

POSTCOLONIAL BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO:  
SELECTED TEXTS FROM JOSHUA 1-12

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The present research has been aimed at investigating how imperialism and colonialism are located both in the biblical text (cf. Joshua 1-12) and in present day interpretive postcolonial contexts such as that of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

An investigation was made of the unequal power dynamics at play between the Israelites who are depicted as mercilessly conquering the indigenous peoples of Canaan in the name of the deity, and the Canaanites. How were/ are such power dynamics played out in the Katangese, Democratic Republic of the Congo's context in the relations between the then colonizers, that is, the Belgians as well as the neo-colonial African rulers and the Congolese peoples? It is argued that the Belgians assumed the role akin to that of the Israelite invaders as they mercilessly invaded the "promised land", that is, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ending with the brutal extermination of African peoples justified on biblical precedents.

A conclusion is made that within the context of postcolonial biblical interpretation, the conquest narrative of Joshua 1-12 is one of the most traumatic stories in which violence is committed by one nation on another in the name of the deity. Postcolonial biblical criticism was found to be an appropriate approach in assisting the researcher to navigate through violent biblical texts with a view to coming up with a transformative reading of the texts in the (Katangese) context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**DECLARATION****Student number: 41832183**

I declare that POSTCOLONIAL BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: SELECTED TEXTS FROM JOSHUA 1-12 is the product of my own research at the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA under the supervision of Professor M.J. MASENYA, in fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Literature and Philosophy in Biblical Studies (Old Testament). References cited in this thesis and sources of data have been fully acknowledged and reflected in footnotes and bibliography in this work. I also declare that no part of this work has ever been published for a degree or a diploma elsewhere.

.....  
Signature

**Rev. Dr. L. Bwalya**

.....

**Date**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is a dream come true that I am now on the point of submitting this thesis. When I look back at the academic path up to now, there is reason to thank God for the present outcome. “Nothing is impossible with God”, says the Apostle Paul. Coming from a Francophone background, I started with an intensive English program at Africa University (Zimbabwe). Then, I was able to climb from the Bachelor of Divinity program to the Master of Theological Studies program, obtaining the latter degree with distinction. Those who know me are aware of my “academic adventure”.

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## **DEDICATION**

Claudine Lubanda Bwalya,

I dedicate this work to you with this saying, “behind a successful man, there is always a strong woman”.

## **KEY WORDS**

Postcolonial; Biblical interpretation; Colonialism; Imperialism; Conquest narratives,  
Land grab; Rhetoric of violence; Exploitation; Gender issues; Human Rights;  
Dehumanization, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Katanga.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AIC(s)	African Independent Churches
BCE	Before the Christian era
BTB	Biblical Theology Bulletin
cf.	Confer, compare
Deut	Deuteronomy (as in the Bible)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ed/s	editor (eds)
et (al)	and others
etc	et cetera (meaning “and so on”)
Ex	Exodus (as in the Bible)
Ezk	Ezekiel (as in the Bible)
Gen	Genesis (as in the Bible)
Heb	Hebrews (as in the Bible)
Hos	Hosea (as in the Bible)
HTS	Theological Studies
JBL	Journal of Black Theology in South Africa
JBQ	Jewish Bible Quarterly
Jer	Jeremiah (as in the Bible)
JES	Journal of Ecumenical Studies

JETS	Journal of Evangelical Theological Studies
JHebs	Journal of Hebrew Scriptures
Isa	Isaiah (as in the Bible)
Josh	Joshua (as in the Bible)
JQR	Journal of Quarterly Review
JR	Journal of Religion
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement series
JTS	Journal for Theological Studies
1 Kgs	First Kings (as in the Bible)
2 Kgs	Second Kings (as in the Bible)
Lev	Leviticus (as in the Bible)
Mt	Matthew (as in the Bible)
NKJV	New King James Version
Nm	Numbers (as in the Bible)
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
OTE	Old Testament Essays
Rom	Romans (as in the Bible)
SJOT	Scandinavian Journal of Theology
NIV	New International Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version



UN	United Nations
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America
v	verse ( as in the Bible)
v v	Verses (as in the Bible)
YHWH	Yahweh (Hebrew for LORD)

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION: REVIEW OF THE SUBJECT AND METHODS**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

One significant thing that the nineteenth century Christian missionaries to Africa did for African Christians south of the Sahara was to translate the Christian Bible into African languages to teach them to read it in their languages and with their own eyes.

As a result, these Christians were on the one hand, to set out on a journey of discovery that has played a significant role in the rapid and widespread embrace of the Christian faith in sub-Saharan Africa today. On the other hand, missionaries who worked hand in hand with colonisers were tainted by the designs of searchers for gold, spices, lands, slaves and colonies. They tended to think that the commercial and military expansion of Western powers was a providential opportunity to spread the Gospel.

Many of them used the Christian Bible (hereinafter referred to as the Bible) as a tool in their hands to justify land grab, oppression, violence, racial segregation, human rights abuse, submission, and to keep their victims in bondage. Any careful postcolonial reader may raise the following questions: how does a biblical text in the “Western” canon reinforce or undermine colonialist ideology?



How does a text of the Hebrew Bible present what one might designate as “colonial” oppression? What does a biblical text reveal about problems connected to postcolonial identity? At least in part, the answer to the above questions will constitute some of the crucial issues to be discussed in this research.

The present thesis investigates how the colonizers (in this instance Belgians), in complicity with the missionaries, used the Bible, in the name of God, to dispossess the Congolese of their land. Some selected texts from the conquest narrative contained in Joshua 1-12 will be used. Yahweh, the God of Israel, is portrayed as the God who sides with Israel. The latter came in to settle in the land of the Canaanites, Amorites, and Hittites and to dispossess them of their land. The present research is an attempt to demonstrate that the Bible may be used as an instrument of colonialism and imperialism, as was the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo context.

In the present thesis, postcolonial biblical criticism will be used as a method for biblical interpretation, in an attempt to find colonial intention in the reading of some selected texts from Joshua 1-12. Although criticism has been levelled by clergy and believers alike for having, consciously or unconsciously, facilitated colonial conquests and imperial establishment all over the world, postcolonial biblical criticism requires a constructive reading that enables readers to see the concerns of the universal mission of equality (Rukundwa 2008: 340).

Biblical interpretation emerges from a social environment, which is built and influenced by both internal and external factors. Postcolonial biblical criticism is concerned with the socio-political contexts whereby the voice of the *Other* is being silenced. It deals with the contexts whereby socio-political powers and identities are constructed. Postcolonial biblical criticism takes into consideration the situation of the coloniser as well as the colonised, in order to reconstruct a negotiating space of equity. Under postcolonial biblical criticism, both biblical scholars and theologians argue that biblical texts have been marked as powerful rhetorical instruments of imperialism. Biblical texts have also been proclaimed in colonial settings. At the same time, biblical texts, used by colonial masters as a tool of colonialism and imperialism, contain a voice of equality that energises faith to challenge injustice against the weak (in this context, the Congolese people). However, while a postcolonial reading attempts to deconstruct the colonial interpretation and simultaneously to forge an alternative approach to texts, it remains ever alert to the “continuing, even if transformed, power” of colonialism and imperialism, and their strategies and tactics (Segovia 1995:145).

The important question to start with is: Does postcolonial biblical criticism fit the models of biblical research? How can these models be drawn? Malina (1983:14; cf. Craffert 1992:224-226; Elliot 1993:41) defines a model as an “abstracted simplified representation of some real world object, event, or interaction constructed for the purpose of understanding, control, or prediction”. Models can be viewed as tools in human processes, which facilitate an understanding of a given context under investigation (cf. Elliot 1993:42).

In addition, Carney (1975:7-9) (cf. Esler 1994:4-8; Viedder 1997:25; Horrell 1999:19-20; Van Aarde 2002:419-439) makes the point that a model works as a “tool or speculative instrument” used to transform theories into research actions.

Malina (1983:17) and Rohrbaugh (1996:4-5) add that “people think with models in order to understand, control, and/or predict” and that they are “cognitive devices” to help “to unearth dimensions of a setting not at once apparent” and to develop “the ramifications of such dimensions”.

According to Elliot (1993:44), models “are used explicitly to articulate theories... and test their validity”. Carney (1975:8) states that theory is defined as “a basic proposition through which a variety of observations or alternatively statements become explicable.

A model, by the way of contrast, acts as a link between theories and observation.” In this case, a theory serves as a foundation on which models are built in order to produce a working methodology in a particular study.

Elliot (1993:34-59) emphasises two types of models of interest to this study, namely sectarian and conceptual models. Sectarian models (cf. Esler 1994:13-17) are employed in features such as communal identity, cohesion and ideological commitment. They are useful in explaining tension based on a binary concept or on cultural or identity differences such as insiders/outside, coloniser/colonised, rich/poor, master/slave. Conceptual models (Elliot 1993:43; cf. Van Staden 1991:158) serve as “vehicles for discovery, trying out new points of view, asking new questions” but also provide explanations and the information required “to articulate a working model”.

Based on social and anthropological studies, Elliot (1993:38; cf; Van Staden 1991:152-153) mentions two concepts for conveying information: *emic* and *etic*. *Emic* identifies the “information provided by ‘natives’”, as perceived and narrated or explained from natives’ experience. It “describes *what* and *how* the native thought”. By contrast, *etic* deals with “the perspective of the external investigator” as determined by the knowledge available to him/her. It employs cross-cultural comparison “by taking into account a full range of factors not mentioned or considered in native reports... They seek to explain *why* the native thought and behaved so and not otherwise”.

Therefore, as Elliot (1993:37-38) notes, a method of analysis can include both *emic* and *etic* concepts as the “means for distinguishing and clarifying the differences between the social location of the interpreter and the social location of the authors and the objects to be interpreted”. This social location encompasses all aspects of social life, such as social classes, gender, ethnicity, roles and status, nationality, education, group membership, political and religious affiliation, language and cultural traditions, and location in time and space. It is from this angle that postcolonial biblical criticism poses the question of social-political and economic equity for silenced voices.

Punt and Segovia (cf. Punt 2003:65-66; cf. Segovia 1995 1-17) argue convincingly that postcolonial biblical criticism as a biblical hermeneutics can help (i) to “revalue the colonial ideology, stigmatisation and negative portrayals embedded in the content, the plot and characterisation”.

It entails looking for the colonial intentions (whether they are political, cultural or economic). (ii) It helps in “reconstructive reading” which enables the reader to see the concerns of the liberation struggles of the past and the present.

Therefore, postcolonial biblical criticism is concerned and interacts with circumstances such as hybridity, new identities, fragmentation and deterritorisation. (iii) Postcolonial biblical criticism interrogates colonial interpretation.

The preceding information intends to show that postcolonial biblical criticism, as a method of interpretation, may be used at the same time as sectarian and conceptual models – which facilitate an understanding of a given context under investigation – in order to convey both emic and ethic information in view of some selected texts contained in the book of Joshua.

## 1.2 The portrait of God

The biblical conquest narrative in Joshua 1-12, the subject of the present research, raises questions about present hermeneutical and ultimately ethical challenges that the custodians of the Old Testament textual traditions face. Put simply, Yahweh **is** portrayed in some of these texts as a God who helps the Israelites to dispossess the Amorites, Hittites and Canaanites and dispossess the latter of their land (cf. Hawk 2000:6; Nelson 1997:16). In other words, Yahweh is portrayed as a God who takes sides with those who are dispossessing others of their land.

The book of Joshua is one of the traumatic books in the Old Testament. It clearly highlights issues such as deterritorialization, oppression, exploitation, violence, imperialism, colonialism, domination, favouritism, choseness, and identity, to mention a few. The preceding issues form the subject matter of postcolonial biblical criticism. They will therefore, in one way or the other, be attended to during the course of this study. That will be the case because the book of Joshua is also a story of terror and destruction, and it repulses and troubles many readers that God can command such atrocity. The book presents a narrative in which God is presented as commanding Joshua and his army to annihilate the inhabitants of the Canaanite towns.

Banana (1993:73) rightly claims that the sense of early Israelites as God's chosen people became a justification for their conquering people in the land they viewed as the "Promised Land" – promised to them by God as a compensation for their suffering in slavery. What about the "up-rooted" Canaanites? Do they deserve that? One may indeed ask.

One more thing which needs to be highlighted in the book of Joshua is of God's problematic involvement in human affairs, something akin to imperialism. God is portrayed as swearing an oath that the land of the Canaanites will be an eternal possession of Israel.

Sugirtharajah (2006a:17) argues that what postcolonial biblical criticism does is to focus on the whole issue of expansion, domination, and imperialism as central forces in defining both the biblical narrative and biblical interpretation.

A closer analysis of some selected texts contained in the book of Joshua seems to reveal that God may be considered to be siding with the Israelites, as He is perceived to have sided with the colonial masters (Belgians) who colluded with the missionaries in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such a picture of God who seems to side with the oppressors is one of the key issues which will be discussed in this present research.

This portrait of God appears to be difficult to understand, especially at a time when people of faith are looking to the Christian Scriptures for inspiration and direction in their own search for peace in the world. In their view God is just and can thus not perpetrate injustice. They argue that if God were to take sides, God will be on the side of the plundered, the oppressed, and the weak. However, they find that not to be the case in these texts from Joshua.

This represents a postcolonial challenge as the use of the Bible seems to have been and still continues to be used to justify imperialism, as many colonial masters, in complicity with missionaries, did to the Congolese population.

### 1.3 Aim of the investigation

The aim of the present research is to investigate how some issues related to imperialism and colonialism, such as land grab, exploitation, violence, favouritism, to mention a few, are located in the conquest narrative in the book of Joshua (1-12) in conjunction with the Democratic Republic of the Congo context, using the postcolonial lens.

In the book of Joshua, the conquest narrative (cf. Josh 1-12), seems to be portrayed as a holy war, because of Yahweh's involvement in it (cf. Grenshaw, 1978:48). The chapters reflect a record of the mass slaughter of innocent people with God's directions to Joshua, to go over Jordan and to take possession of the land which God had sworn to their fathers and to divide it among the people.

It is necessary to read and analyse some of the selected texts from this corpus from the perspective of postcolonial criticism.

The first step is to demonstrate that the conquest narrative (cf. Josh 1-12) reveals an imperialist ideology, with the Canaanites being on the receiving end, even as the Congolese became the victims of imperialism at the hands of the Belgians.

The second step is to demonstrate the apparent connection of the biblical texts with Western imperialism, demonstrating that Westerners used the Bible as an instrument of colonialism.



Western imperialism in this thesis refers to the Belgians and the Mission Society, a group of protestant missionaries who came to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century for evangelism, building capacities such as schools and hospitals. In this regard, Christianity was often used for political reasons, for example, exploitation of raw materials and the trade of slaves, to mention but a few.

Fieldhouse, (2006:79) defines Western imperialism as a process of accumulation and acquisition of land, resources, labour and profit by the colonizers to the detriment of the colonized.

Imperialism is supported by an ideology (a way of thinking, or a philosophy) that suggests that certain peoples and certain territories require domination, assistance and/or “civilization”, as was the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and many other African countries during the colonial era.

Fieldhouse (2006:89) explores the causes of Western imperialism in Africa and the Middle East, ascribing it to a:

- Search for new markets for European manufactured goods: overproduction and under-consumption
- Search for raw materials for European industry: oil, cotton, rubber, tin, copper, gold, diamonds
- Search for cheap and profitable labour, for example Congolese labourers growing cotton and rubber,

- Search for cheap and profitable land, and
- Search for good demanded by a mass consumption market: coffee, tea, bananas, and oranges.

And to get these things, colonies are designed to help/assist/support the mother country by:

- providing cheap raw materials,
- providing cheap labour,
- providing cheap land, and
- providing open markets (cf. Fieldhouse, 2006:107).

Analyzing the effects of Western imperialism, Efraim (2009:82) points out that the political system that the colonies established have been faced by difficulties and mismanagement leading to the coups. The colonial boundaries that they set have been sources of civil wars between some neighbouring nations (the case between Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, (in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and have led to intense loss of blood.

Another effect of Western imperialism which needs to be highlighted is the concept of “race”. “Race” is used as a catch-all term for any type of human difference: historic, linguistic, religious or cultural... This concept from the Western point of view, meant “superior” versus “inferior”, “white” versus “black”, “civilized” versus “savage” (cf. Efraim 2009:103).

The selected texts from Joshua 1-12 reflect something akin to this notion of imperialism where the Israelites are depicted as plundering other nations. The texts thus perpetuate an imperialist ideology, since the Israelites in their conquest dispossess, depopulate, or annihilate the others in the name of Yahweh, the Divine Commander. Western imperialism used the same strategy in their conquest, using the Bible to destroy, to plunder the Congolese resources and values, and to divide the people in the name of the Gospel and civilisation.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, such an ideology served to legitimise violence and scepticism because the inhabitants, even up to this day, always consider not only the Westerners, but also any foreigner, as a looter or a plunderer. This explains the interminable wars the Democratic Republic of the Congo wages with its neighbouring countries, in complicity with the Westerners and allies.

To illustrate this, a group of protestant missionaries in the western part of Katanga<sup>1</sup> employed the catechists in providing and purchasing ivory and gold in the name of God, to alleviate the so-called “spirit of poverty” in the region. Such practices, even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, are a clear indication that there is still use of biblical texts by Westerners to reinforce colonialist ideology. And this constitutes the major concern in the present research.

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<sup>1</sup> Katanga is one the richest provinces in the southern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, with cobalt, copper, gold and diamonds.

The third step is to challenge Western readers to be aware of their history of hegemonic power and to scrutinise their Bible interpretation to avoid repetition of the victimisation of the non-Western peoples.

The fourth step is to challenge the postcolonial reader to ask why biblical texts endorsed unequal power distribution along geographical and racial differences; why, in the wake of political independence, power has remained unequally distributed and how to work towards empowering the disempowered areas and peoples in the hope of creating a better world.

For the purpose of the present thesis, the reading and analysis of some selected texts from Joshua 1-12 will have to take into account the readers'/researchers' complete context, which is essentially a postcolonial one by attempting to analyse the context of Democratic Republic of the Congo. Postcolonial criticism will prove to be the relevant approach in this regard.

The fifth step is gathering together the fruits of the discussion and commitment to actualising the context in concrete life situations, with special reference to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's context in general and that of the Katanga province in particular.

There is a need at this point to highlight a concrete situation that has served to justify violence and atrocity in the name of God.

Bakole Wa Ilunga (1987:39) writes that the Belgian King, Leopold II, dared to quote the Bible in order to justify the land dispossession. In his letter addressed to the army commander in charge of Leopoldville (today Kinshasa, the capital city), the Belgian king wrote, "...the struggle shall continue... and the victory is certain, because this land is a "gift of God" to us... God has given unto us these "savages" to civilise them, these "barbarians" to evangelise them. We do all in the name of the Lord".

It is a clear demonstration that the Belgian king quoted the Bible to justify land dispossession in the name of the deity. According to Kimpolongo (2001:7), the head of the state, the late president Laurent Kabila had declared that the Congolese war was a "sacred one". He used the religious language that "the Lord being on the Congolese side, he will not be afraid".

It may be argued that such a belief entails the wrongful use of the name of God as described in the Decalogue (Exod. 20:7) in order to justify violence and atrocity, and personal as well as national ends in the name of God (cf. Masenya 2003:59).

There is a great need to address the challenge represented by the fact that the biblical conquest account and other texts have been used to provide the rationale for potentially violent ideologies and for outright justification of land dispossession and imperialism.

#### 1.4 Statement of the problem

The present research probes this main question: In exposing imperialism and colonialism in the selected texts of Joshua 1-12 within the context of the postcolonial Democratic Republic of the Congo; could Bible readers safely conclude that God takes side with of one powerful nation against the less powerful Other? If so, what are the implications of such a claim in constructing an ethical postcolonial Hermeneutics?

#### 1.5 Hypothesis

In view of the preceding information, the hypothesis of this thesis can be postulated as follows: even a quick glance at the conquest narrative as depicted in some texts of Joshua 1-12, will reveal that the God presented in there, appears to side with the Israelites, at the expense of the Canaanites. From a postcolonial point of view, God thus seems to be on the side of imperialism and colonialism.

#### 1.6 Rationale

First, the author of this thesis is an indigenous Bemba, born in Mporokoso, northern Zambia, and he was raised in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He lived and ministered among people who experienced wars many times.

They asked themselves why God allowed such atrocities in their country, that is, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In 2002, He conducted research entitled “Is the God of War the Father of the Prince of Peace?” for his bachelor’s degree. The topic of his master’s degree was, “War in the Hebrew Bible: A study in the use of violence as a means to settle disputes” in 2004. This dissertation contributed to the choice of topic for the present thesis.

The fact of regarding God as “one-sided” seems to complicate the position of many readers of the Bible in general and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular, on two grounds.

First, portraying God as favouring one nation to the detriment of the Other is generally warped when the effort is to derive moral and ethical guidance from the ancient stories. The majority of Christians have argued that their members should not be forbidden to kill since the God of Israel defeated their enemies with God’s approval,

Second, some Christians have gone as far as pointing out some conflicting tensions in God’s character: a genocidal God, who commands total destruction of the “Others” or a merciful God who chooses righteousness.

The rationale therefore for pursuing this topic is twofold:

- (a) The research can be seen as seeking to make a significant contribution in theological studies by throwing some light on one troublesome biblical metaphor about God, who is portrayed simultaneously as siding with the oppressors.
- (b) The subject has theological implications which indicate the urgency to look at it from a new perspective, which is from a postcolonial lens.

### 1.7 A review of some selected texts from Joshua 1-12

It is necessary to note that the following texts from Joshua 1-12 have been selected for the purpose of investigation as they have themes relevant for a postcolonial study.

(1) Joshua 1:1-4 seems to be a text which justifies the tradition concerning the promised land, and seems to show God's one-sided position.

(2) Joshua 1:10-18; and 11:23 seems to demonstrate how Joshua consolidates the position of Israel to dispossess the land belonging to the "Other", in the name of God.

As Deuteronomy 1:8 will hopefully reveal, Israel seems to have been chosen by Yahweh and invited into a covenant relationship, with the promise that she will receive the land (cf. Blenkinsopp 1992:56-57). The colonial masters appear to have believed that just as Yahweh favoured the Israelites, they were also chosen to rule and dominate African people among others.



(3) In Joshua 2:1-26 Rahab's character will be investigated to show the double effect that land invasion may have on the females who eventually become the colonial subjects.

(4) Joshua 3:5 will be investigated for its apparent reference to a partial deity who directly commands to conquer. There are also frequent references to Joshua to act according to Yahweh's commands. "...So Joshua defeated the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kings, he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord of Israel commanded." (Josh. 10:40) "... And Joshua did to them as the Lord bade him; he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire" (Josh 11:9) (cf. Boling (et al) 1982:207, 237; Lang: 2008 279).

(5) Joshua 6:1-27 seems to throw light on the ethics of violence in the sense that the LORD defeats Jericho. The key point of the "battle" in Joshua 6 is the falling of Jericho's walls which provided access to the city and left the residents of the city virtually helpless before the attackers. The account of the attack on Jericho seems to follow a typical pattern in many ways. God's word to Joshua is like that in other battle reports, "See, I have handed Jericho over to you" (v 2).

Moreover, Joshua repeats the message to the warriors in verse 16b, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city." Joshua is prompted and led by God at every turn (cf. Buttrick (ed) 1953:729; Rowlett 1996:49-50).

A postcolonial reader may argue that Joshua did nothing to defeat the city, and his command to shout, a sign of engagement in battle, seems to come after Yahweh has

already felled Jericho's walls. In other words, it seems Yahweh, the God of Israel, could defeat Jericho.

(6) Joshua 7:1; 8:29 are useful in investigating the concept of Israel's election as a "chosen nation". Joshua 8:1 and Joshua 10:8 are good examples of this assurance, "... Fear not, for I am with you. I will deliver the enemy into your hand" (8:1).

"... And the Lord said to Joshua, 'Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands; there shall not a man of them stand before you'" (10:8) (cf. Blair 1994:101)

(7) Joshua 10:7-10 reveals Yahweh as an "imperialist" God who takes active part in the acts of war. It is clear that the battle has been commissioned by Yahweh (cf. Maxwell (et al) 1999: 83).

As noted above, Joshua 10:7-10 provides a good example:

So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the fighting force with him, all the mighty warriors. Yahweh said to Joshua. "Do not fear them, for I have handed them over to you, not one of them stands before you."

So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. And Yahweh threw them into a panic before Israel, who inflicted a great slaughter on them at Gibeon, chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah.

As they fled before Israel, while they were going down the slope of Beth-horon, Yahweh threw down huge stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died because of the hailstones killed with the sword.

The primary point of 10:1-14, however, seems not to be Israel's defence of the Gibeonites but God's intervention on behalf of Israel. The story seems to report that God acted in two ways. First, God threw "stones from heavens" on Israel's enemy (10:11). Some scholars have naturally concluded this report was inspired by a fierce hailstone that occurred during the battle.

The icy balls seem to have killed more soldiers than the Israelites killed with the sword, but, even more amazing, the hail apparently seems to have killed no Israelites. The hail might have been the weapon of Yahweh, the God of Israel. This text seems to show clearly that Yahweh, the God of Israel, seems to be one-sided and God seems to be active in the battle, killing more enemies than the Israelite soldiers do. The story ends with the line, "for Yahweh fought for Israel" (Josh 10:14) (cf. Maxwell (et al) 1999: 85; Davis 1988: 83).

In analysing the narratives of Joshua 6 and 10 through a postcolonial lens, it is necessary to investigate if there is something akin to an imperialistic rhetoric that legitimises the invasion, dispossession, subjugation, and annihilation of foreign lands.

There is also a need to find out if the identity of the colonised is defined through being contrasted with this identity of the coloniser with the latter depicted as the divinely designated cultural and religious redeemer of the former whose targeted land is considered as "promised land".

(7) Joshua 11:1-23 seems to conclude the story of Joshua's sweep of northern and southern territories of Canaan in terms of destruction. At the centre of this section seems to be accounts of Joshua's capturing southern and northern territories, and executing the kings of the cities that rise against him there.

Both of these subsections seem to end with brutal conclusions of how Joshua "took the whole land" (Josh. 11:16-23) (cf. Hess 1996:212-220; Goslinga 1986:108). All the above selected texts will be analyzed in more detail in Chapter Four of the present research.

As a postcolonial critic, the summary of Joshua's achievements seems to be a very sensitive issue (vv 16-23) because the generalising statements, such as "So Joshua took all that land" and "So Joshua took the whole land" by themselves give the impression that Joshua had dehumanised the "Other".

This violence seems to be justified again by the use of statements such as, "But none of the cities that stood on mounds did Israel burn, except Hazor only" (v 13), "there remains yet very much land to be possessed".

The fact here is clear in the sense that Joshua is portrayed as launching and carry through a series of smashing attacks on key Canaanite strongholds of the land; dehumanising the Canaanites and gained a foothold for the Israelite tribes in the land.

This being said, it remains that the conquest narrative in Joshua 1-12 is problematic in the Congolese context. The depiction of the God of Israel as an exclusivist God is most

troubling for anyone. It may be argued that Yahweh seems not to be a universal God, rather a very partial God who engages in the extermination of other peoples in favour of one nation. It is believed and expected that the people of God are a people that can tolerate others. The ideal world is not exclusively occupied by those who claim to be “God’s people”.

A closer analysis of the portrait of God as one-sided would not make any sense without the postcolonial approach to biblical texts. The present approach will shed more light on the misuse of the Bible by the colonisers, for example, in the taking of the black African lands in the name of the deity. By implicating the Bible in the taking of the black African lands, biblical texts are marked as powerful rhetorical instruments of imperialism.

The present research will bring freshness to postcolonial hermeneutics, particularly in a war-ridden African context, by demonstrating how the Bible, in the postcolonial period, has been used – and continues to be used – as a document to support imperialism and colonialism.

It is obvious that the adequate information would break new ground and form important criteria to:

- (a) provide tools for church leaders, theologians, and/or academics, and to persuade modern society, in particular Africa, to be aware of the misuse of the Bible, and

(b) provide useful and adequate information on the subject under discussion. Having stated and justified the task or aim, it is now fitting to discuss how to achieve the aim.

The aim will hopefully be achieved by developing the present thesis in five phases

- (a) focusing on relevant excerpts from postcolonial scholars,
- (b) putting a specific interpretation on some selected texts from Joshua 1- 12,
- (c) applying postcolonial criticism on some selected texts from Joshua 1-12,
- (d) situating imperialism and colonialism in the selected texts from Joshua 1-12, and
- (e) applying Joshua 1-12 in conjunction with the Democratic Republic of the Congo's experience.

#### 1.8 Focus on Old Testament literature

The focus is on God's one-sided position in Israel's wars in the Deuteronomistic books, in particular a selection of some relevant texts in the book of Joshua 1-12, by engaging postcolonial criticism as a tool for biblical interpretation. This is to say, an attempt to find colonial intentions (be they political, cultural or economic) that informed and influenced the biblical context.

## 1.9 Methodology

Any academic study requires a methodology to reach its conclusion (s). Methodology as Haralambos (1991:698) puts it refers to “a systematic way of producing and analysing data so that the findings of the study may not be dismissed as guesswork or simply as common sense that has been mystified”.

We follow Haralambos’ (1991:698) definition that recognises three categories of methods, namely,

- (a) methods which are used to collect data, especially from the field,
- (b) methods which are used to analyse data, and
- (c) methods which are used to test data in order to produce a sound conclusion of the study.

As a Bemba from Mporokoso, and a postcolonial product, (born after the colonial era), it is cardinal to re-read the Bible with a postcolonial lens. This means, to take the reality of empire, of imperialism and colonialism as a reality in the Hebrew Bible and biblical interpretation (cf. Segovia 2006:37).

Like any academic study, the task here requires a methodology to reach its conclusion. Postcolonial criticism will be the major method for analysing the biblical texts and related information outside the Bible.

According to Sugirtharajah (2006a:7), postcolonial criticism emerged as a way of engaging with the textual, historical, and cultural articulations of societies disturbed and transformed by the historical reality of colonial presence.

In this respect, in its earlier incarnation, post-colonialism was not conceived as a grand theory, but as a creative literature and a resistance discourse emerging in the former colonies of the Western empires.

For the purpose of the present research, a working definition of postcolonial criticism is that postcolonial biblical criticism is a theory that provides a framework that destabilizes dominant discourses in the West, challenges “inherent assumptions” and critiques the “material and discursive legacies of colonialism” (cf. Sugirtharajah 2006b:74).

Sugirtharajah argues that post-colonialism as a methodological category and as a critical practice followed later. There were two aspects: first to analyse the diverse strategies by which the colonisers constructed images of the colonised and second, to study how the colonised themselves made use of and went beyond many of those strategies in order to articulate their identity, self-worth, and empowerment (cf. Sugirtharajah 2006a:9).



For Sugirtharajah (2006a:8), post-colonialism has been taking a long historical look at both old and new forms of domination. Its insight lies in understanding how the past informs the present.

As a field of inquiry, Sugirtharajah (2006a:10) adds that post-colonialism is not monolithic, but rather it is a field which provides and carries a variety of concerns, oppositional stances, and even contradictory positions. In other words, it generates a noticeable theoretical strength. It provides valuable resources for thinking about those social, cultural, political, and historical contexts in which domestication takes place.

As a style of inquiry, it emerged more or less simultaneously in a variety of disciplines including anthropology and history. When used in conjunction with “theory” or “criticism”, the term “postcolonial” signifies a distinct methodological category and acts as a discursive force (Sugirtharajah 2006a:8-10).

Dube (2000:12) points out that from the point of view of cultural studies, the model of postcolonial criticism should be seen as one major line of approach, alongside others.

Such a line of approach, furthermore, should also be seen as quite broad and quite rich – multi-dimensional, multi-centred, and multi-lingual. As a model within cultural studies, Dube (2001:15) says that postcolonial criticism is the most enlightening and the most faithful to cultural principles for the following: first, it is an optic, in full engagement and dialogue with a host of other models and other optics; second it proves most incisive and most telling, for it reminds us all, the children of the colonised and the children of the

coloniser, that the discipline of biblical criticism must be seen and analysed like other discourses of modernity, against the much broader geographical context of Western imperialism and colonialism.

In recent years, postcolonial approaches have encroached on the dominance of liberation approaches in representing the theological voice of these minority groups.

According to Sugirtharajah (2001:234-43; cf. 2002:102-23), one of the leading proponents of postcolonial biblical criticism, liberation theology was a modernist project that attempted to replace the grand narrative of divine right to rule with another grand narrative of liberation. However, a postcolonial reading allows interpreters to critique these narratives and even criticise the ideology of the biblical writers themselves.

A key example of this difference is liberation theology's use of the Exodus story as its key narrative of liberation. Postcolonial readings highlight, and criticise, the lack of emphasis placed on what happens after the Exodus – the conquest and extermination of the Canaanite population (cf. Masenya 2003:67).

While the diversity of postcolonial studies hinders a strict classification of postcolonial studies and the Hebrew Bible, Sugirtharajah (2001:55; cf. 2002) and Segovia 1998; cf. 2000a) have identified three methods of integrating postcolonial studies with biblical studies.

First, postcolonial biblical criticism interrogates the interpretations and uses of the Bible produced by modern empires of the fifteenth to twentieth centuries (Segovia 1998:58-60). Archives, newspapers, personal accounts and biblical commentaries are searched to identify and expose how imperial powers and biblical interpreters were complicit in reading the biblical text for colonial purposes.

Second, previously colonised groups produce their own readings of the Bible within their cultural post-colonial environment (Segovia 2005:6-7). These readings explore how the Bible can be read within this postcolonial context, and they attempt to disrupt conventional hegemonic interpretations.

Finally, postcolonial biblical criticism scrutinises the biblical text for its own colonial entanglements (Segovia 1998:56-58; Sugirtharajah 2001:251-52). This is typically understood as a historical-critical enterprise that takes the social and cultural environment of empires seriously, and exposes colonial forces at work within the biblical compositions themselves. But in the present case, the focus is more on the Democratic Republic of the Congo within imperial politics.

As a method, postcolonial criticism will link to the present research because it will raise the questions of the ethics and politics of the Bible, the questions of Western imperialism and the Bible. The centrality of the Bible in facilitating Western imperialism remains evident to African people and illustrates the need for such research.

The method will be used in this research to demonstrate how the past informs the present, and how one makes use of the past and who benefits from it.

The method is not completely independent as a construct: it depends upon certain theoretical claims and reading strategies. It also calls for self-consciousness, and demands a specific view with clear implication for both the representation of the past as well as of the present.

The method is profoundly ideological for it looks upon the political experience of imperialism and colonialism as central. By using postcolonial criticism as a methodology in this research, one will hopefully be enabled to identify, deconstruct and problematise colonising ideologies both within the selected Joshua text and as well as in the Congolese context.

#### 1.10 The structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis is:

Chapter One: “Subject and methods” introduces the subject matter of the present research. The main research question is posed and a preliminary hypothesis is also postulated. The rationale behind undertaking the present study and the outline of the method used in investigating the main aspects of the thesis are discussed.

Chapter Two: “Postcolonial Biblical interpretation – a literature review” focuses on a literature review of postcolonial scholars. The following scholars have been selected for various reasons:

- (1) R.S. Sugirtharajah is useful for the relevance of his work **on** postcolonial criticism to biblical studies. He argues that the objective of postcolonial biblical criticism is to locate colonialism and imperialism at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation.
- (2) F. Segovia is utilised for his discussion of the reality of empire, imperialism, and colonialism in the Bible and biblical interpretation. Segovia, like Sugirtharajah, argues that imperialism and colonialism are situated at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation. He argues that one may depict the reality of imperialism and colonialism when reading the Hebrew Bible and early Christian text. The reality of empire and imperialism may be seen as a virtual reality.
- (3) M.W. Dube is selected for her postcolonial feminist biblical hermeneutics. Dube affirms that postcolonial feminist readers of biblical texts and other world texts are working with those communities of faith that seek liberation and justice. She points out that it is essential to establish the imperial surrounding and context in the text.

(4) J. Punt is useful for his discussion on identity politics. He highlighted the loss of memory of colonialism. In other words, the strong inclination of colonialism to impose a Western sense of identity. Punt is more concerned with the following issues: marginalization, identity and violence.

(5) ) K. Pui-Lan is included for her linking of postcolonial studies and feminist biblical interpretation. She points out the role of postcolonial critics, which consist of exposing the various ways in which biblical scholars, feminists among them, have been the subjects of colonialism and neo-colonialism

(6) M.K. Nzimande's work is interesting for her postcolonial, post-*apartheid Imbokodo* reading of the Bible. She considers that both patriarchy and colonization contributed to phenomena that affect powerful women in African. The concept of powerful versus powerless is one of the points to be discussed in the present research.

Chapter Three: "The Democratic Republic of the Congo: colonial and postcolonial histories in perspectives," foreground the context in which postcolonial biblical interpretation occurs, that is, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This chapter

demonstrates how colonial masters and some missionaries used the Bible to carry out a colonial agenda in order to conquer and grab the land in the name of the deity.

Chapter Four focuses on a postcolonial reading of selected texts from Joshua 1-12. Problematic colonising ideologies which revealed a partial deity were exposed, problematised, challenged with hope that such resistant reading strategies would contribute, albeit in a small way, to the establishment of ethical biblical interpretation in our African interpretive contexts.

Chapter Five presents an analysis of selected texts from the Conquest narratives in Joshua 1 to 12 in the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Joshua 1-12 is as an apt parallel to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in general, and the Katanga province in particular. With Belgians inadvertently identifying themselves with the ancient Israelites, faithfully occupying the promised land (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and therefore also fighting the Congolese (considered as Canaanites) in their own country, the brutal retaliation and extermination of the so-called rebels could be justified based on biblical precedents.

Chapter Six seeks to summarise the findings of this study. This includes: a summary of the findings of the study, some recommendations for further studies and the contribution of the study for Biblical/Old Testament studies.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **POSTCOLONIAL BIBLICAL INTERPETATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Preliminary remarks**

This chapter focuses on a literature review of selected postcolonial biblical scholars. Most of these scholars argue that postcolonial biblical criticism interrogates the interpretation and uses of the Bible produced by modern empires of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Segovia 2006:123). They engage the Bible in order to identify and explore how imperial powers and colluding biblical interpreters deliberately read the biblical text to carry out colonial agendas.

The present discussion will focus on the following scholars for various reasons: R.S. Sugirtharajah, F. Segovia, M.W. Dube, J. Punt, K. Pui-Lan, and M.K. Nzimande.

(1) R.S. Sugirtharajah is useful for the relevance of his work to postcolonial criticism to biblical studies. He argues that the objective of postcolonial biblical criticism is to locate colonialism and imperialism at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation. Postcolonial criticism provides valuable resources for thinking about those social, cultural, political and historical contexts in which domestication takes place. He argues that postcolonial readings highlight and criticise the lack of emphasis placed on what



happens after the exodus – the conquest and extermination of the Canaanite population (cf. Sugirtharajah 2006a:17).

(2) Fernando Segovia was utilised for his discussion of the reality of empire, imperialism, and colonialism in the Bible and biblical interpretation. Segovia, like Sugirtharajah, argues that imperialism and colonialism are situated at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation. He argues that one may depict the reality of imperialism and colonialism when reading the Hebrew Bible and the text of early Christian text. The reality of empire and imperialism may be seen as a virtual reality. This means that each colonized people learned from their colonial masters politically, economically and culturally. For him, this is demonstrated by the world of unequal powers (cf. Segovia 2006:321). The unequal power dynamics will also be discussed in the present investigation.

(3) Musa. W. Dube was selected for her postcolonial feminist biblical hermeneutics. Dube affirms that postcolonial feminist readers of biblical texts and other world texts are working with those communities of faith that seek liberation and justice. She points out that it is crucial to establish the imperial surrounding and context in the text. Dube is more concerned about imperialism/colonialism, especially the oppression of women and other marginalizing groups. She stands for a postcolonial feminist criticism that asks how various forms of oppression affect both men and women, how gender oppression functions with other forms of oppression such as class, race, ethnicity, to mention a few (cf. Dube 2006a:312). Some of these points are to be discussed in the present investigation.

#### (4) J. Punt's postcolonial stance

Jeremy Punt's work is useful for his specific contribution toward postcolonial biblical criticism. He argues that postcolonial studies around the globe have contributed to the study of identity and the "hybrid" identity. The loss of memory of colonialism, or in other words, the strong inclination of colonialism to impose a Western sense of identity is highlighted. Punt is more concerned with the following issues: marginalization, identity and violence (Punt 2006:200). Though he tackles these issues from the New Testament perspective, it can be argued that the same issues are also a matter of discussion in the conquest narrative.

(5) Kwok Pui-Lan's work is included for her linking of postcolonial studies and feminist biblical interpretation. She points out the role of postcolonial critics, which consisted of exposing the various ways in which biblical scholars, feminists among them, have been the subjects of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Pui-Lan supports feminist scholars in postcolonial criticism because they want to investigate how the symbolization of women and the development of gender in the text relate to class interests, model of production and colonial domination. She points out Rahab's story in Joshua 2 as an illustration of inequality and conflict relation (Pui-Lan 2006:148). The latter is to be discussed in the present research.

(6) Makhosazana K Nzimande's work is interesting for her post-apartheid Imbokodo reading of the Bible. She considers that both patriarchy and colonization contributed to phenomena that affect powerful women in Africa (cf. Nzimande 2005:221).

This research will engage power dynamics as it occurs between the colonisers and the colonised in the context of biblical interpretation.

## 2.2 R.S. Sugirtharajah's postcolonial biblical criticism

Sugirtharajah (2006a:17) outlines the relevance of postcolonial criticism to biblical studies. According to him, the application of post-colonialism to biblical studies is simply the study of what happened in the colonial government related to biblical studies, and this raised a lot of criticism. This criticism has opened the possibility of developing a biblical study that has to work in conjunction with other disciplines.

He argues that, as a field of inquiry, post-colonialism is not monolithic but rather a field which provides and caters for a variety of concerns, oppositional stances, and even contradictory positions (2006a:18).

However, he points out that it generates a noticeable theoretical strength. In this regard, it provides valuable resources for thinking about those social, cultural, political, and historical contexts in which domestication takes place. He goes on to argue that as a style of inquiry, post-colonialism emerged more or less simultaneously in a variety of

disciplines including anthropology, geography, international studies, history, English, music and medieval studies (2006a:19-20).

In his analysis of postcolonial criticism, Sugirtharajah (2006a:23) concentrated on three major areas that according to him will result in greater understanding of the key concepts of this discipline. They are:

- (1) Post-colonialism as a discipline
- (2) The nature of post-colonialism
- (3) The relevance of post-colonialism and biblical studies.

A closer analysis of these three areas follows.

#### 2.2.1 Post-colonialism as a discipline

One may understand Sugirtharajah's post-colonialism as a discipline as that postcolonial studies became operational in order to challenge the historical reality brought to a halt by the colonial masters. In its earlier stage, says Sugirtharajah (2006a:24), postcolonial theory was never considered to be a grand theory, but was perceived as opposing the ideas of the colonial masters. Later on, it resulted in the formation of what came to be called "the methodological criticism".

He points out that the objectives of this method were to examine and interpret the different strategies used by the colonialist in administering or painting images of the colonised (2006a:24). For Sugirtharajah (2006a:25), post-colonialism is considered not as a theory, but as a criticism. The rationale behind such a belief is that, as an inquiry, it investigates and creates possibilities, and provides a platform for the widest possible convergence of critical forces – multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural voices, to assert their denied rights and rattle the centre.

Criticism is always contextual, it is paradoxical, secular and open to its own contradictions and shortcomings. Said (1993:28) correctly argues along the same lines with Sugirtharajah that post-colonialism is a criticism. The rationale behind such an argument is that there must be critical consciousness if there are to be issues, problems, values, even lives to be fought for.

Sugirtharajah (2006a:32) locates post-colonialism in the 1960s after the demise of formal European colonialism. This was the period when African countries struggled for their independence. In this regard, the term is seen as indicating the historical period after colonialism. This was a decisive period in Africans' attempts to take control over their own destinies. Sugirtharajah (2006a:34) applies the term "criticism" rather than "theory" to the discipline.

### 2.2.2 The nature of post-colonialism

For Sugirtharajah (2006b: 57), the nature of post-colonialism resides in the fact that post-colonialism is a product of hybridity. It is a combination of interaction between colonising countries and the colonised, on the one hand; and a contentious reciprocation between the two, on the other. The result of this connection between the imperial power and the production of literary and historical tradition is manifest in three ways.

First, there is a need to reread Western canonical texts in order to spell out colonial or imperial elements in them. This requires scrutinising texts in order to highlight the reality of empire, of imperialism, and of colonialism; and at the same time, to challenge the colonising ideologies.

Second, a comparative study is needed. This means to search not just literary but also other texts such as historical discourses, official documents, missionary reports, to mention a few, to investigate how the colonised were represented and how they resisted or accepted colonial values.

Third, a literary analysis emerged from the colonies as a way of writing back to the centre, questioning and challenging colonialist modes of thinking, and in the process producing a new form of representation.

The master thinkers of this analysis are Ashcroft, Griffiths, Franz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivack, and Tiffin, to mention a few (cf. Sugirtharajah 2002:33-38). For them, this analysis opens up the debate surrounding the exposition of powerful and diverse writings, especially those emerging from the former Commonwealth countries, their inter-relatedness, their politicisation and their use of subversive language.

To put it simply, the nature of post-colonialism was that of critical analysis during and after the colonial days, which forge a way forward to complete freedom and democracy, to justice for all, to gender equality, and alleviation of poverty.

### 2.2.3 The relevance of postcolonial criticism and biblical studies

Sugirtharajah (2006b:78) argues that the greatest single aim of postcolonial biblical criticism is to situate colonialism at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation.

Postcolonial criticism concentrates on every issue that has to do with expansion, domination, and imperialism as the central focus in defining both the biblical narratives and biblical interpretation.

Postcolonial biblical criticism is relevant to biblical studies because it exposes potential areas for the Bible to work in connection with other disciplines (2003:96). In this regard, biblical scholars can co-operate with scholars in postcolonial criticism in the domain that includes: race, nation, oppression, translation, mission, textuality, spirituality, and

representation. Scholars can also explore subjects related to diaspora, hybridity and post-nationalism, which constitute the focus of postcolonial criticism.

Another area, according to Sugirtharajah (2003:99-103), where biblical studies could benefit from postcolonial discourse is the place and function of criticism in the contemporary world: a constructive and positive judgment is always helpful when dealing with the biblical texts.

He argues that biblical studies are still using the rational as a key to expand texts and fail to accept intuition, sentiment, and emotion as ways into the text. He concludes that even at present, the relevance of postcolonial criticism to biblical studies continues to bear fruit as follows:

First, post-colonialism has empowered those who were part of the former empires to see themselves differently. It has helped one to go beyond thinking in contrastive pairs such as “us” and “them”, “East” and “West”. It helps to free one from such neatly drawn boundaries. Second, postcolonial criticism prevents interpretation from becoming too narrative and nationalistic. This means it frees one from the cultural force, and helps one to interpret everything with a critical eye. Thirdly, Postcolonial criticism enables Western countries to recognise the extent to which European culture and knowledge were involved in destroying the colonised culture, and contributed to older and continuing forms of deprivation, exploitation, and colonisation (Sugirtharajah 2003:103).



For colonialists, the vast continent of Africa was a “haunt of savages”, replete with “superstition and fanaticism” (cf. Ewans 2002:81).

In the view of Sugirtharajah (2002:105) what post-colonialism does positively is to prevent interpretation from becoming too narrative and too nationalistic. One is free from the cultural force to assert one’s own heritage and self-consciously interpret everything as an African. It also enables Western countries to recognise the extent to which European culture and knowledge were involved in and contributed to older and continuing forms of deprivation, exploitation, and colonisation.

### 2.3 F. Segovia: Empire, imperialism and colonialism in the Bible and in biblical interpretation

For Segovia, it is true and real that empire, imperialism and colonialism are situated at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation. He goes further by demonstrating that reality in three areas: the world of antiquity, the modern world, and the world of the reader. The analysis of these is reflected on the following paragraphs:

#### 2.3.1 Postcolonial studies and ancient texts

According to Segovia (1998:57-60) one may depict the reality of imperialism, and colonialism when reading the ancient Judaism and early Christianity texts. This can be seen in three ways:

First, the reality of empire and colonialism may be seen as a virtual reality (1995:58). This means that which colonised people experienced from their colonial masters politically, economically and culturally. This resonates with the notions of developed and underdeveloped, progressive and backward, civilised and uncivilised, advanced and primitive or cultured and barbarian. Simply put, this means the world of unequal powers.

Second, the reality of imperialism and colonialism may be seen as a structural reality. This means the colonial masters imposed their rules and regulations, their religion, their mode of governance, and their style of leadership on their colonies. This links to the concepts of the Western, the Southern, and the Northern (cf. Segovia 1995:59).

Third, the reality of imperialism and colonialism may be seen as artistic (1995:60). This refers to colonial rulers' favouring or privileging of their own views. This connects to the affective content of colours, directly or indirectly: what is white is dominant, and what is black is devoted to demonism, superstition, and animism. The negative side of this artistic reality is that it includes literary productions. A product written by a black person has nothing to offer to society. Put it simply, one may say this is a biased judgment.

For the shadow of empire and colonialism to be highlighted in the production of ancient texts, Segovia (1995:60) raises the following issues: the way the margins look at the world – a world dominated by the reality of empire and colonialism – and fashion in such a world, the way the colonial masters treat the colonised in view of their own views of

the world and life in that world, the concept and construction of history by both sides; the place and representation of “the Other”, and the conception of oppression and justice.

From the perspective of postcolonial criticism, it can be argued that such questions – questioning of culture, ideologies, and power – emerge as crucial.

### 2.3.2 Postcolonial studies and the modern world

For Segovia (1995:70), the reality of empire, imperialism, and colonialism is to be found in regard to the Western imperial tradition of the last five hundred years. He analyses the approach of the imperial tradition of the West in three areas:

First, he points out that the imperial tradition of the West may be approached in terms of three different phases and periods:

(1) Early imperialism, from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth, is characterised by the arrival of the monarchical states of Portugal and Spain in the early modern states of England, France and the Netherlands, among others, (1995:72)

(2) High imperialism, from the end of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, is characterised by monopoly capitalism and its integration of industrial and financial capital in the major capitalist nation states. Segovia mentions England as a prime example of high imperialism, (1995:74) and

(3) The end of formal colonialism and the continued impact and power of imperial culture, which characterises the late imperialism, starting from the middle of the twentieth century to the present time. He gives the United States an example (1995:75).

Second, Segovia (1995:76) argues that a prominent socio-religious dimension accompanied the establishment of Western domination, especially in regard to the Western missionary movement. He points out that the missionary movement may be divided into two major waves, represented by the highly symbolic dates of 1492 and 1792. The first date stands for the first European landfall in the “New World”.

According to him, this first stage of the mission is primarily Catholic. The second date (1792 to the present) is at first primarily Protestant in nature, concerns the massive evangelisation of Africa, Asia and the remaining areas of the Americas, and remains quite vigorous today. Over the last five centuries, therefore, it can be argued that the different phases of European imperialism and colonialism brought with them, their respective religious beliefs and practices, whether Catholic or Protestant (1995:67).

Third, Segovia (1995:77) compares the twofold divisions of the missionary enterprise of the West and the previous threefold division of Western imperialism. He points out that the first missionary wave of the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries coincides with the first imperialistic phase, which is the trade stage of early imperialism. He says that the second missionary wave of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries coincides with the transition from the first to the second imperialist phase in the nineteenth century and the

beginning of the twentieth, which corresponds to the monopoly capitalist stage of high imperialism (1995:89). This stage will be discussed shortly when dealing with the historical background to Democratic Republic of the Congo's context in the next chapter.

According to Segovia (1995:59), the structural double reality of empire should be seen as involving a strong socio-religious component as well. The political, economic, and cultural centre also functions as a religious centre; that is to say, the practices and beliefs of the centre are invariably grounded on, sanctioned and accompanied by a set of religious beliefs and practices. Consequently, for him, the primary duality of centre and margins engenders a further duality in this sphere: believers/unbelievers, which in turn give rise to a number of other secondary and additional duality such as godly/ungodly and religious/unreligious.

Segovia (1995:66) concludes that from the point of view of biblical criticism, it is clear that the academic study of the texts of ancient Judaism and early Christianity, given the formation and consolidation of the discipline in the course of the nineteenth century, resembles the second major wave of the Western missionary movement. This is because Europe turns to Africa and Asia in a renewed and confused scramble for territories and possessions; and then the United States turns to the West and beyond, with its eyes set on the islands of the Caribbean, the hearts of Mexico and territories in the Pacific.

From the view above, the shadow of empire in the production of modern readings of the ancient texts should be underlined. One may raise a question such as: How do such

readings and interpretations, coming from the metropolitan centres of the West, address and present such issues in the ancient texts as empire and margins, oppression and justice, mission and conversion, followers and outsiders, salvation, election, and holiness? From the point of view of postcolonial studies, questions such as these – questions of culture, ideology and power – prove to be all-important.

### 2.3.3 The world of the reader

Segovia (1995:76), from the point of view of biblical critics, distinguishes two general categories of readers. First, those readers associated with the long imperial tradition of the West. Second, those associated with the colonies of the Western empires, what has come to be known as the “Two-Thirds World”, now raising their voices for the first time during the present phase of post-colonialism and late imperialism – a growing minority of critics. Segovia concludes this section with the notion of empire in the lives of modern as well as contemporary readers.

In doing so, one may raise questions, such as: how do the traditional critics, from the metropolitan centres of the West, stand – and construct them-“selves” – with regard to the relationship between empire and margins, the West and the rest? What is the position of Western women in this regard, in their role as previous outsiders from the West itself? Again, such questions emerge as all-important, from the point of view of postcolonial studies. Some of these questions shall be raised at a later stage when analysing some selected texts in the biblical conquest account of Joshua 1-12.

#### 2.4 M.W. Dube's feminist postcolonial biblical hermeneutics

Dube (2006b:142) argues that postcolonial feminist readers in biblical studies are part and parcel of the communities that struggle for liberation in the “Two-Thirds World” and elsewhere. She maintains that the struggle for liberation of postcolonial readers is to be found within the framework of resisting global and national types of oppression – which may be politically, economically, socially, or culturally rooted. She points out that gender oppression is a major agenda for postcolonial feminist readers in their struggle for liberation. She stands for a postcolonial feminist criticism that asks how various forms of national oppression affect men and women, how gender oppression functions with other forms of oppression such as class, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation.

In connection with biblical texts, Dube (2006b:143) argues that postcolonial feminist struggles for liberation operate within communities of faith that embrace these texts as model and where these texts are read in connection with other standard traditions, whether they are religious or not and whether written or not.

In this regard, Dube (2006b:144) affirms that postcolonial feminist readers of biblical texts and other “World” texts are, therefore, working with those communities of faith that seek liberation and justice.

For Dube (2006b:186-188) though, postcolonial feminist hermeneutics is historically based and informed by African Independent Churches' (AICs) communities of faith and

struggle. She contends that these churches began as protest movements against colonial oppression and exclusion and therefore highlight the role of women in the African Independent Churches (AICs) for articulating their faith by seeing themselves as part of the national struggle for liberation, the struggle against colonial oppression. In her postcolonial strategy for reading the Bible, she is more concerned with:

- Whether a text exhibits a clear stance against the political imperialism of this time
- The way imperialism affects men and women of ancient and present times
- If a text encourages travel to distant and inhabited land
- The difference in constructing the text constructs difference in dialogue and mutual interdependence in condemning all that is foreign, and
- The rereading of the text for relationships of liberating interdependence between genders, among races and other social categories of our world (2006b:195-197).

In the analysis of selected texts on the biblical conquest account in Joshua 1-12, some of these questions shall be raised. The rationale behind all these questions is to investigate and situate imperialism and colonialism in the Hebrew Bible.

Dube (2006b:191) believes that it is cardinal to establish the imperial surrounding and context in the text. The rationale behind such a view is that this approach emphasises imperialism and its signs of colonialism as a manifestation of oppression in the international relations of both past and present.



She is more concerned about imperialism/colonialism because it oppresses both women and men, but above all because it subjects women and other marginalised groups to multiple forms of oppression by working with national patriarchal forms of oppression and the imported forms of patriarchy (2006:192).

Dube correctly claims that oppression has no gender. In other words, oppression – it will be well articulated when analysing the postcolonial Democratic Republic of the Congo's historical background – concerned both women and men under the yoke of the colonial masters. She points out that gender oppression is a major agenda for postcolonial feminist readers in their struggle for liberation.

For Dube (2006b:197), there is a need for black women to dismantle the gender stereotypes and the oppression of women imposed by both black and white men, which remains great in postcolonial interpretation of the Bible, an aspect she considers as pertinent from an African socio-cultural perspective.

She stands (2006b:196) for a postcolonial feminist criticism that asks how various forms of national oppression affect men and women, how gender oppression functions with other forms of oppression such as class, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation.

## 2.5 J Punt's postcolonial stance

### 2.5.1 Marginalization and marginality

Punt makes very clear that his remarks should be seen as directly shaped and punctuated by the social-cultural context in which he finds himself, namely, post-apartheid South Africa (cf. Punt 2008:400). He argues that communities and individuals are often still suffering from a serious lack of self-esteem and self-confidence, and not having acquired even very basic life skills, all of which are not unrelated to the surrounding moral landscape. The strategy of making the land ungovernable as part of the liberation movements' struggle against Apartheid grew into a popular groundswell which has to date proved difficult (Punt 2001:3).

He points out that in his country, race and gender remain the major dividing lines. Major problems in the country are related to what is often called a race "fault line" that both defines and divides the people of South Africa. Deep-seated ethnic differences and conflicts brewing under the surface, add to a climate susceptible to polarization.

Serious gender and sexuality concerns exist amidst claims to traditional culture proclaimed as sacrosanct in a very dominant patriarchal context which is largely homophobic (cf. Punt 2001:4).

He adds that such factors work hand in hand with over-simplified but popular notions of majority and minority politics; of (black) political versus (white) economic power; of the (re) distribution of arable agricultural lands and mineral prospecting rights; of affirmative action as initiative of the (black) majority aimed at the (white) minority, with relentless energy (cf. Punt 2001:4).

Punt says that South African citizens are deprived not only of their legitimate claim to resources but have to observe public official squandering of such resources on exorbitant yet fleeting materialist tokens of wealth and prosperity (2001:5).

Marginalized groups can claim their detrimental status as both an indication of their special status before God, and as a legitimation for venting anger and violence on their opponents and the rest of society in general. Such groups who feel exposed, ignored, abandoned and humiliated, having to deal with frustrated expectations, are fertile feeding grounds for dissent, anger and violence (cf. Punt 2006:221; Selengut 2004:85).

With the tension between the Israelites and the Canaanites characterized by the land grab, the interpretation of the conquest narrative will relate to issues of marginalization and human dignity.

### 2.5.2 Issue of identity

Punt says that, in the Old Testament with its strong monotheistic stance and theocratic setting, the people of Israel not only identified themselves accordingly, but also other people. He uses the terms “insiders” and “outsiders”, “self” and “Other” to speak about the nature of identity (cf. Punt 2006:212).

The politics and rhetoric of “othering” found is predominantly a rhetoric of legitimization, constructing a discourse replete with cause, development and effect *contra* the selves or insider-group, and are thus considered as deserving of exclusion, marginalization, vilification at times brutalization. In other words, the “Other” feels isolated, even excluded from the community. This may lead to violence. (cf. Punt 2006:217). He points out that the concern for identity is a major issue in multicultural country like South Africa, which has a dimension as a continent (cf. 2011:6).

### 2.5.3. Rhetoric of violence

Punt points out that violence accompanies monotheistic religion notwithstanding claims to (superior) moral values. Monotheism with its insistence not so much on a single god as on one “defining principle” carries within itself the seeds of exclusivism, contributing both to or a collective identity in which human beings are defined in terms of “us” and “them”, and ultimately also to the violence generated by such notion (cf. Punt 2002:259).

Notwithstanding the emphasis on non-physical violence, Punt highlights four aspects which reinforce the violent perspective of the New Testament:

- (a) An unquestioning acceptance of soldiers and war
- (b) Extreme violence expected to occur at Jesus' end of age
- (c) Male dominance in society as reflected in the choice of Jesus' disciples
- (d) The insider-outsider mentality which divides humanity into opposing groups (cf. Punt 2002:260).

The issues of marginalization, identity and violence seem to be a reality in the conquest narrative of some selected texts contained in the book of Joshua, the subject of the present research.

## 2.6 Pui-Lan's linking of biblical studies and feminist biblical interpretation

Pui-Lan (2006:45) argues that postcolonial feminist interpretation is inclusive. This means that all women, regardless of their condition, must be involved in the process of reading the biblical text through a postcolonial lens.

She points out (2006:46) the role of postcolonial feminist critics, which consist not only in recovering the insights of ordinary women readers but also in exposing the various ways in which biblical scholars, feminists among them, have been subjects of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Pui-Lan (2006:76) encourages feminist scholars who are interested in postcolonial criticism to adopt different approaches to interpretation, from ideological criticism to literary-rhetorical methods, because they share some concerns in common. She gives (2006:77) two reasons for her support of feminist scholars in postcolonial criticism. First, they want to investigate how the symbolisation of women and the development of gender in the text relate to class interests, model of production, concentration of state power, and colonial domination. Second, postcolonial feminist critics focus on the biblical women in the contact zone and present reconstructive readings as counter- narrative.

By contact zone, Pui Lan refers (2006:79) to the space of colonial encounters where people of different geographical and historical backgrounds are brought into contact with each other, usually characterised by inequality and conflictual relations.

Pui-Lan (2006:88-95) illustrates this point with the example of Rahab in Joshua 2 during the siege of Jericho. In the story, Rahab was rewarded for having protected the spies sent by Joshua, and as a Canaanite “Other”, she crossed over to love in Israel and was elevated to a high position as the ancestress of David and Jesus.

It may be argued that this story is a clear demonstration of the double colonisation of women: on the one hand, their bodies are open for taking by foreign men, and on the other hand, their land is possessed (cf. Pui-Lan 2006:167).

Pui-Lan (2006:97-100) gives two other reasons for supporting postcolonial feminist critics: (1) They closely observe metropolitan interpretations, including those offered by

both male and feminist scholars, to see if their readings support the colonising ideology addressing too lightly the imperial context and agenda, or contribute to decolonising the imperialistic texts for the sake of liberation. (2) They emphasise the roles and contributions of ordinary readers in order to undermine the dominant Western patriarchal interpretations, especially those in Africa.

By ordinary readers, Pui-Lan (2006:78-89) refers to most Third World readers, who are outside the accepted academic traditions of biblical interpretation and who are sent away to the boundary of the global economic structures. The inclusion of ordinary readers is meant to enlarge the interpretive community and to emphasise that these readers possess the “suppressed knowledge” that academic elites often neglect.

Pui-Lan (2006:105) strongly argues that postcolonial feminist critics pay increasing attention to what Mary Ann Tolbert has called “the political and poetic location”.

By politics of location, Tolbert means the difficulties of one’s social background, such as gender, race, and sexual orientation, as well as one’s national and institutional context and economic and educational status, which determine who speaks and who is likely to listen. Poetic of location means that any interpretation of a text, especially a text as traditionally powerful as the Bible, must be evaluated not only on whatever its literary or historical value may be but also on its theological and ethical effect on the integrity and dignity of God’s creation (cf. also Adamo 1999:104). Pui-Lan’s concept of dignity is one of the major concerns in post-colonial criticism, concerns which shall be discussed and analysed in the next chapter.

## 2.7 Nzimande's *Imbokodo* postcolonial, post-apartheid reading of the Bible

In her postcolonial reading of the Bible, Nzimande (2005:223) exposes and challenges the historical connection between the dissemination of Western hegemony, power and epistemologies by critically investigating biblical texts in view of the overwhelming presence, role, and influence of empire in their production. She considers black (South African) women's histories as a pertinent starting point in the interpretation of biblical texts.

She challenges black women to develop counter-hegemonic identity constructions that demystify ethnicity, emphasise self-worth, self-love and the love of blackness as a symbol and as skin colour (2005:224).

Nzimande further appeals to South African women to dispel the colonially inculcated self-loathing mentality in dealing with their hybridised post-apartheid South African identity.

She points out that while the trend in African women's interpretation is to focus attention solely on the oppressed women in biblical texts and seeking identification with these, she considers patriarchy and colonisation as related phenomena that affect both the powerful and the not so powerful women in African socio-cultural circles (2005:227).



Nzimande argues (2005:230) that the neo-colonialism of globalisation or global culturalism coupled with the colonial/imperial constructions of the colonised affect black women's perception of self, thus creating a thorny identity crisis that requires resistance, redressing and decolonisation.

Nzimade (2005: 230) emphasises on the need for black women's struggles for survival under harsh socio-economic capitalist conditions to be taken into account when reading the Bible. In this regard, she goes on arguing that the struggles of the oppressed are to be observed in their absence, while similarly taking a critical stance on the identification of oppressors/exploiters and the oppressed/exploited in black women's readings of biblical texts.

Nzimande argues convincingly for her concept of *Imbokodo*<sup>2</sup> postcolonial and post-apartheid of reading the Bible that aligns itself with the worldwide criticism against capitalist exploitation and globalisation and the adverse dehumanising effects of these on the poor. She strongly believes (2005:231) that her *Imbokodo* postcolonial hermeneutic encourages black women to critically interrogate whether biblical texts speak to the struggles of those seeking to survive hegemonic manipulation, socio-economic exploitation and oppression.

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<sup>2</sup> Imbokodo is a smoothly rounded stone used by Zulu women to ground food, in particular, staple food, into powder. Says Nzimande: "Without Imbokodo there is no food in the traditional African household" (2005:22). Hence her expression *Wa thint' abafazi, wathin't imbokodo, uzokufa* meaning, "You strike a women, you strike a grinding stone, you will be crushed!" was, and still is, an affirming saying which reveals the importance of black South African women in the historical-political and daily struggles of the people of South Africa (2005:23-24).

She urges black women to interrogate the ideologies inherent in biblical texts and question whether there is any justice to be found in there. In cases where justice is absent, Nzimande (2005:234) also urges black women to condemn the silencing of the struggles of the oppressed, the prevalence of exploitation, and the dehumanisation of the oppressed.

Her conclusion is apt to the point where she asserts that black South African readers of the Bible should exercise great vigilance when reading biblical texts not to subscribe to the negative psychological images of themselves that the coloniser has inscribed on them (2005:237).

## 2.8 Limitations of postcolonial criticism

Postcolonial criticism is a paradoxical exercise, especially when it deals with locations and specifics, in a world of generalization and globalization, by seeking recognition of an identity within a world of cultural diversities (cf. Said 1993:69).

Iverson (1997:154) laments that it is “extremely difficult to establish a general sense of post-colonialism”, since it means different things to different people with different histories in different contexts. This is because of the continuity within the discontinuity of colonialism and imperialism in the postcolonial era.

As is the case with any social-scientific method, postcolonial criticism has the same translation problems as many social-scientific critics warn (Riley 1963:704-716; Judge 1980:201-217). According to Riley (1963:704-707; cf. Van Staden 1994:166-167), fallacies arise in research, either because “methods fail to fit model”<sup>3</sup> or “methods fail to fit facts”<sup>4</sup>.

A pertinent issue for postcolonial biblical criticism is the relationship between historical criticism and postcolonial criticism. Questions are raised from each side about the applicability of the methods, and theories of the Other (Sugirtharajah 2001:78).

The theories, methods and results of historical criticism gained prominence within the context of colonial expansion, with one of the major hallmarks of colonial hermeneutics being the historicization of faith (Sugirtharajah 2001: 70-72; Segovia 1998: 34-35).

Colonial interpreters viewed the biblical religion as the historic faith and all other, non-biblical, religions as degenerate and in need of deliverance. While the religions of the colonized viewed texts as a medium of religious truth and not as the primary means of acquiring that truth, the colonizers saw the Bible as the revelation of their faith (cf.

Sugirtharajah 2001:70).

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<sup>3</sup> The explanation given by Riley (1963:704) and Van Staden (1994:166) shows that this type of fallacy occurs when a researcher chooses a research case from a social system that does not fit his/her conceptual model, for example if the model refers to individuals in roles, whereas the researcher bases his/her analysis on the group. This is called aggregative fallacy, whereas atomistic fallacy occurs when the researcher model refers to the group but the researcher’s analysis is based on individuals.

<sup>4</sup> From the same explanation as above, two other fallacies occur, namely psychological and sociological. In this instance, the method may fit the model, but fails to discover the relevant facts. Consequently, the group data alone may not adequately prevent a socio-linguistic fallacy even when the focus is on the group; nor can individual data alone prevent a psycho-logistic fallacy, even when the focus is on the individual.

For the subordinated religions, interpreters engage with the texts for their emotive and spiritual power, not to learn about authors, history, and sources.

In colonized territories, the historical-critical method eclipsed all other forms of indigenous interpretation like allegory, symbolism or metaphor (Sugirtharajah 2001: 72).

Like any other form of criticism, post-colonialism presents some limitations. It sometimes implies a romantic vision of the Other and simplistic politics. Although the emphasis is on difference, postcolonial theory sometimes conflates very distinct cultures under the umbrella term of “third world”. While some postcolonial criticism has been groundbreaking, other work has done little to change unequal relationships between countries (Sugirtharajah 2006a:19).

## 2.9 Point of Departure

In the present section, the main ideas from different scholars in matters concerning postcolonial biblical criticism are recapped. Some of them will be more involved in the course of the present research, while others will contribute towards this thesis in one way or another.

Although the six scholars in our survey on postcolonial criticism come from different social locations, speak from different sites, and mobilise different philosophical and conceptual categories, yet there is a certain central aspect and unifying force in their

approach, namely to investigate and expose the imperialism and colonialism at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation.

Though none of them discussed matters related directly to the subject of the present research, there are some connections on matters associated with the concept of conquest, violence, oppression, injustice, and abuse in all its forms, which constitute the major concerns of postcolonial criticism. Most of them are of the opinion that one of the hermeneutical agendas in this liberative role of post-colonialism is to encourage what Edward Said calls “contrapuntal reading” (1993:67).

The latter is a reading strategy with a view to encouraging the experiences of the exploited and the exploiter to be studied together. In other words, texts from metropolitan centres and peripheries are studied simultaneously. As a result, a contrapuntal reading paves the way for a situation that goes beyond reified binary characterisation of Eastern and Western writings.

In Said’s words, “re-read it not univocally but contrapuntally, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and beyond which) the dominating discourse acts” (1993:85).

As a state and condition as well as a reading strategy, post-colonialism is a useful critical concept for the Hebrew Bible.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL HISTORIES IN PERSPECTIVE**

#### **3.1 Preliminary remarks**

In the middle of the nineteenth century, soon after the Atlantic slave trade finally came to an end, the major part of Europe's conquest and colonisation of Africa began. The scramble for Africa was one of the greatest land grabs in history and one of the swiftest.

Conan (1978:12) points out that the Democratic Republic of the Congo possesses vast reserves of gold, copper, diamonds, and uranium, as well as oil, cadmium, cobalt, manganese, silver, tin, and zinc. Cocoa, coffee, cotton, tea, palm oil, rubber, and timber are exported to other countries today. Judged by almost any criterion, its people should be rich. Yet most of these resources have been stolen.

This chapter seeks to highlight the Democratic Republic of the Congo's postcolonial context, in particular that of the Katanga province. It will demonstrate how colonial masters, and many a missionary, used the Bible to carry out a colonial agenda in order to conquer and grab the land in the name of their deity to achieve their own political gains.

The rationale behind the choice of the Katanga province is twofold:

- (1) The author of the present research was raised in that province; he lived and ministered among its people. Simply put, Katanga is his province.

(2) Katanga is the richest province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with its concentration of natural resources.

The explorer Henry Morton Stanley called it “the geological scandal” because of its various and diverse mineral resources. It has vast mineral deposits, notably cobalt, copper, uranium, gold, and diamonds. The country’s forest reserves are considered the most extensive in Africa. Many areas are well suited for growing crops (cf. Lalo 1997:73).

According to Marchal (2001:45), the highlands of the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, with their rich volcanic soils, are especially productive. The Congo River and its tributaries provide a vast network of navigable waterways and have great hydroelectric potential. What follows is an overview of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Lwamba (2007:58) describes the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a vast country in Central Africa, one with dense forests traversed by the powerful Congo River. Rich in natural resources, the country is nonetheless economically stunted due to decades of misrule during the second half of the 20th century under the dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko. He adds (2007:61) that the region was first united as the Congo Free State, a colony created by Belgian king Leopold II in the late 19th century.

He concludes (2007:89) that the colony was called the Belgian Congo from 1908 until 1960, when it gained independence as the Republic of the Congo. Its name was changed to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1964 and then to Zaire in 1971.

As he describes the lakes and rivers, Cornet (1970: 52) states that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is bounded to the north by the Central African Republic and Sudan; to the east by Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Lake Tanganyika (which separates the Democratic Republic of the Congo from Tanzania); to the south by Zambia and Angola; and to the west by the Republic of the Congo and the Angolan exclave of Cabinda. The Equator crosses the northern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Kinshasa is the capital and largest city.

He says (1970: 71) that the country's most significant physical feature is the Congo Basin, which encompasses the entire country. This region consists of a vast depression, constituting the Democratic Republic of the Congo's entire central area, and surrounding plateaus and mountains.

In his description on the lakes and rivers, Cornet (1970) 102-105) states that many rivers cross the Congo Basin and mountain regions. The valleys of these rivers are covered with dense vegetation. In the southern Congo Basin, forest gives way to savannah, drier grasslands are interspersed with trees. In the southeast the basin is fringed by the rugged Katanga Plateau. This region, about 1,000 m (about 4,000 ft) above sea level, contains rich deposits of copper, diamonds, uranium, and other minerals.



According to Cornet (1970:152), virtually impenetrable equatorial forests occupy the northeast of the country. The largest, known variously as the Ituri, Great Congo, Pygmy, and Stanley Forest, covers about 65,000 sq km (about 25,000 sq mi). The Ruwenzori Range, on the Ugandan border, contains the Democratic Republic of the Congo's highest point, Margherita Peak (5,109 m/16,762 ft). Near Rwanda are the Virunga Mountains, which include eight active volcanoes. In the extreme west the country narrows to a wedge terminating in a strip 37 km (23 mi) wide along the Atlantic Ocean.

Eynikee (1984: 32) points out that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has a population (2006 estimate) of 62,660,551, with a density of 28 persons per sq km (71 per sq mi). Largely rural, the population is concentrated in the eastern highlands and along rivers. Only about 31 per cent of the population lives in cities. He continues saying that in 2004 the Democratic Republic of the Congo also had a refugee population of about 199,323, many of whom were exiles from instability in Rwanda (1984:40).

The remainders were Burundians, Angolans, and Sudanese, all fleeing upheavals in their countries. Meanwhile, about 462,203 Congolese citizens had taken refuge in neighbouring countries due to violence in the eastern Congo (Conan 1978:61).

Eynikee says that among other major cities are a south-eastern copper-mining city, Lubumbashi (formerly Elizabethville); a south central diamond-mining centre, Mbuji-Mayi (formerly Bakwanga); a south-eastern industrial city, Kolwezi; and a north-eastern Congo River port, Kisangani (formerly Stanleyville). Matadi, on the Congo estuary, is the principal Congolese seaport (1984:57).

The postcolonial Democratic Republic of the Congo's context will be discussed within three periods:

(1) 1870-1908: This was a moment of land-grab and plunder. Western rulers saw their roles as being those of conquerors or explorers.

(2) 1908-1945: This followed the formal annexation of the Congo by Belgium in 1908, and the arrival of the missionary enterprise.

(3) 1945 to date: This was an era of decolonisation; serious discussion began on how the African states might be used to build up a strong society incorporating attempts to govern themselves in the interests of their own people. A detailed and closer analysis of these three periods of the post-colonial Democratic Republic of the Congo's are considered in order.

The first period (1870-1908) has been dominated by three major traumas among the Congolese people, namely, land grab, oppression, and exploitation – even at times in the name of God.

## 3.2 Early period (1870-1908)

### 3.2.1 Land grab

Conan (1978:11) writes that in 1871, Leopold II, the Belgian King, decreed that all lands, which were not actually occupied by natives, were proclaimed as the property of the state.

The decree stipulated that:

As the greater portion of the land in the Congo is not under cultivation, this interpretation concedes to the State a right of absolute and executive ownership over virtually the whole of the land, with the consequence: that it can dispose – itself and solely – of all the products of the soil; prosecute as a poacher any one who takes from that land the least of its fruits, or as a receiver of stolen goods anyone who receives such fruit: ... The activity of the native is thus limited to very restricted areas, and their economic condition is immobilised.... A native displacing himself without a special permit would be exposed to arrest and be punished.

A simple analysis of such an act prompts one to think that the Congolese have been reduced from freedom to slavery. In its application, the same act stipulates that the State considers the whole Congo Basin as its private property.

As a result, the Congolese people were dispossessed by a simple *memo*<sup>5</sup>. It was also disturbing that permission was graciously granted to indigenous people to collect their products, but only on condition that they bring them for sale to the State for whatever the

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<sup>5</sup> Memo: the term is a shortened form for memorandum. A memorandum is a written note or message giving instructions or information. A memo is usually short and details who is sending the memo and to whom it should be distributed.

latter may be pleased to give them. One may interpret the act in this way: no land in such a country is actually occupied by indigenous people save for the actual site of their villages, and the meagre fields of grain or cassava which surround them.

Conan (1978:23) notices that everywhere, beyond these small local sites, extended to the plains and forests which have been the ancestral wandering places of the indigenous people, and which contain all sorts of richness, such as rubber, ivory and the skins of animals which are the only objects of their commerce.

It can be argued that, at a single signature on a paper in Belgium, everything was taken from the indigenous people – not the produce of the country, but the country! The following question may be raised: How can the indigenous people trade when the state had taken from them everything which they had to offer? As if the decree was not enough to grab the land in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bakole Wa Ilunga (1987:39) writes that the Belgian King, Leopold II, dared to quote the Bible in order to justify the land dispossession. In his letter addressed to the army commander in charge of Leopoldville (Kinshasa), the Belgian king wrote: “...the struggle shall continue... and victory is certain, because this land is a ‘gift of God’ to us... God has given unto us these ‘savages’ to civilise them, these ‘barbarians’ to evangelise them. We do all in the name of the Lord.”

When reading such a statement, the words of Mofokeng (1988:34) may be remembered:

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 man had the land and we had the Bible.

What is observed from such a statement is the extent to which the Belgian King, Leopold II, has explicitly used the Bible as an instrument to dispossess the Congolese of their land and thus motivate and justify his actions.

However, in addition to using the Bible to support his land grab, Dempine (1967:78) observes that Leopold II was a person with a distinct Christian faith. Indeed, he was one of the more resolutely faith-based Belgian kings. His conversion is evidence of the power of faith to save a life and a family. Dempine (1967:80) continues **to say** that the King prayed regularly and read the Bible and other devotional literature. He was committed to “people serving something greater than themselves in life”. It can be argued that what is problematic about the Congolese land grab is not Leopold’s Christian faith and his conversion, but his conviction that he is doing God’s will. In this regard therefore, he crossed the line by misunderstanding the God of his Scripture and traditions. He portrayed God on the side of one particular nation (Belgium), whose possession of the enemy’s land (Democratic Republic of the Congo) is justified. They are the “Other” portrayed as outsiders, heretics, evildoers to be fought and eliminated in the name of God. However, the biblical text itself lends itself to colonising -type ideologies which were greedily utilised by many readers interpreting the colonial and postcolonial as well as neo-colonial contexts.

### 3.2.2 Oppression

The second trauma which the Congolese people experienced under colonial rule was oppression. This was also done in the name of the deity. To oppress means to rule or treat

somebody in a continually harsh or cruel way and to make him/her feel uncomfortable, anxious or unhappy (cf. Crowther 2002:814).

Since the early 1890s, the Congolese people were systematically forced to collect rubber as the only means of paying new taxes levied on them (Nelson 1994:18). Congolese were victims of a slave labour system and other human rights abuses. For example, the population of Lake Mantumba<sup>6</sup> had fallen by 60 per cent as a result of forced labour, which is a form of systematic oppression. In Kimbler's (1988:23) view, the most potent symbol of colonialism's brutality was "the severed hands".

He explains (1988:26) that African soldiers, in the pay of their Belgian masters, were sent out to smash opposition. To demonstrate that they had not wasted their bullets they had to hack the hands from their victims, alive or dead. The baskets of severed hands set down at the feet of the European commanders, became the symbol of the Congo Free State. He concludes (1988:45) that the collection of hands became an end in itself. Public Force soldiers brought them to the stations in place of rubber; they even went out to harvest them instead of rubber. They became a sort of currency. The people who were coerced into the forced labour gangs and the Public Force soldiers<sup>7</sup> were paid their bonuses on the basis of how many hands they collected.

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<sup>6</sup> Mantumba is among the greatest lakes found in the Southern part of the Katanga province. The people from this region lived on agriculture and fishing.

<sup>7</sup> Public force soldiers were a mixture of some white colonial masters in the army with the indigenous people recruited and trained for the circumstances.

Hobsbawn (2007:55) reports that a Belgian commander used religious language to order his Public Force: “Behind all life and all history there is a dedication and purpose, set by the hand of a just and faithful God. Belgium is chosen by God to liberate Congo.”

This entails a higher calling for his life to bring God’s great command to evangelise every human being in the world. So it implies that obedience to his order is divine.

Prompted by this, Hobsbawn adds (2007:56) that the troops went into the village to spread terror, if necessary by killing some of the men. He concludes (2007:60) that in order to prevent a waste of cartridges, they were ordered to bring one right hand for every cartridge used. If they missed, or used cartridges on game, they cut off the hands of living people to make up the necessary number!

Conan (1978:38) describes an account of oppression of indigenous Congolese who “refused to bring the raw material”. Then war was declared. He says that the soldiers were sent in different directions. The people in the towns were attacked, and when they **ran** into the forest to hide and save their lives, they were found by the soldiers. Then their gardens of rice were destroyed and their supplies taken. Their plantains were cut down while they were young and not yet in fruit, and often their huts were burned and everything of value was taken (1978:40) (cf. Kimbler 1988:77, Nelson, 1994:19).

I now discuss trauma and exploitation.

### 3.2.3 Exploitation

The third trauma experienced during this period is exploitation in the name of the Deity. Exploitation refers to “an unfair treatment of or giving an unfair advantage to a person or situation, usually for personal benefit” or “the use or the treatment of somebody in an unfair and selfish manner for one’s own advantage or profit” (Crowther 2002:406). Throughout the period of Leopold’s rule of the Congo the indigenous people were exploited in the real sense of the word.

Ewans (2002:160-161) writes that Leopold took a further step by creating another area, the *Domaine de la courone* (the Domain of the crown), a large tract of territory around Lake Leopold II (today Lake Tanganyika) which he exploited as his private property. Dempine (1967:56) gives the rationale behind Leopold’s II choice of the so-called “Domaine de la courone”. It has its roots in Psalm 21:1-3.

O Lord, the king rejoices in your strength  
How great is his joy in the victories you give!  
You have granted him the desire of his heart  
And have not withheld the request of his lips.  
You have welcomed him with rich blessings  
And placed a crown of pure gold on his head.

Dempine (1967:80) claims that the king identified himself with this Psalm. He portrayed himself as the king of both Belgium and the Congo, claiming that God had placed a crown of pure gold on his head to rule. It can also be argued that the use of the Deity is



just a theological construction meant to justify the king's greed and selfishness in pursuing his personal benefit and that of the Belgians.

The point is not that one cannot use the name of the deity, but rather that one cannot use one's language about God's providence, divine election, vocation, righteousness, and hope to motivate and justify a land grab, exploitation, colonialism and imperialism. Such language was often used by colonial powers, as was the case of the Belgian King of a secular state. The problem is not that religion has trespassed on the province of government, but the government has trespassed in the arena of religion. The Belgian King uses the biblical language to justify land grab, oppression, and exploitation in the name of his deity. The threat is not that religion has taken over the state, but that the state has co-opted the authority and power of the church to speak with religious and moral authority at the very moment the church should be evaluating the actions of the government from the point of view of its faith traditions.

The existence of this *domaine* was kept a closely guarded secret and even the Belgian cabinet had no knowledge of its existence. To augment its income, Leopold also obtained a proportion of the proceeds of the state loans (cf. Ewans 2002:167; Nelson 1994:35; Conan 1978:75).

Conan (1978:80) points out that both the state and the companies paid their employees low salaries and expected them to earn commission on the produce they obtained, a practice which presented considerable incentive for exploitation.

Having described the early period (1870-1908) as a moment of land grab and plunder in which Western rulers saw their roles as being those of conquerors and explorers, the description of the second period (1908-1945), which followed the formal annexation of the Congo by Belgium, follows.

### 3.3 Middle period (1908-1945)

#### 3.3.1 Introduction

The period 1908-1945 is the period of the annexation of the Congo by Belgium, and also the genesis of the missionary enterprise.

According to Renton (1988:58), the Belgian parliament did not originally plan to annex the Congo, but this new state was inaugurated by means of a confidential decree, declaring the Congo, “L’ Etat Independent du Congo”, a title that came to be translated as “The Congo Free State”. From the outset, the Free State’s administration was highly centralised, with control firmly exercised from Brussels and in all important matters by the king himself. One may say (borrowing theological jargon) that Leopold was in the Congo as the “incarnation” of sovereignty. In other words, all the rights and all the duties of government were consolidated and incorporated in his person.

Sovereign refers to the authorised decision-maker on legislative and judicial power. As stated before, this second period of colonial rule was marked by the arrival of the missionaries in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The missionaries and colonial rulers worked hand in hand. In fact, in the early phases of Western expansion, the missionaries were allies in the colonising process, and benefited from the expansion of the empire. In return they legitimised imperialism and accustomed their new adherents to accept compensatory expectations of an eternal reward for terrestrial misfortunes including colonial exploitation (cf. Conan 1978:56; Nelson 1994:83).

Analysing the Christian Congo historical background, Isichei (1995:55) observes that among all African Christian kingdoms, the Congo ranks among those with the longest Christian tradition. This was due to the third Congolese king Ndofonsu (Afonso) and his work of Christianisation. He began to establish a Christian kingdom. He was convinced that his royal power was to be based on the Christian faith, which also gave him a unique legitimacy.

Baur (1994:8) writes that during Afonso's reign, the Congo opted for Christianity and European contacts, a decision which strongly influenced the subsequent history of the country. The Congolese constitution of the time was based on Christian principles. Hence he himself preached after each religious ceremony, first asking for the priest's blessings. Significantly he got professional preachers to propagate the new religion. He called again and again for new missionaries.

Ndaywel (1998:74) appraises the wonderful work the missionaries performed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, such as: church planting, building of schools, hospitals, orphanages. All these “good deeds” were done in collaboration and co-operation with the colonial masters.

He observes though, that the missionaries, like their colonial ruler counterparts, used the Bible to perpetuate their oppression, racial segregation, violence, land grab, and unequal power relations in the name of God.

The analysis of the abuse of the Bible in the name of God by colonial masters and missionaries will focus on racial segregation, violence, and the abuse of human rights.

### 3.3.2 Racial segregation

Segregation in this thesis refers to the practice of keeping ethnic, racial, and religious or gender groups, separate, especially by enforcing the use of separate schools, transportation, housing, and other facilities. Rundell (2005:1346) defines segregation as “the policy to separate groups of people, especially because of race, sex, or religion”.

In the Congolese context, racial segregation is the separation of the races into areas where white people (the minority) and black people (the majority) live, separation of the public facilities they may use, such as schools, restaurants, public transportation, churches, and stores, to mention a few.

Ndaywel (1998:94) is correct in portraying the missionaries as “evangelic racists”. He argues that they use the Scriptures, such as Genesis 1:18c, “...to separate the light from

the darkness” for racist purposes. For missionaries, the light portrayed the white people, while the dark related to the black Congolese.

Such an interpretation is inadequate because it does not reflect the *Sitz Im Leben* surrounding the text.

Such interpretive strategies are unco-operative in that they cause many oppressed people to turn a blind eye toward atrocities done to them through misuse of the same Bible (cf. West (1995:32-34; Mosala 1989:19-20). Commenting on the “two services” church programmes, which missionaries initiated in most of the churches in urban centres of the Katanga Province, Kalele (1999:54) believes that missionaries established them for the simple reason to discriminate against black people. In principle, the first service was typically “white” in attendance, usually conducted in French or Latin. In such a service, no “other colour” was allowed take part.

For Kalele 1999:67) the reason is very simple: such a service ended with a special meeting between the missionaries and the “Bwana Mukubwa” or the decision-makers of the colonial rule. The missionaries report what “believers” confess to them. The meeting was an exchange of information in order to “secure” their benefits vis-à-vis the black population. Mosala (1989:4) argues that the dehumanisation of black people and the “superiority” of the white people over the black people is based on the divine privileging of the Israelites over the Canaanites in the biblical conquest narratives.

It may be argued that the missionaries, in complicity with the colonial rulers, not only manipulated the Bible in the name of God, but also, found in the same Bible, ideologies

reinforcing their colonial agenda. Their reason was to discriminate against people in order to achieve the goals for their benefit and that of the Empire like land grabbing, oppression, colonialism, imperialism, unequal power relations.

Having described racial segregation during the postcolonial era in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's context, the next trauma I discuss is violence.

### 3.3.3 Violence

Etymologically, the roots of the term “violence” come from the Hebrew language. The rationale of the etymological use is twofold: (1) the Hebrew language has various terminologies to define a word; (2) the textual analysis is dealing with an Old Testament text (Joshua 1 to 12). There is no doubt that some of the above-mentioned chapters reflect what has come to be referred to as “the holy war”. There is a need to emphasise the importance of the violence theme, whether under the aspect of the holy war or the “divine warrior”, in the theology of the Old Testament. The Old Testament word for “violence” is *.נזל*. The verb is rendered to “do violence” or “suffer violence”. The basic meaning thereof is not “destructive force” but “social injustice” or “oppression” (cf. Holladay, 1971:109).

Another word-group occasionally rendered “violence” is the Hebrew noun      the verb cognate often occurs in synonymous parallelism meaning “desolation” (Is. 59:7), “devastation” (Is. 60:18), “destruction” (Hab. 2:17).

Sometimes the terms are paired as *חַמַּס וְשָׂד* in (Jer 6:7; Ezk 45:9). This suggests that the terms are synonymous and that      , like *חַמַּס* connotes social injustice, oppression of the poor and the righteous. Simply put, violence is the use of force exercised to compel a person to do something against his/her will (cf. Seow 1995:78).

Culture can be understood as the patterned way in which people do things together and think in the same way. In other words, culture is the integrated system of learned patterns of behaviour, ideas, and products characteristic of a society. In this regard, the Congolese culture involves the belief, values, customs and institutions which the society, together with a sense of identity, shares in common.

Kalele (1999:104) points out that missionaries used Exodus 20:3-5 which says:

You shall have no other gods before me.  
You shall not make yourself a graven image,  
Or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above,  
Or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;  
You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God  
I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children  
To the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me....

as a refrain to demonstrate that Congolese culture was evil and full of superstition. Therefore, in their view, it was necessary to destroy everything that goes against the will of God.

In destroying such a culture, Kalele (1997:107) observes that the missionaries produce a “hybrid” society where people are physically Congolese, but mentally, spiritually, and morally “white” since they have to reason, to speak and sometimes to walk like missionaries!

In his analysis of decolonisation of theologies, Rayan (1988:23) argues, that taking advantage of the European colonial rule, the missionaries played a pivotal role in domesticating the minds and cultures of new converts ignorant of the biblical realities.

Tshitungu (1998:24) finds it ironic that the missionaries, who vilified the Congolese culture, were the same people who engaged in the commercial trade in Congolese masks, drums, and various other items which they considered to be “profane”. These were sold to them in different European museums at high prices “in the name of God”.

### 3.3.4 Abuse of human rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948), affirms the dignity and rights of all human beings. In its 30 articles it describes the right to life, liberty, and security of person; to freedom of conscience, religion, opinion, expression, association, and assembly; to freedom from arbitrary arrest, to a fair and impartial trial; to freedom from interference in privacy, home, or correspondence, to a nationality; to a secure society and an adequate standard of living; to education, and to rest and leisure. The declaration also affirms the right of every person to own property, to



be presumed innocent until proven guilty, to travel in his/her home country at will and return at will; to work under favourable conditions, receive equal pay for equal work, and to join labour unions at will; to marry and raise a family, and to participate in government and in the social life of the community (cf. Howard 1999:69).

It would not be an exaggeration to argue that some of these articles were only “dead letter” not only with the colonial masters, but also with the missionaries, who are supposed to be the custodians of God’s principles. In this respect also, Nkay (2001:23) writes that missionaries used the Bible in the one hand and in the other wielded a “chicotte”<sup>8</sup> to endorse discipline. The missionaries forced men and women to search for precious stones in exchange for education and second hand clothes. All those who refused to submit were considered to belong to the kingdom of darkness, and therefore were “disciplined”.

Such an act is abusive. One may raise a question: is there any other means to correct somebody apart from using such a draconian measure?

With regard to the education system, Lalo (1997:23) argues that the missionaries were not prepared to share any knowledge with the Congolese. In his view, the standard of education was low: two years of primary school education were the norm and in remote areas in particular, equipment and facilities were minimal. Much more time was devoted to manual labour.

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<sup>8</sup> Chicotte is a French word which designates a whip made of sun-dried hippopotamus hide with razor-sharp edges to beat up all who failed to obey.

Congolese, men and women were reduced to “Ndiyo Bwama Mukubwa”<sup>9</sup>, as an expression of their submission to white people who were considered to speak on behalf of God. It may be argued that colonial rulers, and many missionaries alike, used the Bible to achieve the ends of their organisations: land grab, oppression, racial segregation, human rights abuse. This second period ended with an alliance between the colonial masters and the missionaries. Once again, missionaries abused the Bible in the name of the deity for their own gain. The next analysis will focus on the late period (1948 to date), an era of decolonisation.

### 3.4 Late period (1945 to the present)

#### 3.4.1 Introduction

The period under review is the era of decolonisation. At the end of World War II (1939-1945), the great powers held vast colonial empires in the developing world. One goal of the United Nations charter was decolonisation thus ending the practice of colonialism.

The Trusteeship Council was established as the United Nations organ to aid in the decolonisation process. As colonies gained their independence in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, one of their first steps was to join the United Nations. This act announced the arrival of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the international stage as a fully-fledged member of the international community.

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<sup>9</sup> Ndiyo Bwana Mukubwa is a Swahili expression to say “Yes Lord”. The missionaries were considered to be “sacred persons” and whatever they will say or ask must be answered positively. It is also an expression of humility toward a superior.

The Trusteeship Council served as a transitional authority to help a country make the transition from colony to independent nation (cf. Howard 1999:218). In the Congolese process, this period was characterised by two phenomena, namely, conflict and civil war. A closer analysis of these two phenomena follows.

### 3.4.2 Conflict

One of the largest and most effective movements was the millenarian campaign led by Simon Kimbangu<sup>10</sup> (Kaozi 1988:64).

Kimbangu established himself as a prophet in the area around Kamba. The State felt forced to arrest the prophet. Soldiers fired on the crowds defending Kimbangu and he was forced to go into hiding. Kaozi (1988:94) points out that Simon Kimbangu claimed that his ministry was biblically grounded. Addressing the crowd in Kinshasa's stadium in 1921, he quoted the Bible saying:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me (Kimbangu), because the Lord has anointed me (Kimbangu) to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me (Kimbangu) to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Isaiah 61:1-2).

Yet again, the Bible is used to justify human interests. In the example above, Kimbangu defends his prophetic call.

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<sup>10</sup> Simon Kimbangu, a religious instructor at a British mission, inaugurated a healing revival in 1921. Claiming that the voice of Christ called him as a prophet, he drew thousands of converts. The Belgian colonial authorities viewed his revival ministry as a threat and arrested him. His imprisonment and the subsequent Belgian attempts to suppress his movement only stirred the fervour of his followers. After the prophet's death in 1951 the Kimbanguist church survived under the leadership of his son. With more than 4 million adherents, the "Church of Jesus Christ on Earth" through the Prophet Kimbangu was admitted to the World Council of Churches in 1969.

Kaozi (1988:167) argues that in all the areas of the country, Kimbangu's movement gave rise to a series of demonstrations against the State and this resulted in various types of violence. After several weeks without capture, Kimbangu voluntarily gave himself up to the authorities and was sentenced to death and later on died.

However, Kaozi (1988:187) concludes that the good side of this movement was that it brought a certain panic to the state which was then forced to review its programme of imposing taxes and redistributing land to the Congolese population.

According to Conan (1978:78), another movement that perpetrated violence was the association of miners. It was the inadequate level of salaries that resulted in a strike in the small town of Kipushi<sup>11</sup>. In the aftermath of this incident the Belgian commander ordered the troops to fire on the strikers. The day after the massacre the majority of workers returned to work. The reality of the strike served, however, to transform the conditions in the mines as well as the consciousness of tens of thousands of working Congolese.

The strike's leader addressed a number of strikers (Bakole Wa Iluga 1987:98). He called for the ending of corporal punishment in the prisons as well as the abolition of racially abusive insults at the work place.

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<sup>11</sup> Kipushi is a small town located in the southeast region of the Katanga province. It is a mining town about 30 miles (50 kilometres) from Lubumbashi. It contains rich deposits of copper, cobalt, zinc, and uranium.

### 3.4.3 Civil war

A month after independence, the Congolese army, known as the “Public Force”, mutinied (Renton 1988:87). The soldiers seemed to have expected that independence would improve their pay and pave the way to other grades, which were filled by white men.

When this radical change did not take place, they decided to oust the white people themselves. As a result, different mutinies and violence followed.

The Belgians were forced to evacuate the city. The women and children were taken away by boat. Soldiers proceeded to fire on the civilians. Men, women and children were killed indiscriminately.

Three weeks later, the Katanga province, the richest province with the assistance of the former colonial masters, began an armed uprising to secure the independence of its copper production, and resolved to withdraw from the central government of Kinshasa. The immediate effect was to infuriate the government. The new state failed to break apart, as its former colonial masters continued to exercise an evil power over events in the country.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo experienced many and various civil wars in different places. Nkay (2001:57) describes Kisangani’s civil war as “unacceptable”.<sup>12</sup> He points out that the Congolese army was disappointed with the government in place, which failed to honour its promises.

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<sup>12</sup> Kisangani, formerly Stanleyville, is a city in the northern DRC, capital of the Oriental Region. Stanleyville was made a city in 1898 and renamed Kisangani in 1966. The city suffered from periods of civil war in the 1960s and 1990 which caused severe economic difficulties. In early 1997, Kisangani was the scene of the decisive battle in Laurent Kabila’s successful rebellion against the three-decade long dictatorship of Mobutu.

The soldiers mutilated and exterminated the male populace. Large numbers of women and children were impaled or decapitated, the severed heads being thrown together in large heaps. The southern Kivu also experienced civil war<sup>13</sup>.

Ewans (2002:89) describes Kivu's civil war as "inhuman" because people were subjected to inhuman treatment by the security forces, whose primary task was to protect the civilians. He points out that civil war in the region had a dehumanising effect and many people were removed from their homes. A total of 79,937 were forced out. Families were broken with one section in one side of the country, and the other remaining in the original area. Families were forced to live on handouts. Children were forced to be "child soldiers" and were trained to be cruel.

The Kasai province as well as Kinshasa, the capital city of the Democratic Republic of Congo experienced civil wars. Nkay (2001:54) writes that in the Katanga province it was worse. Civilians killed each other on tribal and ethnic grounds. People who did not originate from the Katanga province were considered as "enemy" of the province, in particular people from the Kasai, Lower Congo and Bandaka. The reason was that their leaders did not support the Katanga province in its struggle for secession.

Nkay (2001:79) points out that the civil war in the Katanga province caused unmitigated disaster, and people still remember the trauma of a war as:

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<sup>13</sup> Kivu is the eastern highland in the DRC. In the region of Kivu's rich volcanic soil, farmers also produce bumper crops of cabbage, onions, lettuce, other vegetables and coffee. The region is one of the most heavily populated, largely because of its agricultural productivity.

(a) Loss: the human cost in loss of life, loss of property, loss of identity and dignity.

This is true of those people who were uprooted or otherwise, faced the loss of their loved ones and other things that were basic to their well-being. Many people had to put up with the disorientation and deep sorrow that went with that loss.

(b) Suffering: the civil war was too expensive and brought a lot of suffering to its people, not only militarily, but also economically, socially, morally and mentally, to the point of creating uncertainties among the people.

(c) Lack of development: the war had economic costs arising from the destruction of buildings, productive farmlands and forests, public services such as waterworks, electricity-generating facilities and distribution systems, roads, bridges and factories (cf. Bwalya, 2004:100-101).

According to Bakole Wa Iluga (1987:104), the Katangese leader, Moise Kapenda Tshombe<sup>14</sup>, a United Methodist lay leader, declared and proclaimed the secession. He quoted the Bible to justify his stand on secession. He compared Katanga, rich in natural resources such as cobalt, zinc and gold, to the biblical land full of “milk and honey”. He assured the people that “Katanga is a gift from God”.

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<sup>14</sup> Moise Tshombe (1919-1969), was a Congolese politician, president of the secessionist state of Katanga (1960-1963) and prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC; 1964-1965). Born in Musumba, the son of a wealthy businessman and descendant of Lunda rulers, Tshombe was trained as an accountant under Belgian rule. When the Congo attained independence in 1960, he turned to politics, emerging as a spokesman for decentralisation.

Ewans (2002:126) described the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in general, and Katanga in particular, as tragic. He says that it was tragic because of the mutiny of the *Force Publique* that killed civilians and innocent people, in particular the assassination of Lumumba<sup>15</sup>.

He adds that it was a tragedy because of the departure of the Belgian administration, which was supposed to guarantee employment in the public service. He concludes that the involvement of powerful nations, such as USA, France, Belgium, to mention a few, in the Katanga secession, had created rivalries among them. This resulted in economic instability and successive unstable governments.

It can be argued that the successive and unstable governments were due to the Belgian colonial regime's paternalistic and purely racist attitude. They did not prepare Congolese elite to take over after them. For example there were no Congolese in the senior judiciary and not even a single Congolese army officer in the senior administrative ranks. As independence approached the Belgian administration did nothing whatever to prepare the Congolese leadership for the responsibilities they were about to assume.

There were no experienced political leaders, no educated citizenry, no indigenous administrators, no professional, no commercial or military elite, no established middle class with a stake in the stability and well-being of the country (cf. Tshitungu 1998:59; Kaozi 1988:32).

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<sup>15</sup> Patrice Lumumba (1925-1961) was a nationalist leader who served briefly as the first prime minister of the DRC. He helped bring independence to the colony of Belgian Congo but fell victim to the chaos independence created. He was assassinated in 1961 in Katanga. He has been declared the national hero.



Between 1965 and 1990, despite flagrant corruption and abuse of human rights, Mobutu enjoyed widespread international support. According to Lalo (1997:34), Mobutu claimed to be a “committed Roman Catholic Christian, a God-given gift to liberate and free the Congolese nation”.

Bakole Wa Ilunga (1987:98) writes that in his inaugural speech in the national assembly in 1966, Mobutu used the biblical references, “For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Rom 13:1b), to demonstrate how God had chosen him to rule over the Congolese destiny.

All the Congolese people shouted and sung for him, “*Nzambe eponi yo*” (“God has chosen you”). This, however, led to a cult of personality: Mobutu is considered as the “Moses” of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This in turn had political repercussions, and Mobutu, the dictator, was forced in 1990 to try to reach an agreement with his opponents. The failure of his attempts to fight against corruption and tribalism, then gave rise to widespread instability, escalating into ethnic conflict and civil war. At the same time hyper-inflation developed, the country’s economic infrastructure disintegrated, the agricultural sector declined, large portion of the population reverted to subsistence farming and the country became a net importer of food.

Overthrown in 1997, Mobutu died one year later and left a country on its knees economically, socially and politically (cf. Ngbanda 2002: 125).

### 3.5 Concluding Remarks

A closer analysis of the postcolonial Democratic Republic of the Congo's context gives a clear picture of how the Bible was used to achieve the ends and interests of specific individuals, in the church as well as political entities (cf. Empire and governments). In the first period (1870-1908) the colonial masters used it to dispossess the Congolese of their land. They misused the Bible to oppress and exploit the Congolese people in the name of the deity. This was also demonstrated during the second period (1908-1945) when the missionaries, in complicity with the colonial masters, used the Bible to perpetuate racial segregation, oppressions and violence, in the name of the deity.

The third period (1945 to the present), experienced the same: the new Congolese elite class of political and religious leaders also used the Bible, in the name of the deity, to defend the prophetic call (Simon Kimbangu), to justify secession (Moise Kapenda Tshombe) and to protect power (Mobutu).

Kalele (1999:76) argues that today in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in general, and Katanga, in particular, the use of the Bible has a negative impact on the social, economic, and political aspects of the lives of the Congolese.

He concludes that this results in the mushrooming of churches, prophets, evangelists and bishops and such like.

As already noted, a postcolonial critique's aim is to investigate and situate imperialism and colonialism at the centre of biblical interpretation, in our case, at the centre of some texts from the Hebrew Bible. This has been demonstrated in our analysis in the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Using a postcolonial approach as the hermeneutical lens to interpret the selected texts concerned in the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an attempt will be made to expose colonising ideologies which exist in both the biblical text and in the reader's context. The latter will constitute our discussion in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **A POSTCOLONIAL READING OF SELECTED TEXTS FROM JOSHUA 1- 12**

#### **4.1 Preliminary remarks**

This chapter seeks to apply the postcolonial approach to the biblical texts selected in order to demonstrate how the colonial masters (the Belgians) used the Bible as a document to carry a colonial agenda in order to conquer, to grab land, and to destabilise the black indigenous people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This reminds one of the first twelve chapters in the book of Joshua, which record the mass slaughter of innocent people in accordance with God's directions to Joshua to take possession of the land which God had sworn to their fathers and to divide it among the people (cf. Boling 1982:5).

Since a postcolonial perspective challenges colonising ideologies both within the biblical text and in the context of the Bible's recipients, the application of postcolonial criticism will hopefully enable interrogation of violence, injustice, imperialism and how colonialism reshaped and re-informed these concepts in the biblical texts to the detriment of indigenous people.

It is essential at this stage to explain the meaning of "postcolonial perspective".

Wicker (1993:377) refers to “discursive colonialism” as “the psychological domination of people through appeals to authority, based on the asserted superiority of one race, gender, class or culture over another”.

In this way, postcolonial criticism allows one to search for “alternative hermeneutics while thus overturning and dismantling colonial perspectives. What post-colonialism does is to enable us to question totalising tendencies of European reading practice and interprets the texts on our own terms and read them from our own specific locations” (Sugirtharajah 1998:16).

However, while postcolonial reading attempts to deconstruct the colonial interpretation and simultaneously to forge an alternative approach to the texts, it remains ever alert to “the continuing even if transformed power” of colonialism and imperialism, and the strategies and tactics (Segovia 1998:51).

To borrow the language of Pui-Lan (1995:295, postcolonial perspective may be understood as “the finding of a new image, the repatterning of reality, and interpretation”. In other words, there is need to imagine how the biblical text, which was formulated in another time and culture, can address the burning questions today.

Postcolonial perspective aims to describe the process of creative hermeneutics in Africa. It attempts to capture the complexities, the multi-dimensional linkages, and the different levels of meaning in the present task of reading the Bible in Africa.

It is highly imaginative, for it looks at both the Bible and the African reality anew, challenging the established “order of things” (cf. Sugirtharajah 1995:295).

However, the use of postcolonial criticism in the present research is inspired by most postcolonial scholars, in particular Sugirtharajah and Segovia whose special focus is on the reality of imperialism and colonialism, as an omnipresent, inseparable, and overwhelming reality in the Bible and biblical interpretation.

For Segovia, like Sugirtharajah, imperialism and colonialism are situated at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation. He argues that one may observe the reality of imperialism and colonialism when reading the Hebrew Bible and early Christianity text. The reality of empire and imperialism may be seen as a virtual reality. This means that each colonised people were subjected by their colonial masters politically, economically and culturally. An example is demonstrated by the world of unequal powers during the colonial era in most African countries and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular (cf. Segovia 2006:32-34; Sugirtharajah 2006a:16-17).

There is a need to identify violence, injustice, imperialism and colonialism, and attempt to decolonise and dis-imperialise them in liberating ways in order to bring out a better understanding of the text.

Although the biblical texts cannot be appropriated to the Democratic Republic of the Congo’ context at this stage, the postcolonial criticism will enable to interrogate how land

grab, violence, injustice, colonialism, and imperialism seem to be a reality in some selected texts contained in the book of Joshua to the detriment of the indigenous people of Canaan. Reading the conquest of Joshua from a colonised perspective in which the Bible had a significant role, this account served as the justification for violence against indigenous people. In this regard, a postcolonial approach fits as a working methodology that serves as a foundation upon which a variety of colonial observations and realities become explainable. This is possible for two reasons: first, this approach investigates interpretations that contested colonial interests. Second, this approach interrogates colonial interpretation to draw attention to the inescapable effects of colonisation and colonial deals.

#### 4.2 The biblical conquest narrative and its postcolonial challenges

As previously stated, the aim of postcolonial biblical criticism is to situate colonialism and imperialism at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation.

However, the rationale behind the choice of some selected texts of Joshua 1-12 for postcolonial analysis is twofold: (1) The story of Joshua and his alleged conquest of Canaan (cf. Josh 1-12) is one of the most traumatic narratives for postcolonial interpreters: postcolonial readers highlight the end result of the conquest of Canaan and the extermination of its people (Creach 2003:71). In contemporary postcolonial contexts, the conquerors insisted that the new territories were a gift from God, just as Canaan was viewed as a gift from God. The contemporary conquerors believed that they must destroy

the idolatrous people as Joshua is believed to have destroyed the Canaanites. (2) The use of war vocabulary in the biblical account of Joshua 1-12. This is found in some of the expressions, such as “give into the hands of” (Josh 2:24).

In contemporary postcolonial contexts, this is the factor of panic because Yahweh has given the land into Israel’s hand. Before the might of God no human being has the courage to stand: this constitutes the basic belief of Israel (cf. Hess 1996:80-130; Soggin 1972:41-73).

Some vocabularies of war are used in the conquest narrative, which need more clarification and explanation, such as:

- (Josh 2:1) is a vocabulary of war, particularly holy war. Ordinarily the root simply means simply “to dig”. In the present textual context, it means “to investigate, to spy”. It is associated with ferocity and things which cause fear in order to create panic.
- (Josh 4:24) describes the fear which is believed to have overshadowed the Canaanites when they heard of Yahweh’s exploits. It is associated with the divine warrior and his agents even as it is always associated with weapons (cf. Holladay, 1971:112, 143).

An analysis of the role of Joshua’s leadership on the conquest narrative from a postcolonial perspective may shed light on: the relationships between the oppressor and



the oppressed, the claims of God's command on the utter destruction of the indigenous peoples, the use of the Deity to justify violence, and God's one-sided position to the detriment of the "Other".

A response to the above reflections suggests that there is an apparent connection between the biblical texts and postcolonial identity. The conquest narrative is a text in which God is presented as commanding Joshua and his army to annihilate the inhabitants of the Canaanite towns. This represents a colossal postcolonial challenge as such use of the Bible has been, and is still being, used to justify racial segregation, as the missionaries, in complicity with the colonial masters, did to the Congolese population. This was clearly demonstrated in the previous chapter.

The following texts from Joshua have been selected for a postcolonial analysis for various reasons:

- (1) Joshua 1:1-4 is chosen in order to present the justification of the tradition concerning the promised land,
- (2) Joshua 1:10-18 and 11:23 are useful as they reveal Joshua's consolidating of Israel's grab of the land, in the name of God,
- (3) Joshua 2 is selected to highlight the concept of exploitation of gender,
- (4) Joshua 3:5 is selected to portray God's partiality,
- (5) Joshua 6:1-27 and 10:38 are selected because they throw light on the rhetoric of violence,

(6) Joshua 7:1 and 8:29 are useful for the re-reading for decolonisation of the “chosen people”,

(7) Joshua 9 is chosen to highlight the Israelites identifying with the “Other”.

The postcolonial analysis of the texts mentioned follows here below.

#### 4.3. Postcolonial analysis of texts

##### 4.3.1 Joshua 1:1-4: Tradition of the promised land

This section is an attempt to demonstrate that the promised land is a generic feature of the covenant of God with Israel. The promise is a guarantee to certify the security and the tradition of inheriting the land of Canaan (cf. Baker 1994:290).

Goslinga (1986:7) writes that the hero of our book, Joshua, is presented as the successor to Moses with the command to complete his mission (Josh 1:6-8). The book takes its name from him, not because it contains the story of his life, but because he was Israel’s leader, under whom the tradition of the promised land should be accomplished.

Goslinga (1986:7) argues that Moses probably renamed Joshua following the victory God gave him over the Amalekites (Exod. 17:8-16). Whatever the case may have been, the change in Joshua’s name has deep significance. Whereas “Hoshea” can be translated simply as “deliverance” or “help”.

“Joshua” (Heb. *yhosua*) means “the Lord is salvation”. The name “Joshua” emphasises the fact that Israel’s tradition of the promise of the land lay fully in the Lord, the God of the Covenant.

Joshua bore this name as a promise that he would be the Lord’s instrument to accomplish the tradition of the promised land (cf. Goslinga 1986:8).

From one point of view, then, the death of Moses forms a break in the course of sacred history; from another point of view, it is only one episode among others.

God had already thought of everything, the sacred history continues, and, now that the great leader of the people is dead, the tradition is that God appoints a successor to him, who inherits the task from him, receiving it as it were at second hand (cf. Hawk 2000:14) in order to accomplish the promise of land.

One point to note, observes Goslinga (1986:9), is that of the difference of titles between the two leaders. Moses is called, the servant of Yahweh, while Joshua is referred to as Moses’ minister. Joshua’s title is equally well known, but instead of relating him to God, like Moses’ title, it relates him to a human being.

Although Joshua stood lower than Moses he was still rightly called a prophet. He acted in this capacity when he conveyed God’s words to the people (Josh 3:9; Josh 20:1-6) and when he pronounced admonitions (Josh 4:21-24) or curses (Josh 6:26).

His prophetic role was especially to convey one message: God swore an oath that the land is an eternal possession of Israel (cf. Goslinga 1986:11).

The tradition concerning the promised land is indicated by two verbs employed: the first *נתתי* (*noteen* a participle, indicates intention: “I propose to give,” (Josh 1:2) the second, (*netatif*), in the perfect, means “I have given to you” (Josh 1:3). The first bears witness to the divine plan, while the second expresses a divine decree in which all things have been accomplished. In other words, the time had arrived to God to make His promise good. These two verses in which the Lord recalls His promise to Moses have much in common with Deuteronomy 11:24-25 and substantially correspond to the Lord’s promise in Exodus 23:23, 27, and 31. God was to prove himself faithful to what He has said to Moses and, through him, to the people (cf. Baker 1994:290; Goslinga 1986:36).

The first segment of the speech thus encloses promises (Josh 1:3-5) within commands (Josh 1:2-6), implicitly enforcing the connections between divine initiative and human response. The command displays a parallel structure. Each begins emphatically, with two imperatives (“Now arise! Cross the Jordan” v 2; “Be strong and courageous” v.6) and together they remind Joshua to lead the people across the Jordan (v 2) and to put them in possession of the land (cf. Hawk 2000:6).

Concerning the promise of the land, the Deuteronomic text articulates the tension between gift and response, the land across Jordan will become “Israel’s” to the extent that Yahweh defines it and the people walk it.

It therefore contains an implicit charge to actualise what Yahweh has declared, the land which Israel should “tread upon” ought to constitute the whole of the land which Yahweh has decreed for it (cf. Baker 1994:291).

In Joshua 1:2, Yahweh reiterates these words of Moses and strongly exhorts Joshua and the people to cross and gain the inheritance. Repetition of the promise recalls the Deuteronomic context and confronts the reader immediately with the tension between the promise and its realisation. The tension is underscored by a small modification of the Deuteronomic text. Whereas Moses had declared that “every place on which you set foot *shall be yours*,” Yahweh now declares, “Every place on which the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I promised to Moses” (1:3). The modification reminds anyone that the land is a gift of Yahweh and the fulfilment of a divine promise and what Israel must do (cf. Hawk 2000:7).

The people are faced with a future which, although it is not realised, is already irrevocably expressed in this history. It is enough in the present case for the people to touch the lands in question with the sole of their foot for the divine plan to take immediate effect (cf. Butlet 1993:105).

Mitchell (1993: 28) observes that an interesting feature of the territorial description of the “land” in Joshua, is that all have as their main interest the listing of the nations who have been destroyed, or still need to be destroyed (Josh 9:1; Josh 11:17; Josh 12:7; Josh 13:5).

The exception is Joshua 1:4. It could be argued that the parallel description in Joshua 1:3, “every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon” suggests military and political domination of an enemy people. It is also significant that verbs suggesting movement appear in context dealing the transfer of the land ownership, such as , , .

It can be argued that, unlike territorial descriptions found later in the narrative, the primary concern of this portion of text is that the land is a divine gift, and this establishes Israel’s right to it.

Analysing the biblical perspective of the land, Ateek (1989: 269) observes that since God swore an oath that the land is an eternal possession of Israel, though they did not deserve it, one may ask, would it not be strange if God decided against fulfilling his strong and numerous promises to Israel about the land? Any look at the Old Testament shows that what God has spoken with His mouth He can and will perform with His hand - this is the biblical sign manual of God – for His word does not return void. A pattern of divine promise and historical fulfilment is traced, expressing of this tradition.

Mutambo (1990:49) put it well when he argued that favouritism was at the centre of imperialist tendencies and ideologies.

He points out that favouritism was the practice of giving special treatment or unfair advantage to a person or a group vis-à-vis another group.

When analysing such a portion of Scripture, one gets the following impression: (1) the Old Testament refers to the land as given or promised to the Israelites, (2) Yahweh swore a solemn oath to give the Israelites the land, and (3) the land is promised forever. So strong is the emphasis on this in the Old Testament that it is clear that the people and the land are very closely associated. If the two are separated, this means that something is wrong because of the tradition of such a promise. God is not concerned about other people besides the Israelites.

The Israelites were favoured by Yahweh, the God of Israel. The promised land (irrespective of whether it was already occupied or not) belongs to the favourites of the Yahweh, the Israelites, as demonstrated in the text under review.

The preceding discussion has hopefully revealed that the tradition of the promised land, is an integral part of the conquest narrative. We now turn to the next Joshua text.

#### 4.3.2 Joshua 1:10-18 and 11:23: Israel's dispossession of the land

As Exodus 3:8 has shown, Israel has been chosen by Yahweh and invited into a covenant relationship, with the promise that she will receive the land.

In the two portions of texts under review, an attempt will be made to demonstrate that the Israelites receive possession of the land promised by Yahweh their God (Josh 1:10-11) (cf. Blenkinsopp 1993:75).

The exhortation in Joshua 1:8 “be strong and of good courage” rings out more than once in this chapter. Three times Joshua is charged to face this great task with courage, in words very similar to Deuteronomy 3:28; 31:7, 23. The three encouragements are for the three different situations. Courage is needed to face difficult opposition from the Canaanite kings, and the patience when working with the people to bring them into their inheritance (Josh 1: 5-6). It was Joshua’s task to help the people come into their inheritance. The people, on their part, must “possess” the land as God’s tenants (cf. Hamlin 1983:8).

The Hebrew verb יָרַשׁ (yarash) has an original and archaic meaning “to tread on” grapes, as seen from Micah 6:15, the only surviving example. The verb יָרַשׁ (yarash) has three meanings when used in relation to land.

The first is to receive the land as a gift (Lev. 20:24 Revised Standard Version (RSV - “inherit”). The second is to occupy and organise the land according to God’s teaching. The Deuteronomic reform group lays great emphasis on this second meaning (Deut 6:1-3). The third meaning derives from the first two.

Receiving the right of tenancy (possessing in the sense of inheriting) and living on the land (possessing in the sense of a proper ordering of society on the land) can be effected only if there is actual control. For this reason יָרַשׁ may also mean to take possession by force (Deut 6:18-19) from “nation greater and mightier” than Israel, who are occupying



the land. It is in this sense that the word is sometimes translated “dispossess”, i.e., to take control of the land from the present tenants (Deut 9:1; 19:1-3) (cf. Hamlin 1983:10).

Nelson, (1997:15-16) points out that the basis of this command is that Yahweh has called on the people to take possession of the territories which have been accorded to them, and has promised to remain at the side of Joshua, as He was at the side of Moses. Israel’s possession of the promised land was the partial fulfilment of God’s promises to his people. The promise is both the blessing and re-affirmation of God to direct Israel’s destiny. The possession of the land is God’s covenant faithfulness to his promises and God’s holiness in bringing judgment upon the immoral Canaanites (cf. Sinnema 1979:16).

Joshua is instructed to command the officers and the people to rely on God’s promises in going out to possess the land, which the Lord gives them to possess (Josh 1:10-11).

It can be argued that the purpose of the book of Joshua, like the other narratives in the corpus (Genesis to 2 Kings) was to inculcate in the people of Israel an identity that was based on the land (cf. Hawk 2000: 7).

Two important criteria defined Israel’s understanding of itself as a people: religion and land. It was basically through religion that Israel managed to possess their land. It is inappropriate to argue that it is their land, particularly within the post-colonial approach. Viewed from their perspective though, they believed that Yahweh, their God, had given the land to them. Their conditional possession of the land depended on their religious faithfulness and purity. Thus in an effort to remove all temptations in order to be faithful

to Yahweh, they developed a “religious” ideology to reinforce the grabbing the land of the indigenous inhabitants in the name of God (cf. Hawk 2000:17; Davis 1998:19-20; Nelson 1997:16-17).

The narrative presented in the Joshua text ( 1-12) thus represents a tortuous relationship between the “chosen” minority and the “heathen” majority. The tragedy of history is that the minority supplants the majority. This is the case between Israel, a small group of people, which is depicted as dominating through the blessing of the deity, and a developed, organised albeit “unchosen”, nation, that is, the Canaanites.

Israel, like the colonisers of the time, as Dube (2000:150) put it, represents a single traveller who exerts power over the distant land to which he arrives as a foreigner, thus subjugating its people and imposing his religion and culture on the subjugated.

Postcolonial readers are familiar with identical religious tiffs in colonial situations where a minority of “superior” foreigners impose their religions, cultures, language, judicial systems, political organisation and governance upon the supposedly “inferior” subjects, whose geographical territories they illegally possess (cf. Kalele 1999:38). Kalele argues compellingly that colonisers consider the indigenous black population as “Canaanites” who worshipped other gods and who they should not “mix with”. This is a grave example of how potentially dangerous it is to appropriate biblical text to legitimise or justify the ends/ambitions of colonising governments, in the name of God.

It can be concluded that Joshua 1:1-10-18 and 11:23 are texts that explicitly admit that the land which Yahweh eventually gave to Israel, was inhabited by someone else, the Canaanites. Approaching this text from postcolonial perspective, then also with a sensitivity with regard to the ethical questions raised by the text, one can hardly avoid seeing the role of Yahweh vis-à-vis the Canaanites as a problem. (cf. Holter 2000: 2).

Segovia is right when arguing that the reality of imperialism and colonialism may be seen as artistic. This refers to colonial rulers' favouring or privileging their own interests. This connects to the affective content of colours, directly or indirectly: what is white is dominant, and what is black is devoted to demonism, superstition, and animism (cf. Segovia 1995:60). This has been demonstrated by the powerful Israelites who dispossess the powerless Canaanites.

In the dispossession of the land, the reality of imperialism and colonialism may also be seen as true. This means the colonial masters imposed their rules and regulations, their religion, their mode of governance, and their style of leadership as the Israelites did to the Canaanites (cf. Segovia 1995:58).

It is necessary to point out the negative attitudes towards the indigenous people who were already living in the land. Every time they are mentioned the language is very hostile. They were supposed to be displaced or destroyed. There is no room for them in the land among the chosen people. The Canaanites have status only as the people Yahweh removes from the land in order to bring the chosen people in. They are not to be trusted,

nor are they to be allowed to enter social relationships with the people of Israel. They are wicked, and their religion is to be avoided at all costs (cf. Deut 7:1-2).

It is difficult to understand why Yahweh decided to give the land which belonged to these former slaves from Egypt to the Israelites – using the same power used against the enslaving Egyptians to defeat the indigenous inhabitants of Canaan. Yahweh the delivered became Yahweh the conqueror.

Having dealt with the issue of land's dispossession, which exposes the “powerful” versus the “powerless”, there is need to analyse another issue on exploitation and gender.

#### 4.3.3 Joshua 2:1-26 Exploitation and gender

This section is an attempt to demonstrate how women in general, and sex workers in particular, may be exploited – because of their gender – to work in collaboration with the empire of the day.

Davis (1988: 25-27) summarises Rahab's story as follows: when the Israelites cross the Jordan to take possession of the land that God promised them, they come to Jericho. Joshua sends two spies to investigate the land and report back to him. The two spies come to Jericho. They enter the house of a sex worker, Rahab, and spend the night there. The people of Jericho hear about the spies in Rahab's house and come searching at the house, but she hides them and misleads the soldiers of her own city, saying that the men

have already departed. Rahab, however, also uses this moment to negotiate for her own safety and that of her family, saying to the two spies:

I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants melt in fear before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, to Sibon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in us because of you. The Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below. Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the Lord that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith... (Josh 2:9-12).

Goslinga points out that Rahab's intention was good, but the end does not justify the means. In other words, the most important thing is that Rahab, who previously had been a heathen woman of ill repute, in principle aligned herself with Israel. This was a choice of faith. In carrying out this decision, however, she committed a regrettable sin that should surprise no one who condemns the great weakness that attacks the faith of even the strongest leaders (1986:45).

A careful postcolonial reader may raise a question when analysing the text under review. Why should the spies go to a harlot named Rahab's house? It may be argued that patriarchy affords powerful men the capacity to use the bodies of marginalised women (especially ones without husbands) to achieve their own ends.

What is surprising when reading the Hebrew Bible is that, Rahab, the prostitute, appears in Jesus' genealogy (Mt 1:4). It cannot be! A prostitute as a member of the people of the covenant, of God's royal realm included in the genealogy of Jesus!

It may be argued that Yahweh, the God of Israel, promotes the interests of the “nation” of the chosen people against the other nations of the earth. In this aspect, the story portrays the supposed Israelite nation against the Canaanite nations, and Rahab belong to the sides of the Canaanites rather than the Israelites.

Pui-Lan is right when arguing that the story of Rahab in Joshua 2 is a clear demonstration of the double colonisation of women: on the one hand, their bodies are open for taking by foreign men, and on the other hand, their land is possessed (cf. Pui-Lan 2006:167).

Analysing Rahab from an African woman’s perspective, Dube observes that powerless and desperate women may be used at any time and circumstances of life to the benefit of the powerful men in order to achieve male and national goals. This has been observed in many African colonised countries during colonial times (cf. Dube 1997:143).

Dube highlights the similarities between Judith and Rahab. She argues that both these women represent their lands – the fate that shall befall their lands in the face of an imperial threat. Their characters are therefore allegorical stories that foreshadow how the prevailing imperial power struggles unfold (cf. Dube 1997:143-153).

Thus, Rahab, was a sex worker – a woman who can be taken by any man who desires her. She had porous boundaries. A woman who could exchange one man for another; a woman who owed no allegiance to any man, save the one who is ready to pay for her services. As a representative of Canaan/Jericho, Rahab entrusts herself to the invading power, the Israelite spies, and betrays her own people, whom she judges too weak to withstand the invading power (cf. Dube 1997:147).

Accordingly, in Rahab's story, Israel is the invader, projecting Canaan/Jericho as a sex worker who can be taken. The woman character is presented from a patriarchal perspective as ways of articulating imperial agendas (cf. Dube 1997:153).

In a contemporary postcolonial context, it may be argued that Rahab represents collaboration with imperialism.

Nzimande argues compellingly that while the trend in African women's interpretation is to focus attention solely on the oppressed women in biblical texts and seek to identification with them, she considers patriarchy and colonisation as related phenomena that affect both the powerful and the not so powerful women in African socio-cultural circles (2005:227).

Rahab's story shows clearly that patriarchy and colonisation are related phenomena that influence powerless women to betray their nations and to sacrifice their bodies in order to gain any privilege from the empire of the day.

Bakole Wa Ilunga (1987:92) explains sad experiences of how sex workers and vulnerable children were used as sources of information during the Belgian colonial era. He describes a case in which a daughter betrays her own father (who was just complaining about the social injustice suffered by his fellow countrymen). The father was then sentenced to death by the colonial master!

Dube points out that gender oppression is a major agenda for post-colonial feminist readers in their struggle for liberation. There is a need for black women to dismantle the gender stereotypes and the oppression of women imposed by both black and white men, which remains influential in postcolonial interpretation of the Bible, an aspect she considers as pertinent from an African socio-cultural perspective (cf. Dube 2006:197).

The issue of exploitation and gender were a reality in the conquest narrative of Joshua, as well as in the colonies. Postcolonial critics must condemn the gender exploitation present in the Hebrew Bible.

The next issue to be discussed concerns God's partiality.

#### 4.3.4 Joshua 3:5-10: The "partial" God

The term "partial", which is associated with Yahweh, the God of Israel, in the present context means "biased", or "showing an unfair preference" to Israel over other nations, in this case the Canaanites (Collins 1975:321).

Davis (1988:33-34) points out that the various preparations Israel makes before entering the land emphasises the perception of Yahweh's presence. In other words, the preparations confirm that Israel will not enter Canaan in her own way and at her own time. Rather Yahweh will lead the people into the land. By responding obediently, Israel will acknowledge again that the land is a gift of Yahweh.



While Yahweh focuses on the exaltation of Joshua as a means of confirming the divine presence with him, Joshua now draws attention to Yahweh's sovereignty and power as a means of confirming the divine presence with Israel. The verb יָדָע signifying "know" occurs now for a third time (Josh 3:10), linking the recognition of Yahweh's presence with Israel's presence with Joshua. Israel will learn, during the ensuing events, that Yahweh is with Joshua and is present among the people (cf. Hawk 2000:65-66).

Davis (1988:36) points out that the text under review also underscores the assurance of Yahweh's power. Before crossing the Jordan, Joshua predicted, "By this you will know that the living God is among you and he will certainly drive out from before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites" (Josh 3:10).

If Yahweh can tame a raging river, he can also repel attacking Amorites. If he can stop the Jordan, he can put down the Girgashite. If he can get you into the land, he can surely give you the land (cf. Davis 1988:37).

Mitchell (1993:44-45) observes that the presence of Yahweh is further embellished by the odd reference to the ark as the "ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth" (vv 11-13). The exact meaning to this phrase is open to debate, for the phrase translated by the RSV "all the earth" (כָּל הָאָרֶץ) can refer either to the earth as a whole, or the entire land of Canaan in particular. The latter is the more likely focus, given the prior promise that Yahweh will drive out the nations before Israel and the spies' declaration that Yahweh

had given Israel the entire land (2:24). In many cases, the appellation underscores Yahweh's ownership of the land and ability to determine its fate. In contrast to the totality of Yahweh's presence and power, the peoples of the land are now listed in their seven-fold plurality (v.10); the ark will thus demonstrate the supremacy of the God of Israel, who will drive out the many inhabitants of the land (cf. Butlet 1993:45; Hawk 2000:65; Sinnema 1979:22).

Hamlin (1983:25) also confirms that in these verses, the ark still carries out the functions of a guide, as a sign of the presence of Yahweh. This is well articulated in verse 10, with the expression (as truly as Yahweh lives). It is as it were the proof offered to the people "that a living God" is amongst them.

Joshua summons the people to hear what God is about to do. Because of His mighty acts they will know beyond doubt that He is the living God and that He will give the land as promised.

The God who proves Himself to be God by His ability to direct both nature and history is a basic concept of Hebrew theology. As the Lord of nature and of history, He can drive out or submit to others the inhabitants of any region. In this way, in the present case, He fulfils his promise to Israel, his chosen one. From the postcolonial perspective, this may be seen as God's one-sided position in favour of Israel, and such a concept of God, cannot but signify that God is one who segregates people according to their ethnical identities, that is He shows animosity towards other ethnic groups (cf. Hamlin 1983: 25; cf. Sinnema 1979:22).

Favouritism needs to be specified as “divine” because God is presented as giving special treatment and advantage to Israel to the detriment of the “Other”.

Masenya convincingly (2003:59) outlines an ambivalent picture of Yahweh in the book of Exodus. She argues that in the events leading up to the Israelites’ exodus out of Egypt, we see God deliberately taking sides with the oppressed, delivering them out of the house of bondage.

On the other hand, the events leading up to the conquest of the land, reveals yet another picture of God. Yahweh is portrayed as the God who favours the Israelites, who come in to settle in the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites to dispossess them of their land.

It can be argued that the God who fought against the powerful Egyptians who dispossessed the Israelites of their true humanity by enslaving them, who dispossessed them of their valued heritage (their sons) becomes the God who now takes sides with the dispossessor; Yahweh is portrayed as taking side with those who are dispossessing others of their land!

Punt argues that marginalised groups can claim their negative status as both an indication of their special status before God, and as a warrant for venting anger and violence on their opponents and rest of society in general. Such groups, who feel exposed, ignored, abandoned and humiliated and which have to deal with frustrated expectations, are fertile feeding grounds for dissent, anger and violence (cf. Punt 2006:221).

The colonial masters believed that just as Yahweh favoured the Israelites, they were also chosen to rule and dominate the African continent. It may be argued that most parts of Africa have been plundered and dispossessed in the name of God, just as happened in the Bible with the dispossession of the land of Canaan by the Israelites (cf. Banana 1993:34-36).

#### 4.3.5 Joshua 6: 1-27; 10:38: Rhetoric of violence

This section intends to demonstrate the rhetoric of violence displayed in Joshua 6. God's war against the Canaanites gives the postcolonial reader more than the occasion for locating genocide in the Hebrew Bible. This section also highlights the functions of violence and the dynamics of genocide initiated and commanded by God.

Hamlin (1983:45) argues that if the purpose of Joshua 6 and 10 is to introduce the problem of the ban, this story, and its conclusions in Joshua 10, has important implications for how we relate the book of Joshua to the issues of violence and warfare. The biblical account of the Israelite conquest of Jericho under the leadership of Joshua is found in Joshua 6:1-27. The book of Deuteronomy, which precedes Joshua in terms of sequence in the English Bible, continuously refers to what the Israelites are to do after they go in and possess the land of Canaan (Deut 1: 1-8; 4:12-14; 7:1-6; ) which Yahweh their God is said to give them. The book of Joshua proceeds to give an account of this conquest with Jericho being depicted as the first city that is taken.

Hamlin says (1983:49) that the story can be summarised as: after having infiltrated Jericho with two spies who set up a plan with the prostitute Rahab (Josh 2:1-24), Joshua follows the orders of the Israelite God Yahweh to march around Jericho for six days (Josh 6:8-14).

On the seventh day they continue to march around seven times and blow the horns, and when they give a long blast, it signals the people to give a great war-cry, a loud shout which will make the walls fall down, and they all rush into the city from every side. It is Yahweh himself who leads the battle, giving the orders and giving them the promise of victory: “Shout for Yahweh has given you the city!” (Josh 6:16).

Hamlin (1983:70) concludes that the story of Joshua and the “Battle of Jericho” might be popular as a children’s Bible-story, as a Negro Spiritual about the hero Joshua, and a story showing the strength of God and the victory of the Israelites. What follows next is a terse, matter-of-fact account of utter annihilation and violence, “The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to Yahweh for destruction.” (Josh 6:17) The text continues in a terse, direct style. “So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon the people heard the sound of the trumpets they raised a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it.

Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys.” (Josh 6:20-21) Later, after the rescue of Rahab and her family, the account continues, “They burned down the city and everything in it; only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of Yahweh.” (Josh 6:20-21)

Cetina (1998: 532) points out that the sequence of authority is found also in Joshua 6: the Lord gives orders and Joshua obeys; Joshua gives orders, and the people obey.

Josh 6:5, 20 shows how a concrete order is followed by concrete obedience, “all the people shall charge straight ahead... the people charged straight ahead in the city”.

In his analysis of Joshua 6, Hawk (2000:87-90) points out that this account gives surprisingly little attention to the actual conflict (vv 20-21, 24) and concentrates instead on the continuation of two prior themes: Israel’s obedient performance of ritual commands and the deliverance of Rahab and her family. The first section relates a series of ritual processions around Jericho, which are carried out under the direction of Joshua (vv 2-15). The middle section, which tells of the destruction of the city (vv 16-21), concludes this theme while introducing the second. The processions comes to an end of the seventh day, when Joshua issues additional instructions concerning the city and the walls fall flat as the people shout and blow the trumpets (vv 16-20).

Joshua also decrees the deliverance of Rahab and her house (v 17), introducing a second plot line which becomes the focus of the third section (vv 22-23).

The chapter ends with the pronouncement of a curse and confirmation that Yahweh was with Joshua, whose renown spread throughout the land (vv. 26-27).

Sinnema (1979:39) describes Yahweh’s active part in the battle of Jericho. He says that Israel followed Yahweh’s orders and marched in a procession that encircled the city.

The central position of the Ark of the Covenant in the midst of the procession meant that Yahweh was marching in the midst of his people to lay siege at Jericho.

Thus Yahweh was accompanied by a liturgical procession. Jericho was devoted to Yahweh by an act of worship. Israel encircled the city in faith that Yahweh would take possession.

Sinnema (1979:41) highlights the importance of the number seven in this account. He says that seven days the procession lasted, like a great religious festival. Seven days the people waited for Yahweh to act. Seven is the number of completion, which features prominently in this story (seven priests, seven trumpets, seven days and seven times around the city). This emphasises that the iniquity of the inhabitants of Canaan was complete (cf. Gen 15:16) and ripe for judgment.

Sinnema 1979:43) argues that the seven day circle followed the sabbatical order. It meant that Yahweh's work was completed on the seventh day. In other words, the seventh day must be seen as the Sabbath, the Day of the Lord. It was the Day of Judgment for Jericho was devoted as holy to Yahweh.

Butlet (1993:52) observes a key word in this chapter 6. A key word in the argumentation is *herem* (ban), which appears on six occasions, twice as verb (6:18, 21) and four times as a noun (6:17, 18). The act of destroying the city is expressed both as a verb (6:21), and as a noun simply by stating that the city is *herem* (6:17, 18).

In the Hebrew Bible generally, several words are used for the total destruction of an enemy, often clustered together in order to emphasise its completeness.

The Book of Joshua is no exception. While <sup>1</sup> can be used simply to describe the destruction of an enemy, it is also used in a more restricted and specialised manner (cf. Mitchell 1993:56).

The primary use of <sup>2</sup> in the book of Joshua concerns the complete destruction of pre-Israelite occupants of the land. However, <sup>3</sup> can be used as punishment.

Undoubtedly, there is a connection between the severity of the destruction and the extent of the crime, particularly the crime of rebellion. In Deuteronomy, one of the reasons for the conquest of Canaan is the wickedness of the residents (9:5). The prophetic writings also make it clear that Yahweh can use war to punish a nation. The Amalekites' reputation for aggression (Deut 25:19), and the fact that, apart from Jericho, the only cities in Joshua whose destruction is emphasised are those who took aggressive action against Israel (Ai & Hazor), suggest the notion of punishment (cf. Mitchell 1993:65; cf. Good 1985:385-400).

<sup>4</sup> can also be used as a solemn curse, which is uttered by Joshua: anyone rebuilding the city is cursed before the Lord.

This wording makes Yahweh the effective agent of the curse, an interpretation which is confirmed by the fact that, in the wider history of Deuteronomy, Joshua 6:26 functions as a prophecy of events recorded in 1 Kings 16:23. This curse on a city is virtually unique in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Mitchell 1993:67).



The combined use of all this language in Joshua 6 serves to make a very strong statement about the destruction accompanied by violence of the city. This destruction is paralleled simultaneously with the description of the survival of Rahab (cf. Mitchell 1993:68).

The        required that the enemy be utterly destroyed as a sacrifice to a deity who had made the victory possible. The writer of Joshua appealed to the        tradition to relate the identity of the chosen people to the doctrine of separation of the holy from the unholy. The Israelites were expected to separate themselves from the impurity of others (cf. Hamlin 1983:92-93).

The postcolonial reading of such a text which clearly highlights the role Yahweh, as the commandant who orders total destruction of the city of Jericho and its population, is sensitive. Joshua 6 is a story of terror and destruction. As a result, it repulses and troubles many careful readers that God can command such atrocity.

In analysing the narratives of Joshua 6 and 10 through a postcolonial lens, it may be argued that there is an imperialistic rhetoric that legitimises the invasion, dispossession, subjugation, and annihilation of foreign lands through violence.

It is not easy to convince anyone about the challenges posed by a text that states that God commands mass killing of innocent people.

Warrior argues that the Canaanites should be at the centre of Christian theological reflection and political action. They are the last remaining ignored voice in the text except, perhaps, for the land itself. The conquest stories, with their violence and injustice,

must be taken seriously by those who believe in the God of the Old Testament (cf. 2006:293).

Dube states that such failure to condemn imperialising ideologies in biblical texts and in our contemporary power relations is tantamount to bracketing imperialism and maintaining the oppressive imperialist status quo. In her view, the biblical legitimising of the invasion, dispossession, subjugation, genocide and annihilation of foreign lands necessitates a reading for decolonisation in which colonial and paternalist usage is brought to the fore and condemned with vigour and force.

Dube (2000:16) puts it well when she says, first, as the story of the arrival of a white man and his exchange of the Bible for black African lands indicates that geography is central to postcolonial biblical hermeneutics. She adds that the issues of Western geographical possession and expansion and non-Western dispossession are inseparably tied to the biblical text. She concludes in this way: first, the land was occupied by black Africans. Second, the white men came in and took it. Third, in its place black Africans were given the Bible. There is same analogy in the Bible: Yahweh, who dispossessed the Israelites by enslaving them to the Egyptians, is now taking sides with those who are dispossessing others of their land. By implicating the Bible in taking black African lands, it may be argued that biblical texts are marked as powerful rhetorical instrument of imperialism.

The rhetoric of violence and genocide have been clearly identified, not only in the conquest narrative of Joshua, but also in the way the colonial masters used violence in order to conquer and dispossess African countries.

#### 4.3.6 Joshua 7:1 – 8:29: Re-reading chosen people

This section intends to demonstrate how Israel took advantage of her privileged position – being a chosen nation – to subjugate other nations in the name of God.

First and foremost, there is need to highlight the significance and understanding of the term “chosen people” in the context of the text of the Old Testament.

Baker (1994:143) points out that, in the Hebrew Bible, the "treasured people" is the exact phrase used in the text, referring to the Hebrews/Israelites. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Yahweh proclaims the nation of Israel, known originally as the children of Israel, are his "treasured people out of all the people on the face of the earth" (Deut 7:6). As mentioned in the Book of Exodus (Ex 3:1-8), the Hebrew people are God's chosen people, and from them shall come the Messiah, or redeemer of the world. The Israelites also possess the "Word of God" and/or the "Law of God" in the form of the Torah as communicated by God to Moses. Jews consider themselves as the "chosen people".

Baker says that in Judaism, “chosenness” is the belief that the Jews are a people chosen to be in a covenant with God. In modern day Rabbinical Judaism, the idea is not

connected with being the descendants of Jacob (Israel), as it was in Biblical Judaism since non-Jews can also become Jews (cf. Baker 1994:144).

The Jewish idea of being chosen is first found in the Torah and is elaborated on in later books of the Hebrew Bible. This status carries both responsibilities and blessings as described in the Biblical covenants with God (cf. Grentz 1987:458; Geisler 1979: 458).

Kellermann (1975:57) observes that the understanding of the concept of election in the Bible is frequently ambiguous and contradictory. For instance, in the text under investigation, the uniqueness of Israel is developed as a model of relationship to a God who chooses out of love. Nevertheless, the understanding of uniqueness as a people chosen by God can be seen in the development of Yahwist religion among the tribes of Israel.

Historians know little about the early history of the Israelites, but they do know that at some point the Israelites came to see themselves as bearers of a unique covenant with a single God whom they called by many names, most importantly, Yahweh. Yahweh provided them with a law and way of life, as well as with a territory—the land of Israel—in which to carry out that way of life. Acceptance of this covenant and *monotheism* (belief in a single God) distinguished the Israelites from most of their contemporaries, who believed in multiple gods, a practice known as polytheism, and worshipped idols, a practice known as idolatry.

The Israelites often separated themselves from people who did not share in this covenant with their one God (cf. Lemche 1986:124; Meagher 1979:456).

According to Felder (1996:202-203), Israel's particularity loses much of its subtlety as the dubious concept of her election begins to gain a firm footing in the Old Testament. Certainly, traces of the idea of Israel's chosenness and personal, special relationship with her deity were present in "the pre-Yahwistic cult of the ancestors", but the explicit concept of Yahweh's loving preference for the people of Israel develops relatively late. He goes on to argue that the theologically elaborated belief that Yahweh specifically chose Israel above all other nations does not become a matter of religious ideology – and therefore an instance of sacralisation – until the period of Deuteronomistic history toward the end of the seventh century B.C. (Deut 7.6-8, 10.15; Jer 2.3; compare: Isa 43.20, 65.9).

Felder (1996: 224-230) points out that, regardless of the theological structure that attempts to support the Deuteronomistic concept of Israel's election, ambiguities engulf this concept of election. He insists that even among the Deuteronomistic writers, Israel's election "only rarely stands at the centre of what is meant by election". According to him, Israel's election always functions as a symbol of universalism. It represents Israel in the role of "service to the whole".

He concludes that the ethnic and racial ambiguities involved in the concept of Israel's election seem to persist. The ambiguity does not result from the fact that a universalistic history is presupposed by the biblical writers who advance the Old Testament concept of Israel's election. Rather, the ambiguities stem from the nature of the presupposed universalism.

Von Rad (1962:79) points out that in Deuteronomistic circles the chosenness of Israel attains a radical form and its universal aspect is at best paradoxical. Perhaps the real

paradox resides in the notion that Israel's divine election seems to lead inevitably to sacralisation, with the people of Israel as an ethnic group at the centre. Certainly, the Deuteronomistic authors struggle to demonstrate Yahweh's selection of Jerusalem as the centre of any continuing redemptive activity. Although the people of Israel exhibit no extraordinary attributes or values by which they objectively merit Yahweh's election, there later develops an elaborate doctrine of merit, by which those who know and follow the Torah attempt to prove their worthiness as the chosen people.

Despite the absence of any inherent superiority of the people of Israel, the concept of election becomes inextricably bound up with ethnic particularity.

Accordingly, the people of Israel claim the status of being pre-eminently chosen. They thereby claim to possess the Law, the Covenant, and a continuing promise of the land and the city as the "in-group". Other races and ethnic groups may, of course, subscribe to Israel's religion and derive the commensurate benefits. But the criteria for such subscription are not easily met (cf. Von Rad (1962:94; Schroeder 1977:93).

Hawk (2000: 95) argues that the problem of patriarchy and election go together. For, as already seen, the web of oppression always includes a paradigm of domination and subordination.

In Joshua 7:1-26, a scenario is described in which Yahweh is angry with Israel because there has been a breach in the instructions regarding (ban). For the first time, (Mitchell 1993:67) observes that in the book, there appears a pattern which is familiar in

the Deuteronomic History: Israel provokes Yahweh – divine anger – divine punishment. Tension mounts as the audience awaits the inevitable outcome.

Joshua, in the meantime, is unaware of all of this as he prepares to conquer Ai. This is a natural consequence to the common belief that Yahweh decides the outcomes of a battle, and that he can use warfare to punish his disobedient people. This is consistent with the account of Joshua humiliating himself (7:6). A twist in the tale occurs where Joshua makes a statement expressing a desire to reverse the process of conquest. He employs language that is almost identical to the faithless response of the people to the spies' report in Deut 1:27:

Alas, O Lord God, why have you brought this people over the Jordan  
as all to give us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us?  
Would that had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan? (1:27).

Joshua's complaint draws Yahweh's into a legal case in which, as a covenant partner, He has to prove his innocence. Yahweh's response is to explain the cause of the disaster, and to outline the route to divine blessings (cf. Mitchell 1993:71).

Yahweh says to Joshua, "Arise, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow' " (7:13a). This procedure is a preparation for a theophany<sup>16</sup>. The procedure is presented as a preparation for the following day when this takes place.

Once again, Israel, although, one of them has offended God's law, remains the "chosen people".

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<sup>16</sup> Theophany derives from two Greek words: θεος and φανεια, meaning appearance or manifestation of God in an invisible form to a human being.

One may wonder about the criteria of election. This act of choice whereby God picks an individual or a nation out of a larger company for a purpose or destiny of His own appointment creates reluctance in people's mind. Bias also may be seen in such an approach because no criteria of selection have been put into place to select one at the detriment of the other. When one talks about selection, this implies at least two or more people to be involved in the competition. One may raise such a question: did Israel deserve God's favour? Israel was in fact the reverse of attractive, being neither numerous nor righteous, but feeble, small and rebellious.

In the book of Joshua over and over again there is a cycle of superiority vis-à-vis that of inferiority, domination versus subordination, and victory versus defeat.

The world today is divided into two categories: the developed and the under-developed. In this regard, the so-called developed countries impose their decisions, even sanctions upon the under-developed countries.

Banana observes that the sense of the early Israelites as God's chosen people became a justification for their conquering people in the land they viewed as the "promised land" – promised to them by God as a reward of their faithfulness as a people of God and as a compensation for their suffering in slavery. He concludes that the ideology of favouritism has its genesis in the Bible (1993:32).

Despite many products coming from the African "poor" countries, the price of the same products is usually fixed by those in power. This implies the cycle of domination versus



subordination, superiority versus inferiority, as portrayed in the book of Joshua. Israel is “unique” for being the “chosen people” as are the colonial masters for being the “colonisers”.

The household of God is supposed to be open to all persons, especially to those who have been excluded and marginalised. Unfortunately, this option is ignored in the book of Joshua.

It has been demonstrated that Israel, as a chosen nation, took advantage to subjugate other nations in the name of Yahweh, as the colonial masters also did to their colonies.

#### 4.3.7 Joshua 9: Israel identifying with the “Other”

This portion of the text intends to explain the relationship between Israel and the other nations. In other words, how Israel relates with other nations in terms of equality and power.

The “Other” in the present research is a grammatical word used to identify a person or group of people (nation) that are strange or different from the in-group. In other words, the Other is an outsider from the community (cf. Punt 2006:217). In the text under review, the Gibeonites are considered as the “Other” (cf. Collins, 1975:542).

According to Boling (1982:270-271), Joshua 9 reveals that the land that Israel entered was inhabited not only by the Canaanites, but also by a number of differing ethnic

groups. The Gibeonites are here described as concocting a scheme to enter into a treaty with the Israelites so that they might not be destroyed by them. The story shows how strong the notion of the treaty was in the world of the time of the Israelites. Treaty or covenant meant serious relationships. They were religiously sanctioned and enforced by the threat of the curse and death (vv 19-20).

Thus, even though the Israelites were stunned to find that they had been deceived by the Gibeonites, they could not cancel the covenant obligations. This chapter is a little window into what must have been the complex history of the entry of the Israelites into the land. It ends with a note about later times when the Gibeonites served at the altar in Jerusalem as “hewers of wood and drawers of water” (v. 27).

The final phase of analysis of Joshua 9 is intended to indicate the importance of a covenant in the text (cf. Boling 1982:270).

The paradox here is that, as Israel had been considered as a “chosen people”, she could not interact and mix with the “Other” people.

It can be argued that empathising with the Gibeonites probably helps the present day reader of the text to receive the impact Joshua 9 had on ancient Israelites. The story undoubtedly pushed Israel to view the “outsiders” in its midst as integrally part of the community.

Nelson, (1997:131-132) suggests that this chapter is read in the larger context of the book of Joshua. He points out that there are some similarities with Rahab's stories. In both stories a threatened foreign element outwits Israel through cleverness, extracting an oath insuring life. Each speaks with appreciative knowledge of Yahweh's mighty acts, although the Gibeonites do so dishonestly.

As a result, the descendants of each still "live among" Israel (6:25; 9:16). The most significant difference is that the problematic issue of skirting the (ban) and violating the law is downplayed in regard to Rahab, but highlighted in regard to Gibeon.

Rahab remains a positive figure as the saviour of her family, but the Gibeonites slide from the status of successful tricksters to unmasked and enslaved deceivers.

Just as Achan and Ai are redactionally interlinked (Achan being a narrative obstacle to the success at Ai), so the Gibeonite alliance is presented as the trigger for the following conflict (10:1-5). One may foresee the danger of the Gibeonite story in the fact that foreigners are "living among us".

The shadow of possible disobedience to the law and the problematic presence of unconquered peoples left in the land (15:63; 16:10; 17:12-13) have started to emerge when reading the book of Joshua, in spite of protestations to the contrary (11:23).

Nelson, (1997:134) says that this story functions to display identity in relation to the land, but in a way different from the heroic tales of successful conquest or the divinely authorised division of the land.

Here one is confronted with the ideological challenge of the non-Israelite neighbour. These Gibeonites could be seen as continuing Canaanite populations, potential or actual foreign allies, conquerors or captors, and eventually those non-Jewish elements who shared the land after the return from exile. In each situation the question arose as to what sorts of relationships with or attitudes toward the “nations” would be faithful to an identity as Yahweh’s people.

Nelson, (1997:135) concludes that this tale warns of the duplicity of outsiders and justifies repressive measures against them. By negative example it encourages Israel to obey Deuteronomic law about foreign entanglement and to seek the will of God about them. Yet it also encourages acceptance of the troublesome status quo for the Gibeonites are permitted to live and obtain a place in the social system.

The next chapter shows how even Yahweh will fight to protect them. The continued existence of the nation may be a matter of failure and disobedience, but here the combined authority of Joshua and the leaders of the community support a sort of toleration, albeit one that sounds suspiciously colonialist or oppressive to modern ears. In the last analysis, the presence of foreign elements cannot undermine Israel’s identity or its claim to the land. As the Gibeonites themselves are made to declare, these realities are assured by the acts and promises of Yahweh (vv 9-10, 24).

The Gibeonites identify themselves as inferior compared to their counterparts, the Israelites, who took advantage of their powerful position.

In his analysis of the covenant with the Gibeonites Mitchell (1993:85-86) points out that the appeal to allow them to survive (Josh 9:15, 20, cf. 24) is also a reflection on the legislation.

The shock at discovering that Israel has made a covenant with the inhabitants of the land is even more understandable in the light of the command in Deuteronomy 7:2 not to enter into any covenants with these people. While the explanation for the destruction of the inhabitants as a religious threat is absent in Joshua 9; it is possible that the Gibeonites' impeccable confession of faith is stimulated by this idea.

On the one hand Mitchell (1993:89) a convincing argument could be presented that the story is an interpretation of the Deuteronomy legislation. On the other hand, it must be recognised that Joshua 9 is not unique in this regard, and that the idea of destroying all the inhabitants of the land is a central theme in the book of Joshua as a whole, particularly in the immediate context of Chapter 9.

At the same time one observes that the Gibeonites introduce the legislation with a clarity that has not appeared before. In this respect they are similar to Rahab who is the first to mention the word . The notable exceptions remind one of the legislation's existence.

For Hawk (2000:134), the narrator has opened with description of the Gibeonites that separates them from the plurality of the other peoples of the land and invests them with an Israel-like unity. Then, through allusions to Deuteronomy 29:1-7, the text associates

them with the Israelite community assembled to make a covenant on the plains of Moab. After the covenant between Gibeon and Israel has been forged, the incorporation of Gibeon will be confirmed by the Israelite leaders' decree. They will be "hewers of wood and drawers of water". The semantic link with Deuteronomy 29:11 completes the inter-textual connection by returning one to the earlier covenant ceremony where Moses moves from the reminder of Yahweh's deeds to call for the community to unite. This ironically reflects Moses' assertion that "Yahweh has not given you a mind to understand, or eyes to see, or ear to hear (Deut 29:4) and thus they are unable to see through the Gibeonites' disguise".

Hawk (2000:142) concludes that the Gibeonites exploit the potential separation between leadership and people and, like Rahab before them, forcefully dictate both the conversation and events. Their objective is to rescue a place to live within the land, but they do so with the energy and craftiness that ought to characterise Israel.

The narrator introduces the Gibeonites by remarking on their ability to act "with subtlety" (v.4) and signifies their quick and decisive response to the Israelites by using a string of verbs to convey an atmosphere of intense activity.

Dispensing with trivial pleasantries, the emissaries offer a brief introduction before revealing the purpose of their mission, "We have come from a distant land. Now make a covenant with us" (v 6). Though brief, the message is carefully crafted to deflect Israel's attention away from their identities and to elicit an immediate response. The first sentence, a simple declaration, is rendered in the indicative mood, while the second takes

the form of an imperative which, proceeded by the particle “now” for emphasis, demands the attention of the Israelites (cf. Hawk 2000:146).

In his analysis on the Gibeonites deal, Goslinga (1986:90-92) points out that at first, the Israelites do not take the bait and respond with comparable craftiness. Beginning with their own declaration, they defuse the force by transforming it into a question (thus giving more force to the issue of identity), “Perhaps you dwell very close to us. How can we make a covenant with you (v 7)?” At this, the Gibeonites make a calculated move. Instead of responding to the “man of Israel’s” question, they turn instead to Joshua and, in markedly obsequious gesture, drop the imperative and say simply, “we are your servants” (v 8a).

With this succinct announcement, it may be argued that the Gibeonites acknowledge Joshua’s authority and redefine themselves as his subjects, appropriating language conventionally employed to address monarchs and others in high authority ( 2 Kgs 10:5; Ex 5:15-16; Num 32:5). They direct their words to Joshua and not the nation (as indicated by the singular form of the pronoun). Thwarted by the Israelites’ question the Gibeonites now turn their appeal toward Israel’s leaders.

Goslinga (1986:93-94) goes on to say that Joshua, however, will not let the issue of identity lie, though his questions are less threatening than those of the Israelites (v 8b), “Who are you? And where do you come from?” The Gibeonites respond to the softened questions by repeating their claims that they have travelled from a far country (although

they now emphasise the distance by asserting they have come from a “very far distance” [v. 9a]. Immediately after this, however, they deftly change the subject again, this time in a direction that strikes at the heart of Israel’s self-concept. After acclaiming the renown of Israel’s God and the victories over Pharaoh and the Amorite kings, the Gibeonites finally divulge that they have been sent by “our elders and all the inhabitants of our land” (v. 11).

Goslinga (1986:95) concludes that the impact of the pronouncement is two-fold. First, it reinforces the “official” nature of the Gibeonites’ mission and thus the legitimate character of any agreement they make. Second, the reference to “elders and inhabitants” stresses their affinity with Israel and disassociates them from kings who rule the peoples of the land.

They then take the edge off their initial imperative by recasting it in a much less aggressive form and prefacing it with their offer of servitude, “We are your servants; come now make a covenant with us” (11b). Here words of submission replace words of identification, and these are now directed toward the entire community (“your servants” now occur in the plural). Pressing the initiative, the emissaries then ensure that the exploration of their identities will take place on their terms rather than on the Israelites. They direct attention to the condition of the bread, wineskins, garments, and sandals as evidence that they have indeed travelled on “a very long journey” (vv 12-13). And they invite the Israelites to have a look for themselves.



One may notice that, apart from the issue of who is responsible for decision-making in this story, a reconsideration of the two endings shows a significant difference of emphasis. In the first, the “leaders of the congregation” are concerned to hold firm to the treaty (9:18-19). Its sanctity is affirmed three times (vv 18, 19, 20), with the consequences of Yahweh’s wrath (v 20). The content of the treaty is never disclosed.

In the second ending, one may see the inclusion of the house of God and the altar of Yahweh as places of hewing and drawing, the treaty is distant, never even mentioned.

As observed above, one may say that, even today, the world in which we live is a world of complementariness. In other words there is need of inter-relations. It is an open society in which every one brings his/her little/big contribution.

It can be argued that the text of Joshua 9, in particular the concept of a treaty, signals both ideological conflict and functions as an imaginary resolution of a social contradiction. The resolution operating in Joshua 9 is then the story as it is: the Gibeonites are indigenous people, or at least the “first nations” of Canaan, ensuring their own survival through a treaty. The way the Gibeonites become part of “Israel” is one example of the way people are called to “cohabit” together despite their religious, social, and political affiliation. Our actual world is a “global village”. In this regard, Israel, as the favourite of Yahweh, is encouraged to cohabit with the “Other”.

For the shadow of empire and colonialism to be highlighted in the production of ancient texts, Segovia raises the following issues: the way the margins look at the world – a

world dominated by the reality of empire and colonialism – and fashion in such a world; the way the colonial masters treat the colonised in view of their own views of the world and life in that world; the concept and construction of history by both sides, and the place and representation of the “Other” (cf. Segovia 1995:60).

From the perspective of postcolonial criticism, it can be argued that such concerns – questioning of culture, ideologies, and power – emerge as crucial.

Punt points out that the politics and rhetoric of ‘Othering’ found in any society is predominantly a rhetoric of legitimisation, constructing a discourse replete with cause, development and effect contra the selves or insider-group, and are thus considered as deserving of exclusion, marginalisation, vilification and at times brutalisation (cf. Punt 2006:217).

#### 4.4 Concluding remarks

A closer analysis of the biblical conquest narrative of Joshua 1-12, through a postcolonial lens, poses some challenges. The conquest narrative is a text in which Joshua and his army are portrayed as annihilating the inhabitants of the Canaanite towns (Josh 6:1-27). This represents a colossal theological challenge. It is a challenge for theology, and it is also urgent in another, more directly applied sense. There is a great need to address the challenge. The biblical conquest narrative and other texts have been and are still being used to provide the rationale for potentially violent and programmatic ideologies. It also serves to justify acts of violence, exploitation, oppression, partiality, human rights abuse,

racial segregation and land grabs committed by the Israelites in the name of God. The conquest narrative (Josh 1-12) is one of the most traumatic narratives in the Hebrew Bible. This is due to the mass slaughter of innocent people and the dispossession of the land under God's direction. For the reasons mentioned above Marcion<sup>17</sup> did not want the Hebrew Bible to be part of the canon.

Religious traditions that use the ancient Hebrew writings as Holy Scripture and the cultures who share those traditions as part of their heritage; even though they might not consider the texts as Holy Scripture, share the responsibility for facing this challenge. Without the necessary interpretive "brakes", these texts stand out as sanctioning meaningless slaughter and the divine commissioning of ethnic cleansing.

The Christian Bible is considered as the "inspired" and "authoritative" Word of God, and at the same time, it has been used as an instrument of imperialism and colonialism (cf. Banana 1993: 67). This has been demonstrated in many colonised African countries, and in particular, the Belgium vis-à-vis the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is a potentially extremely dangerous situation. It can be argued that the biblical texts have been used to legitimise and justify land grabs, racial segregation, oppression and violence, in the name of God.

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<sup>17</sup> Marcion (c. 100-160) rejected the Old Testament and almost all of the New Testament, including the accounts of the incarnation and the resurrection, basing his teachings on ten of the Epistles of St. Paul and on an altered version of the Gospel of Luke. His tenets included a belief in the eternity of matter, which was later developed by the Greek teacher Hermogenes, and a dualistic interpretation of God, whereby God is divided into the just God of Law, who was the Creator of the Old Testament, and the good God, the infinitely superior deity revealed by Jesus Christ.

The atrocities have been legitimised and justified on the basis of these textual traditions. The oppressive and violent ideologies have been developed. These have been inspired by the biblical texts of the narrative conquest among others.

It can be argued that biblical scholars have a responsibility to contribute with their knowledge of the ancient texts and respective world view, and especially to throw more light on the “unclear texts”, such as, the conquest narrative of Joshua.

Such application requires a critical and humble attitude to the content of the texts. It requires an open debate about questions of scripture, authority and the nature of divine revelation. But that is not enough.

It also requires an open ear to the actual practice of textual interpretation as it is carried out by real people, and the ways the Bible is used which in accordance with its users conviction.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **POSTCOLONIAL BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: A VIEW OF SOME TEXTS FROM JOSHUA 1 - 12**

#### **5.1 Preliminary Remarks**

This chapter seeks to analyse selected texts from the Conquest narratives in Joshua 1 to 12 in view of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's context.

Joshua 1-12 is chosen as an apt parallel to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in general, and the Katanga province in particular. With Belgians identifying themselves with the ancient Israelites, faithfully occupying the promised land (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and therefore also fighting the Congolese (seen as "unsaved people) in their own country, the brutal retaliation and extermination of the so-called rebels could be justified based on biblical precedents.

Whether it is self-proclaimed by others, for example, the Belgians (the colonial masters in the case of the indigenous Congolese), the concept of being chosen by divine initiative, as King Leopold claimed, (Conan 1978:79) leads to claims of being the real exponents of a complex culture and the true religion, and not least being the real owners of the land.

In this chapter, the postcolonial reading of some texts from Joshua 1-12 will hopefully enable to demonstrate how imperialism, violence, social injustice, land grab, and discrimination wrecked the Congolese people to the advantage of the coloniser. In this regard, a postcolonial methodology is appropriate as a working approach that serves as a basis upon which a diversity of colonial record and reality become understandable.

However, the rationale behind the choice of Joshua 1-12 to be re-read within the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is threefold:

- (1) The conquest narrative may shed light on the relationships between the oppressor and the oppressed, the coloniser and the colonised.
- (2) There are connections between the conquest narrative and the Congolese situation: the conquest narrative is a text in which Israel takes possession of the land of the “Other” in the name of the deity in the same way that the Belgians extorted the Congolese lands.
- (3) The conquest narrative is a text which perpetrates violence, imperialism, discrimination, and social injustice with God’s consent, something pretty much akin to what occurred in the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

A postcolonial examination of the following texts will identify land grab in the name of the deity, gender issues, violence, social injustice, oppression, and dehumanization.

The following texts from Joshua 1-12 have been selected in connection with the Democratic Republic of the Congo context for various reasons:

- (1) Joshua 1:1-9 is chosen in order to highlight how land was grabbed in the name of the deity,
- (2) Joshua 2:1-7 is selected to highlight the gender issues,
- (3) Joshua 6: 1-27 will highlight the rhetoric of violence,
- (4) Joshua 9:3-27 is selected to foreground the categories of social status and social class, and
- (5) Joshua 11:1-15 is selected to highlight the concept of dehumanisation.

The analysis of the texts under review from the post-colonial approach in conjunction with the Democratic Republic of the Congo context follows.

## 5.2 Postcolonial Textual Analysis

### 5.2.1 Joshua 1:1-9: Land grab

Land Grab refers to the seizure of the land violently, dishonestly and forcefully (cf. Bryant 1997:205).

God's charge to Joshua revolves around three foci. Joshua is told, first, that the time of fulfilment has come. He and all the people should now rise up and take possession of the land. At this point, it is noteworthy that in the Book of Deuteronomy, Israel is pictured as standing between promise and fulfilment: Israel had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt, had entered into a Covenant with God, but had not yet possessed the land in which

the terms of that Covenant were to be carried out. But now the hour had come; and Joshua hears God's command, "Arise, go over this Jordan..." (Josh 1:2).

Another point to highlight here is that the limits of the land to be possessed are vaguely described: it stretches from the southern wilderness to the Euphrates River, far to the northeast, and westward to the Lebanon Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea (v 4) (cf. Hess 1996:67-70; cf. Boling 1982:113-115).

Secondly, the charge next assures Joshua that he will be invincible; for God will be with him (vv 5-6). Joshua's strength will be as the Lord's. God will not "fail" (literally, "let drop") Joshua or abandon him in the difficult enterprise.

Thirdly, the charge affirms empathically that the promise of God's involvement is conditional on complete obedience to the Law (vv 7-8) and on complete confidence in God (v 9). Confidence in God is here connected with assurance of God's presence. Joshua is to have courage because God will be with him.

The land of these promises is eventually identified as the land of Canaan. Yahweh says that he will give this land of Canaan to Joshua and Israel. One can hardly avoid seeing the role of Yahweh vis-à-vis the Canaanites as a problem. In other words, Yahweh is an "imperialist", someone who uses his power and position to impose his will on the "Other". Yahweh gives the land of the Canaanites to someone else. As an imperialist God, we admit that the land which He is giving to Joshua is already inhabited by the Canaanites (cf. Blair 1994:45-52, cf. Goslinga 1986:36-37).



Approaching this text from the postcolonial perspective, it reveals that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is an “imperialist” God. He does allow the dispossession of the land in his name, with the divine order, “Arise, go over this Jordan...” (Josh 1:12). This has been similar to the Congolese context. The Belgian King, Leopold II, with a simple act of decree, orders dispossession of the Congolese land (Conan 1978:11).

As a result, the Congolese people are dispossessed by a simple memo, as the Canaanites were by the divine order (Josh 1: 3).

Imperialism refers to the policy of extending power, authority and influence over others in the interests of domination. Scholars frequently use the term more restrictively: some associate imperialism solely with the economic expansion of capitalist states; others reserve it for European expansion after 1870 (Bryant 1997:241).

Although imperialism is similar in meaning to colonialism, and the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably they should be distinguished. On the one hand, colonialism usually implies formal political control, involving territorial annexation and loss of sovereignty. On the other hand, imperialism refers; more broadly, to control or influence that is exercised either formally or informally, directly or indirectly, politically, economically, socially or culturally (cf. Bryant 1997:242).

As highlighted earlier on, the issue of imperial domination has occupied much of the Congolese situation in the following respects: political, economic, social and cultural. Politically, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been only an extension province of Belgium. In other words, all the matters pertaining to Congolese politics have to be first, discussed, analysed, and then decided in the Belgian capital, Brussels. The Congolese political leaders had to submit to any decision of the masters.

A brief look into the text under review reveals a tension as far as the relationship between the Israelites and Canaanites are concerned. Yahweh assures Joshua that no one will ever be able to stand against him (Josh 1:4), insinuating that the Israelites, the chosen people, are superior to the “Other”, the Canaanites.

Kalele (1999:89) writes that the relationship between the colonial masters, the Belgians with the Congolese was based upon the philosophy of coloniser/colonised, and oppressor/oppressed. It can be argued that politics is concerned with the activities associated with governing (not to be governed), with obtaining legislative or executive power (not to be dictated).

Economically, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is potentially one of Africa’s richest states, with extensive agricultural, mineral and energy resources.

Conan (1978:12) points out that the Democratic Republic of the Congo possesses vast reserves of gold, copper, diamonds, and uranium, as well as oil, cadmium, cobalt,

manganese, silver, tin, and zinc. Cocoa, coffee, cotton, tea, palm oil, rubber, and timber are exported to other countries today. Under any consideration, its people should be rich. A careful reading of the Old Testament confirms milk and honey, the home of the Canaanites...” (Ex 3:8b). It may be argued that the two countries (Democratic Republic of the Congo and Canaan) do not benefit from and God’s promise to Moses and Israel about the richness in the land of Canaan... “And to bring them up out of that country into a fine (Canaan), broad land, it is a land flowing with /or enjoy their resources because of colonialism and imperialism imposed on them by their masters in the name of the deity”.

Mosoma points out (1991:23) that political emancipation without corresponding economic well-being is a fraud. However, this has been a reality when analysing the conquest narrative in the book of Joshua and the experience which the Congolese people went through.

Mosala (1989:55-56) correctly levels a sharp critique against the post-World War II internationalisation of capital under late monopoly capitalism and the failure of sociological approaches to the Bible to effect transformation of oppressive and exploitative class and economic ideologies. He further contends that readers of biblical texts should be able to detect oppression and oppressors, exploitation and exploiters in the text of the Bible and to observe the kindred struggles of the oppressed and exploited of the biblical communities in the very absence of those struggles in the text.

Mosala's approach is still relevant for the Democratic Republic of the Congo where economic exploitation and oppression by the former colonial masters are still rampant. Therefore it informs the politico-economic aspect of the postcolonial understanding.

The land grab is clearly stated in verse 9 when Joshua summons the people to hear what God is about to do. Because of his mighty acts they will know beyond doubt that He is the living God (Deut 5:5-25; Hos 1:10), and that He will give them the land as promised.

Culturally, there are vast differences between the modern urban way of life and traditional rural cultures in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Belgium began to colonise the country in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which led to urbanisation, adaptation to foreign ideas and values, and the loss of local traditions for many.

Kalele says (1999:97) that the missionaries with their counterpart colonial masters (the Belgians) produced a "hybrid" Congolese society: people are "externally Congolese minded" but "internally" Belgian minded.

It is therefore not too far-fetched to deduce from the above observation that the Belgians brought their colonising legacy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and were intent on diffusing their culture, religion, and policies to the new subjects over which they reigned.

For a postcolonial critic, the Belgian venture represents a tortuous relationship between a powerful colonising suzerain and a powerless colonised vassal.

The Belgians represent as Dube (2000:150-153) would correctly argue “a powerful traveller” who exerts power over the distant land to which he arrives as a foreigner, thus subjugating its people and imposing his religious and cultural will.

Postcolonial readers are familiar with identical religious tiffs in colonial situations where supposedly superior foreigners impose their religion, cultures, languages, judicial systems, political organisation and governance over their supposedly inferior subjects whose geographical territories they illegally possess.

A closer analysis of the text under review shows that God has commanded Joshua to take the Promised Land by force. In this regard, it may be argued that they have exerted an impact upon the “Other’s” religions and civilisations.

#### 5.2.2 Joshua 2:1-7: Gender issues

The story told here is dramatic and full of human interest. Israel was camped at Shittim. The Abel-Shittim (meaning “brook of the acacias”) of the plains of Moab (Num 33:49) located at the foot of the mountains across the Jordan Valley from Jericho.

The presence of a large invading force encamped there was obviously known to the Canaanite inhabitants of Jericho, who are represented as terror-stricken (vv 9-11). The king of Jericho (actually a kinglet who ruled over a tiny city-state, of which there were many in Canaan at this time) and his soldiers were on the alert for any signs of aggressive

activity on the part of the invaders. How the presence of the spies in the house of Rahab the harlot became known is not reported. Anyone who has lived in a tight little oriental village knows how hard it is for strangers to enter undetected and to remain concealed. Choosing a harlot's house raises the problem of the gender issue (cf. Maxwell (et al) 1999:45-51; Mitchell 1993:36-37).

Analysing Rahab from a postcolonial lens, it may be argued that women's rights in most colonising countries (the Democratic Republic of the Congo) are violated. The incorporation of women in politics, church leadership, and other areas of Congolese society does not necessarily grant immunity from patriarchal oppression.

As a result, there is still a dire need to pay attention to the dismantling of gender inequality, stereotypes and the oppression of women in many aspects of Congolese women's lives.

Nzuzi Wa Mbombo (1999:56-60) points out that gender and the development approach sheds light on why women, who make up the majority, are marginalised in education system, politics, economy and various other areas where decisions that affect them are made.

The word "gender" is often used interchangeably with the word sex yet in the practical sense they are different. Sex refers to the biological difference between men and women, whilst gender refers to the difference between men and women, which are learnt through the socialisation process and through the culture of a given society (cf. Bryant 1997:192).

A closer reading of Joshua 2, however, raises doubts about whether the story is primarily a spy account. The spies hardly view the land through the inside of Rahab's house and her rooftop. They report only what Rahab told them.

What is the explanation of Rahab's apparent betrayal of her own people? Can it be that she did not regard it as an act of betrayal? Rahab is a harlot by profession, a single woman without a specific role in the society (Butlet 1993:57-63). The only role she plays was to hide the spies in her home.

Analysing the gender role in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in general and Katanga in particular, Lalo (1997:34) states that:

- (1) Women in the Katanga province are responsible for thatching houses, but among the Kasai, it is men's work,
- (2) Men do the cooking when this role carries a salary, but not at home where it is regarded as women's work, and
- (3) When women are young they do not participate in family decisions, but when they become older they are the voice of wisdom.

It may be argued that the implication of gender roles in the Democratic Republic of the Congo tend to confine both men and women within certain areas. Women because of their reproductive work are confined more and more to the private space hence are not seen participating in decision-making process within the public area.

Another point which needs more attention when reading Joshua 2 is the concept of women's human rights. Rahab is free to welcome whoever comes to visit her.

Verses 3-11 read that the presence of the spies became known and a report was transmitted to the king.

He at once demanded that Rahab surrender them. Rahab hid the spies and told the authorities that they had left the city under cover of night. One may raise the question whether Rahab was not free to accommodate anyone of her choice. Is it not part of her privacy, her human rights?

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, writes Kaozi (1988:32) the issue of cultural relativism has allowed some violation of human rights to occur under the guise of culture. Violation of human rights is repeatedly justified by government in the name of culture.

Kalele (1999:99) describes a situation during the colonial era where a young girl was impregnated by a boy at the same school. The boy was suspended for only a few weeks while the girl was dismissed from school and would never be given another chance to pursue her studies!

Advocates for women's human rights in the Katanga province have used the human rights framework to articulate women's issues. A human rights framework enables women to:



- incorporate women's perspectives and lives into human rights standards and practice,
- be accorded the human dignity and respect that they deserve simply as human rights,
- recognise violence against women as denial of human rights and raises questions about how to put some mechanisms in place to expedite the process of redress, and
- have a vocabulary for women to share the experiences of other women around the country and work collaboratively for change (cf. Meena 2007:45-50).

Describing the atrocities of war in the Katanga province, Kaozi (1988:96) writes about the problem of sexual abuse in the refugees' camp. He points out that the officers in charge of food sought sexual favours from women, especially single ones or prostitutes, and that those who consented were given more food. This demonstrates how the bodies of prostitutes were used for the satisfaction of male lust.

A careful reading of Joshua 2: 17-22 shows that Rahab has contributed to the survival of her family. We are told that when in due time the armies of Israel attacked the city, they would be on the lookout for this telltale, recognise her home, and spare it. In recognition of her part she and all her family were to be saved. There is here an interesting African concept of the power of family ties. Rahab lived a questionable life, yet through it all she carried a deep concern for her family (cf. Creach 2003:78-85).

Nzuzi Wa Mbombo (1999:42-51) observes that women in general, and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular, when given opportunities, are able to do great things. She points out that authorities in place should give to women equal opportunities and progress to all regardless of their gender.

Both men and women work to maintain communities and households. However, the work they do tends to differ in nature and value. These differences represent the important aspects of gender relations. Women's work is invisible and given less value.

Dube (2000:57) is right in the view that the story of imperialism mainly speaks of white males versus "we" the Africans. In both cases, she says that women are either subsumed or absent. This absence in many ways captures gender relationships and oppression in imperialism; that is, both women and men of certain nations participate together in oppressing women and men of distant countries. This fact has complicated global feminist struggles for even among marginalised women there are the oppressors and the oppressed.

It may be argued that the ushering in of a new democratic era and the concomitant constitutional prohibition of gender discrimination and sexism in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular have done little to alter discriminatory gender attitudes.

Hence the oppression of women by men continues unabated in this country.

Dube's (2000:20-21) postcolonial feminist hermeneutics deals with the intersection of empire, gender, race, and class by exposing the differences in gender oppression between women in imperialist centres and women in formerly colonised geographical territories. She correctly observes that women who are socially located in colonised landscapes not only suffer the yoke of colonial oppression but also endure the burden of two patriarchal systems imposed by them.

This analysis impels postcolonial readers to scrutinise patriarchal and imperial ideologies and how these contribute to gender imbalances.

#### 5.2.3 Joshua 6:1-27: The rhetoric of violence

This chapter resumes the story of Chapter 2, reporting the destruction of Jericho and the preservation of Rahab and her family. The narrative follows a familiar pattern. After noting that Jericho was under siege, Joshua's communication of those orders to the priests and the army (vv 6-7), is given, followed by the careful execution of the plan with the expected collapse of the city walls (vv 8-21), and the result of the attack, including the rescue of Rahab and her household (Sizoo 1993:542-545).

What strikes the reader of this chapter is the use of the number seven. As previously noted, there are seven priests, seven rams' horn trumpets, seven days, and seven circuits

of the walls. These events are mentioned again and again in the story (fourteen times).

The number seven was a sacred number among many ancient peoples.

In the Old Testament there are seven days in the week, various seven-day festivals, (several occurring in the seventh month), seven-day periods for ordination of priests and for consecrations of altars (Lev 8; 23), seven-year famines (Gen 42:23), seven baths in the Jordan (2 Kgs 5); (Von Rad 1962:72).

It may be argued that the number seven signifies completeness, perfection, power and consummation. It is clearly conceived of as a number sacred to God. When things exist and/ or are in seven they are characterised by perfection and power. In the capture of Jericho, the prominent position of the Ark of the Covenant is the strategy of capture, as in the crossing of the Jordan. Again it is indicated that it was God's power and presence in the conquest that brought victory (Hess 1996:74).

It is reported that the walls fell down flat after the sevenfold march and the mighty shout of the seventh day. It is said that Jericho was to be devoted to the Lord for destruction.

Devoted for destruction translates a Hebrew word "herem" meaning something taboo or forbidden in common use. In Hebrew usage this word was especially associated with warfare.

In the belief that it would ensure victory, a vow was made devoting all spoils, living and inanimate to God (Num 21:2-3). It is noteworthy that the Deuteronomic law requires the complete devotion of the Canaanites and their possession (Deut 7:1-5; 20:16-18), so that

Israel will not be led into idolatry. Since Canaanite artefacts were all to be regarded as belonging to God and could not be appropriated by the common Israelite (Deut 13:17), valuable Canaanite metal objects could be placed in the sanctuary treasury (Josh 6:19, 24), in the custody of the priests of the LORD (Num 18:14). The destruction of the Canaanite population and the dispossession of their land seem barbaric in the extreme.

A closer analysis of the text under review portrays similarities with the Democratic Republic of Congo situation. Belgium, (compared with Israel) used all the machinery available to colonize economically, politically, culturally, and socially the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Kalele (1999:108) describes the violence that characterises the great crime which many missionaries committed against the Congolese people, in complicity with the Belgians, in the name of the deity. He points out that missionaries quoted the Bible (Ex 20:3-5) arguing that these verses served as a refrain to demonstrate that Congolese culture was evil, and full of superstition. They used force and violence to destroy what belonged to the Congolese culture in the name of the deity.

As previously noted, in my view, the brutal practice of slaughtering all the enemy of Israel and the destruction of the whole population appears barbaric in the extreme. The same act of violence and barbarism was perpetrated by the Belgians vis-à-vis the Congolese people during the colonial era. Tshitungu (1998:45-47) writes that thousands of people were massacred in a stadium in Likasi<sup>18</sup> just because they were singing and

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<sup>18</sup> Likasi is a small town in the Katanga province, 120 miles from Lubumbashi. Likasi has been considered as the cleanest town in the Katanga Province.

dancing, enjoying their rights of being born and belonging to the richest province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It is reported that some were beaten to death, including women and children. Others were jailed because they opposed the Belgians in such acts of violence and barbarism.

A careful Congolese reader when analysing the text under review may highlight very important implications on how the book of Joshua relates to the issues of violence and warfare. Some raise questions why God fought for Israel and commanded Israel to annihilate the Canaanites. This has made many Christian Congolese scholars view Joshua in one of two ways, none of which removes the offence of divinely sponsored violence.

(1) Some, like Calvin, guided primarily by the doctrine of divine sovereignty, argue that the Canaanites were rightly the object of God's wrath because they were so depraved, as Deuteronomy 9:5 indicates (cf. Calvin 1991:97). This explanation can hardly satisfy any post-colonial interpreter and reader.

(2) Therefore, more recently it has been suggested that the book of Joshua came early in Israelite thinking about God's relationship to the nations; later in Israel's history the violence of holy war was spiritualised, that is, God's warfare became a battle against the forces of evil, not against real flesh-and blood enemies.

It may be argued that the text under review (Josh 6) is one of the most traumatic narratives for postcolonial interpreters: postcolonial readers highlight violence and extermination perpetrated towards the Canaanites, just because they were the Canaanites. The Congolese experienced the same violence and extermination under the colonial masters in conjunction with the missionaries who played a pivotal role in domesticating the minds of people in the name of the deity.

Mosala's approach is still relevant for a postcolonial struggle and remains a reality in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and therefore informs the violence aspect of my postcolonial view.

Another point to highlight when reading Joshua 6 in connection with Democratic Republic of Congo is the question of the land dispossession.

Joshua 6:18 says that the city and all that is in it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction and Joshua warns Israel to keep away from the things devoted for destruction, lest the Israelite camp become an object for destruction, bringing trouble upon it.

As already observed, possessing a devoted thing comes from the idea that the items to be banned were the Lord's portion (Hess 1996:103). In this regard, these objects become holy when dedicated to the Lord by means of a vow which Joshua 6:17 probably implies.

Lalo (1997: 57-61) writes that the irony of the Congolese history is that the Belgians seized and owned the Congolese land because of their privileged position of being the

“colonisers” (something akin to what the Israelites did). They took advantage of such a position to dictate their wishes. Lalo points out that the colonisers of the Congolese people changed the original names of some of the towns, with the idea behind that these names are associated with the ancestral spirits. They re-baptised the towns with new names as these were then being “devoted” to the Lord.

Tshitungu (1998:52) observed that the Democratic Republic of the Congo in general, and the Katanga province in particular, experienced its own “scramble”. He points out that the missionaries, in complicity with the colonial masters, dispossessed thousands of hectares, in the name of the deity. The “Domaine Reserved” as they used to call them, was piece of land, given in the name of the deity, for religious purposes.

Ngbanda (2002:210) writes that Mobutu<sup>19</sup>, by virtue of being a president and at the same time a Christian, took advantage of seizing thousands of hectares in the name of Christianity. The rationale behind such a seizure of land was that he is “a chosen one” (Nzambe aponi yo meaning “God has chosen you”). The “Domaine of Nsele” became a private property to Mobutu - property seized and possessed in the name of the deity! Ngbanda is right where he argues that the Congolese people will only remember their colonial masters in one aspect: the seizure of their motherland in the name of the deity: the Belgian legacy (2002:213).

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<sup>19</sup> Mobutu Sese Seko (1930-1997), president of Zaire, who seized power by force in 1965 and held it for more than three decades. Mobutu kept a chokehold on political power, amassing vast amounts of wealth while his country collapsed. After Mobutu was overthrown in 1997, Zaire was renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



From the above mentioned argument, the careful postcolonial reader must condemn the biblical legitimization of the invasion, dispossession, subjugation and annihilation of the land by both the colonial and neo-colonial (including some greedy African leaders) masters, as the Democratic Republic of the Congo experienced and continue to experience, together with other black African countries.

In this regard, it is “right” of and the “right” of every careful postcolonial reader, with an uncompromising vigour, to utterly condemn the unlawful invasions and forced conquest of geographical territories by the imperialists of our time.

Nkrumah<sup>20</sup> is correct in arguing that what makes a country really independent is the ownership of the land.

By the power of eminent domain, the government may take land from the owner for public use on payment of its reasonable value. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been victim of such imperialism in the hands of the colonial masters and even by her own leaders.

A move to another analysis of the conquest narrative, focusing on social injustice is in order.

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<sup>20</sup> Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972), first prime minister (1957-1960) and president (1960-1966) of Ghana and the first black African post-colonial leader. Nkrumah led his country to independence from Britain in 1957 and was a powerful voice for African nationalism, but he was overthrown by a military coup nine years later after his rule grew dictatorial.

#### 5.2.4 Joshua 9:3-27: Social injustice

In the first eight chapters, Israel had chosen its military objectives and targets.

The activity of nations “hearing” appears in Joshua 2:10 and 5:1. Joshua 5:1 begins with the identical words and grammar as 9:1. In 2: 10, is recorded the reaction of Canaan to the crossing of the Red Sea and the defeat of the Transjordanian kings.

In 5:1, it is the crossing of the Jordan River to which the kings of Canaan react. In both cases, the reaction is fear, bordering on paralysis. These features are not reflected in 9:1-2. Although similar wording evokes a comparison with the two earlier texts, this is done to stress the contrast. These features are different. Firstly, there is no indication of an object for “hear”. Although the New International Version (NIV) supplies these things, the text is silent about what it was that the kings of Canaan “heard”. The text in 9:1-2 indicates an entirely different reaction to what is heard. No hearts melt. Instead, there are preparations to fight Israel (Hess 1996:175-177).

The third difference contains the key to the explanation of the first two. No longer are the Canaanites cowed by the Israelites. The question one may raise: what has changed? The texts between Joshua 5:1 and 9:1 relate the defeat of Jericho, the defeat of Ai, and the covenant ceremony. It may be that these military victories were sufficient to arouse the inhabitants of the land to the threat of Israel.

Further, the texts do not suggest that the Canaanites ignored Israel before this. They had reportedly followed Israel's actions and knew of her victories from Egypt onwards. Indeed, the victory at Jericho enhances Joshua's fame throughout Canaan (Josh 6:27). Earlier the Canaanites refused to attack Israel for fear of what would happen to them. They defended themselves only when attacked. Now they gather together, united for war against Israel. What has happened? (cf. Hess 1996: 57).

The answer to this question is the basis of the textual analysis in conjunction with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thus this passage underlines the concept of social injustice. The lower status given to the Gibeonites is an example of social injustice.

It is observed that the punishment was that they were to be reduced into slavery. They became "hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord" (v 27).

The story is told, in part at least, to explain how it came about for the Gibeonites served as menials in the temple service of later times.

One may say that the picture of Israel in Gibeon is a picture of a people intermixed with other peoples. But Israel did not live among the Gibeonites in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Because of the Israelite ideology and their identity constructed on the basis of a religious exclusivism, the other inhabitants of the land had to be seen as undesirable.

A careful reading of this story reveals similarities between the Democratic Republic of the Congo experiences and Belgium. The first thing to highlight in the similarities is the non-respect of engagement in their memorandum of understanding.

Bakole Wa Ilunga (1987:79) points out that a treaty (Contacieux Belgo-Congolais) was signed between the Belgians and the Congolese in order to harmonise their views on certain aspects pertaining to social, economic and political arenas. The two parties did not respect the so-called treaty.

On the one hand, the Belgians were considered “superior” compared to the Congolese. On the other hand, the Congolese felt socially classified because they were considered “inferior” compared to the Belgians.

Verses 6b-15 point out that the message of the Gibeonites contains three parts, two of which were summarised in v 6. Firstly, they have come from a distant land. Secondly, they want a covenant with Israel. The third part of the message appears in v 8, where the Gibeonites call themselves “your servants”. This term describes the willingness of the Gibeonites to become partners with Israel. The scepticism of the Israelites (v 7) and of Joshua (v 8) leads to the confession by the Gibeonites of the power of Israel (cf. Hawk 2000:142-144).

Kaozi (1988:101) argues that each person (Belgians and Congolese) dwells in a particular social world. Persons are formed in that world and its rituals, values and symbols are the spectacles through which they tend to view life. Thus, beliefs about ourselves and others, about what we may aspire to or hope for, and about the proper, i.e., right way of striving are related to class. The descriptions above reflect power in terms of opportunities for decisions and action, prestige in terms of how one is regarded, privilege in terms of prerogatives and access. These descriptions become an index to one's worth and identity.

In the Congolese context, the social injustice was seen in the interaction between the black majority and the white minority in the public sector, such as schools, restaurants, public transportation, churches, and stores, to mention a few. Kalele (1999:110) is correct in portraying the missionaries as "separatists". He argues that they use the Scriptures, such as Genesis 1:18c, "...to separate the light from the darkness" for racist purposes. For missionaries, the light portrays the white people, superior, while the dark is compared with the black Congolese, inferior in status.

The superiority of the white minority was also observed with the missionaries, in complicity with the colonial masters, who initiated in most of the churches in urban centres in Katanga Province, two church services: French (for the minority) and Swahili (for the majority). Kalele (1999:112) believes that missionaries established the two services in the church for the simple reason of being "superior" or the "Bwana Mukubwa" or decision makers. For Kalele (1999:117), the reason is very simple: such a service ended with a special meeting between the missionaries and the "Bwana Mukubwa" or decision-makers.

The words of Sugirtharajah (2006a:27) come to mind here: “Post-colonialism has enabled those of us who were part of the former empires to see ourselves differently. It has helped us to go beyond thinking in contrasting terms of “us” and “them”, the “East” and “West”. Such a duality reduces everyone to an undifferentiated entity”.

#### 5.2.5 Joshua 11: 1-15: Dehumanisation

The term dehumanisation refers to the non-respect of human dignity and right.

And the verb to dehumanise refers to the act of making somebody less human by taking away his/her individuality, the creative and interesting aspect of his/her personality, his/her compassion and sensitivity.

In other words, it is the taking away of qualities or features of a person which makes him/her able to meet human needs and desires or to enhance people’s lives (Bryant 1997:134).

This passage (Josh 11:1-15) links to Chapter 10 and the conquest of the south. Similar verbs and expressions occur, as well as larger blocks of material whose organisation resembles that of Chapter 10. There are two main parts to the story: (1) the account of the formation of the coalition and its defeat at “the waters of Merom” (Josh 11: 1-9), and (2) the campaign against the cities with a summary of the victories (Josh 11: 10-15) (cf. Davis 1988:81-86).

Again Joshua's strategy was an expected attack, probably after a long, forced march.

The rugged hills and valleys of this area were ideally suited to Joshua's type of guerrilla fighting. It is probable that the Canaanites expected to meet the Israelites in a more open area for effective use of their horses and chariots. But Joshua is portrayed as forestalling this and scoring a smashing victory. He hamstrung their horses, so that they could not be corralled and used by other Canaanites and he burned their chariots (Josh 11: 9). Joshua then turned back from the pursuit and destroyed the great city of Hazor (cf. Nelson, 1997:134-135).

When reading the preceding text, what strikes any postcolonial critic, is the summary of Joshua's achievements (Josh 11: 16-23). The generalising statements, "So Joshua took all that land" and "So Joshua took the whole land" by themselves give the impression that Joshua had dehumanised the "Other".

This dehumanisation is justified by the use of the more sober statements, such as, "But none of the cities that stood on mounds did Israel burn, except Hazor only" (Josh 11: 13), "there remains yet very much land to be possessed".

The fact here is clear in the sense that Joshua did launch and carry through a series of smashing attacks on key Canaanite strongholds of the land; he dehumanised the Canaanites and gained a foothold for the Israelite tribes in the land (cf. Goslinga 1986:107-109).

This has been pictured in the Congolese experience vis-à-vis Belgians. The Congolese people were dehumanised in various ways.

Kalele (1999:119) describes the Congolese dehumanisation as unfortunate. He says that the Belgian soldiers, during the colonial era, went into villages to spread terror, if necessary by killing some of the men. But in order to prevent the waste of a cartridge, they were ordered to bring one right hand for every cartridge used.

On the other hand, Lalo (1997:93) describes a scenario in the Katanga province where thousands of miners were murdered for the simple reason of not singing the national anthem. He points out that some found themselves half-naked and were obliged to exhibit their traditional dance before the “Bwana Mukubwa”.

Another point to remember is that dehumanisation has its roots in prejudice.

Prejudice refers to preconceived attitudes or opinions about the “Other”.

Prejudices may be favourable or unfavourable, but the term usually refers to negative attitudes held toward others based solely on their belonging in a specific group (cf.

Bryant 1997:474).

In this regard, dehumanisation is a form of prejudice based on perceived physical differences and usually refers to unfavourable or hostile attitudes toward people perceived to belong to another ethnic group (Crowther 2002:341).



A closer analysis of Joshua 11:10-11 highlights the repetition of the verb “destroyed”. This verb emphasises Hazor’s fate. The same is true of the repetition of the noun “sword”. These repetitions serve to suggest the importance of Joshua’s victory over a nation perceived as “stubborn” and therefore belonging to “another” ethnic group (cf. Mitchell 1993:94-97).

Dehumanisation usually results in a belief in the superiority of one’s own ethnic group. One cause of prejudice and dehumanisation is the human tendency to form stereotypes, generalised beliefs that associate whole groups of people with particular traits (cf. Bryant 1997:474).

Demptine (1967:56) points out that in his letter addressed to the missionaries commissioned to work in the Katanga province, Leopold II, the Belgian king, urges them not to consider them as “brothers”, but on the contrary they are to be considered as enemies. The letter also stipulates the removal of their “original names” and their replacement by the Western ones when baptising them.

The letter goes on by telling missionaries to give to the Katangese the basic of knowledge only in these two areas: teachers and nurses.

Tshitungu observes (1998:59-60) that the Belgians did not prepare the Congolese elite to take over after them. For example, there were no Congolese in the senior judiciary and not a single Congolese army officer, even in the senior administrative ranks. Even as independence approached, the Belgian administration did nothing whatsoever to prepare

the Congolese leadership for the responsibilities they were about to assume. There were no experienced political leaders, no educated citizenry, no indigenous administrators, no professional, no commercial or military elite, no established middle class with a stake in the stability and well-being of the country in general, and the Katanga province in particular (cf. Kaozi 1988: 32).

The postcolonial reading of the story of Joshua (11:1-15) observe that the text betrays an interest in identity. Identity refers to a set of characteristics that somebody recognises as belonging uniquely to himself or herself and constituting his/her individual personality for life. It includes those qualities that distinguish one person from another and the consciousness of one's own being (cf. Bryant 1997:234).

The postcolonial reading seeks to decolonise the colonially imposed images utilising the images of “3 A Katangese” as the tool of awareness for Congolese consciousness, in general and Katangese in particular. By “3 A”, simply means: Arise, Awake and Act. In other words, the time has come for every post-colonial reader of the Bible to exercise great caution when reading biblical texts not to subscribe to the negative psychological images of themselves that the coloniser has inscribed. Whereas the imperially and colonially interpreted Bible sought to degrade and distort the Congolese image in general and Katangese in particular, the post-colonial interpretation of the Bible should be used as a weapon to counter the colonially inculcated negative self-images.

### 5.3 Concluding remarks

African postcolonial readers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in general and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's context in particular therefore, need to be aware of the cultural influences that shape them as they engage with the biblical text. If this is not done, foreign values and interpretations will be inculcated into Africans or even the Congolese people, reducing them to moral confusion and an identity crisis.

Using a postcolonial methodology as hermeneutic lens to interpret the texts concerned in the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the present thesis is an attempt to re-read the conquest narrative with a view to not only exposing colonising ideologies which exist both in the biblical text and in the readers' contexts, but also to coming up with strategies of redressing the global challenge of the unequal power dynamics, usually played out in the name of God.

Rereading the conquest of Joshua from a colonised perspective in which the Bible had a significant role, it can be argued that this conquest narrative served as the justification for violence committed against indigenous people.

The story of Joshua 1-12 is one of the most traumatic of postcolonial interpretations because the conquerors insisted the promised land was a gift of God. The conquerors must destroy the idolatrous people with God fighting for them (cf. Hawk 2000:6-7).

Using the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a case study, It has been demonstrated how the Belgians identified themselves with Israelites, as God's chosen people, on the way to the promised land, and the Congolese as corresponding to the Canaanites.

Missionaries should have read the Bible with Congolese traditional piety in view. In this way, they should have arrived at an understanding of God that deals with the perceived reality of the Congolese ancestors.

They too share in the divine promises given to the ancestors through the history of ancient Israel. The faith or even the Christian religion in Katanga would not have been presented as an extremely new reality to an extremely irreligious people. That is why the hermeneutical approach that foregrounds the Congolese context needs to be given chance by biblical scholars in the years to come.

This being said, it remains that the conquest narratives in Joshua 1-12 are very problematic for a postcolonial reader. The portrait of Yahweh, the God of Israel, as an exclusivist God, remains a crucial issue for postcolonial readers. Postcolonial critics have the mandate to speak against present-day segregation. They need to voice their objections to the use of the deity to justify national ends. How a people constructs its identity reflects how they relate to those who live among them and to those who are different. The ideology of divine entitlement is a dangerous one. Yet the book of Joshua can help the people of God to construct its identity in a sound way, namely by acknowledging and making explicit the revulsion we have for its narratives.

The next chapter will focus on the summary of the findings of this study and recommendations for the future.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to summarise the findings of this study as follows:

- a) a summary of how aims and objectives were achieved,
- a) the statement of the problem revisited,
- b) the methodology and its relevance,
- c) a summary of the findings of the study,
- d) a recapitulation of each chapter,
- e) the contribution of the present study, and
- f) some recommendation for further studies,

#### **6.2 Summary of how aims and objectives were fulfilled**

The aims and objectives were fulfilled through an engagement with some selected texts from Joshua 1-12 through a postcolonial lens, whereupon an application was made to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in general, and the Katanga province in particular. What the Belgian colonisers did to the Congolese, by faithfully occupying the “promised land” (the Democratic Republic of the Congo), and therefore also fighting them (considered as Canaanites) in their own country, was compared to what the Israelites did to the Canaanites. It was argued that the brutal retaliation and

extermination of African peoples by the so-called “rebels” were justified on biblical precedents.

It was concluded that:

- (i) Within the context of postcolonial biblical interpretation, the narrative of the conquest as reflected in Joshua 1-12 is one of the most traumatic stories because the conquering Israelites are portrayed as insisting that the new territories were a gift from God, just as the promised land was viewed as a gift from God. As a result, the conquerors felt justified to destroy the “idolatrous” Canaanites with the deity portrayed as fighting for them.
- (ii) Similarly, the Belgians, the colonial masters of the Democratic Republic of the Congo people, identified themselves as God’s chosen people, on the way to the promised land (the Democratic Republic of the Congo). They extorted Congolese land, also in the name of the deity.
- (iii) Postcolonial criticism was found to be an appropriate approach in facilitating a constructive reading of the biblical conquest narrative in Joshua 1-12, a text which can be applied to contemporary postcolonial, neo-colonial settings.

### 6.3 Summary of the statement of the problem

The main question related to the statement of the problem of this research was: In exploring some issues related to imperialism and colonialism in the selected texts from Joshua 1-12 within the context of the postcolonial Democratic Republic of the Congo,

could Bible readers safely assume that God takes sides with one powerful nation against the less powerful other?

If so, what are the implications of such a claim in constructing an ethical African Hermeneutics?

In view of my findings, one can safely conclude that in some selected texts of Joshua, God is portrayed as taking sides with one powerful nation, the “chosen one”, Israel vis-à-vis the powerless, an “unelected” nation, that is, the Canaanites. Such a claim has serious implications for biblical hermeneutics on the African continent where the Bible continues to enjoy the esteemed status as a normative text.

The preceding answer confirms my hypothesis postulation stated in chapter One of this thesis that both the Israelites and colonial masters tend to use the name of the deity in order to achieve personal as well as national ends and ambitions. The God of justice, who is the Creator of all human beings, that is, both Israelites and Canaanites alike cannot show favouritism.

For committed African Bible readers, the observation that God is that God who is portrayed in the Bible as partial, is problematic. An ethical African biblical hermeneutic necessitates that a responsible interpreter should be willing to face head-on and expose as well as resist such problematic ideologies in the biblical text.



That is the case because in war-torn contexts such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, such dangerous texts can be easily exploited to perpetrate violence in the name of the deity.

#### 6.4 The method and its relevance

Postcolonial criticism was the main method used in this research and its development was highlighted. The methodology helped me to critically analyze the biblical texts in Joshua 1-12 in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo context in general, and the Katanga province in particular. Through this methodology, problematic violent ideologies both within the biblical texts and the reader's context were exposed and challenged, an exercise which in my view is necessary in our quest for justice and the fullness of life in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the rest of the African continent. Through constantly raising a prophetic voice against all forms of injustice in our war-torn context, we need to remind ourselves never to repeat the history of injustice that typified not only the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also many parts of the continent.

In the present research, the relevance of this methodology is twofold: First, postcolonial criticism has empowered those of us who were part of the former empires to see ourselves differently. It has helped us to go beyond thinking of the contrastive pairs “us” (Congolese or Kifita<sup>21</sup>) and “them” (white or Muzungu).

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<sup>21</sup> Kifita means a black skin, compared to Muzungu meaning a white skin

In other words, it helps us to free ourselves from such neatly drawn boundaries. Second, postcolonial criticism has helped one to discover the double jeopardy faced by women in war-torn contexts.

One was thus re-conscientised about the need to take seriously issues pertaining to the affirmation and empowerment of present day Democratic Republic of the Congo women; women who, for the most part even today, continue to remain the victims of patriarchal subjugation and control.

Before narrowing the theory and model down to some of the texts reflected in the biblical conquest narrative in Joshua 1-12, this study investigated how postcolonial criticism fits the alternative hermeneutical tool for biblical readers. It was argued that the Democratic Republic of the Congo in general and the Katanga province in particular, were subjected to Belgian colonialism and imperialism.

The coloniser exercised cultural domination and land dispossession. The method shed some light on examining the socio-political, economic, and historical processes regarding how the Bible was misused in the history of its reception in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Moreover, it may be argued that a postcolonial reading of the Bible invokes a war against sin, neo-colonialism, imperialism and social injustices in every aspect of a society, regardless of the agent. In this case a postcolonial criticism was not a discourse of historical finger pointing, but a tireless committed struggle for the total decolonisation and liberation of the oppressed. In other words, the oppressed must find their deliverance

within the context of the revolutionary message from the Word of God. No matter how the Bible was used and abused by the coloniser, the meaning of liberation of God's people – the oppressed – never loses its power.

It can be argued that the Bible is and will remain the “effective weapon and faithful ally” in the struggle for liberation against injustice, oppression committed by external, internal and evil powers that come to destroy the likeness of God in human beings.

#### 6.5 Recapitulation of each chapter

Chapter One is a review of the subject matter dealt with in the present thesis. A brief background leading to the main statement of the problem as well as the postulation of the hypothesis was described. Postcolonial criticism as a preferred methodology was described even as the researcher suggested the possible significance of his research within the context of postcolonial biblical hermeneutics.

Chapter Two is a literature review. A selection of the following scholars on postcolonial biblical criticism was made:

(1) Sugirtharajah was selected for the relevance of postcolonial criticism to biblical studies. Sugirtharajah believes that the greatest single aim of postcolonial biblical criticism is to situate colonialism at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation.

Postcolonial criticism concentrates on every issue that has to do with expansion, domination, and imperialism as central focus in defining both the biblical narratives and biblical interpretation.

Segovia was useful for the reality of empire, imperialism, and colonialism in the Bible and biblical interpretation. For Segovia, it is true and real that empire, imperialism and colonialism are situated at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation. He goes further by demonstrating reality in three areas: the world of antiquity, the modern world, and the world of the reader.

Dube was chosen for her postcolonial feminist reader's hermeneutics. Dube believes that postcolonial feminist readers in biblical studies are part and parcel of the communities that struggle for liberation in the Two-Thirds World and elsewhere. She maintains that the struggle for liberation of postcolonial readers is to be found within the framework of resisting global and national types of oppression – which may be politically, economically, socially, or culturally rooted

J. Punt was selected for his interrogation of identity politics. He argues that postcolonial studies around the globe have contributed to the study of identity and hybridity of identity. On the other hand, the loss of memory of colonialism is highlighted, or in other words, the strong inclination of colonialism to impose a Western sense of identity. Punt was more concerned on the following issues: Marginalization, Identity and violence (Punt 2006:200).

Though he tackles these issues from the New Testament perspective, it can be argued that the same issues are also a matter of discussion in the conquest narrative.

Pui-Lan was chosen for his connection of postcolonial studies and feminist biblical interpretation. Pui-Lan argues that postcolonial feminist interpretation is inclusive. This means that all women, regardless of their condition, must be involved in the process of reading the biblical text with a postcolonial lens. He points out the role of postcolonial feminist critics, which consists not only in recovering the insights of ordinary woman readers, but also in exposing the various ways in which biblical scholars, feminists among them, have been subjects of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Nzimande was selected for her *Imbokodo* postcolonial reading of the Bible. In this, Nzimande exposes and challenges the historical connection between the dissemination of Western hegemony, power and epistemologies by critically investigating biblical texts in view of the overwhelming presence, role, and influence of empire in their production. She considers black South African women's histories to be a pertinent starting point in the interpretation of biblical texts.

Chapter Three sought to highlight the Democratic Republic of the Congo's postcolonial context, in particular the Katanga province. It has demonstrated how colonial masters and the missionaries used the Bible to carry out a colonial agenda in order to conquer and grab the land in the name of God to achieve their own interest.

Chapter Four focused on a postcolonial reading of selected texts from Joshua 1-12. Problematic colonising ideologies which revealed a partial deity were exposed, problematised, challenged with hope that such resistant reading strategies would contribute, albeit in a small way, to the establishment of ethical biblical interpretation in our African interpretive contexts.

Chapter Five presented an analysis of selected texts from the Conquest narratives in Joshua 1-12 in the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Joshua 1-12 was found to be as an apt parallel to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in general, and Katanga province in particular.

Chapter Six sought to summarise the findings of this study. This included: a recapitulation of each chapter, a summary of the findings of the study, the contribution of the study for Biblical/Old Testament studies, and some recommendations for further studies.

## 6.6 Summary of findings

### 6.6.1 Conquest narrative and land dispossession

The brutal retaliation and extermination of African peoples by the so-called “rebels” were justified on biblical precedents.

From the postcolonial perspective, the Joshua text reveals that Yahweh, the God of Israel is an “imperial” God. He is portrayed as sanctioning the dispossession of the land of Canaan from the indigenous peoples through commands among others.

The Congolese context has been similar. The Belgian King Leopold II, with a simple act of decree, gave orders for the dispossession of the Congolese peoples from the ownership of their land (Conan 1978:11). Consequently, the Congolese people were dispossessed by a simple memo, just as the Canaanites were by an allegedly divine order (Josh 1:3)

The issue of imperial domination has occupied much of the Congolese situation in the following aspects: political, economic, social, and cultural.

Politically, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been only an added province of Belgium. In other words, all the matters pertaining to Congolese politics have to be first discussed, analysed, and then decided in the Belgium Capital, Brussels. The Congolese political leaders have to be submissive to any outcome of the discussions of the masters.

The country possesses vast reserves of gold, copper, diamonds, and uranium, as well as oil, cadmium, cobalt, manganese, silver, tin, and zinc. Cocoa, coffee, cotton, tea, palm oil, rubber, and timber are exported to other countries today. Under these circumstances, its people should be rich (Conan 1978:12). In the same way, reading the Old Testament reveals God’s promise to Moses and Israel about a rich land to be later occupied by them.

It may be argued that the two countries (Democratic Republic of the Congo and Canaan) did not get to benefit and enjoy their resources because of the injustices of invasion, violence, and social injustice suffered by both these countries colonialism and imperialism imposed to them by their colonial masters in the name of the deity.

Culturally, there are vast differences between the modern urban way of life and traditional rural cultures in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Belgians began to colonise the country in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which led to urbanisation, adaptation to foreign ideas and values, and the loss of local traditions for many. The missionaries with their allies, the colonial masters (the Belgians) produced a “hybrid” Congolese society: people are “externally” Congolese minded but “internally” Belgian minded.

It is therefore not too far-fetched to deduce from the above observation that the Belgians brought their colonising legacy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and were intent on diffusing their culture, religion, and politics to the new subjects over which they reigned.

In the postcolonial view, the Belgian venture represents a tortuous relationship between a powerful colonising suzerain and a powerless colonised vassal. A closer analysis of the conquest narrative in the book of Joshua 1-12 reveals to the postcolonial reader the observation that God had commanded Joshua to take the promised land by force. In this regard, it may be argued that they have exerted an impact upon the “Other” religions and civilisations.



### 6.6.2 Conquest narrative and gender issues

When analysing Joshua 2:1-27 (cf. Rahab's story) from a post-colonial perspective, it may be argued that women's rights in most colonised countries (in particular the Democratic Republic of the Congo) are violated. The incorporation of women in politics, church leadership, and other areas of the Congolese society does not necessarily grant women immunity from patriarchal oppression. As a result, there is still a dire need to pay attention to the dismantling of gender inequality, stereotypes and the oppression of women in many aspects of Congolese women's lives.

Another point which needs more attention when reading Joshua 2 is the concept of women's human rights. Rahab is free to welcome whoever comes to visit her.

In verses 3-11 we read that the presence of the spies became known and a report was transmitted to the King. He at once demanded that Rahab surrender the men. Rahab hid the spies and told the authorities that they left the city under cover of night. One might raise the question whether Rahab was not free to accommodate anyone of her choice (cf. Mitchell 1993:44).

Abuses of human rights are common in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in general and the Katanga province in particular. Women are forced to enter into marriage at early ages without their consent in the name of culture. Some young women are forced to

marry men of the same age as their own parents. Other young women are denied their rights to introduce the “men” of their choice to their families.

Such cultural values including virginity testing and total submission to the parents continue to prevail in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in general, and the Katanga province in particular.

#### 6.6.3 Conquest narrative and the rhetoric of violence

It may be argued that the text of Joshua (Josh. 6 for example) is one of the most traumatic narratives for postcolonial interpreters: postcolonial readers highlight violence and extermination perpetrated towards the indigenous peoples such as the Canaanites, not just because they were the Canaanites, but because they refused to believe in God.

The Congolese experienced the same violence and extermination under the colonial masters in conjunction with the missionaries who played a pivotal role in “domesticating” the minds of the people in the name of the deity.

#### 6.6.4 Conquest narrative and social injustice

In this regard, a passage such as Joshua 9:1-27 can be cited as a case in point. Embedded in this text is the issue of social injustice. The perceived lower position status given to the Gibeonites is an example in this regard. In the Congolese context, the social injustice was seen in the interaction between the black majority and the white minority in the public

sector, such as schools, hospitals, restaurants, public transportations, churches and stores, to mention a few.

Some missionaries in the Democratic Republic of the Congo may be portrayed as “separatists”. They used and continue to use the Scriptures, such as Genesis 1:18c ... “To separate the light from the darkness” for racist purposes. For missionaries, the light portrays the white and their alleged “superior” status while the “darkness” is compared to the black Congolese and their alleged “inferior” status. The superiority of the white minority was also observed among the missionaries, in complicity with the colonial masters, who initiated for the most part in the churches in the urban centres in Katanga province, two church services: French (for the minority) and Swahili (for the majority).

#### 6.6.5 Conquest narrative and dehumanisation

When reading Joshua 11:13-23, one is troubled by generalisations such as, “So Joshua took all the land” (v 16) and “So Joshua took the whole land” (v 23). One is left with one impression: Joshua, the conqueror, this superior “Other”, is so powerful that with the sanction of the deity on his side, he and fellow conquerors can actually conquer the whole land, as though the indigenous inhabitants were all incapacitated. In the process, it may be argued that the “conquered” become the dehumanised “Other”.

This dehumanisation is justified by the use of more optimistic statements, such as, “But none of the cities that stood on mounds did Israel burn, except Hazor only (v 13), “There remains yet very much land to be possessed” (v 22) (cf. Nelson, 1997:131).

This has been revealed in the Congolese experience vis-à-vis the Belgians. The Congolese people were dehumanised in various ways. The Congolese dehumanisation is described as tragic. During the colonial era, the Belgian soldiers went into villages to spread terror, if necessary by killing some of the men. But in order to prevent a waste of cartridges, they were ordered to bring one right hand for every cartridge used. If they misused, or used cartridges on big game, they cut off the hands of living Congolese to make up the necessary number.

#### 6.7 Contribution of research to Biblical/Old Testament studies

The present research will be incomplete without pointing out its contribution to Biblical/Old Testament studies.

- This study may be seen as a contribution to Biblical/Old Testament studies because it sheds some light on one troublesome biblical metaphor about God. The latter is portrayed simultaneously as partial, siding with the oppressors.
- The present research contribution is new to Biblical/ Old Testament studies because it displays the notion of God as warrior and as conqueror, using the post-colonial approach to biblical texts in the context of the Democratic Republic of

the Congo. This approach has shed more light on the misuse of the Bible by the colonisers, for example, in the taking of the African black lands in general, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular, in the name of God.

This study is unique because no one has conducted such a study before.

- The present research, as a unique contribution to biblical/ Old Testament studies, as it brings freshness to post-biblical hermeneutics, particularly in the war-ridden African contexts. It exposes violent ideologies both within biblical texts as well as the context of the modern Bible readers.
- The present research makes a rare contribution to biblical/ Old Testament studies because particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's context as it challenges Western readers to be aware of their history of hegemonic power and to scrutinise their current interpretation to avoid repetition of the victimisation of the non-Western races.
- Also, the present research, as a contribution to biblical/ Old Testament studies, challenges the postcolonial reader to ask why biblical texts endorsed unequal power distribution along geographical and racial differences in particular why, in the wake of political independence, power has remained unequally distributed, and how to read for empowering the disempowered areas and races in the hope of creating a better world.

## 6.8 Recommendations for further studies

For further studies on African biblical hermeneutic, the following themes among others, could be considered:

- Postcolonial readings of biblical texts informed by the experiences of the Democratic Republic of the Congo women and,
- Issues of ecology and the sacred texts (be those of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and African Traditional Religions, among others...)

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