in which the period between 1980 and 2008 is covered. This is the period during which Robert Mugabe has been head of state since independence from Rhodesia in 1980. A number of issues are examined in this period which to a large extent, include factors that have contributed to the downturn of the economy of Zimbabwe, subsequently affecting life in a negative way. According to Vale (2005) Zimbabwean society has faced enormous problems of political, economic and social nature, collectively called the Zimbabwean crisis.

The Zimbabwean economy is in shambles. The impact of suffering amongst Zimbabweans because of economic upheavals led the electorate to lose confidence in Mugabe. In the elections held on 28 March 2008, the Zimbabwean people had cast their votes for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), in clear conscience of expressing their despondency on Mugabe and his ZANU–PF regime. However, Mugabe – as he had done in previous polls – denied the Zimbabwean people their liberation. First, he ordered a recount of the votes, and secondly he ordered a run–off. The date was set for 27 June 2008.

The period prior to the run–off elections was deliberately launched as a time–span during which horror would be exerted upon the people of Zimbabwe to “re–orient” them so that they would change their minds and vote for ZANU–PF. People experienced torture, murder, mayhem, and brutal persecution. Many people died, thousands of others were misplaced, and still others went missing. The opposition leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, escaped death and took refuge at the Dutch
Embassy in Harare. He subsequently withdrew from contesting the run–off elections. Mugabe then took advantage of the orchestrated opportunity and went to the polls alone. Barely two days after the elections, was he sworn–in as Zimbabwe’s president for the next five years. After his inauguration, Mugabe flies to Egypt to join other African Heads of State at the African Union Summit which was still under way. This is oppression at its highest level. Mugabe could be worse than the oppressive Pharaoh of ancient Egypt. At the moment, Mugabe is never likely to be tolerant. His behaviour is likely to get worse as people’s suffering heightens.

It is in this context that this chapter seeks to underscore the theme of liberation from oppression derived from the exodus narrative. This study seeks to highlight liberation from a specific situation of crisis. It is an attempt to reflect on what it means to read the exodus tradition from a specific context of struggle in Zimbabwe. Although this study will continue to dialogue with the biblical narrative of a liberated people of an ancient period (Ex 1–15) Zimbabwe's situation and ancient Israel's situation will never have a definitive parallel “head–for–head” with each other. What is essential is the theme of oppression and liberation which are common features in every space and time. The pharaoh can be any system that oppresses human beings anywhere and any time. Moses could be any person who inspires the oppressed people towards their self–emancipation.

A shift from life of suffering and oppression to life of peace, justice and happiness could be metaphorically regarded as Israel’s escape from Egyptian bondage to the Promised Land of Canaan. In this study, the narrative of Exodus–Joshua does not need to be confined in terms of a physical geography, because even the physical geography of the ancient biblical world itself has changed significantly over period of time. But, situations and struggles affecting humanity, defy time and space. According to Croatto (1981:28–29) the exodus experience becomes the decisive event in Israel’s history, but through a process of hermeneutical reflection and re-appropriation, it also becomes a message for all humankind.

Readers will note that in a Zimbabwean situation, the liberation motif drawn from the exodus narrative will comprise a number of critical facets. It is not merely “freedom” in a political sense, although the political situation will feature pre–dominantly. Traditionally, some readers have usually drawn the liberation theme from the exodus narrative in a political sense. Some have limited the exodus narrative by trying to appropriate the Book of Exodus theologically only. But,
I think that is not doing justice to the narrative that involves people, a nation, a king, economy, trade, culture, politics, religion and many other life issues.

In some cases – and unfortunately so – some people have attempted to justify their revolutionary endeavours and orchestrated a picturesque of their ambitions by introducing the exodus narrative theme in their guise–some pursuits of prevailing events in their contexts. The “defenceless” biblical story of oppression and liberation of a specific people is quite often abusively appropriated in a myopic and narrow way to achieve certain political or economic ends. In such cases, it is suffice to say that many people would lose sight of the “other meanings” in that narrative which could be fundamental and essential in the everyday lives of human beings if read in a broader perspective.

Liberation can be described in terms of either individual liberation or collective liberation, as a nation or communities. Liberation from political oppression is simply one of the many aspects of “freedoms” which the exodus narrative could portray to modern readers in the post–biblical times. Apart from liberation in a political perspective, the following “liberations” will be discussed in this chapter in view of the exodus narrative: economic liberation, liberation from poverty, religious liberation, liberation from gender discrimination and liberation from evil (e.g., murder, rape, child sexual abuse, etc), to name a few. These “liberations” shall be discussed in due course in this study.

Among a few people who have written about the exodas and the Zimbabwean situation, are the Catholics. In this study, the views of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC) – a brainchild of Rhodesia Catholic Bishop Conference (RCBC) after Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980 – will be made use of extensively. My own views and experiences will – to a large extent – form part of the discussion. But, first I will discuss the background to the present affliction in Zimbabwe which has contributed to the decline of the country’s economy – causing such a high magnitude of suffering of people – to justify why Zimbabwe needs liberation.

2. WHO IS ROBERT GABRIEL MUGABE?

Because Robert Mugabe’s life story takes a central part in this discussion, I have decided to dedicate a topic about events connected to him. Heidi Holland’s chronology about Mugabe will
assist readers. In his book entitled: *Dinner With Mugabe*, Holland (2008: xvii–xix) gives the following chronology of key events in Robert Mugabe’s life:

1924 Robert Gabriel Mugabe born in Kutama, Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia).
1945 Leaves St Francis Xavier College, Kutama, having qualified as a teacher.
1949 Obtains scholarship to University College of Fort Hare, South Africa, achieving first of seven degrees.
1957 Moves to Ghana; meets Sally Hayfron.
1961 Marries Sally Hayfron. Zimbabwe African People’s Union (Zapu) is formed to replace banned NDP.
1962 Zapu banned; leaders arrested.
1963 Zimbabwe African National Union (Zanu) formed as rival to Zapu.
1964 Mugabe and others detained.
1966 Three–year–old Nhamo Mugabe dies in Ghana; imprisoned Mugabe is denied permission to attend his son’s funeral.
1974 Detainees released from prison for settlement talks.
1975 Herbert Chitepo, leader of Zanu in exile, is assassinated in Zambia. Mugabe and Edgar Tekere leave Rhodesia to join guerrillas in Mozambique but are initially placed under restriction there.
1977 Mugabe gains control of Zanu and its army.
1978 Zanu military leader Rex Nhongo (aka Solomon Mujuru) crushes internal revolt aimed at toppling Mugabe.
1980 Mugabe becomes prime minister of independent Zimbabwe.
1981 Apartheid South Africa embarks on campaign to destabilise Mugabe.
1995 Streets riots in Harare against rising prices and unemployment. 
1996 Mugabe marries Grace Marufu in lavish ceremony at Kutama. 
1997 New Labour government under Tony Blair wins UK election. 
1998 Mugabe sends troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo to intervene in civil war and plunder riches. 
1999 Repressive action against Zimbabwe’s media and judiciary increases. Mugabe is accosted by a Gay Rights activist in London. Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is formed in Harare. Relation with Britain deteriorates. 
2004 Leader of the MDC Morgan Tsvangirai acquitted of treason charges. 

2.1 Robert Mugabe as head of state in Independent Zimbabwe

The Lancaster House agreement of 1979 facilitated independence for Zimbabwe. The country no longer needed war. Mozambicans had also expressed their concern over Zimbabwe’s guerrilla warfare waged from Mozambique. According to Flower (1987:247–248):

President Samora Machel of Mozambique had phoned and told Mugabe bluntly to sign for ceasefire and indicated that if he didn’t all he could expect in Mozambique would be political asylum, for this time the country was suffering from Rhodesian raids, damaged communications and food shortages and needed the war to come to an end.

As stated by Arnold (2005:523) the guerrilla warfare in Mozambique had cost thirty thousand lives (official estimate) and probably a good many more while at least one million Africans had been uprooted during the course of the struggle. The beginning of 1980 saw a watershed in Zimbabwe’s political environment. Lord Soames, under Margaret Thatcher’s governance, presided over Zimbabwe’s elections. According to Amold (2005:522) the elections were held over five days from 27 February and the results were announced on 4 March 1980, Mugabe’s
ZANU–PF winning 57 seats.

When Robert Mugabe became head of state of independent Zimbabwe, many people had expected that he would become a true Moses to lead the people of Zimbabwe to the "Promised Land". According to Sithole (1988:65) all recorded revolutions, before and during actualisation, promised people: "Power to the downtrodden people" but after the revolution is established, reality becomes "power to the rulers". Scholz (2004:19) says that when Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere arrived in Harare for the independence celebrations on 18 April 1980, he greeted Zimbabwe's new Prime Minister Robert Mugabe with these words: "You have inherited a jewel. Keep it that way." Mugabe never measured up to these words of wisdom from a revered African leader. According to ZCBC (1980:2) today in Zimbabwe, after the war which brought too much suffering and anxiety, the citizenry or better, the entire family of the country, is gradually coming together and is more conscious of its unity.

However, Mugabe must be credited for some notable successes a few years into independence. In the first few years into independence, Mugabe made some great strides towards development in some critical areas of human life. Some examples of success stories which would be credited to Mugabe are on: education, health and roads. A few years into independence were marked with success and development such as building of schools, roads, clinics and hospitals (Mlambo 1997:55). According to Mlambo (1997:55) Zimbabwe made notable strides in the provision of social services to the Zimbabwean majority, economic and other problems confronting the country notwithstanding. The most impressive advances were recorded in the areas of education and health. However, the situation was never to remain constant and consistent as time went by.

During the early 1990s, the Zimbabwean economy began to crumble, with poverty and starvation devastating Zimbabweans on a large scale. Zimbabwe has become a bad name among many people and the surrounding nations, and even abroad. According to Sachikonye (2004:5) although the theme "reconciliation" featured in the first major national broadcast by Robert Mugabe in April 1980, it was not translated into a coherent policy or project afterwards. According to the exodus narrative, liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage was due to God's miraculous power. Although it can be deduced in some parts of Scripture (such as in Joshua, where militancy was undertaken) as already noted in this study – Scripture does not urge individuals of the post–biblical world to wage war to liberate themselves. It is equally a violation
and abuse of the scriptural teaching to wage a so-called a “holy-war” in the name of God when certain individuals are simply inclined to perpetuate personal interests and political hegemonies.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, so many things have changed – the colonial spirit of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have been buried and forgotten. With the magnitude of condemnation of colonialism by the world, no foreigner – black or white – would dare to invade and colonise other people’s nations.

The widely publicized statement by Robert Mugabe wherever he went – “Zimbabwe will never be a colony again” – was but a simple political rhetoric and “cheap fooling” of the Zimbabwean electorare as well as leaders of other states to believe him that perhaps Britain and America might still have had stakes and political interests in Zimbabwe. Some African leaders, a few in Europeans and Asians, have supported Mugabe on the basis of his allegations that former colonial master Britain is still meddling in the internal affairs of independent and sovereign Zimbabwe.

Taken at face value, Mugabe’s allegations might sound legitimate in the ears of an ignorant observer. But, if truth be told, Mugabe has simply lost support from the majority of Zimbabweans who now support Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). It is correct to say that on the basis of funding, MDC draws the bulk of its finance base from among the white community, just like any other revolutionary movement such as Zanu–PF during the colonial era in Rhodesia when they got financial and material aid for example from China, Russia and Yugoslavia, to name but just a few countries. The bone of contention on the part of Mugabe over MDC lies in the fact that Britain – former colonizers – has several times criticized Mugabe’s policies and the loss of rule of law in Zimbabwe. Britain managed to convince the European Union that Mugabe is a tyranny. No fair-minded Zimbabwean would want to entertain the thought that Britain would once more want to colonise Zimbabwe. Mugabe knows this, but is simply not being fair to himself and to the suffering people of Zimbabwe, because of power–hunger.

On the same note, Mugabe calculated his move very well on how he would convince and win the support of African States most of whom had once been under colonial rule and that his message to the world including his long–time allies China and Cuba, would carry weight by accusing
Britain of meddling in Zimbabwe’s internal affairs. Mugabe has alleged that his effort to empower his landless black people was a legitimate cause, citing the loss of land by white commercial farmers in the fast-track land redistribution exercise in the early 1990s, as the reason for Britain’s and European Union’s tough reaction – by way of an economic embargo – on the Zimbabwean Government.

However, the prevailing atmosphere in Africa – in Zimbabwe, for example – suggests that liberation is an “on-going” exercise. As shall be discussed below, although Zimbabwe got independent from colonial Rhodesia, the Zimbabwean people are suffering and being oppressed by their own black government. History repeats itself. One cannot be certain nor guaranteed of consistency in terms of democracy and freedom ever if the ZANU–PF regime is replaced in Zimbabwe. At some point, Mugabe was revered as a beacon of justice in Africa, but he suddenly turned into an uncompromising tyrant against his own people.

3. THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT IN ZIMBABWE

The economy of Zimbabwe has been in shambles since 1991 (Juana and Mabugu 2005:344). Output declined in most of the production sectors, leading to many job losses. According to Dachs (2007b:1):

Zimbabwe is crippled by the highest rate of inflation in the world, unemployment of more than eighty percent and shortages of foreign currency and fuel. Food shortages are acute, large numbers of people are migrating to the neighbouring countries of South Africa and Botswana, and with elections scheduled for March 2008, and political violence has intensified.

Moyo (2008:7) projects Zimbabwe’s inflation to be at one hundred and sixty thousand percent. Some say that the Zimbabwe’s inflation risen up to nine million percent by June 2008. Unemployment rate could be over eighty percent. Every time civil servants get an increase in salaries, virtually all commercial activities shift their standpoint in view of the latest developments, thereby threatening human existence in the country. Prices of commodities change almost on a daily basis.

In my qualitative research, it revealed that the economy of Zimbabwe has deteriorated tremendously. On the question of whether the economy of Zimbabwe has really gone down,
Mabvundwi (2006) responded by saying that Zimbabwe’s economy is hemorrhaging to the extent that only those who are in power tend to benefit from the status quo.

According to ZCBC (2003:5):

Zimbabwe’s economy was one of the strongest economies on the whole continent. Selfishness of wanting to gain continuous control over the economy, on the other hand, there was bad planning with political decisions dictating economic processes. Other factors as “stay-aways” by employees, lack of enough export produce, growth of the parallel market, lack of foreign currency, lack of proper funding for the land reform programme, disruption of farming activities, lack of confidence of investors, and other factors, culminated in the drastic weakening of the Zimbabwe dollar and non-growth of the economy.

Many factors have created the vulnerability to the economic decline in Zimbabwe. Socio-political factors have affected negatively Zimbabwe’s economic life. Discussed below, are these factors which include, among others: the genocide in Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces, ESAP, Zimbabwe’s involvement in the DRC, the land redistribution programme, the constitution referendum and corruption, among others. Operation Restore Order – the clean-up exercise (in 2005) – hit the last nail on Zimbabwe’s haemorrhaging economy.

3.1 The genocide in the Matabeleland and in the Midlands provinces

Hartnack (2001) says that although some critics have hailed Mugabe’s first ten years as leader to be superb, that period was marred by a genocide which was intended to suppress the uprising in Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces.

It might be legitimate account that there were cases of dissident activities during 1982 in both Matebeleland and Midlands Provinces, respectively. But to say that Joshua Nkomo was architecture in those dissident activities is another thing. Available sources suggest that some people fell victims of dissident activities. According to Stiff (2000:160) during May 1982, a white farmer was shot and wounded in an ambush. Two days later a black truck driver was shot and killed near Tsholotsho. Later that month a farmer’s wife drove straight through an ambush and escaped unharmed.
Under normal circumstances, it is correct for a country’s security institution to respond to such dissident acts. But, it is another thing to deploy a fully-armed special army to torture and kill unarmed members of society. Mugabe and his Fifth Brigade are blamed for the Gukurahundi in which thousands of innocent civilians were massacred.

This brutal act created a great amount of mistrust on the part of the Ndebele people towards Mugabe – whom they perceived hated them on the basis of ethnical differences – and so was committed to treat them ruthlessly. Mugabe is Shona – the largest ethnical tribe in Zimbabwe. According to ZCBC (1983:1):

Violent reaction against dissident activity has, to our certain knowledge, brought about the maiming and death of hundreds and hundreds of innocent people who are neither dissidents nor collaborators. We are convinced by incontrovertible evidence many wanton atrocities and brutalities have been and are still being perpetrated. We have already forwarded such evidence to Government.

It is proper to discuss the civil war which took place in Matabeleland in account of the veteran politician and former Vice President of Zimbabwe, Joshua Mqabuko Nyongolo Nkomo.

Joshua Nkomo was born in 1917 and died in 1999. According to Bute and Harmer (1997:46) Nkomo was educated in South Africa and returned to work in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) as a social worker in 1945. Nkomo was instrumental in the formation of many African liberation movements in Southern Rhodesia, such as: Rhodesian African National Congress (RANC) (1951), National Democratic Party (NDP) (1960), and the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) (1960). Nkomo was imprisoned for ten years after calling on Britain to overthrow the illegal white Rhodesian regime, in 1964.

Mugabe’s character was always violent and militant. He had always believed in the war and armed struggle to bring freedom to the Zimbabwe people. According to Meredith (2008:2) whereas other imprisoned nationalists, such as his main rival Joshua Nkomo, the leader of the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU), were willing to come to terms with Ian Smith, Mugabe regarded the armed struggle as an essential part of the process of establishing a new society. The barbaric killings of innocent civilians in Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces in 1982 on Mugabe’s order did not come as a surprise.
Prior to the 1980 elections, in which Nkomo had stood for ZAPU’s presidential candidate, the main parties including ZAPU were accused of using intimidation, but the British thought that ZANU–PF was the main culprits (Meredith 2008:10). According to Meredith, Nkomo roared, “People are being terrorised. It is terror. There is fear in people’s eyes” (Meredith 2008:10). Muzorewa and Nkomo had initially urged Lord Soames, the Rhodesian governor towards Zimbabwe’s elections in 1980, to disqualify ZANU. Even his closest advisors were in favour of a ban. This request was, however, never taken seriously by Britain.

After independence in 1980, in which became Prime Minister after winning the elections with 57 seats, Nkomo became Minister of Home Affairs, but was dismissed for alleged involvement in coup attempt in 1982. Following the Unity Accord in 1987, Nkomo became the Vice–President on the amalgamation of ZAPU and ZANU.

The Matabeleland massacres of 1982 to 1987 by the Korean–trained Zimbabwean soldiers, the Fifth Brigade, remain an unforgettable, if not unpardonable act among the people who experienced the horrific terror there. According to the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and Legal Resources Foundation (LRF) (1997:28) the Fifth Brigade committed serious atrocities against the civilian population. The Fifth Brigade was an almost entirely Shona–speaking military crack unit and the Ndebele–speaking members of the Fifth Brigade who were part of it were kept sorely on the basis of their knowledge of the Matebeleland terrain and language. The brutal atrocity was dubbed Gukurahundi by Mugabe’s government.

According to the report by CCJP and LRF (1997:28) Gukurahundi in Shona language means “the rain that washes away the chaff from the last harvest, before the spring rains”. The chaff seemed to refer to the people in Matebeleland and the Midlands provinces which were supposed to be washed away. The Fifth Brigade also starved people to death by imposing a food embargo. The Fifth Brigade’s operations in Matebeleland included depriving people of food through closure of stores, grinding mills and butcheries and by burning granaries.

In response to the question of practicality of democracy in Zimbabwe, Mabvundwi (2006) said that the army has been highjacked to become a partisan organisation, coined to ruthlessly deal with dissenting voices mourning for liberation. Instead of the army to be a national military institution designed for national security, it has been highjacked to serve individual interests. As
stated by Mandaza (2001:1) sensing danger at the height of the civil war, Joshua Nkomo escaped death by a whisker when he tried to sneak into neighbouring Botswana after realising that Mugabe was hunting him.

3.1.1 The unity accord

The Unity Accord was a culmination of the Gukurahundi, which was signed on 22 December 1987 between PF–ZAPU and ZANU–PF. If a society has to live in harmony together, unity is not a choice but a requirement. According to ZCBC (1988:1): “We must now use this newly won unity and strength to build the Church, fill our families with the love of Christ and our country with the spirit of reconciliation.” The Unity Day has become an important event in Zimbabwe’s national calendar, in which on the 22nd of December every year, it has become a holiday. The first and late president of Zimbabwe then, Rev Canaan Banana, brokered the peace initiatives between Mugabe and Nkomo. Nkomo signed the Unity Accord in an attempt to halt the Government’s military brutality and genocide in Matabeleland. To President Mugabe the Unity Accord was designed to usurp opposition in ZAPU, so that ZANU–PF would be in control and any other party would be seen as a dissident party. The political implications of the Unity Accord were contradictory.

As we shall see later in my discussion of the political parties in Zimbabwe, ZAPU had to revive under a new leadership. Despite Mugabe’s deliberate scheme to downplay Nkomo, the multitudes that thronged the heroes acre – the national shrines for Zimbabwe’s liberation heroes and heroines – at Nkomo’s burial in 1999, to pay their tribute to “Father Zimbabwe” or “Umdhala wethu” (in Ndebele) – as Nkomo was affectionately known – bore testimony that Nkomo was a gallant and true liberator, and a man of the people. Nkomo was the soul of a nation. According to Zacharias (1997:141) when the soul of a nation is scarred, its children are part of the loss. Zimbabweans felt to have been robbed of a liberator, a father and peace lover.

3.2 Economic structural adjustment programme (ESAP) (1990–1995)

According to Mlambo (1997:1) ESAP was the International Monetary Fund (IMF)’s and World Bank’s reform package. Zimbabwe’s economy was already showing signs of a downturn in the late eighties. In 1991, Zimbabwe became a member of the IMF and World Bank respectively.
Faced with poor economic performance and rising levels of debt, the government adopted an Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991. Zimbabwe implemented the IMF’s and World Bank’s economic structural adjustment programmes in an attempt to revamp her ailing economy. According to Gundani (2003:479) the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) introduced the country to the liberalisation of the economy and all the sectors including agriculture. According to ZCBC (1998:2):

Our country has high expectations because the war of liberation was fought over the injustices of racism and colonialism. In the first decade we saw great strides in access to health and education services. Nevertheless, serious problems in the economy saw the Government introducing ESAP in the 1990s, without consultation or due explanation.

The ESAP in Zimbabwe as elsewhere was accompanied by a decline in incomes and increases in the price of food and other essentials as markets were liberalised.

3.3 Zimbabwe’s participation in the civil war in Democratic Republic of Congo (1998)

To indicate how the Zimbabwean government gradually became oppressive, in August 1998 Mugabe – who had by then assumed the post of chairman of Southern African Development Community (SADC) – deployed initially three thousand Zimbabwean troops to help Laurent Kabila’s DRC fight against the rebels. According to Meredith (2008:148):

The number eventually increased to eleven thousand. When questioned about the cost to Zimbabwe, estimated to be at least US $ 1 million per day, Mugabe retorted, “Don’t talk of resources as if resources are more important than the security of the people and the sovereignty of the country. The people must survive. The only way to bring peace to the country is to confront the rebels.”

The Democratic Republic of Congo’s (DRC’s) civil war contributed negatively to Zimbabwe’s economic problems, in terms of losses in both human resources and materials. Mugabe got Zimbabwe involved in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which resulted in casualties and deaths of a number of Zimbabwean soldiers in that conflict. Zimbabwe’s intervention in 1998 war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) cost the country the downturn in the economy, which further exacerbated Zimbabwe’s already serious foreign exchange shortages. Zimbabwe was a young and ailing economy. Other than targeted resources for personal gain in
DRC, as it later emerged, Zimbabwe had no legitimate mandate to participate in the DRC’s conflict. According to Meredith (2008:149):

At the centre of Congo network was Emmerson Mnangagwa, Zanu–PF’s business controller. Another key figure was John Bredenkemp, a former Rhodesian sanctions-buster and millionaire arms dealer. General Vitalis Zvinavashe, the armed forces commander, who owned a transport business, won contracts to haul supplies to the Congo. To keep the army content, special allowances were paid to all soldiers serving in the Congo. Officers and other ranks were also encouraged to make their own deals, usually involving consumer goods. “There are fortunes to be made in the Congo,” said colonel Tshinga Dube on television. “They import everything there, even potatoes and cooking oil”, he added, “So why rush to conquer the rebels?”

When one analyses the time frame of the DRC civil war and Zimbabwe’s involvement and the fall of the economy in Zimbabwe during the same period, one would but conclude that Zimbabwe’s participation in the DRC war was a huge suicide as it expended a lot on the country’s material and financial resources. The army command would be content with the involvement in the DRC war for as long as they would expropriate on the scandalous opportunities there, using swindled Zimbabwe’s resources.

3.4 The land reform programme: the constitutional referendum

The constitutional referendum was a draft Constitution which was presented to the Zimbabwean citizens towards the amendment or change of the Constitution operating in Zimbabwe. Members of the public are provided with the opportunity to approve it or critique before approval. Any serious flaws present in this constitutional referendum will then mean that the public have the right to reject its adoption. According to Meredith (2008:162) in 1998 the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) was launched with Morgan Tsvangirai as president, seeking public support for a new constitution. The denial by the Zimbabwean majority of the constitutional referendum and the emergence of MDC as an opposition political party, created an environment for ZANU–PF government to declare horror upon members of the public, influencing land invasions countrywide.

Violence continued to be intensified after elections. Mugabe’s seizure of farms was political, because the farms belonged to white commercial farmers whom Mugabe accused of sponsoring
MDC. According *The Mail and Guardian* (10 April 2000) the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) was repeatedly warned to stop supporting MDC. Mugabe warned that “death will befall” his opponents, while veteran leaders threatened war.

In 2000 the constitutional referendum marked a watershed in Zimbabwean land politics. According to ZCBC (1989:2):

> The nations of Africa have expressed their common conviction about the relationship between the individual and the community in “The Africa Charter on Human Rights and Peoples’ Rights” to which Zimbabwe is a signatory. A revised Constitution should contain this charter on human rights so as to serve as the foundation of unity, solidarity and common consent while guaranteeing the rights of the individual citizen.

The government had set up the Constitutional Commission to undertake country consultations from members of the public on the new constitution to be established. But, a lot of irregularities soon emerged. The bulk of the members of the commission were from the ruling party, including members of parliament. Besides, Mugabe had twisted and corrupted the draft constitution in order to portray a certain image in an attempt to underscore his own interests, particularly against the white section of the population, most of whom owned commercial farms. According to Meredith (2008:164):

> Mugabe added his own twists to the draft constitution. By special gazette, he inserted an amendment allowing land expropriation without consultation, believing that it would help secure the rural vote. The amendment declared that Britain, as the former colonial power, was responsible for the payment of compensation for land. If Britain defaulted, said the amendment, “the government of Zimbabwe has no obligation to pay compensation.”

These, among other flaws, attracted a "No" vote to the draft constitution. Meredith further said that MDC and the NCA held public meetings attacking the draft constitution for giving the president too much power and patronage and failing to provide for checks and balances.

According to *The Herald* (1 March 2000) from the outset veteran spokesmen explained that their decision to occupy farms was a response to the rejection of the new constitution. *The Financial Gazette* (16 March 2000) asserts that the farm occupations involved a range of powerful actors in addition to veterans. *The Zimbabwe Independent* (5 May 2000) asserts that Government did not
have a budget for the land reform, hence it is regarded by many as being political.

According to *The Daily Mirror* (2000) and also reported in *The Mail and Guardian* (3 March 2000) Mugabe stressed that the occupations would not be stopped as they were simply “peaceful demonstrations” against the “No” vote (this he said in reference to the referendum). The church argued that the land redistribution exercise did not constitute the peacefulness and the lawfulness, with which it should have been associated (*Sunday Mail* 17 June 2000). As stated by ZCBC (1998:3):

> Much of our poverty in Zimbabwe is related to people having access only to poor land, a consequence of our colonial history that still has not been adequately addressed. We are aware that three quarters of our peasant farmers live in Natural Regions IV and V, with poor land and unreliable water resources.

According to Bakare (1993:1) from time immemorial, land has played a vital role in the history of human beings. On the question of the land redistribution exercise in Zimbabwe, Makaya (2006) said:

> The land reform programme was a necessary evil. Necessary that we all know how the land was expropriated from the Africans during the time of colonialism and it was time to redress the imbalance in land ownership. From that perspective it was necessary. It becomes an evil in the sense that it was carried out in a very vindictive manner.

According to Iness (2006) the land redistribution exercise was a good programme. As stated by ZCBC (2001:1) unfortunately the redistribution of land has been marred by violence, deaths and intimidation. We should be careful not to create more injustices in the process of addressing legitimate concerns.” According to ZCBC (2001:1): “Let us remind each other that the great majority of Zimbabweans, because of their love for freedom and sense of justice, liberated it through their sacrifices.” Crops such as, tobacco, maize, wheat and soya beans which need special training as well as adequate inputs are in short supply in Zimbabwe. The decline in agricultural production was caused by the haphazard land redistribution exercise.

According to *The Zimbabwe Independent* (21 July 2000) the government did not have money to fund the agrarian reform programme, so did not have budgets for supporting new settlers with inputs, social or veterinary services, besides farming equipment. Unfortunately, some people
have resorted to violence in their quest for land.

3.5 Corruption

Corruption continued to devastate Zimbabwe’s economic stability, barely a few years into independence. According to ZCBC (2003:4):

The level of corruption is in fact frightening as it has embraced both leadership levels as well as many of the ordinary citizens. In addition to corruption, there is a high degree of human greed which has been demonstrated in the context of current shortages of basic commodities. Current shortages of basic commodities have provided an opportunity for corruption by people in strategic positions including government ministers and other government officials.

In a qualitative research – on the question of whether corruption has contributed to the economic decline in Zimbabwe – Nyasha (2006) responded by saying that there is corruption everywhere – at the Registrar General’s office, in the land redistribution, in banks, the army, in the police force, and in hospitals.

On the same note, Mwire (2006) said that poverty in Zimbabwe is a result of greediness among the leaders. According to a source who chose to remain anonymous, Zimbabwe’s Industrial and International Trade Minister, Obert Mpofu, had earlier on said that senior Government officials and politicians were behind the looting of resources at Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company (ZISCO). *The Daily Mirror* (2 March 2006) reported of three top Registrar General’s officials in corruption saga. Other corruption cases involve foreign currency, fuel and food hoarding. Sugar and cooking oil are sold on the black market at exorbitant prices in Zimbabwe. To a large extent, the ZANU–PF government has created an environment where corruption has become rampant in Zimbabwe. Hence, many people have resorted to unorthodox means to survive.

3.6 The clean-up exercise: *Operation Murambatsvina*

In May 2005, the government of Zimbabwe embarked on a clean-up exercise code–named *Operation Murambatsvina*. This was a programme aimed at cleaning all the cities of illegal settlements, garbage and illegal business dealings. The timing of the clean-up exercise led others
to allege that it was aimed at quelling away to rural areas the MDC’s electorate, the bulk of which dwelt in cities. However, the intention of the clean-up exercise was superb, but the execution was disastrous – not only because people were not informed timeously about the clean-up programme – but more so that the government ignored to consider the lives of people without a roof above their heads. Thousands of Zimbabweans were left homeless after bulldozers razed their houses in the Clean-up Exercise. In his response to the question of the impact of Operation Murambatsvina, Henry Mugabe (2006) said people’s shelters were destroyed in the middle of winter, some of the victims being sick people. According to ZCBC (1998:3):

We also recognise the important role those in informal sector play, not just in providing livelihoods for many, but in creating many kinds of goods and services unavailable of uncompetitive in the formal sector. Government, both central and local, could do more in the protection and promotion of informal sector activities, which are a source of income for many poor, especially women.

*Operation Murambatsvina* had unforeseen consequences in the future, particularly on the informal sector and business in general. Some clothing shops such as Edgar’s, Sales House and Express Stores were loosing revenue due to *Operation Murambatsvina*. Sales at Express Stores were hit by a knock on the informal market earnings after the government’s controversial Clean-up Operation. The aim of this brutal campaign is to depopulate urban areas and force people back to the “rural home”. About the operation, *The Herald* (17 Aug 2005) asserted that President Robert Mugabe’s government said it acted in the public interest and was carried out in compliance with the government’s laws.

Some thought that the clean-up exercise was a noble idea. In a qualitative research, Masitara (2006) responded by saying that at first the clean-up exercise appeared to be a noble idea, but was a bit over-reacted. The rebuilding exercise is not benefiting those who were affected by *Operation Murambatsvina*.

Others thought that *Operation Murambatsvina* was a violation of Human Rights. One such respondent was Manzunzu (2006) who said that *Operation Murambatsvina* brought a lot of Human Rights violations. Manzunzu further said that the majority of those whose homes were destroyed still do not have shelter. Zimbabwe government has always denied responsibility whenever it abuses power upon its humble citizens. As stated by Makoni (2007:3):
When a government is under siege from both known and unknown enemies, it will do anything to stay in power. When bulldozers worked overnight tearing apart buildings and people’s possessions while security agents were on guard, sources of livelihood were shuttered and some people were only left with clothes that they were wearing.

The government of Zimbabwe later embarked on a rebuilding programme for those people whose shelters were demolished, to which I have raised some questions about its progress: have the victims of Operation Murambatsvina benefited from the rebuilding exercise? Savieri (2006) responded by saying that a few selected individuals benefited from the rebuilding exercise. Even the state–owned media have also adopted this culture, where the ethics of their profession is negated in order to impress their “pay–master.” Polished lies and propaganda form part of their assigned duties.

4. DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL PROCESSES IN ZIMBABWE

There is no democracy in Zimbabwe. According to Zunga (2003:5) the Zimbabwean Government says it holds elections every five years and therefore it is a democracy. This only true if the people are able to express their will. In a democratic society citizens are free to express their views without fear of victimization or assault – tools aimed at instilling intimidation on members of society. The opposite is true for Zimbabwe. Mazambani (2006) says that the word “democracy” comes from the word “demo” which means “people” and “cratos” which means “power”. Democracy is understood as a “rule of the people, by the people and for the people” (Getui 1999:33). According to ZCBC (2004:3) democracy bases itself on the understanding that all people are equal and by virtue of their human dignity enjoy a capacity to participate in decisions concerning their social life and common future. The politics of democratisation has not sufficiently negotiated its connections, as well as differences, with the legacies of the liberation struggle (Raftopoulos 2001:16).

On the question of whether there is democracy in Zimbabwe, Kuchidza (2006) says that there is democracy in Zimbabwe in the sense that elections are held, except that Zimbabwean elections have been characterised by violence. On the same note, Mazambani (2006) concurs that violence brings trauma, and creates psychological stress and suffering. The government has lost conscience. According to ZCBC (2005:3):
"Woe to the legislators of infamous laws,
To those who issue tyrannical decrees,
Who refuse justice to the unfortunate?
And cheat the poor among my people of their rights,
Who make widows their prey?
And rob the orphan" (Is 10:1–2).

According to Murota (2006) there must be a rule of law in a democratic society, and no one should be above the law. According to Nehohwa (2006) the government should be accountable and transparent. The elections themselves are being conducted on an uneven ground, in which the ZANU–PF government can manipulate the election results in their favour. As stated by Jonhasi (2006) there is dictatorship in Zimbabwe. As stated by ZCBC (2004:4) the period before elections is as important as the period during and after elections. All campaigns by political parties should be done peacefully. Political parties should be free to campaign. As stated by ZCBC (2003:3) we cannot have a lasting peace without truth, justice, love and freedom.

Violence is rampant during both the pre–and post–election periods in Zimbabwe. Violent attacks on perceived opposition supporters especially in the rural areas are common. In his response to the question of democracy and the rule of law in Zimbabwe, Mazambani (2006) says that when you talk of democracy you are talking of the rule of law, but the government has defied the courts in several cases, and judges have been forced to resign. In her response to the same question, Mitchell (2006) says that the counting of votes after the elections is a very scary time, as there is a lot of cheating.

As stated by ZCBC (2002:1) inflammatory and intimidatory statements and shouting slogans against fellow Zimbabweans and other parties engenders feelings of hatred and incites people to violence. The use of violence to achieve any perceived goal by the ruling elite or advantaged group is a most worrying factor in our nation. A grave crime has been committed against the poor and helpless people who are already facing many hardships in the country. As stated by The South African Observer (15 March 2002) polling stations in Harare became torture places. The practice of democracy and respect for human rights remain only ideological. For Mugabe, politics is a field which he alone can define, and if anyone else gets into the political arena he or
she is regarded as an intruder. According to Ashworth (2007:1) President Mugabe is on record for warning the Catholic Bishops as treading a “dangerous path.”

5. POLITICAL PARTIES IN ZIMBABWE

Following the cease-fire in 1979, Mugabe of ZANU, Nkomo of ZAPU and Muzorewa of the ruling UANC, were all probably quite certain that they could win the elections. After Mugabe’s party (ZANU–PF) won by a landslide victory in the 1980 elections, many political parties, including the previous liberation movements during the colonial period such as ZAPU and UANC almost died a natural death. Nkomo, who had denied the offer by Prime Minister Mugabe for the position of president, was considered a renegade and so Mugabe’s enemy. Mugabe soon appointed Rev Canaan Banana as president of independent Zimbabwe.

Many opposition political parties emerged after independence and others recently. Some of the political movements have since disappeared from the political scene. As stated by ZCBC (Aug 2004) in a democratic system people are free to form political parties. In this study, I will discuss just a few of these opposition political parties as examples: the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) (the ruling party), Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU), ZANU Ndonga, Rhodesian Front (RF), Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), United African National Council (UANC), Forum Party of Zimbabwe (FPZ), and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

5.1 The Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF)

Following the loss of the post of president of the initial ZANU by Sithole in the early 1970s, when Sithole (who by now was serving a jail term), denounced violence in order to be released from detention, Mugabe assumed the post of President of ZANU–PF, to distinguish it from the original ZANU. Sithole had lost grip of his ZANU party and immediate contact and control with his fellow comrades in the fighting zones. His former ZANU party had been taken over under a new president, namely Robert Mugabe, adopting in itself a suffix “PF”. Mugabe went into the 1980 elections under the ZANU–PF ticket, which propelled him to power after a landslide victory. According to Meredith (2008:13) when the election results were announced on the morning of 4 March 1980, Mugabe’s victory was so overwhelming that those arguments over the
effect of intimidation became largely irrelevant. Meredith further gives the following results of the 1980 elections: with 63% of national vote, ZANU–PF gained 57 of the 80 black seats in parliament. Robert Mugabe and ZANU–PF have been at the helm of the political echelon as the head of state and the ruling party since independence on 18 April 1980.

5.2 The Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU)

The Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) was formed in 1961 and Joshua Nkomo was the party’s first president. ZAPU was once banned by the Rhodesian government, but soon surfaced and operated from underground in Tanzania. May be the loss of his party at the 1980 elections might have disheartened Nkomo, whose relations with his former ally in the guerrilla warfare had now been strained. According to Bute and Harmer (1997:276) in the 1980 elections, ZAPU won 20 seats and subsequently joined a coalition government.

According to Arnold (2005:523) Mugabe had offered Nkomo the position of the first president of independent Zimbabwe, but Nkomo declined, may be for fear of being “swallowed” by ZANU–PF and subsequently becoming inactive from politics. According to Arnold, had Nkomo accepted, he might have been able to avoid the loss of lives of the Ndebele people that followed the ZANU–ZAPU compact (Arnold 2005:523). Mugabe then appointed Rev Canaan Banana as president. The discovery of arms caches in Matebeleland was blamed on Joshua Nkomo which further culminated into mistrust on the part of Mugabe for Nkomo. The tension that arose between the two leaders paved way for the rebel movement in some parts of Matebeleland, which was responded to by Mugabe with the massacres of many civilians, in the popular Gukurahundi (the civil war) insurgency. However, Nkomo was never associated with the dissident activities going on in Matebeleland. According to Meredith (2008:66):

At that time the number of dissidents in Matebeleland North was no more than about 200. Government ministers however, portrayed the dissidents as well-supplied and well-organised fighting units and constantly exaggerated the level of their activities when it suited them. Without ever producing any evidence, they continued to assert that ZAPU and the dissidents were one and the same.

Meanwhile, Canaan Banana had brokered peace initiatives between Nkomo and Mugabe, resulting in the Unity Accord in 1987. Nkomo’s supporters in Matebeleland felt that ZAPU needed to survive. ZAPU had tried to resuscitate its political fame and influence, having adopted
a new name, PF–ZAPU, under a new leader, after Nkomo had finally accepted the post of Vice President in the ZANU–PF government. However, PF–ZAPU has not made an impression in the previous elections.

5.3 United African National Council (UANC)

According to Bute and Harmer (1997:276) ANC (the brainchild of UANC), was formed in 1971 by Bishop Muzorewa. UANC is the party that propelled Bishop Abel Muzorewa to power in the short–lived Zimbabwe–Rhodesia government following the internal settlement in 1978. At the height of the liberation war, the Rhodesian government tried to undercut Nkomo and Mugabe and started negotiations with UANC’s Abel Muzorewa and Sithole. Muzorewa and his party won three seats in the 1980 elections and none in 1985 (Bute and Harmer 1997:276). UANC had not relived its political activities of the colonial era, neither did it offer competitive arsenal to the ruling party in independent Zimbabwe. Muzorewa had gone into hiding in exile in Europe for fear of Mugabe’s torturous reaction and unforgiving spirit against his past political opponents. It is not certain to say exactly to what extent Mugabe would react against key members of the previous ruling government, such as against Muzorewa after his (Mugabe’s) ascension onto the throne of leadership. Mugabe’s reactions are unpredictable, forcing someone to read between the lines about his or her future.

5.4 The Rhodesian Front (RF)

According to Muzorewa (1978:45) the Rhodesian Front (RF) was formed in 1962 and Winston Field was to become its first leader. The Rhodesian Front was the colonial ruling party which was headed by Ian Smith as its Prime Minister, during which the liberation struggle was waged. According to Arnold (2005:522) in the 1980 elections Smith’s Rhodesia Front (RF) won 20 seats reserved for whites. After his loss in the 1980 elections, the RF went into oblivion, never to be heard of, obviously because the political environment then did not favour white participation in elections Smith sought to contest the white seats with his Rhodesian Front (RF), but no meaningful success was registered. However, the bulk of the Rhodesia Front (RF) membership has but transferred over to the MDC in Zimbabwe.
5.5 Zimbabwe African National Union–Ndonga (ZANU–Ndonga)

ZANU–Ndonga was founded in 1977 as a breakaway faction of ZANU by Rev Ndabaini Sithole. Sithole was formally the founder president of the original ZANU, which was later chaired by Mugabe after Sithole's imprisonment in Rhodesia. According to Bute and Harmer (1997:276) led by Sithole, the party won two seats in the 1995 general elections in a contest widely boycotted by parties which opposed President Mugabe's ZANU. Rev Ndabaini Sithole was arrested on a charge of plotting to assassinate President Mugabe in October 1995. ZANU Ndonga had participated in the previous elections in independent Zimbabwe, but did not make an impression on the majority of the electorate.

5.6 Forum Party of Zimbabwe (FPZ)


> Dumbutshena said of Mugabe, “we have a president who does not believe in the rule of law and who disregards the tenancy upon which the rule of law is built...To ordinary people, it's more frightening because it means the president has given a licence to members of ZANU–PF and CIO to kill those who are not members of their party in full knowledge that the president will pardon them.”

During Dumbutshena's time, ZANU–PF was the party of the moment, so much that the Forum Party of Zimbabwe could not match the popularity ZANU–PF and Mugabe had established for themselves in the land.

5.7 Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM)

The Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) was founded in 1989 by Edgar Tekere (Moyo 1992:32–35). According to Rukobo (1991:127) the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) emerged in 1989 on the wave of anti-corruption and other issues. ZUM had nothing to do with the Unity Accord between Mugabe and Nkomo. Tekere was Mugabe’s ally in the liberation struggle during the colonial period. Sources say that he and Mugabe had even crossed over together to join other
freedom fighters in Mozambique in the early 1970s.

In the farming communities, in the early 1990s, ZANU–PF had already begun exerting fear and intimidation so that people would not support the opposition party – Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM). Farm workers were threatened with war if they would opt to vote for ZUM. According to Sylvester (1990:375–400) farm workers said: “If we vote for ZUM there will be war….it is better to be oppressed than to have another war.” These statements referred to the 1990 elections. The ZANU–PF government had also made it clear that voting for ZUM would result in the discontinuation of food relief (Sachikonye 1990:92–99). Bute and Harmer (1997:277) states that in the 1990 elections, ZUM was endorsed by the white Conservative Alliance of Zimbabwe (CAZ) and won two parliamentary seats. Tekere took a fifth of the popular vote in presidential elections held at the same time. Despite its electoral showing, however, ZUM could not claim to have presented a coherent alternative programme to that of ZANU–PF during the 1990 general elections (Rukobo 1991:127).

5.8 Morgan Tsvangirai

Morgan Tsvangirai was born in 1952 in a poor rural family in Buhara – in Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe. According to Meredith (2008:140) Morgan left school at early an age to look for employment in a textile mill in Mutare. He later moved to a nickel mine in Bindura in 1974, where be became active in the mining union. Tsvangirai soon moved to Harare, where he had now assumed the post of Secretary–General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). Tsvangirai’s arrest and detention during the student protests of 1989 had brought him national prominence (Meredith 2008:140).

According to Meredith (2008:139) when Mugabe tried to impose new taxes and levies to pay his largesse towards the war veterans, he provoked mass resistance. Leading the campaign against him was Morgan Tsvanidrai, the trade union leader, who had become one of Mugabe’s relentless critics. In another trial of strength, the ZCTU organised a nationwide “stay-away” in March 1989, ignoring a government warning that it was illegal (Meredith 2008:141).
5.8.1 Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)

In September 1999, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed as political party, Morgan Tsvangirai being its president. According to Chipangura (2005:12) since the formation of MDC, Zimbabwe has gone through turbulent political periods never experienced since independence. In fact, Mugabe’s reaction of seizing commercial farms, especially from the white farmers, was in response to the newly formed MDC, which he has several times attacked for being a “white-sponsored” party. For Mugabe, Tsvangirai intended to “take the country back” to the whites. Hence, Mugabe’s statement wherever he goes: “Zimbabwe will never be a colony again.”

The fact that MDC has managed to reach this far, is a long history through which it has gone through trials of strength from both within and without. While on one hand Mugabe wanted to see the MDC becoming defunct by even persecuting its leadership, on the other hand, within MDC itself were in-house squabbles, weakening themselves through struggle for power. This further threatened and almost diminished the long and winding road to prominence and freedom. Following misunderstandings and leadership wrangles within the party, factionalism occurred within MDC. The main MDC is still being headed by Morgan Tsvangirai, whereas, the other faction is being headed by Arthur Mutambara.

Mugabe delayed the announcement of the election results for over one month after the elections of March 2008. When the results were finally released, they reflected MDC winning the elections but Mugabe ordered a recount. After the recount, the results appeared the same. But, still Mugabe ordered a run-off of the polls which have been penciled for 27 June 2008. MDC felt they were robbed of the elections, but were still determined to contest in the run-off. Mugabe has tried helplessly to hold onto the reigns of power and has done so by even provoking violence unnecessarily, nullifying in the process a good record of peaceful elections which were held in Zimbabwe in March 2008.

6. THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC DECLINE IN ZIMBABWE

Business in general is affected when the economy of a country is not stable. Mpofu (2006) says that the Zimbabwean economic and political condition is unfortunate.
In the qualitative research – on the question of the reasons for the economic decline in Zimbabwe – Varaidzo (2006) responded by saying that the economy of Zimbabwe began to decline as a result of poor relations with the other countries of the world.

So many factors have caused the suffering amongst people in Zimbabwe. But, Zimbabweans have varying opinions about the causes of the suffering in the country. When I asked what could have caused the suffering in Zimbabwe, Manenji (2006) responded that people were suffering in Zimbabwe due to unavailability of jobs, poor economy being a major contributing factor.

On the other hand, Wermter (2005:99) asserted that: “our economy is no longer providing for the basic needs of our people. People go without medical attention because they cannot pay. Children go without education because their parents are poor.”

Virtually, all sectors of the economy have been affected by the economic decline. Below, I will discuss six sectors as representative examples: transport, education, agriculture, tourism and investment, health and power utility.

6.1 Transport sector and fuel problems

Zimbabwe has continuously had fuel problems. Its citizens are now literally living in queues waiting for fuel that only avail in erratic volumes. Motor vehicles depend on black market for petrol and diesel, which is imported by individuals from neighbouring countries such as Botswana and South Africa. The ever-increasing fuel price continues to influence food prices and bus fares. Drums of fuel are being imported from neighbouring countries and sold on the streets by unauthorised individuals. Some businesses have embarked on this lucrative dealing on a full scale, as a way of “diversification”. According to ZCBC (2007:2) the erosion of the public transport system has negatively affected every aspect of the country and social life. Horrific accidents claim the lives of dozens of citizens each month.

6.2 Education and school fees

At attainment of independence in 1980, Zimbabwean education system was of high standard and
was the envy of many nations across the globe. As stated by ZCBC (2007:2):

In the educational sector, high tuition fees and levies, the lack of teaching and learning resources, and the absence of teachers, have brought activities in many public schools and institutions of higher education to a standstill. The number of students forced to terminate their education is increasing every month. At the same time, Government interference with the provision of education by private schools has created unnecessary tension and conflict.

According to Phillips (2004) the education system in Zimbabwe used to be Africa’s finest and one of President Robert Mugabe’s greatest achievements. At independence in 1980, there was a tremendous drive in education. According to ZCBC (2005:2) the school–building programme of the 1980s was truly impressive. Today the achievements of the 1980s look deeply flawed and the lofty sentiments of that time tawdry. The church has always offered support in terms of offering education facilities, building hospitals and clinics. According to ZCBC (1987:5):

We believe that the Church’s involvement in education should be a positive commitment to the development of the country and the needs and progress of the people. The Church should examine the traditional educational system and be prepared to give a lead in experimentation of new areas of educational practice and policy.

But today schools are in crisis. The majority of the parents in Zimbabwe at the moment are struggling to pay school fees for their children. Free education in Zimbabwe was only introduced in the early years into independence, but was soon abandoned later on. Since then, parents have to pay school fees from primary level to tertiary education for their children. Meanwhile, college and university fees have gone up beyond the reach of many poor students.

Sometimes it is thought to be over–exaggerated when someone is asked whether people are really suffering in Zimbabwe. But, Murota (2006) agrees that there is suffering in Zimbabwe. She said students were really suffering at Midlands State University (MSU), with some even going for days without food.

Among the huge numbers that are leaving the country for fortunes in the neighbouring countries and some in Europe, most of them are teachers. Frustrated by both the remuneration and poor services in schools, teachers are leaving the country at an alarming rate. According to The Daily
Mirror (21 March 2006) Zimbabwe has been hit by massive exodus of teachers. Government’s reluctance on teachers’ incentives was political. It is alleged that teachers have formed the bulk of MDC membership, so the government is punishing teachers for “biting the finger that feeds them”, for supporting the opposition party, MDC. According to a source that chose to remain anonymous, following the teachers who demonstrated against marking the O-Level English paper (for November 2006 ZIMSEC examinations), in order to press for a better remuneration, teachers were threatened with stiffer action for refusing to mark the papers.

Political leaders who addressed the disgruntled teachers said names of teachers who would want to continue to demonstrate would be submitted to head office in Harare, obviously for personal victimisation. These teachers had nothing to do but to comply by continuing to mark the papers. However, government’s arrogant stance on teachers carries with it a lot of disadvantages on pupils and parents, not mentioning its bearing on the outcome of the results in schools. In a democracy, varying political opinions need to be respected.

6.3 Agriculture: the agrarian reform and food crisis in Zimbabwe

Agriculture is the lifeline for Zimbabwe’s economy. Zimbabwe is a landlocked country and her economy is agro–based. Zimbabwe’s agricultural production has traditionally sustained life and the country’s economy has always been boosted by agriculture, providing for one third of the country’s economy. But, agriculture has been affected by the haphazard land redistribution exercise, not because there was no need for land among our people, but because the government had not planned for it carefully, and to that effect, output from agriculture has deteriorated tremendously.

As stated by The Vanguard (20 Sept 2001) agriculture is the second largest contributor to Zimbabwe’s GDP and accounts for almost fifty percent of foreign exchange earnings. Commercial agriculture directly accounted for approximately twenty–five per cent of a total formal employment. But, agriculture in Zimbabwe at the moment is dependent on a number of factors, which include, weather patterns and the gift of rainfall, availability of inputs, politics and the economy as a whole.
More than seventy-five per cent of the population derives at least large part of its livelihood from agriculture. As at 1991, there were approximately six thousand white commercial farmers in Zimbabwe. Meredith (2008:111) gives the following statistics about commercial farming production by six thousand commercial farmers since 1980:

90% of marketed maize
90% of cotton,
1/3 of the total exports for tobacco, wheat, coffee, tea, and sugar,
1/3 of the total wage-earning labour force (about 271,000 people).


Following the radical land reform programme seven years ago, many people are today going to bed hungry and wake up to a day without work. Hundreds of companies were forced to close. Over 80% of the people of Zimbabwe are without employment. Scores risk lives week after week in search of work in neighbouring countries.

The land seizures and the exodus of commercial farmers have caused a huge reduction in agricultural production, hence threatening food security in the country. Former commercial farmers have either sold or taken with them their heads of cattle, including dairy breeders. In a qualitative research, I asked Mabhugu if he would agree that people are suffering in Zimbabwe. Mabhugu (2006) responded that the majority of people are suffering in Zimbabwe. Food security is a physical, social and economic condition which every population should have access to.

According to ZCBC (2003:4) we deeply appreciate the humanitarian assistance that the international community, churches and NGOs continue give to our needy people. We need to appeal to them to continue the good assistance in the spirit of solidarity.

Shenstone (2006) CARE International's country director in Zimbabwe said that there just isn't food in the rural areas. People are clamouring for food everywhere. Schools are asking for help for hungry children. Prices of goods go up unrealistically, almost on a daily basis. It has become a culture in Zimbabwe to find a price change of the same commodity the following morning.
According to ZCBC (1998:1) the recent food riots and two national stay away days are indications of a general deep discontent and resentment. While we do not condone the violence of riot, even as an expression of deep grievances, we acknowledge the situation out of which this behaviour arose.

Food security in Zimbabwe has been highly threatened. In certain instances, Mugabe rejected donor community’s food assistance, when that food allocation has not been addressed through the government.

6.4 Investment hampered and the tourism sector bleeds

Following farm invasions and Harare’s land policy, absence of the rule of law, political violence and murder, the International Community, including financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have withdrawn their support for Zimbabwe.

Any nation cannot survive without interaction with other countries of the greater world. Humankind lives in a global village. If a country can survive, it needs bilateral relations and trade with other nations such as European countries, the Americas, Latin America, Asia, and with some countries of the continent of Africa. On the question of Zimbabwe’s interaction with other countries, Makaya (2006) responded by saying that Simba Makoni could not have expressed himself better when he said that the international community can survive without Zimbabwe, but Zimbabwe cannot survive without the international community. In this regard, Chitakunye (2006) concurs the same sentiments when he said: Zimbabwe’s interaction with other countries is very important. Zimbabwe cannot survive as an island without interacting with other countries.

So many people have raised concerns that the land redistribution programme has contributed a great deal to the down-turn of the Zimbabwean economy, resulting in the decline in tourism. On the question of the extent to which the haphazard land redistribution exercise has impacted on the Zimbabwean economy, Mashavakure (2006) said that it is a good political atmosphere that creates room for investment. On the other hand, deforestation has occurred on a massive scale as new resettled farmers have embarked on cutting trees indiscriminately, destroying Zimbabwe’s beautiful natural environment.
To the same question of the extent to which the haphazard land redistribution exercise impacted on the Zimbabwean economy. Henry Mugabe (2006) said that one needs to travel around to see the destruction the sporadic land reform exercise has caused to the environment.

Mugabe’s regime has forced many of his own people to sneak out to live into Diaspora. Many highly qualified human resources have left and continue to leave Zimbabwe to neighbouring countries such as Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Europe and United States America. Most of Zimbabwean exiles have obtained specialised skills from various tertiary institutions dotted in the country: technical and teacher training colleges, polytechnics and universities. Their expertise is lost and the countries they are serving are benefiting immensely from Zimbabwean human resources such as: doctors, teachers, nurses, engineers, lawyers, managers, accountants and many other professionals.

6.5 Health delivery system in Zimbabwe: hospitalisation and the adverse of HIV/AIDS

At independence in 1980, Government undertook great strides towards development in the health sector in Zimbabwe. According to ZCBC (2005:2) health services were expanded. Hospitals and clinics were built and medical staff was welcomed from abroad, notably Cuba to augment the local shortfall. Now the reality in the hospitals and public buildings, are in complete decay. As stated by ZCBC (2007:2) the national health system has all but disintegrated as a result of prolonged industrial action by medical professionals, lack of drugs, essential equipment in disrepair and several other factors. Soon after independence, health facilities formed party of Zimbabwe’s pride within and without: medicine was available, beds were shiny and smart, good food was provided, doctors and nurses were recruited and deployed to needy institutions across the country. According to ZCBC (2003:5):

We acknowledge with appreciation the great strides that the government of Zimbabwe made in the health sector after independence. Many rural hospitals were upgraded and renovated; a lot of clinics were to bring health services nearer to thousands of people who had no access to these facilities. The dream at independence was “health for all by the year 2000”. Alas, this dream was never to come true.

However, all that has since changed drastically. According to Mashavakure (2006) there are virtually no drugs in hospitals. According to sources who chose to remain anonymous, babies
who are fortunate enough to be picked soon after they are dumped, are fed by soup at Zimbabwe’s health institutions, because of both the critical shortage of milk in Zimbabwe as well as the lack of funds to procure dairy feeds for such babies. One hospital has resorted to washing and recycling the gloves and uses them for the next assignment. Relatives have to bring food for their loved ones in hospital beds.

For those who come from distant places and poor families, the crisis is no longer that of dietary feeding and nutritious intake, but at least anything to survive on. For many Zimbabweans visiting the doctor for medical check-ups is a luxury. Diabetic, HIV/AIDS and blood pressure (BP) patients, who most often live on prescribed tablets or drugs, find their lives shortened by the economic turmoil ever experienced in the history of Zimbabwe. According to ZCBC (1994:1) human life from the moment of conception until natural death is sacred. No one must deliberately and directly kill an innocent human being.

One needs to understand how ugly the Zimbabwean crisis is. The impact of poverty and starvation in Zimbabwe has reduced a number of women and girls to sheer beggars and sex-workers for their livelihood. Starvation in Zimbabwe has forced girls aged about eight years or younger still, to indulge in sexual activities in order to earn a living. Many people have been misplaced and families and marriage institutions have been disintegrated. According to ZCBC (1994:5):

> The family is a community of particularly intense interpersonal relationships: between spouses, between parents and children, between generations. It is a community which must be safeguarded in a special way. “Honour your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land your God gives you” (Ex. 20:12).

In their desire to search for means of survival, Zimbabweans both young and old are sojourning in countries such as: Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, etc. Females have also joined the race and quite often they face the risk of rape. A few have secured employment in the countries they have gone to settle. But, others have resorted to unethical and immoral practices, namely, prostitution. Besides loss of human resources as people continue to migrate to other countries, there is also the danger to marriage institutions and family structures. It might be argued that this is not necessarily due to moral laxity, but more so due to economic gain in search of survival as well as the separateness created by the economic environment in Zimbabwe. The economic situation in Zimbabwe – exacerbated by bad governance and
selfishness – has deepened the level of immorality both within and outside Zimbabwe and human dignity among Zimbabwean communities has been eroded.

Many young women cannot afford to take care of their little ones after falling pregnant and the man rejecting responsibility, forcing kids born and bred under strenuous circumstances onto the streets, thereby increasing the already–swelling number of kids on the streets. In addition to the risk of the deadly HIV/AIDS scourge, cases of baby dumping are on the increase in Zimbabwe due to economic hardships, where everyone is wrestling with life in their struggle to survive. In the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the situation becomes more complicated. According to ZCBC (2002:1) Zimbabwe currently has a large number of orphans because of the scourge of HIV/AIDS. A large number of widows, street kids and the sick are affected by the food shortage more severely than those who have someone to provide for them.

6.6 Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA): power utility

Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) Holdings, a company that is responsible for the distribution of electricity power in the country, is having a critical shortage of electricity power due to economic problems. The residents of Harare have complained against constant and lengthy power cuts that have affected the capital and other major cities in recent days. According to The Daily Mirror (22 March 2006) residents in Harare are experiencing regular electricity power cuts. Zimbabwe’s troubled power utility, ZESA Holdings, has signed some Asians and South African investors to partner it in exploiting its coalfields.

ZESA is struggling to meet its obligation in terms of debts payment which is overdue to its suppliers of electricity power. According to ZCBC (2007:2) public services in Zimbabwe’s towns and cities have crumbled. Roads and street lights are in a state of severe disrepair.

7. CONCLUSION

According to Verstraelen (1998:89) the people of Israel were singled out under divine providence, not to present them to the rest of the world as the nation through which God’s redeeming love could be mediated, but to be a symbol of how God would also deal redemptively with other nations. African nationalists were engaged in a struggle to liberate themselves from
the oppressive regime of the Rhodesia Front (RF) government (Bhebe 1999:10). Although Zimbabweans had gone past the colonial rule, Zimbabwe’s own African leader, Robert Mugabe, had emerged as yet another oppressor upon his own people.

The army of late has been used by ZANU–PF to underscore its political agenda, such as in the *Gukurahundi* (the civil war), land redistribution and Operation Restore Order. Zimbabwe derives the bulk of her Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from agricultural production. Since the departure of white commercial farmers, Zimbabwe’s agricultural output has declined, ultimately affecting the economy in a negative way. Zimbabweans have been facing a lot of crises and people find life unbearable in the hyperinflationary economy.

As mentioned already in this chapter, liberation can not only be realised on the basis of race (where one can only think of liberation from colonial rule and not viewed as such when a black dictator government is in control). Zimbabwe’s experience has portrayed exactly that picture. In terms of human resources, liberation can come from either black or white. The removal of white government of Ian Smith did not bring a lasting liberation for Zimbabweans. In a new Zimbabwe, both black and white people should contribute meaningfully towards the country’s economic development. Many Zimbabweans argue that life in colonial Rhodesia was far much better than life in the present Zimbabwe.

Many people in Zimbabwe – particularly those who were mature in Rhodesia – believe that life was better in colonial Rhodesia than the present experience of life in independent Zimbabwe. On the question of comparison of life before and after independence in Zimbabwe in terms of living standards, Mbaeni (2006) responded by saying that during colonialism in Rhodesia people were suffering, but not at the level of the Zimbabwean situation at the moment. At least in Rhodesia, Zimbabweans could have access to basic necessities of livelihood, such as foodstuffs, to be precise. Reading the exodus tradition from a Zimbabwean perspective, is reading the exodus narrative from a specific cultural and contextual perspective. According to Gous and van Heerden (2006:129) the foundation story of the exodus contains a serious message for oppressors and those who suffer alike.

Some people feel that the church should not meddle in political issues. But, still others think that the church should take a leading role in addressing evils of both political and economic nature
exerted on societies by rulers. Opinions of varying degrees were displayed by members of the public on the question of what the church should do when involved in socio-political issues. In a qualitative research, Dube (2006) responded by saying that history reveals that wherever the church was, and it still is, the voice of the oppressed. Really, it is supposed to be such. Being in the situation in which Zimbabwe is been going through, it is the season for the church to advise government on the magnitude of socio-political crises affecting people.

Zimbabweans should understand that they have a significant role to play to change the political situation bedevilling Zimbabwe’s economy. Illegal land invasions and violence should be condemned in very sincere and strong terms. Zimbabweans needed a saviour to liberate them from these sorry circumstances; they needed solidarity with one another more than ever. Whether this saviour is in Morgan Tsvangirai and MDC, time will tell. Civil society must continue to press for sanity on political leaders. Zimbabweans themselves need to fight for their freedom for sanity to prevail. The ballot, and not the bullet, should be the means to remove the ZANU–PF government, and it is the ballot that will remove any other regime in future. Meanwhile, Morgan Tsvangirai’s credentials and capability to lead Zimbabwe as Head of State have been questioned by some sections of the Zimbabwean society. Some anonymous views suggest that the formation of a breakaway party from the original MDC was a result of this factor.

However, some people have what they perceive as a weakness by an individual, but they would still complement on where one comes short by supporting the individual. According to Maxwell (1995:17) those who believe in our abilities do more than stimulate us — they create an atmosphere in which it will be easier for us to succeed. They must create a climate in which potential leaders will thrive. Moses knew his shortcomings to mee: and speak to Pharaoh (Ex 4:10). But, God gave him Aaron as Moses’ “mouth” (Ex 4:14–16). Morgan Tsvangirai should not see himself as a lone ranger in the wilderness. The impressive news is that the new president is surrounded by committed and skilled personnel, both black and white, dedicated to bring change to Zimbabwe’s wrecked image.

Conclusions of the whole discussion are highlighted in chapter six below, followed by Hermeneutical Conclusions on Israel’s Occupation of Canaan, the Challenge of the Exodus Liberation Motif to Zimbabwe, and Recommendations – What Can Be Done in Zimbabwe.
Chapter Six

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CONCLUSIONS

1.1 Oppression

By definition the situation of oppression exists where people do not get equal treatment or do not get treated with respect because they belong to a certain group or category of people (Ruth 2006:116). In Egypt, the oppression upon the Israelites was exerted at the ascension onto the throne of a new Pharaoh who did not know Joseph (Ex 1:8). The Israelites had become numerous. According to Hamilton (1982:177) Exodus 12:37 informs us that 600 000 men, besides women and children, left Egypt. The total number of Israelites leaving Egypt would be in excess of two million. The existence of such a large alien group – “the opposition” – in his borderlands had made Pharaoh uneasy. As we shall see in the context of a Zimbabwean situation below, under the heading: THE CHALLENGE OF THE EXODUS LIBERATION MOTIF TO ZIMBABWE, Mugabe began to oppress and subjugate the Zimbabwean people when he realized that his support-base was outnumbered by those he considered to be “aliens” to ZANU–PF – among them ex–Rhodians – commercial farmers, whom Mugabe accused of supporting MDC. Those who had become “aliens” were supporters of the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). This is where Robert Mugabe becomes Zimbabwe’s Pharaoh. According to Mullaly (2002:28):

What determines oppression is when a person is blocked from opportunities to self-development, is excluded from full participation in society, does not have certain rights that the dominant group takes for granted, or is assigned a second-class citizenship, not because of individual talent, merit, or failure, but because of his or her membership in a particular group or category of people.

As already noted, oppression is a phenomenon common in many parts in the post–biblical world: Europe, the United States of America, Latin America, the Caribbean and in Africa. There is no specific individual or group of people who might be described as oppressors upon others. Anyone – regardless of colour, creed, religion, gender, or country of origin – can be an
oppressor, as long as that individual is treating someone unfairly and unjustly, individually and collectively. Such incidents of oppression are quite often very ugly so as to demand liberation to the oppressed.

1.2 The liberator: God’s revelation and human responsibility

To liberate is to set free from conventional ideas about behaviour (OED 2001: s v “to liberate”). Liberation can take many forms: political liberation, economic liberation, and religious liberation, liberation from evil (eg, murder, child sexual abuse, etc), liberation from gender discrimination, and liberation from poverty and starvation, to name a few examples.

A liberator is one who liberates from oppression of any form. The task of liberation is one that demands a calling and conviction. Liberation is a very difficult task, full of trials and betrayals. The biblical Moses has become a pacesetter for many readers and the majority of theologians today, who have been demanding liberation in both the political and the religious sense, and many have drawn their motivation from the Moses of the exodus narrative. I have also mourned above, that there are some readers who have unfortunately abused the biblical narrative in order to justify their so-called “struggle” for liberation. As already noted above, liberation should not only be political; it should be holistic and “all-embracing.”

How can one be honest to oneself to demand justice at workplace, for instance, where one feels that one does not deserve the little wage paid to him or her, whereas at his or her home he or she pays the maid or gardener, about one hundredth (\(1/100\)) of his or her salary? Can such a person be justified to demand liberation from political oppression and be content that he or she is being fair in fighting for justice? This is what I meant when I said earlier on that everyone might be an oppressor and everyone might need liberation. A good example we find it in the exodus narrative itself. The Israelites are liberated from Egyptian slavery (Ex 12:51). On the other hand the exodus narrative describes the Israelites occupying Canaan – the land which was already inhabited by other peoples: the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and the Jebusites (Ex 13:5). In my view, the Israelites became the oppressors upon other tribes in Canaan by occupying their land. Liberation is a process; it is never an event. Above that, it is also contextual. The liberator must represent others and himself or herself faithfully. He or she must take introspection upon himself or herself to justify his or her liberation undertaking.
A liberator is neither sent on the mission of liberation alone. Moses had a helper, his brother Aaron (Ex 4:14–16). A liberator does not embark on a liberation mission empty-handedly. He or she does have resources at his or her disposal. God provided Moses with the staff with which he performed miracles (Ex 4:17). When someone undertakes the task of liberation of humankind, one must have the support of other people. I have already alluded to above, that every individual does have some weaknesses in some area. A helper or an assistant will complement on what one would be lacking or have some shortcomings. Moses had his own weaknesses. Moses told God: “O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue” (Ex 4:10). God did not say Moses could not qualify because of his inability to speak. Many a time, most of us as humans, our choice of a leader or occupant of a position is influenced – to a large extent – by our view of the person’s capability to do the job. According to Carson (1994:19) God is the judge of all the earth, and of all nations. Human beings are ultimately answerable to him. God’s choice of a liberator – although it takes account of – does not preclude disability as inability.

Liberation can effectively begin from one’s immediate context and in one’s country of origin, where one knows exactly who the oppressed are and who the oppressor is and also how would people receive one’s message of liberation. The biblical Moses had to ponder on how the Israelites would accept his message of liberation having been given to him by God. Hence, Moses asked God his name (Ex 3:13) and God gives his name as: “I am who I am. This is what you are going to say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex 3:14). A task of liberation is not the messenger’s own undertaking. God would need human vessels to deal with human predicaments, but the accomplishment of the freedom of the oppressed is God’s responsibility. Moses did not go to Median to seek military aid, neither did he approach God when he was heading Jethro’s flock at Horeb, “the mountain of God” (Ex 3:1) to plead with God about the suffering Israelites. God made a choice of the “unsuspecting” Moses for his redemptive work on behalf of the suffering Israelites.

1.3 The plagues and violence: the role of God in a liberation act

Alec Motyer describes a plague as a judgment. According to Motyer (1999:163) now begins a series of judgments which will teach Pharaoh and his people who the Lord is, and show them the extent of God’s power over all creation (Ex 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14). According to Exodus 7:14–
12:30, the plagues which devastated Egypt were: blood, frogs, gnats, flies, livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness and deaths of the firstborn. It was the last plague that of the death of the firstborn of both human beings and livestock (Ex 12:29–30) which forced Pharaoh, his officials and all the Egyptians to wail (Ex 12:30). During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said: “Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said and go. And also bless me” (Ex 12:31–32).

Some readers have described the affliction by plagues upon the Egyptians in terms of violence. God is a God of order and besides, he is a God of dialogue. God does not engage in violence without first of all considering the consequences of the violent action. It only happens when God is provoked and in an attempt to defend the defenceless. Otherwise, God is always a God of dialogue. God’s expectation of human being’s responsibility is to maintain peace and order. According to Rugwiji (2008a:9) God has been betrayed and misrepresented by people on earth.

It would not have taken God a long and tedious way to persuade Pharaoh to “let the people go.” God would have simply “crushed” Israel’s oppressors and set them on their route to Canaan. When God is determined to liberating his oppressed people, he tries every means to convince the oppressor for the need to liberate the oppressed. The last thing that God will do is the punishment which would be so severe beyond human contemplation. In my view and as depicted in the exodus tradition, the plagues were not a kind of violence. It was a supernatural act on creation for being disobedient. God can exert that kind of affliction for his disobedient children to comply. Hence, Pharaoh did in the end. According to Gottwald and Horsley (1993:165) those who dominate and exploit the people are viewed as enemies whom God is about to overthrow. Rulers can be seen to exercise such violence against the people because they sense the illegitimacy and insecurity of their own domination.

Dialogue has always been helpful in the modern day conflicts. Humanity needs to try to stretch their patience in an attempt to lobby for the most peaceful means possible to resolve conflicts whether political or family problems. In Zimbabwe, peace must prevail above all things. It is unfortunate that President Robert Mugabe does not seem to tolerate peace initiatives Africa and the International Community have been trying to lobby for in many parts of the world.
particularly in Africa, where most of the countries have been devastated by armed conflicts. Mugabe’s stance in Zimbabwe is in contrast with his preaching for freedom.

Readers should also understand plagues in terms of the evils humanity does. The fact that humanity engages itself in various kinds of evils does not imply that those evils would not have disastrous consequences on the perpetrator in the long run. An example would be HIV/AIDS as a plague. Someone, whose sexual behaviour is reckless, might be infected by the epidemic because of the many relationships one has had.

1.4 Celebration of the Passover

Prior to the exodus, the Israelites had celebrated the Passover. According to Hamilton (1982:175):

The Hebrew word for “Passover” is pesah. There is also a verb pasah – meaning “to pass over” – used three times in Exodus 12:13: “When I see the blood I will pass over you”, 12:23: “The Lord will pass over the door”, and 12:27: “It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt.”

Passover was the major Jewish spring festival, commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (OED 2001: s v “Passover”). The term originates from “pass over,” with reference to the exemption of the Israelites from the death of their first born. Exodus 12:17 says: “Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.” The celebration of the Passover is also echoed in Exodus 13:3–4, in which Moses said to the people: “Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the Lord brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing yeast. Today, in the month of Ahib, you are leaving.”

The Israelites had this tradition kept among their children and generations to come. When people are delivered from the hands of the oppressor they celebrate. When liberation comes, every person involved is “moved.” Life can only be lived to the full by a free society.
1.5 The departure: the Exodus

Weems (1993:43) describes the exodus as “the Hebrews’ escape from Egyptian slavery,” the same idea which is also expressed by Bruggeman (1994b: s.v “exodus”). God led the Israelites by the “roundabout way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea” (Ex 13:18). The Israelites are seen about to cross the Red Sea. They found themselves in a perilous situation – trapped between the sea and their enemies (Durham 1990: s.v “Exodus”). But, the Israelites still trusted in the liberative power of Yahweh.

This aspect of longevity of the road to freedom functions in many respects. Many liberation movements which have struggled for independence, have taken a long time to achieve their goals, and some of revolutionaries or proponents for liberation died before they enjoyed the fruits of their hard work through persecution for their cause for justice. For example, Martin Luther King, Jr has become a household name in theological circles because of his courage in fighting for justice. Many others have perished unnoticed. Many have paid a sacrificial price towards the freedom of the oppressed.

Contemplating on the exodus tradition, one can conclude that God’s choice of direction for the Israelites’ journey to the Promised Land demonstrates that God takes into consideration the social and political forces and the emotional make-up of those being led (Fretheim 1991:150). Nevertheless, this does not imply that Israel was prepared to conquer other nations as they moved towards Canaan. As we have seen, God always fought battles for Israel.

Thinking of Zimbabwe, the “exodus” can be both geographical and psychological. Many people have been displaced by both the economic turmoil and persecution in Zimbabwe. Many have gone to sojourn in neighbouring countries and others in Europe. Zimbabwe has lost a lot of skilled people. All these people would want to return home and be part of the celebration when things normalise in Zimbabwe. Then there will be an “exodus” of people returning home after the persecution period. At the moment as things stand, Zimbabwe can never be anything closer to something better.

However, Mugabe has denied people this “exodus” by retaining his presidency through hooks and crooks, stepping on human blood to climb to the top. For over one month after the elections
were held on 28 March 2008, no one knew who was ruling the country, as Mugabe had withheld the elections results. Suddenly the court – on instigation by ZANU–PF Government – ruled that there should be a “re-count” of the votes. After the recount, Mugabe calls for a run-off. The period prior to the run-off was torturous on the part of the Zimbabwean people who were beaten up, bruised, wounded, assaulted, persecuted and murdered. As murderous acts intensified, MDC withdrew from the election race and the June 27 run-off election was a “one-man showcase”. Mugabe “won” and two days later was inaugurated as Zimbabwe’s president for the next five years. If ZANU–PF government continues to rule as things stand, then the “exodus” of the Zimbabwean people becomes an ideal to be realised in practicality only in the unknown future. Zimbabweans have to live in perpetual hope for a change in future – near yet so far. Meanwhile, the tension between MDC and ZANU–PF has grown to create some vulnerability of an ugly political impasse. The possibility of a successful outcome of the talks between the two parties looks gloomy. It is a moment of waiting, as fresh talks between Mugabe’s ZANU–PF and Tsvangirai’s MDC are said to resume (in October 2008).

1.6 The crossing of the Red Sea

In biblical times, the Red Sea is the sea that is reported to have been crossed over by the Israelites to Mount Sinai. Modern scholars have argued that it could have been the Sea of Reeds as opposed to the Red Sea. According to Hamilton (1982:180) the crossing of the Reed Sea (to be preferred to “Red Sea,” which is based not on the Hebrew, but on the Greek eruthra thalassa and the Latin mare rubrum) is described miraculously. To have the Red Sea divided would be no insignificant event. The Red Sea is a long, narrow landlocked sea separating Africa from Arabia. It is linked to the Indian Ocean by the Gulf of Aden and to the Mediterranean by the modern Suez Canal (OED 2001: s v “Red Sea”). Hamilton (1982:180) further says: “We conclude then that the Hebrews crossed not the Red Sea or the Gulf of Suez, but rather some freshwater lake in northern Egypt (perhaps the southern tip of modern Lake Manzala near modern Port Said).” Pharaoh had ordered the release of the Israelites for the chosen people to begin a journey to the Promised Land. But on second thought, the Pharaoh decided that the Israelites should be brought back to servitude. Israel was faced with two uncompromising challenges: the “pursuing pharaohs” and the flooded Red Sea. Israel is trapped in between.
The fact that Israel had escaped oppression by the Egyptians does not make a natural phenomenon to treat the ‘‘escapees’’ the same way. The sea needed to follow a natural routine – getting flooded at times. The Pharaoh later decided that he would want to bring back the once-oppressed people and use them as usual. On the other hand – in the camp of the Israelites – the new beginning is threatened and foreshadowed at an early stage between the past, present and the future: the Israelites were sandwiched between the pursuing pharaoh and the flooded Red Sea.

In a Zimbabwean context, the Israelite escaping experience is a phenomenon repeating itself. The March 2008 elections could have been a milestone and an escape route to the ‘‘land of milk and honey’’. Zimbabweans had voted for the opposition MDC in order to bring change and freedom to their economic situation in Zimbabwe. But, Robert Mugabe – when he realised the results reflected a win in favour of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) – withheld the election results for over a month before he ordered for a recount of the votes – followed by a run-off, which the ruling party “won”. Pure reasoning – minus the fact file of the results – can suggest that Mugabe’s behaviour meant that he knew he had lost the elections of 28 March 2008. However, by way of a reminder, Mugabe is still president of Zimbabwe for the next five years. The suffering of the Zimbabwean people is expected to get worse. The past cannot be forgotten, but the future could be worse if things stand as they have been before, with Robert Mugabe as head of state. Starvation, poverty, sickness, inflation, food shortages will get worse. The international community could impose stiffer sanctions on Zimbabwe if Harare does not come up with a better solution to its political crisis.

The idealised liberation was near, yet still far. As an example, suppose one gets a glass of the last water between one’s thirst and death, and when one is about to drink it, someone smashes the glass, which spills the life-giving water. The hope for survival for that individual is dashed. This illustration serves to give the economic picture about Zimbabwe and her future. The exodus liberation motif remains paradigmic in every time. Even if the MDC had been declared the winner after the elections of 28 March 2008, checks and balances would still need to be put in place, so that any government does not misuse its office to oppress its people. The exodus narrative should as well motivate readers to challenge injustice like it was previously done against other regimes.
1.7 The wilderness journey

The task of liberation is a kind of a “wilderness.” In the wilderness one is likely to encounter many unusual environments. According to Burns (1987:17) the wilderness is a wild territory where survival requires that travellers have a sense of direction. The wilderness experience was a trying and difficult time for the Israelites.

The act of liberation on the part of Israel would not end with them crossing the Red Sea. They had to walk through the desert, before enjoying “milk and honey” in Canaan. This is actually a test of life of every time and everywhere. Trying times always present themselves despite someone having achieved some great success in life. Life is always full of challenges, most of which are extremely “stubborn” to comprehend. Even after having made it into the Promised Land after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Israel’s existence in Canaan was always threatened. According to Le Roux (1992:141) neither freedom nor security are to be found in the Promised Land in Judges, much less heaven or haven. The gifts of freedom and security are constantly threatened in this God–given place, both from without and from within, and are preserved and lost by real people (Hamlin 1990:1).

Le Roux (1992:141) further says that in our present situation we might have similar yearnings for our own “Promised Land.” Zimbabweans too, have got such yearnings – being in a space of peace, enough food, freedom of expression, political tolerance and having a home. If Zimbabweans have not been able to cross their “Red Sea” separating the past and the future, then the “wilderness” experience cannot be a phenomenon to think about at this juncture, because the enemy has caught up with them and have brought them back into a “Zimbabwean slavery.”

Zimbabweans need not think of a “land of milk and honey” under ZANU–PF government. African governments need checks and balances. Politics in Africa can take a sudden twist. According to Hill (2003:259) since 2000, Zambia, Malawi, Uganda and Nigeria had all been accused of electoral fraud, and if the fairness of a poll became the sole test of legitimacy, then many of Africa’s leaders would be in trouble. Perhaps one would conclude that the “Egyptian bondage” was better, because past experiences – both in biblical and post–biblical situations – have shown that freedom can never be said to be fully accomplished. The previously oppressed
can any one time become an oppressor. De Klerk (2003:282) commented that in politics the future is never guaranteed unless the people themselves remain vigilant.

The ruling regime has always vowed ruling Zimbabwe the “ZANU–PF way.” According to Chidoori (2007:6) the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Publicity, George Charamba said that: “the way of Zimbabwe must be the way of ZANU–PF.” After the run–off, things have remained fraudently the “ZANU–PF way” – Mugabe remains head of state in Zimbabwe. In spite of the situation as it stands, I may want to suggest that Zimbabweans should not resort to violence, because it will not work in their favour. The army and the police are, to a large extent, still loyal to Mugabe. May be a peaceful demonstration may help. Violence may attract violence. Despite their commonalities of fatalities, war and violence further create a lot of disorderliness and displacements of humans, creating refugee camps, which, in most cases are unfortunately characterised by deaths and sicknesses of various kinds. Von Clausewitz (1968:101) defines war as an act of violence intended to compel “our opponent to fulfil our will.” Mugabe may take it as an opportunity to massacre people indiscriminately.

The fact that in Mugabe, Zimbabweans are dealing with a tyrant who has vowed to remain in power despite world concerns on both the withdrawal of MDC from contesting the run–off elections and deaths of people as a result of violence and abductions on perceived opposition supporters, implies that the regime is more than ready to deal ruthlessly with members of the public who would want to take it the violent way. Zimbabweans may experience a repeat of Gukurahundi (the civil war of 1982), if they resort to violence. When humanity have faithfully done what they could to set themselves free through democratic means and it has not worked in their favour, they may need to leave everything else to God to accomplish it, in the same way God dealt with the Pharaoh of ancient Egypt, when he devastated the firstborn of their children and that of their livestock. In the end, it was God’s power which prevailed and Israel was free.

2. HERMENEUTICAL CONCLUSIONS: ISRAEL’S OCCUPATION OF CANAAN

Deriving from thorough scholarly research, it has been hypothesized that there was no one single theory associated with Israel’s occupation of Canaan. As has been noted previously in this study, there were a number of models at play – the conquest model being one of such models. However, it is not within the scope and framework of this study to debate on the mode of
occupation of Canaan by Israel – although that is important. This study mainly focuses on the liberation of the oppressed people and their subsequent settlement in the land promised to their ancestors by God, and how the tradition can become a motivation for post-biblical societies.

God and humanity work together in collaboration to bring freedom to humankind, both through divine intervention and human means. It is actually a corporate and collective effort. As Achebe (2005:25) puts it: “If we want to climb out of the hole we are in, it is a job for all the people”. Given the context of Joshua’s exploits as contained in the text itself, one would but conclude that it was a real war, but sanctioned by God. The Pentateuch portrays the picture that Yahweh has always been fighting wars for Israel’s ancestors, as established by the exodus tradition throughout the history of Israel up to the exilic period. The exodus narrative itself seems to portray the view that it was by military exploits that Israel occupied Canaan. This assumption is based on my personal opinion and does not seek to make dogmatic assertions – neither to exclude nor downplay – important scholarly viewpoints about theories on Israel’s settlement in the Promised Land. A few examples are worthy giving about the possibilities that the conquest model – among other theories – could have propelled Israel to occupy Canaan.

Earlier on in the Pentateuch, we read that the patriarch, Abram (Gn 14:14–16) had 318 trained men born in his household. If these “cadres” were simple “flock keepers”, they would not have been described as “trained”, nor sent to rescue Abram’s nephew, Lot. Besides, the text further states that during the night Abram’s men “attacked” and “routed” the enemy (Gn 14:15). We can deduce that some people died in the process of rescuing.

In the exodus narrative, Moses murdered an Egyptian and escaped to Median (Ex 2:12). There is no record in Scripture in which Yahweh condemned Moses for killing an adversary. In other incidents, the use of military exploits is reflected in various passages where Yahweh predicted the defeat of Pharaoh (Ex 3:19–20; 4:21–23; 6:1, 6–8; 7:3–5).

The plagues (Blood, Frogs, Gnats, Flies, Livestock, Boils, Hail, Locusts, Darkness, and deaths of the Firstborn) (Ex 7–11) that devastated the Egyptian Pharaoh and his people, were no less bloody. The killing of the firstborn of the Egyptian children on the part of God, was an indication that, when God is determined to actualize freedom for the oppressed, he goes ahead to sanction the ruthless murder of the helpless children of the oppressor. According to the exodus narrative
(Ex 11–12:30) it was this particular plague that shook Pharaoh to allow the release of the Israelites. Later on during the monarchy, wars were sanctioned by God if it meant the enemy threatened Israel’s existence in the land. According to Scheffler (2001:88–166):

During the monarchy Israel became part and parcel of the political and military conflicts of the Ancient Near East, in which nations such as: Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia, were involved in coalitions and intrigues (Is 18:1; 30:1; 31:1).

In Exodus 13:18 we read that the Israelites went up out of Egypt “armed for battle.” This notion seems to suggest that the Israelites needed weapons through which Yahweh could give them victories over their enemies. According to Gushee (2001:2) God’s liberation of the Hebrew slaves in Exodus is by no means free of death, and yet it is distinctive in the sense that the exodus narrative says the Hebrews did not use a sword. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians (Ex 14:31).

Israel had now occupied Canaan, and the first attack was on Jericho. Joshua 6 describes the whole panorama of how Jericho fell to the newcomers, and Joshua swore that Jericho should not be rebuilt, and if anyone did so, would be cursed (Jos 6:26). In that, the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land (v 27). The book of Joshua seems to suggest and point to the notion that Israel’s occupation of the land was a result of military campaigns. To Joshua and Israel, these campaigns and victories in battles encountered with Israel’s enemies were still a result of Yahweh’s divine intervention.

In Joshua 8:1–2 the Lord instructed Joshua and his army to attack Ai. According to the tradition, the Gibeonites had received news about Israel’s presence in Canaan and that their Lord had fought the wars for them against all their past enemies. When the Gibeonites spoke to Joshua, they said: “For we have heard reports of him (the Lord), and all that he did to Egypt and to the Amorite kings” (Jos 9:9–10). The same theme is narrated in Joshua 9:24–25:

Your servants were clearly told how the Lord your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you the whole land and to wipe out all the inhabitants from before you. So we feared for our lives because of you, and that is why we did this. We are now in your hands. Do to us whatever seems good and right to you.
In Joshua 21:43 we read that the Israelites have finally occupied all the land that the “Lord had sworn to give their forefathers and they took possession of it and settled there.” Joshua 24 is fundamentally a summary of the whole exodus narrative as it unfolds the perceived history of Israel from the time of Abraham, to the oppression in Egypt, the deliverance, the crossing of the Red sea and finally Israel’s settlement in Canaan.

3. THE CHALLENGE OF THE EXODUS LIBERATION MOTIF TO ZIMBABWE

Zimbabweans are God’s people in the same way that God regarded the biblical Israelites who were oppressed in ancient Egypt. According to Rugwiji (2008b:9):

Zimbabwe’s hopes are underpinned in the unlimited power of God to deal with seemingly unpredictable situations. The good God who delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (Ex 6:6–8) is the same God who would ultimately emerge victorious over all the evils threatening the Zimbabwean people.

According to Goldingway (1993:5) anyone who believes the actual text of these biblical narratives as given by inspiration of God will be enthusiastic about the stimulus and the help we can receive from such renewed study of the text of Scripture itself, which is a powerful aid to our being grasped by its message.

According to the exodus narrative, Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh and announced the divine imperative of deliverance to the imperial power that ruled their world that the Israelites be freed from Egyptian bondage. Then a series of dramatic episodes began in which God sent plague after plague against the empire, until the tenth plague. According to Borg (2002:97) the death of the firstborns forced Pharaoh to release the Israelites out of Egypt. According to Exodus 12:29: “At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on the throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon and the firstborn of all the livestock as well” (NIV). Pharaoh finally relented and let the Israelites leave Egypt. It seems to be an attitude on the part of the ruler never to comply with the pleas of their subjects at the earliest possible moment until the situation really gets worse.

At the dawn of independence in Zimbabwe, many people had expected that Mugabe would become a true Moses to lead the people of Zimbabwe to the “Promised Land” and would live up
to the promises he had always made during the liberation struggle. The opposite was true of him in the recent past. Gukurahundi (in the Matabeleland genocide and in the Midlands provinces) of the early 1980s and Operation Murambatsvina were testimonies to his cruelty. Mugabe’s heart was hardened as people’s suffering escalated. The people’s hopes for a better future in Zimbabwe were underpinned solely on the change of government. As stated by Sithole (1988:193) to change means to make the reform. Where there is no difference in the same thing, change is absent. Unfortunately, change in Zimbabwe is still an ideal; the ZANU–PF government is there to stay.

The oppression of the Zimbabweans under Mugabe’s regime in the post-colonial period provides another parallel to the exodus narrative. The spirit of the oppressive Pharaoh of an ancient Egyptian kingdom has re-incarnated in Mugabe. As already noted above, the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh expressed his concern on the fact that the Israelites had become numerous and feared that they might overpower them when a conflict arose. Pharaoh did not only persecute the Israelites with hard labour, but went on to order the murder of all Israelite male children. This was a calculated move intended to reduce the number of males and thereby reducing the birthrate in the near future.

In Zimbabwe many people had become despondent about Mugabe’s rule, which culminated into large numbers supporting the opposition MDC, thinking that at least if government changed; people’s lives would also change for the better. It is in this context that the ZANU–PF government exerted horror, mayhem, murders, farm evictions, Operation Murambatsvina, and the recent torture prior to the run–off elections, all in an effort to disperse and misplace the opposition support base – who at the moment – are the majority. Zimbabweans were subjected to coercion, intimidation, threats, denied freedom of expression, erosion of democracy and lack of rule of law, bad governance, hunger and corruption, among other evils. Through their prophetic voices, Morgan Tsvangirai and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference stood out as prophets to challenge the government on its injustice upon the people of Zimbabwe. But, more importantly, it is the contribution of the majority of Zimbabweans – expressed through the ballot – which would play a significant role to carry the nation towards liberation, but unfortunately to no avail. This time unpleasant circumstances of barbaric murders denied the Zimbabwean electorate to cast their votes in the run–off elections to express their despondency against the ruling party. Mugabe took Tsvangirai’s and MDC’s withdrawal from contesting the run–off
elections as the opportunity Mugabe had worked hard to grab.

When God commanded Moses to appeal to Pharaoh for the release of the children of Israel (Ex 5:21), Moses said: “O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to appeal in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all” (Ex 5:22–23). However, in Zimbabwe, change is inevitable. Liberation must be considered as process; it is never an event. In Zimbabwe, there is need for liberation in the following areas: political, economic, poverty and starvation, religious, gender, and evil, to name just a few.

3.1 Political liberation

According to Rugwiji (2008b:9) Zimbabwean politics has had a negative effect on the country’s economic environment. Politics has taken a centre stage at the expense of the economic revival. Power–hunger, selfishness to remain in power and the candid to uphold the hegemony have collectively reinforced the ZANU–PF regime to go on a rampage by murdering people to compel them to vote for Mugabe. It is actually oppression at its highest level. The removal of ZANU–PF government out of power through elections would have been a milestone towards freedom on the part of the Zimbabwean society as well as change of the economic situation for the better. But, that opportunity has gone begging at the withdrawal of MDC from contesting the run–off elections citing massive violence and murders of the members of the public as reasons.

Hopes for change in the economy of Zimbabwe have been dashed due to a political shift in Zimbabwe. According to Dachs (2007a:2) after elections all citizens should join forces to build the Zimbabwe we want. Some suggest that two main political parties – ZANU–PF and MDC – should talk over the prevailing socio–political issues in Zimbabwe. Previous talks under Thabo Mbeki’s mediation have not been successful as Mugabe did not live up to the agreement. Would Mugabe faithfully accept a power–sharing deal with Tsvangirai towards an internal settlement or a Government of National Unity? That still remains a mystery, but the most desirable move to do for the good of the people of Zimbabwe. As noted earlier on, talks about “who–controls–what” are under way in Zimbabwe (in October 2008). Many people are curiously waiting for the outcome. A change of Government would bring positive results in Zimbabwe’s political economy.
3.1.1 Democracy

However, if Mugabe’s government is to survive, there are a lot of expectations by the Zimbabwean people as well as the International Community. First and foremost, the rule of law must prevail in the country, which should seek to protect citizens and respect property. Democracy must prevail. Democracy is the form of government in which the people have a say in who should hold power and how it should be used (*OED* 2001: s v “democracy”). Democracy in terms of political parties should take precedence. Government should avoid the practice of silencing the masses’ grievances by using the police, the army, and the CID department, by unleashing harassment and horror on innocent and unarmed civilians.

Let people express their political opinions by joining a party of their choice. In a democracy, people’s choices have to be respected. Opposition parties must be allowed to challenge the government on issues of governance. The ruling party must allow the opposing parties for media coverage – television, radio, newspapers, public meetings, press conferences, and campaign rallies – in order to present their manifesto to the public so that when the electorate go to the polls, they are well-informed about who they want to vote for. The opposite is true in a Zimbabwean situation, where ZANU–PF (the ruling party) allows itself a lion’s share of all national privileges, including the media coverage.

3.1.2 The run–off elections: 27 June 2008

Zimbabwe – under the present leadership – is not a democratic country. Political violence, persecution of opposition membership, and murders of members of the public designated as enemies of the State, are testimonies to undemocratic principles employed by the ruling party.

The first elections of 2008 were conducted on 28 March. Without getting into minute details about the results of those elections, the fact that Mugabe first of all of ordered the recount of those elections indicated that the results reflected a loss on the part of ZANU–PF. Mugabe then ordered a recount. A recount was conducted and the results came out exactly the same as in the first count. Then what does Mugabe do? He orders a run–off.
Secondly, the whole scenario which amounts to a shocking feeling is that if Mugabe was not content about how the votes were counted in the first round of the elections and after the recount the results remained the same, why the run–off? The question could be posed the other way round. If Mugabe and ZANU–PF had won the first round of elections in March 2008, would both the recount and the run–off have been allowed to be conducted? One does not need an extra sense to understand that Mugabe would not accept a defeat by Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). However, the run–off elections were penciled for 27 June 2008.

During the period of campaign prior to the run–off elections, it was the time Mugabe and ZANU–PF militias mounted an untold witch–hunt on the Zimbabwean people, from house to house searching for opposition supporters, most of whom were assaulted and others were murdered. Hundreds of other people are reported to have gone missing. In the rural areas, sources who chose to remain anonymous, said that people were being forced to produce identity cards for party membership. Those who were found to be members of the opposition were first of all brutally assaulted before being forced to accept ZANU–PF cards and then “re–oriented” to vote for ZANU–PF.

It was a kind of experience which was a common feature during the colonial era – where people, particularly in the communal areas – were tortured for having links with the Rhodesians or for having a family member who worked for the Rhodesian government. In towns as well, some were forced to flee their homes after deaths occurred in the neighbourhood as ZANU–PF youths mounted horrific killings of members of the public believed to be staunch opposition supporters. Morgan Tsvangirai – the opposition MDC leader – himself escaped by a whisker by securing refuge at the Dutch Embassy in Harare, Zimbabwe’s capital city.

This state of affairs – in which thousands of people were severely assaulted and others murdered – necessitated Morgan Tsvangirai’s withdrawal from contesting the run–off elections, barely few days before the election day. The MDC leader felt the ground was not even for both the MDC contesting the run–off as well as the persecution which was mounted on his supporters, most whom lost homes, lives and limbs. Even if the MDC had braved to contest the run–off elections, it was going to be an extremely difficult task for the opposition to win the elections because the ZANU–PF government had put structures in place which would make it virtually impossible for any opposition to clinch victory. Sources whose names remained anonymous, said that the army,
police, CIOs, security personnel and other government officers, had already voted for ZANU–PF prior to the date of the run–off elections. This is typical of many other irregularities that suggest the June 2008 run–off elections were heavily fraudulent.

The Zimbabwean people were presented with yet another of numerous shocking experiences of their lives when Mugabe – after the withdrawal of the MDC from contesting the run–off which was marred by violence and murders – went ahead as a “lone ranger” in polls. Within two days after the run–off in which Mugabe was competing with no one, the results were released, followed by his inauguration a day later as president of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the next five years. In contrast, it had taken Mugabe over a month to release the results after the elections of 28 March 2008.

Meanwhile, the African Union Summit was still under way in Egypt. Having accomplished his desires – inaugurated as president about two days after the run–off elections – Mugabe flies to Egypt to join other African Heads of State. Whether the African Union would recognize Mugabe’s government is something that still had to be revealed to the author. But, assumptions are that sympathisers to Mugabe such as Angola, Libya, DRC, and South Africa, to name a few, would probe for lenience on Mugabe. The majority of African leaders – supported by the international community – would feel that Mugabe’s behaviour has been a shameful act not only to Africa, but also to the whole world.

Mugabe’s government is illegitimate and an act of fraud. It is only befitting that Mugabe be tried under an international court of justice for Human Rights violations. Mugabe remains typically an Egyptian Pharaoh. The Zimbabweans who are being oppressed by Mugabe are typologically the Israelites. Mugabe hardens his heart when the people of Zimbabwe are suffering and who have ever since been crying for freedom and Mugabe denies them that freedom. Mugabe has robbed the Zimbabwean people of their justice in broad day–light. Some who doubted Mugabe’s cruelty, this time around they have witnessed things which are hard to believe executed by a once–revered leader of Africa who has turned into a dictator.

The Israelites in Egypt cried out because of their oppression and their cries rose up to God (Ex 3:7–10). According to Kim (2008:1) the outcry to God of every people, like that of the Hebrews in Egypt, operates as the place where humanity meets God through the dialogical interaction of
human lament and divine intervention. According to Kaiser (1978) faith in the promise is indeed a Pentateuchal and biblical motif, which motivates inward orientation, social involvement and sense of identity. Pharaoh many times denied the release of the children of God. According to Dobson (1993:27) scripture is replete with examples of the troubling human experience.

In the previous elections of 1985, 1990, 1995, and in 2000 – which the MDC party first contested – the Zimbabwean electorate has been trying to bring change, but allegations of fraud and vote-rigging on the part of the ruling party have always disadvantaged them. ZCBC (10 April 2007) drew similarities between Human Rights violations by state agents to the oppression of biblical pharaohs and Egyptian slave masters. Mugabe is never willing to relinquish power despite the country’s economy failing and the suffering of the people escalating. Mugabe’s selfishness and his fear of trial for human rights violations after his exit from office as head of state, makes him cling onto the hot chair for his dear life.

3.1.3 Racism and regionalism

Racism is the belief that each race has certain qualities or abilities, giving rise to the belief that certain races are better than others (OED 2001: s.v “racism”). It also means discrimination against or hostilities towards other races. As stated by ZCBC (1984:3)

> We do not deny the existence of conflict between different classes and between rich and poor nations. But we cannot accept that strife and conflict by themselves are positive forces of transformation. A society torn by hatred does not suddenly give birth to love and harmony.

In contrast, all people must form part of the larger society in Zimbabwe where they share and contribute towards nation-building and also towards the welfare of every individual in the land. Racism has been a stumbling block in many situations where progress was supposed to take precedence. To a large extent racism has prohibited development in Zimbabwe, subsequently preventing business from functioning properly. As stated by ZCBC (1998:2):

> Our country has high expectations because a war of liberation was fought over the injustices of racism and colonialism. It is the right of every citizen of Zimbabwe to claim justice wherever and whenever it is negated by the ruling elite.
The biblical narrative offers a rational basis for opposing racism and pursuing justice. Numbers 15:15–16 says: “The community is to have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the alien shall be the same before the Lord. The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and the alien living among you”.

Regionalism is another problem which could derail development in much the same way as racism. Regionalism means loyalty to one’s own region in cultural and political terms, rather than to central government (OED 2001: s.v “regionalism”). Both racism and regionalism carry almost the identical tendencies, and both should be avoided. If such things are contained, and citizens are urged to work together in a free society, then political freedom can truly be said to exist in Zimbabwe. Government must make every effort to disdain from any racial practices, and allow every individual – regardless of race, colour, creed or religion – to co-habit with and discourage other races from discriminating upon the other. Let people regard each other in terms of unity. ZCBC (1997:7) says:

> We need solidarity between different ethnic groups and regions, between people of different cultures and speaking different languages. No one group must prevail and dictate to others. Every group has something to contribute. No one can do it alone. While one group tries to improve its lot, it must take the legitimate expectations of everyone else into account.

Racist attacks or racial segregation by Mugabe on the white community (e.g. white commercial farmers) will not help the country to forge ahead in terms of development. Instead, it will continue to worsen the situation, not only in Zimbabwe, but also in other parts of the continent where such practices would occur. In the same way, the white community would not be expected to treat the black people in a racially discriminated manner. All people – regardless of colour, creed, race, or nationality – should live in harmony with one another. Development can only be implemented in an environment where trust is guaranteed.

### 3.1.4 Justice

As stated by Davies (1976:20–21):
It is to all Christians that we address a fresh and insistent call to action...It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustices and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and effective action.

The church must continue to stand for justice on behalf of the oppressed peoples of our society. By its concern of politics, the church should not be interested in the acquisition and control of political power. Paoli (1973:87) talks of “political love”. In politics, the church must be concerned about justice, which is righteousness. What the church would like to see in the socio-political sphere is for justice to “roll down like waters and righteousness like an unfailing stream” (Am 5:24). Without justice nothing of love is preserved. Every love spills out on the ground, when justice is not present. But love trembles within the fibres of justice and sighs for freedom (Paoli 1973:99). Leviticus 19:15 says: “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favouritism to the great, but judge your neighbour fairly.”

In Zimbabwe, there is need for a paradigm shift. To a large extent, injustice characterised Mugabe’s style of leadership in the past and it impacted negatively on the lives of the majority. This should be avoided. The public should make their concerns heard when government has deviated from its obligation to the nation. A free society should be able to measure the nation’s ability to deliver justice by how government responds to mass or public demonstrations when justice is negated. In Zimbabwe, one cannot exercise freedom in any way because the police and army will be ready – not only to disperse the gathering – but also to brutally assault and kill. It is illegal to be free in Zimbabwe. One will be charged for exercising one’s freedom.

3.2 Economic liberation

Economic means relating to economics or the economy of the country or region. It also means profitable or having to do with profitability. Therefore, the term economy means the state of a country or region in terms of its production and consumption of goods and services and the supply of money (OED 2001: s v “economic”). As already been noted, Zimbabwe’s economy has been in shambles since the early 1990s and people’s lives were at stake from that time onwards (1990–2008). Although Mugabe has retained the presidency, there must be a new dispensation, some change in terms of how he runs the country. Mugabe should take account of the previous circumstances of economic nature which need a redress sooner than later, so that
people's lives change for the better. Companies that had closed down as a result of the political situation in the past should be allowed to reopen and investment should be attracted into the country, sending a positive signal that Zimbabwe is now a safe destination for investment, which will in the end create employment opportunities. Industries should be allowed to operate profitably so that they continue to expand, and subsequently having the capacity to boost the economic performance and create employment opportunities in many sectors.

3.2.1 The land question

The land question has been at the centre of controversy since independence. According to Meredith (2008:218) during the Lancaster House negotiations, the land issue was one of the most difficult to relive. Mugabe did not want to abide by the Bill of Rights on which the land issue would be resolved in a new Zimbabwe. According to Meredith (2008:119):

The compromise that Mugabe was forced to accept meant that for ten years the government could only purchase land against the owner's wishes if it was "underutilised" or required for a public purpose, and only then if the owner was provided with prompt and full compensation in foreign exchange. In other words, land transactions could only be conducted on a "willing seller-willing buyer" basis.

In the late 1990s, President Robert Mugabe had used the land to "buy" support and approval for endorsement to stay in power from some sections of the public. The land, being the main booster of the economy, and also being the lifeline for many people in Zimbabwe, should be settled and handled with wisdom. Unfortunately, in the past the land had been used for political expediency without placing emphasis on the consequences of such actions on the economy as a whole. According to ZCBC (1998:3) much of our poverty in Zimbabwe is related to people having access to poor land, a consequence of our colonial history that still has not been adequately addressed. The fast-track land reform programme was not supposed to be fast in the first place. The haphazard land reform has resulted in food shortages in the country. ZCBC (1989:3) says:

A war was fought and blood was spilt over ownership of land. Lasting peace and prosperity can only be achieved if the land is shared out equitably. Land is a limited resource. It cannot be produced or multiplied. It must be shared in such a way that all citizens of the country benefit sufficiently.
It is also my view that Government should strive to reallocate land in a more systematic way, using the land audit institution so that anyone found in possession of more than one farm should surrender the other ones to government, so as to make everyone deserving land to get it for farming purposes. According to ZCBC (1997:1):

Productive agricultural land, on the other hand, is a most precious asset which should be put to the best possible use for the benefit of one’s family, the nation and even the neighbouring countries, irrespective of whether a person owns the land or has part of the communal land allocated to him or her.

In a discussion on the land issue in Zimbabwe, Scheffler (2008) suggested that aspiring farmers should apply to relevant agricultural colleges established for the purpose of training and equipping new farmers. Upon their completion of a two-year or three-year training programme, one can then be allocated a farm for a period of say five years. When that period lapses, this farmer can then apply to buy that farm by instalments over a period of time, so that the money could be used and recycled to train more farmers for a stipulated period of time.

Scheffler (2008) further concurs that those people who have had previous training and farming experience could be the first to be allocated land for farming. Indigenous people, who are staying on the farms which were allocated previously, where such areas are only meant for grazing and animal breeding, should be re-located on to new areas where they can sustain themselves through subsistence farming on productive soils.

3.3 Liberation from poverty and starvation

Poverty can be defined in many ways: lack of food, clothing, housing and so on. Poverty is an enemy which hinders one’s independence from life meaning and from other people. According to ZCBC (2005:1) Jesus tells us “what I want is mercy, not sacrifice” (Mt 9:13). Jesus’ words reflect those Old Testament prophets who continually stated that prayers and sacrifices were of no value unless there was concern for the poor and the needy (Am 5: 21–24).

According to Wermter (2005:11) the church which is convinced of the value and importance of every human being, must speak up for those normally neglected and considered not important in the power struggle: the poor, the marginalised and the disadvantaged. The similarities between
the Israelite context and the Zimbabwean context are the theme that runs through both cases and that is the suffering of humanity. ZCBC (1997:1) says: “we have won the war of political independence; we have not yet won the war against poverty.”

In Come and Share (1991:9) Banana says that Christ associated himself with the downtrodden and those despised by the society. Jesus was born of a modest family and he understood the difficulties of the marginalised through personal experience. According to Heschel (1969: x) a prophet is “person and not a microphone”. The prophets addressed social, political and economic issues on behalf of God. Their source of courage was God. The prophets were passionate about social justice. Quite often, some people are tethered or are “slaves” to some things or other people because of material and financial lack. Many people in Zimbabwe had internalised this condition of lacking and could afford to go without food for many hours or days. According to ZCBC (1997:6) hunger and malnutrition, poverty and misery are first and foremost a result of human sin and selfishness, of injustice and lack of solidarity.

The Christian Care Director, Jaka (2001:77) says that Christian Care – which is an arm of the churches – was finding ways of being proactive in light of looming disaster on the nation. Christian Care has been and continues to play a leading role in providing humanitarian assistance to the needy people in Zimbabwe. The government of Robert Mugabe had exacerbated the suffering of people, reducing them to beggars. It is only a responsible government that will see the suffering among its people as an urgent concern that would need attention. According to Bonheoffer (1967:361) God can only help the suffering. Think of those who suffer as if you shared their pain (Heb 13:3) (NIV). In view of the assertions by ZCBC (2002:1) the most valuable treasure of any nation is its people. Without this asset true nationhood cannot be possible.

Children are usually at risk because of the situation of starvation and poverty. On “God Hears the Cries of the Oppressed”, in The Zimbabwean, Rugwiji (2008c:9) says: “I am persuaded to think about the little ones, the elderly, the sick and the prisoners, who quite often, are neglected when a revolution or change occurs.” According to Collins (2007:218) many poor homes have loving parents, and relatively stable environments, but a disproportionate number of the poor are exposed to harmful conditions. Government should make efforts to reduce the level of poverty among its people, and this can be done through employment creation, promoting and financing
self-supportive projects. Government should lobby with the international community and donor organisations to facilitate such a programme. The suffering people of Zimbabwe are groaning in agony: “watchman, how much longer the night?” (Is 21:11).

Food is in short supply in Zimbabwe at the moment. The output from agriculture has been dwindling for the past ten years due to the expulsion of commercial farmers in the controversial land redistribution programme, resulting in a massive reduction in agricultural productivity. The Zimbabwean economy is agro-based. The government should seriously reconsider the land redistribution exercise and its agricultural reform because Zimbabwe is immensely dependent on agriculture for food – for both domestic consumption and commercial purposes.

Resources should be channelled into commercial farming so that the country begins to recapture its past glory of being the “bread-basket” of Africa which sustains the economy and improves the lives of people. Resettlement should be undertaken in such a way that only deserving people have access to productive pieces of land, even for subsistence farming.

3.3.1 Housing crisis

Accommodation is a very critical topic to be addressed by any government for its people. In Zimbabwe, it should be on the agenda in parliament sessions quite often. According to ZCBC (2005:1) the prophet Isaiah reminds us “to share our bread with the hungry, to shelter the homeless poor and clothe the man seen to be naked” (Is 58:5–7). Housing schemes are very essential towards alleviating accommodation crises in Zimbabwe. Many people whose homes were destroyed during Mugabe’s Operation Murambatsvina (the Clean-up exercise), are critically in need of shelter. Many have been forced to go and settle in the rural areas because they could not own a house in the urban setting. Operation Restore Order was a very barbaric act whose intentions up to now are still questionable. As stated by Mbanga (2005) Operation Murambatsvina had already targeted urban supporters of the MDC party, which had mobilised donor support from churches and civic organisations to alleviate the suffering. Children who were of school-going age were forced to abandon school because parents had to resettle and relocate elsewhere.
It is in the context of the situation explained above that accommodation should receive priority in terms of government agenda topics, in an effort to alleviate squatting by people. Construction of houses can be undertaken using the traditional building methods, in which materials such as sun-dried bricks baked from mud, corrugated or asbestos sheets (for roof) form the major part of the housing unit. The government may not be in the capacity of constructing bigger houses – a five–roomed house – for every individual. But, government can start building say a standard two–roomed house – with a toilet and a bathroom. The occupant will then be urged to extend that two–roomed housing unit into a bigger house (e.g., a five–roomed house).

A scheme for funding both non–and low–income earning individuals should be put in place to assist people to own houses of their own. Otherwise if the government can, it will have to take it upon itself to build a whole house capable of accommodating a family of five people. The other way would be to engage independent contractors to build houses for people. The larger part of the bill for building the houses would be subsidized by government. These are a few suggestions which can be implemented in an effort to solve the housing crisis in Zimbabwe. This way government will be discouraging people – in a responsible manner – from continuing to squat, because people would have an alternative, as opposed to the barbaric Operation Murambatsvina, which left people without shelter during rains, in the sun–heat and in the cold breeze.

3.4 Religious liberation

Religion means the belief in or worship of a God or gods. It is a particular system of faith or worship (OED 2001: s v “religion”). So, being religious means having to do with or believing in a religion. Many people have described other nations as “Christian” nations. May be what they mean is that Christianity is the main religion in that country. Some have described Zimbabwe as a “Christian nation”. The government of Zimbabwe must allow people to exercise their religious freedom by worshipping, attending religious ceremonies or festivals such as, Easter and Christmas with reference to Christianity. Christianity, for example, has always provided a take–off ground for moral behaviour for our societies. Besides that, many mission schools, hospitals and clinics in Zimbabwe, which can be traced even to the colonial era, have their roots in Christianity. Many leaders, political or the clergy, have been “brought up” and nurtured by the church; examples being, President Robert Mugabe, Rev Canaan Banana, Rev Ndabaningi Sithole and Bishop Abel Muzorewa, to name a few.
The freedom of worship is necessary for the church because it then can continue to instil discipline and groom young people potential for leadership positions in many spheres of life. This effort by the church is important among our people so that they become responsible citizens, and hence, contributing immensely on the reduction of crime in the country.

The Old Testament priesthood and sacrifices, along with their food laws and ritual washings, were “imposed until the time of the Reformation” (Heb 9:10). The Oxford English Dictionary describes Martin Luther, “the reformer” as follows:

Martin Luther (1483–1546), was a German Protestant theologian, the leading figure of the German Reformation. He preached the doctrine of justification by faith (the belief that people are freed from sin by their faith in God, rather than by their actions) and attacked the papal authority. He was excommunicated in 1521 (OED 2001: s.v “Martin Luther 1483–1546”).

As stated by McGrath and Packer (2005:17) Luther sought to re-establish the centrality of the Bible to the teaching and structures of the church. He was especially concerned by the sale of indulgences – pieces of paper which promised the bearer for forgiveness of sins, as the result of payment to the church. The sprouting of both protestant churches, namely, the Lutheran Church, among other protestant movements and independent churches today could be attributed to Luther’s theology of freedom of worship.

Martin Luther’s (the reformer’s) ninety-five theses were not by any means intended as a call to Reformation. They were simply the proposal of an earnest university professor to discuss the theology of indulgences, in the light of the errors and abuses that had grown up over the centuries. Luther did not oppose indulgences in their true and original sense as the merciful release of a penitent sinner from a penance imposed earlier by the priest. What Luther opposed was all the additions and pervasions of indulgences, which were harmful to the salvation of humanity and infected the everyday practice of the church.

On the other hand, there are other religions beside Christianity which should also be allowed to practice their faiths in a free society. Among these other religions are: Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and African Traditional Religion (ATR), to name but a few. People have different perceptions about God or a supernatural being and their belief systems about the divine differ. It is in this context that freedom to one’s religion of choice is necessary, so that an individual is not
oppressed by being forced to believe things which alienate somebody from one’s traditional belief system. Adherents of a particular religion should respect each other’s uniqueness and differences in the manner they perceive of a Supreme Being. The attack of other people’s religious beliefs should be condemned as it violates the aspect of freedom of worship of an individual.

To some extent, there has been religious oppression in Zimbabwe. For example, the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (Zimsec) examines a subject called Religious Studies, referring to Christianity. Other religions are not taught and examined in both the primary school and secondary school levels in Zimbabwe. Religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism are neither taught nor examined in schools in Zimbabwe. A course on world religions, namely Phenomenology of Religions, is taught and examined at University level in Zimbabwe. Otherwise Christianity is dominant in both the communities and Zimbabwean schools. The government of Zimbabwe has always allowed freedom of worship to members of the public who congregate in the name of other religions besides Christianity.

I feel that Religious Education should be taught in Zimbabwean schools – from Primary to Secondary – where all essential elements for human development of major religions should be introduced into the education system by the Ministry of Education.

3.5 Liberation from gender discrimination

The World Bank Report (1990:95) defines gender as referring to male–female differences that are not biological, but based on social cultural factors. The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) (1995) views gender equality as the evenness in the distribution of vital resources and equal access to education, employment opportunities and benefits afforded to both male and female.

Liberation must also account for gender imbalances. As to the function of the exodus on the liberation of women’s oppressive situations, the following examinations will assist readers. Women play significant roles in various spheres of life: political, economic, social and religious responsibilities. As stated by Sanders and Sambo (1991:157) African women carry the multiple social, economic and cultural burdens. In spite of the crucial roles played by women in both their
immediate families and the society at large, discrimination against women has been a worldwide phenomenon. According to Masenya (1995:189) black women in South Africa, like all other women, are the victims of sexism as a form of oppression caused basically by the phenomenon of patriarchy. For black men, though they are victims of oppression due to their race, sexism allows them to exploit and oppress black women (Masenya 1995:192).

The Bible is not silent about both the oppression and liberation of women. This is so because to a large extent, the Jewish culture portrays a view of male dominance over women and the impression implicated by the Pentateuch as a whole is somehow patriarchal. Again, a few examples are worthy noting. Bird (1982:91) says that one needs only to scan the genealogy of the Old Testament (Gn 5, 10; Nm 16, 26; 1 Chr 1, 2), to see that the biblical world is a man’s world, for the genealogies are fundamentally lists of males, in which women do not normally appear. There are also theological inclinations in the exodus narrative with reference to feminist/womanist perspectives. According to Dube (2000:74) Israelite women and men are both slaves; they have no human rights in Egypt. To this degree, imperialism is gender blind, though, of course, colonised women suffer more because they also have two patriarchal systems superimposed on them.

Despite the condition of male dominance in the Bible, modern interpretation of the biblical narratives suggests that passages of scripture are liberative on women (e.g, Proverbs). Proverbs 31:30–31, says: “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate” (NIV). As expressed by Masenya (1995:192) in feminist hermeneutics for example, women’s experiences play a role in the interpretation of Scripture. This interpretation will create a new meaning of passages of Scripture in relation to women, and in the process boost women’s confidence in realizing both their self-worthiness as well as their ability to challenge experiences of oppression in male-dominated situations.

As stated by Morgan (1984:750–751) because they are under oppression, the colonised usually overlook some gender roles in the struggle for independence. According to Dube (2000:74):

In Exodus, for example, the struggle for independence is pioneered by women: midwives, mothers, sisters, and daughters defy the king’s instruction to annihilate Israelite children (Ex 1:15–2:1–22). Thus, they
sustain the survival of Israel, leading to the survival of Moses, who later joins their long struggle against Pharaoh's imperial oppression.

Exodus 1:15–2:10 (KJV) narrates the dramatic birth and survival episode of Moses, the future liberator of the oppressed Israelites. Moses' life at birth was threatened with death, but the roles of women who defied Pharaoh's orders preserved Moses' life at birth. These women included the midwives, Moses' mother and sister, and Pharaoh's daughter. Israel's hope for the future was preserved through the courageous action of these women, namely: Shiphrah and Puah (Ex 2:15), Moses' mother (Ex 2:2–3), Miriam (Ex 2:4) and Pharaoh's daughter (Ex 2:8–9) (KJV) who enabled the birth, preservation and first stirrings of social conscience in Moses, who would become God's agent to deliver Israel (Birch et al 1999:105). The actions of these women precede and foreshadow the saving activity of God on behalf of the Hebrews in bondage and preserve the life of God's agent, Moses. According to Felder (2002:139):

The family begins with the woman when she gives birth to the child. This is no less true of the church as a family, for, while Joseph's caring and protective role is important; everything begins with Mary, who gave birth to the Christ child. This is often minimised as a motive for giving attention to the roles, rights, and status of women in the church.

Judges 3:4 explains the prevailing spirit of the exodus motif among the Israelites and further provides fascinating perspectives on the role of women in the Bible. According to Scheffler (2000:74) during the period of the judges gender roles were apparently not yet rigid, and Deborah could have acted as a prophetess and judge. Judges 4:4, 9 and 5:7 illustrate the significant roles women played in the Old Testament.

In Zimbabwe gender debate is not only becoming common, but also more and more sensitive. In my qualitative research, I asked some respondents what their opinions were about gender equality in Zimbabwe. Mugabe (2006) responded by saying that women were disadvantaged for a long time. In the church, especially in the Baptist Convention Church, women form the majority of parishioners, yet women are marginalised and men dominate decision-making positions. Others such as Mbaluka (2006) said that Zimbabwe has made some great strides towards the emancipation of women. Mbaluka went on to say that there were (then 2006) quite a lot of female heads in schools, as well as female vice President Joyce Mujuru. On the other hand, Tavaziva (2006) argues that men and women are not equal. Women are just put in front in
certain instances. Usually after men have achieved what they want, they “throw women away”.

In the late 1990s a number of women organisations in Zimbabwe, such as Affirmative Action Group (AAG), Women’s Aids Actions Group (WAAG), Women Lawyers Association (WLA), Msasa Project (MP), and Girl Child Network (GCN), gained support to bring more women to the different employment and educational sectors, respectively.

Traditionally, Zimbabwean people’s wealth is composed of their land, their livestock and their children, particularly their daughters, for whom they expect *roora* (a Shona name which means “bride price”) (Tungamirai 1995:37). In addition to that, women perform extra ordinary duties on the land to which they are traditionally believed to belong. Yet, in the land redistribution programme in Zimbabwe, women have not been considered. Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) (2001:85) expressed concern that women were left out in the land reform process. As stated by the Ministry of Community and Co-operative Development (MCCD) (1991:2) during the liberation struggle, women, in addition to taking up military and political roles, extended their additional roles by feeding and clothing the freedom fighters. According to Mpunga et al (1995:10) prior to independence in Zimbabwe, women were marginalised, as their problems were not addressed at policy level. Government should seek to address the controversial subject of gender in an attempt to liberate both the oppressor and the oppressed, so that that they cohabit with one common idea in mind: that they are all human beings and who can both contribute towards the development of their nation.

3.6 Liberation from evil: violence, war, corruption, murder, child sexual abuse

Evil can take any form. Adams (1977:9) says that evil is suffering that is inflicted by some other person which one must endure. Liberation from evil is two-fold: freedom on the part of the perpetrator, as well as the victim. In Zimbabwe, there is need for liberation from evil, such as war, violence, corruption, murder, and child sexual abuse, to name but a few. If one understands his or her enemy and the evil the enemy is likely to inflict, one would avoid engaging the enemy in a more direct and obvious way.
3.6.1 Violence and war

As stated by Adams (1977:9) whenever you are engaged in warfare, you must understand your enemy; otherwise you will lose the battle. The Zimbabwean government has unleashed terror and violence on the public, particularly members of the opposition party. According to Rugwiji (2008d: 9):

Some people could be identified with specific colours: green, yellow, black, or red. The colour of one’s sunglasses will influence how an object appears in the eyes of an individual. One will see green if one wears green lenses. The same is true with one who has been seeing “red” for the larger part of his or her life. Nothing short of blood will change his or her mind. Mugabe seems to want to react in a bloody encounter at the slightest error of violence either on the part of the public or the opposition.

However, it is important to note that, even during the colonial era, churches had always preached peace and justice in Rhodesia, showing that the absence of peace in any nation creates a clique of an ungovernable society, which in the end attracts violence. RCBC (1977:5) said:

In Rhodesia for many years there have been various factors which have combined to produce a climate of division, violence and injustice. Today, we ask the people of Rhodesia to remove any obstacles which may stand in the way of permanent peace. We ask them not to create new obstacles, or to commit errors which might be irreparable.

According to RCBC (1978:2) war is powerless to eliminate the deep-seated causes of all wars. They went on to say that violence is not the normal way of bringing about justice, and that it is at best a last recourse in unavoidable necessity.

It is everyone’s hope that such acts of brutality do not end up in war. As already noted in chapter four, involvement in wars on the part of the church in modern times is not unique. This should not be taken in a negative view. In most cases, the church’s involvement in wars and violence has been the role of a mediator towards peace initiatives. Otherwise, the church has always campaigned against war and violence. According to Rugwiji (2008d: 9):

An educated society tries to avoid violent confrontation and violent acts; it prefers dialogue and democratic means to rise to the top. If that is still denied, either by powers that be or by other circumstances, then we have no choice but to leave that to God himself.
Zimbabwe must desist from initiating or engaging itself in violence and war, unnecessarily. War and violence disturb the orderliness in a society and increase the carnage and suffering amongst people. According to Joas (2003:111):

Wars have destructive consequences that continue long after they have finished. In the context of Scripture, particularly the exodus narrative, it is only God who had always fought Israel’s wars. After the end of a war there is not only mourning for human lives ended by violence, but also social relations are torn asunder, cities and countryside destroyed.

War and violence create a lot of suffering and trauma for innocent civilians. War destroys infrastructures that have been erected for our benefit. The intensity of suffering as a result of war, coupled with hunger, is a very serious experience, culminating in deaths (Rugwiji 2008d: 9).

According to ZCBC (1985:2) while it is the duty of government to maintain law and order, even by force if necessary, we feel that there is a crying need for a new peace initiative, even communication and dialogue with those that are resorting to violence. People should have confidence in a government that has put in place measures that protect its citizens.

The Law given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai prohibited murder on the part of the Israelis. Exodus 20:13 says: “you shall not kill”, indicating that (as in all cultures) a basic non-violent stance was part and parcel of ancient Israel’s world-view. This should be taken as how it should function for humankind everywhere and anytime. A nation could be engaged in warfare when it is forced to do so in an attempt to protect or “liberate” its citizens from foreign attack.

Israel had always believed that God fought wars for them. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians (Ex 14:31). In 1 Samuel 17:26, the Philistines continued to be a menace upon the Israelis, who were defying the armies of the living God. But, David goes to fight Goliath in the “name of God” (1 Sm 17:45–47). When a nation engages itself in war, that move must contribute to meeting a certain positive objective. Otherwise embarking on war has to be justified, or wholesome condemned.

According to ZCBC (2000:1) the pre-election terror and intimidation must stop. In the post-colonial period, Zimbabweans had cast their vote for their own black Prime Minister Robert
Mugabe expecting him to treat them fairly and justly. The civil war that killed over twenty thousand civilians in Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces in the early 1980s, was uncalled for, unjustified and a sheer brutal act on the part of government elected by the people. It could have been a legitimate claim that Mugabe had unearthed arms’ caches following dissident activities in Matabeleland, of which Joshua Nkomo was believed to be implicated in those deals. However, the maximized military action in response to those findings cannot justify the brutal killings of the general members of the public. To a large extent those massacres were an act of ethnic cleansing, aimed at certain groups of people considered the minority race by the dominating race in the country.

Again, the recent brutal murders, mayhem, maiming and persecution of people to force them to vote for ZANU–PF in the past run–off elections of March 2008, were a demonstration of cruelty of highest level perpetrated by a Government against its own people. When conscience is absent, guilty for killing disappears and the blood of the deceased becomes the sacrificial means to rise to the top.

3.6.2 Corruption

Corruption is another evil threatening livelihood in Zimbabwe, and it has negatively crippled the country’s economy in the past decade. Rugwiji (2008c:9) says:

Although I do not condone corruption at all, on closer examination, it is not the perpetrator who is to blame. One is almost tempted to lobby for forgiveness on the part of those reprimanded for corruption because of the extenuating circumstances attached to the act, given the struggle for survival that characterizes their everyday economic life.

According to ZCBC (1997:5) corruption and bribery are great evils in our society. It is unworthy for a nation to be proud of its freedom bought by such a big price – blood of people who sacrificed their lives during the war in colonial Rhodesia. People of power, either in the public or private sector, who demand bribes are exploiters and oppressors. These are the sources to Zimbabwe’s corrupt practices.
3.6.3 Murder

In Zimbabwe, cases of murder are not as common as the situation in other contexts such as in South Africa. But, the ZANU–PF government – through the “green bombers” (the youths who have been recruited and trained in military activities and they wear green uniforms) and CIOs – have exerted murderous acts especially during pre–election periods, targeting members of the opposition and other potential opposition supporters, in order to scare away people from voting for the opposition. That is setting a very bad precedence against the laws of murder in Zimbabwe. It is actually a crime. Otherwise, under normal circumstances, murder cases had been minimal in Zimbabwe. Murderous infernos have been activated by Robert Mugabe’s political motives.

Life is very precious. According to ZCBC (1994:1) human life from the moment of conception until natural death is sacred. No one must deliberately and directly kill an innocent human being. Laws on murder should be intensified in Zimbabwe, so that no one kills at will. In the recent past in Zimbabwe, brutal killings and abductions were a common feature and this should be avoided in future. Murder –among other evils – is a negative element which can easily flash away both business expansion and potential investors from the country.

3.6.4 Child sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse and rape have been on the increase in Zimbabwe. Many babies, young children and girls are raped. Many are left with unwanted pregnancies and babies which they end up dumping. The increased demand for liberation of minors from these shrewdness and wickedness is inevitable. According to ZCBC (1991:2):

Sexual intercourse has become a form of entertainment for mere children, often seduced by their irresponsible elders. Innumerable young girls are scarred for life through the experience of premature pregnancies and abortions. Countless children aborted or dumped after birth are of the many human beings thrown on scrap heap.

Some perpetrators escaped and continue to escape the wrath of law “unnoticed” by law-enforcement agents. Efforts must be made by government to discourage child sexual abuses, by punishing severely perpetrators of child sexual abuse, using laws operative in the land. Society
must play its part by reporting cases of rape and child sexual abuse to the law-enforcement agents so that sexual abusers could be reprimanded. In some cases an abuse is not reported – where the perpetrator is a respected and a close member of the family. In many cases, the abuser got away with the crime, such as rape on minors.

Parents must make every effort to protect the children and give proper care about how and where children are nurtured. It is the role of parents to protect and support their children as much as they possibly could. According to ZCBC (1984:2) young children should develop an awareness and relationship with God at their “mother’s knee.” Parents should teach their children to be wary of strangers and as well as teaching them a “tradition” of good morals for their upkeep. Government must protect its citizens, particularly minors, from sexual abuse and rape.

In conclusion, significant parallels of the Zimbabwean situation to the Exodus narrative have been drawn in a number of ways. The Israelites were oppressed by Pharaoh in Egypt, while on the other hand Zimbabweans were oppressed under British colonialism, Smith’s regime in Rhodesia and Mugabe’s regime in Zimbabwe. The exodus narrative speaks to us to find our way out of the crises threatening our existence. According to Gous and Van Heerden (2006:92) the biblical story of the exodus which recounts the Israelites’ journey from slavery to freedom, forms the core narrative of Jewish spiritual life, and has played a major role in the lives of Christians who were facing crisis situations. In Zimbabwe, the exodus motif becomes inevitable because people are being oppressed in many spheres. To a greater extent, many people (opposition leaders and Human Rights activists) were abducted; others have lost their lives and still others continue to be perpetual victims because of the oppression exerted on them by the ZANU–PF regime.

As noted previously in this study, liberation drawn from the exodus narrative does not necessarily need to focus on political oppression alone – where emphasis for liberation is placed on racism, colonialism, apartheid, segregation, as examples. Oppression can also take many other forms, such as economic, social, gender inequality, evil (e.g., murder, rape, and child sexual abuse), poverty, and many more. If Zimbabwean society has to be smart, these oppressive circumstances need to be tackled each day in people’s lives. It may not be possible to completely wipe out all oppressive situations among societies, but one step towards alleviating oppression is the most desirable initiative than not doing anything.
To a large extent, political oppression has taken a centre stage at the moment in Zimbabwe; this unstable political environment has impacted negatively on the economy of the country, subsequently affecting the livelihood of people. There are some possible options which the Zimbabwean government, regional bodies such as Sadc and African Union, and the United Nations, can take to tackle problems bedevilling Zimbabwe. These options are summarized below under Recommendations: What can be done in Zimbabwe.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT CAN BE DONE IN ZIMBABWE

According to Matshiqi and Kornegay (2008:26) now the ZANU–PF leader Robert Mugabe has successfully subverted the will of Zimbabweans, what is to be done? Like many other people around the world, questions like this have been asked, but answers have not been given, as reflected by lack of action by those accountable. Maybe it is still too early to dream of implementation. The following are possible suggestions or recommendations of what could be done in the Zimbabwean situation:

4.1 Government of national unity

Politics in Zimbabwe forms the main basis on which many oppressive situations sprout. The run–off election which had been scheduled for 27 June 2008 is now a thing of the past, because Mugabe has retained once again his post as president of Zimbabwe. The future of Zimbabwe is relatively skewed and the fate of the Zimbabwean people is likely to get worse. According to Pretoria News (3 July 2008) the 53–member body of the African Union called on Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai to form a government of national unity and recommended that the Sadc continue to mediate between the rivals to facilitate this. The African Union passed a resolution for a government of national unity in Zimbabwe (Le Roux 2008:25). As stated by The Citizen (3 July 2008) Zimbabwean opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai has rejected an African Union decision to keep President Thabo Mbeki alone in charge of efforts to resolve Zimbabwe’s political crisis.

Meanwhile, negotiations between main political parties – represented by Mugabe, Tsvangirai and Mutambara – brokered by South African President Thabo Mbeki, have not achieved significant progress. After several weeks of talks during the months of July and August 2008,
Mugabe once again decided to exert himself with executive powers in the Government of National Unity. When this move was disputed by the main faction of the opposition party MDC, Mugabe went ahead and orchestrated yet another arrogant tactic by incorporating Arthur Mutambara – leader of the breakaway faction of the MDC – in the new government, sidelining Morgan Tsvangirai of the main opposition party MDC. As noted earlier on in this chapter, a deal has not been sealed yet, as fresh talks are under way. Much has not changed since then, and if the political environment continues to deepen, the ugly economic situation in Zimbabwe is expected to get worse than it is at the moment.

As things stand, both Tsvangirai and Mugabe reflect opinions and demands which are completely divorced from each other. They are literally two different worlds apart. In the event that either Tsvangirai or Mugabe or both refused to accept a proposal for a transitional government – pending fresh elections or a government of national unity – Zimbabwe’s future for something better sooner is dashed. A government of national unity – which should include Tsvangirai and MDC – could be established for the good of the people of Zimbabwe.

According to Scheffler (2008) a government of national unity – in which contesting parties are brought together into one government – could resolve Zimbabwe’s socio–political problems. The government of national unity was not disputed by both parties in the talks. But, what has complicated the scenario is who should have executive powers in the unity government. This has torn apart earlier attempts and progress in the negotiations, forcing South African President Thabo Mbeki to convene yet another round of talks. Both the political and economic situations in Zimbabwe cannot improve if the main opposition party – Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) – does not have a crucial role in the power–sharing deal. Again, it is a time of waiting to see what will come out of it.

4.2 The African Union’s position on the Zimbabwean crisis

African leaders, through their regional organs such as the African Union (AU) – formerly Organisation of African Unity (OAU) – and Southern African Development Community (SADC), must collectively stand against President Mugabe, by even banning his visits to member countries. They must put pressure on him to respect the rule of law and by forcing him to step down, for the good of the nation. The African Union must respond to crises Africa is

The only way of light in the entire drama around Zimbabwe is the fact that Africa does not speak with one voice any longer – some African leaders have discovered the courage to actually condemn one of their own (e.g., Kenya, Zambia, Botswana, Sierra Leon, and Nigeria, as examples).

According to Rugwiji (2008d: 9):

The African Union has become unusually silent over the Zimbabwean issue. I still recall the role of the previous Organisation of African Unity (OAU) whose role to emancipate Africans from colonial aggression was one of the organisation’s remarkable endeavours. The present African Union (AU) seems to act on friendly basis: there is no commitment to liberate the oppressed from regime governments in Africa.

Rugwiji (2008a:9) further says that one becomes angrier when African leaders fail to draw lessons from civil conflicts that have occurred elsewhere in Africa and which claimed millions of untimely deaths (e.g., Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Uganda, Eritrea, and recently Kenya). Zimbabwe is no exception.

It is not surprising to find out that not many African leaders at the AU Summit stood with one voice against Robert Mugabe. Many African leaders and dictators have stayed too long in office, whose constitutional terms they manipulated to stay on. Mofokeng (2008:25) gives names of the other culprits on the continent as follows:

President Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola (1979–2008),
President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso (1987–2008),
President Paul Biya of Cameroon (1982–2008),
President Ahmed Abdullah Sambi of Comoros (2006–2008),
President Laurent Gbagbo of Ivory Coast (2000–2008),
President Joseph Kabila of the DRC (2001–2008),
President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt (1981–2008),
President Teodoro Obiang Nguema of Equatorial Guinea (1979–2008),
President Omar Bongo of Gabon (1967–2008),
President Lansana Conte of Guinea (1984–2008),
President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya (2002–2008),
Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi (1969–2008),
President Armando Guebuza (2004–2008),
Former President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria (1999–2008),
President Omar al–Bashir of Sudan (1986–2008), and

President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe has ruled the impoverished country from 1980 up to 2008. He has maneuvered himself into the helm of power through default once again, allowing himself another five–year term. According to Rugwiji (2008a:9) how long they would continue to be at the helm of the ruling elite depends on the magnanimity of both the Zimbabwean public and the world which is observing the political proceedings in Zimbabwe. On the other hand, lives of people are at stake. The International Community and the European Union are pondering on stiffer sanctions on Zimbabwe. But, much of effort is expected from the Zimbabwean people themselves, who should stand up and say “NO” to a continued rule by a dictator government. However, fear has been exerted upon the people because Mugabe, his right hands – police commissioner, lieutenants and army generals – do not hesitate to commit murder.

4.3 Dictatorship in Africa and its perpetual effect on the continent.

The United Nations (UN) should intervene in the Zimbabwean crisis by calling for stiffer sanctions on the Zimbabwean government, including arms embargo, to weaken her military strength, which has continuously given the ultimatum to usurp power in the confidence that any uprising will be crushed by the army which Mugabe has turned into an individual’s institution. It might help to realize that allowing Mugabe to carry on – even in the composition of a government of national unity with MDC – is a kind of an endorsement for thumb–ups for other regimes elsewhere, thereby permitting the perpetuity of tyranny by other governments in the world, at the expense of the oppressed and suffering masses. As stated by Letsoko (2008:26): “our leaders need to refrain from endorsing tyranny.”

4.4 Food and humanitarian assistance to Zimbabwe

Humanitarian organisations should be allowed to continue sending food supplies to the Zimbabwean population most of whom are starving to death. Mugabe on the other hand should be pressurised to accept donor communities – Non–Governmental Organisations (NGOs) – to come in and assist the hunger–stricken people in the country. Of late, Mugabe has interpreted the
involvement of donor communities in the allocation of food in Zimbabwe as a ploy to influence the masses to turn against him.

4.5 Price for peace

As the present situation presents itself, there is need for Zimbabweans to continue to be patient and to exercise extreme caution on the political arena. Zimbabweans should not take chances in risking life by resorting to violence or any such revolutionary moves, because Mugabe will capitalise on any slightest move on the part of the public and brutally punish them, given the fact that the army and police are still loyal to him. Peace is a right for every Zimbabwean. According to RCBC (1977:11) every Christian must be pacifist in the sense of being a peacemaker as well as being a lover of peace, but a refusal to resist evil by physical force is not always praiseworthy. Rugwiji (2008d: 9) states that Zimbabweans should make every effort to avoid engaging in violence. The prevailing environment of suffering will surely come to an end soon.

Peace is the key to Zimbabwe's situation. According to ZCBC (2003:6): “We call upon the Government to re-establish an environment of peace and justice which encourages participation of all citizens in the affairs of their nation”. Zimbabwe needs to create an enabling environment which will attract investment into the country so that business begins to operate on a large scale, as opposed to the situation of the recent past in which most businesses were either battling to stay afloat – due to the biting economic environment – or have completely closed down. The ruling party or the government of national unity should embrace both regional and international opinions on the rule of law, after which the international community would recognize the new government and start pouring finances for investment and donor funds for human development in an effort to combat further starvation in Zimbabwe.

4.6 Review of land redistribution and agricultural reform in Zimbabwe

The ZANU–PF government or the government of national unity should review the land redistribution and agricultural reform in the country because Zimbabwe is immensely dependent on agriculture. Resources should be channelled into commercial farming so that the country begins to recapture its past glory of being the “bread–basket” of Africa, which resuscitates the economy and sustains the lives of people. The previous land redistribution exercise was a
suicidal blunder which cannot be allowed to continue as things stand at the moment in Zimbabwe. Land allocation should be given careful planning this time around. Resettlement should be undertaken in such a way that deserving people have access to productive pieces of land, even for subsistence farming.

As already noted previously by Scheffler (2008) agricultural colleges should be allowed to run proficiently and recruitment of trainees in Agriculture be carried out so that at the end of say three or four years’ training programmes, the graduates are allocated farms for commercial farming. After a certain period of farming, these new farmers would also be allowed to buy these or some other farms by instalments. The training programme should be a continuous exercise. Given its educated resource–base, Zimbabwe will restore its positive identity as both a safe destination and a country conducive for investment as in the past.

4.7 The need for planning

According to the exodus narrative, planning was part of the exodus journey. God’s leadership did not preclude careful planning on the part of the Israelites. The Israelites “went out of the land of Egypt prepared for battle” (13:18). According to Emdans (1949:640) the above reference may well be as indicative of the deliberate organisation with which the Israelites travelled as of their military preparedness. The exodus narrative speaks of Israel plundering the Egyptians of silver, gold and clothing (Ex 12:35–36). The Israelites prepared food which they carried with them (Ex 12:34). All these texts serve to explain that the Israelites were prepared for this journey because they needed food to eat along the way. They needed extra clothing along the journey. They needed money to purchase extra food when their supplies were finished.

Zimbabweans – particularly the new government or the government of national unity – should start planning as to what needs immediate attention in a country which – for over a decade – has been wrecked by corruption, lawlessness, starvation, economic haemorrhage, and murder due to political intolerance. Maybe President Mbeki, among others, have got plans, but is pondering on the execution of those plans, without worsening the situation in Zimbabwe. This time around, Mbeki must be able to take a position in the negotiations, as the tug–of–war in the political economy in Zimbabwe continues to exacerbate poverty, further worsening the suffering of people in the country.
4.8 South Africa’s position on the Zimbabwean crisis

According to James (2008:15) first of all the crisis demands answers to why the SA government does not make full and creative use of the extensive array of foreign policy instruments available to those who have the determination to use it. James’ argument related to the involvement of South Africa in trying to solve Zimbabwe’s problems which would work to South Africa’s advantage in the long run. According to Rugwiji (2008a:9) solving the Zimbabwean crisis carries a dual function: it solves the South African problem of unemployment and Zimbabwe’s dependence on South Africa.

President Thabo Mbeki has been accused of negligence and quiet diplomacy over the Zimbabwean crisis by both the South African people and the international community, in contrast to the views of regional bodies such as the African Union (AU) and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), who have continued to stress hope on Mbeki’s mediation process in the Zimbabwean crisis. Mbeki and South Africa could have some solutions to Zimbabwe’s problems, which of late Mbeki had deliberately and reluctantly ignored to implement. Others think that South Africa should have closed the border with Zimbabwe a long time ago. According to Hill (2003:6) more than two-thirds of all Zimbabwe’s imports and exports move through South Africa, and closing the border – or even threatening to do so – would bring Mugabe to his knees in less than a week.

However, the South African government under Thabo Mbeki was not likely to entertain this thought because of his alleged support for Mugabe. Meanwhile, Mbeki still has a crucial role to play on Zimbabwe’s crisis. According to Muleya (2008:1):

The outlines of the negotiations if not deal in Zimbabwe began to form for President Thabo Mbeki yesterday (2 July 2008), as that country’s two main political protagonists laid down markers in the wake of an African Union’s call this week for Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai to form a “unity” government in Harare.

Some have argued that Tsvangirai should not have withdrawn from contesting the run-off elections. It is unfortunate that there have been cases of high level of torture and murder on the part of the people in Zimbabwe. But, worse still, withdrawing from the election race was the free ticket which Mugabe grabbed without appreciation, but with great arrogance. MDC has had a
large following of electorate both within and outside Zimbabwe. These would have sacrificed their lives to propel MDC to power. Others have expressed the option that MDC should form a government in exile. According to Matshiqi and Kornegay (2008:26):

The idea of a government in exile is compelling as a means of isolating the Robert Mugabe–Emmerson Mnangagwa junta, while placing political and diplomatic pressure on SADC and the African Union to back their new--found voice of condemnation of Mugabe with practical steps to hasten change.

To dictators like Mugabe, this might sound as a revolutionary movement formed to oust him from power and hence he might retaliate with a brutal military action on both civilians and the hosting nation if that government in exile is formed and hosted in Africa.

4.8.1 Review of President Mbeki’s mediation efforts in Zimbabwe

President Thabo Mbeki is walking on slippery surface. Some sources think that the South African President is trying to avoid an outbreak of war in Zimbabwe, that is why his mediation process is taking a carefully monitored slow pace. War is very difficult to completely put to an end. According to Mamaila (2008:26):

If war breaks out in Zimbabwe, it might spill over into South Africa. Men in uniform know it is easy to start a war, but almost impossible to end it. Despite peace deals in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, peace continues to elude those countries.

There is need to reconsider general views about Thabo Mbeki’s so–called quiet diplomacy. May be there is need to understand him more than what catches the eye. According to Mamaila (2008:26) Mbeki’s objective is to walk the minefield – Zimbabwe – without denoting the mines. Mbeki might still be trying to calculate his moves and approaches over the Zimbabwean issue cautiously. Maybe the fragile and delicate political atmosphere in Zimbabwe – in view of the acts of violence and brutality in the past – have lately influenced, to a large extent, President Mbeki’s mediation process in Zimbabwean politics, in order to try to avoid an outbreak of war, which has got the highest possibility of affecting the Southern African region, including South Africa. Given the fact that South Africa at the moment is on the spotlight because of the World Cup in 2010, and the massive investment which has been channelled towards the world’s sporting
showcase, the war in Zimbabwe will influence international critiquing about South Africa's capability in hosting the beautiful event of such a massive magnitude.

Given time and willingness on the part of government to embrace both regional and international views, coupled with a peaceful environment in the country, Zimbabwe's political environment and its economy are likely to improve and subsequently improving the living standards of its people. According to sources that chose to remain anonymous, most people in Zimbabwe demand South African Rands in exchange for foodstuffs and other basic items. It is extremely difficult for the majority of the poor in Zimbabwe to find food, whose medium of exchange is in forex. It is surprising to imagine how people are surviving in Zimbabwe under these hyperinflationary conditions.
5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview questions

The following questions have been used for the purpose of the interviews (Zimbabwe’s case):

- What problems do you find common in Africa, especially in southern African countries?
- Who is your role model in terms of leaders in Africa? Support your choice.
- What attributes would you desire of a next president of Zimbabwe?
- In your own ways, state your understanding of colonialism.
- How would you describe life before and after independence in terms of living standards in Zimbabwe?
- Would you say that Zimbabwe has achieved the gains of the liberation struggle since Independence in 1980?
- What good things have been achieved by Government since independence?
- Do you think the economy of Zimbabwe has really gone down?
- When would you say the economy of Zimbabwe began to decline?
- What would you say are the reasons for the economic decline in Zimbabwe?
- Do you support any party politics?
- Do you think politics has had a bearing on the downturn of the economy in Zimbabwe?
- What would you like to see improved on the political environment in Zimbabwe?
- How would you define democracy?
- Is there any democracy in Zimbabwe?
- How reliable is the judicial system in Zimbabwe?
- What are your views about political violence in Zimbabwe?
- Do you think corruption has contributed to the economic decline in Zimbabwe?
- Can Zimbabwe survive without interaction with other countries of the world?
- What is your comment on the land redistribution exercise in Zimbabwe?
- To what extent has the haphazard land redistribution exercise impacted on the Zimbabwean economy?
- How would you describe the Clean-up exercise, dubbed Operation Murambatsvina?
- Have the victims of Operation Murambatsvina benefited from the rebuilding exercise?
- Would you say that people are suffering in Zimbabwe?
– What are the causes of the suffering in Zimbabwe?
– What should the church do when involved in socio–political issues?
– What is your opinion on gender equality in Zimbabwe?
– What do you think should be done by both Government and Zimbabwean citizens to chat the way forward for Zimbabwe’s survival?
– How can you explain Zimbabwe’s future four years from now (2006)?

Appendix 2: Names of interviewees and dates of interviews

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