CHAPTER I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research gap and problem statement

With the continuing cycle of conflict in the Eastern Congo, a 5 year old, after few days in a refugee transit camp in Gatumba, Burundi in June 2004, asked his mother: "Mom, when will we reach Burundi? Listen to the gunshots … It is not safe here!" The mother fought her tears back as she answered her son: "We are in Burundi!" One month later, the Gatumba refugee camp was attacked on 13 August 2004 and more than 160 refugees, including the boy's family, died in the massacre.[1] Humanity is at stake!

The concept of justice and righteousness[2], a challenging paradox under Roman imperialism, is a dominant theme in the Gospel of Matthew. The contention between the Matthean community and Formative Judaism amid the religious, social and political crises that followed the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple has to do with the future of their society. From the perspective of postcolonial theory (cf Ashcroft, Griffins & Tiffin 1989; Guha 1994; Sugirtharajah 1999, 2001; Segovia 1999; Young, 2001, 2003; Van Aarde 2004a), the obvious question of most survivors of anti-colonial struggles is how justice can be redressed in war-torn societies.

[1] Two of United Nations reports, one in August 2004 under S/2004/682 and another in October 2004 under S/2004/821, are contradictory as to who is responsible for the massacre at the Gatumba refugee camp. This is also the case with the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report of September 2004. The October report of the UN and that of the HRW are contested by the Banyamulenge community's representatives and refugees who accuse them of ambiguity and complicity and thus jeopardizing justice (see reaction of Enock Niyontezeho, President of the Gatumba refugees, 2 November 2004). Allegations by political analysts in the region are that the International Community is protecting the already fragile "peace processes" and political institutions in DRC and Burundi whose members would eventually be directly or indirectly in the massacre.

[2] In this research, justice and righteousness is used as one concept that means the same thing. "Righteous" or "just" means straight or right. According to the *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (1968), justice comprises related "principles of impartiality and probity in rendering judgement, reciprocity in interpersonal transactions and equality of elementary rights not only between members of diverse economic classes but also between nations and races." Justice imposes obligations or duties to fulfil as social welfare or reparation. Using Plato's teaching, justice can be defined as distributive and corrective or commutative justice. At the same time righteousness can mean "the fulfilment of the demands of a relationship" between persons, and between persons and God (*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* 1962).

However, it is believed that, despite the struggles for freedom in Africa, and the DRC[3] in particular, freedom is yet to come. After forty-five years of political independence inhabitants of the DRC, still long for justice and the provision of necessities. Likewise, reorganization of the Judean society during and after the first revolt of 66-70 CE against the Romans (cf Saldarini 1988; Overman 1990; Sim 1998), poses a fundamental question: How does society experience justice and righteousness not as personal piety, but as a social responsibility, in the fulfillment of the law and the prophets? It is at this bifurcation that the Matthean community and Formative Judaism depart in their understanding of the law.

Theological research and exegeses that have taken a thematic route with regard to the social context of Matthew have made a significant contribution to understanding the Matthean community. However, researchers do encounter certain challenges because Matthew does not present a clear and systematic theme and purpose for writing his story. From an African viewpoint, and in the Banyamulenge[4] tradition in particular, Matthew is seen as a storyteller trying to touch on different snippets of events, which in the end lead to his audience being convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, whose mission it is to do justice and righteousness. According to Van Aarde (1994:xv), Matthew is not a "theologian" in the sense of portraying a systematic and "reasoned theology". However, Matthew is "a theologian" in the sense that he reveals to his readers something about God's dealing with Jesus Christ in a human setting (cf Luz 1990:44; see Menninger 1994:1-2).

Unlike Luke (Lk 1:1-4) or John (Jn 20:30-31), Matthew does not explicitly formulate the purpose of his writing. As Van Aarde (1994:xv) argues, this constitutes "a considerable obstacle" in the search for a dominant theme in Matthean theology. Garland (1993:4-10) finds a similar challenge in the search for a comprehensive theme. From Kingsbury's (1977:14-21) viewpoint, one is left with the impression that Matthew emerges from the urgent need to provide a desperate community with teaching material. This is especially evident in the synoptic debate on the composition of the gospels (see Davies and Allison 1988:127-138; Sabourin 1982:37-40; Grundy 1982:599-609; Luz 1990:93; Sim 1988:33-40).

[3] The Democratic Republic of Congo.

[4] The Banyamulenge community is of Congolese origin. It is a community whose members are mainly Tutsis of Rwandan and Burundian origins (Mutambo 1997:41; see Johnstone & Mandryk 2001:197). But also integrated in the community are other Congolese tribes, not necessarily of Tutsi origin.

According to Kingsbury (1977:15), Matthew is supplying new teaching material because Mark was not adequate in meeting the needs of the church in the areas of christology, ecclesiology and the history of salvation. The Gospel of Matthew emerges after the debacle of the Judean revolt against Roman colonialism[5] (Horsley 1988, 1989, 1993, Carter 2001, 2000; Overman 1996) when the Judean community as a whole was living in subjugation, suffering injustice and oppression. The Gospel of Matthew emerges from a war torn context in which the political independence of a people is shattered. In Judean society, justice and righteousness are jeopardized by the ruling colonial structures.

What is at stake in the structure of Matthean theology is the administration of justice and righteousness in the light of a postcolonial reading thereof, which emanates from its socio-political context. This is clear right from the outset of the narrative. A son is born and is introduced as Yeshua, the savior (see Van Aarde 2005:7-31) who will take away the shame (sins) of his people (Mt 1:21) in contrast to the Roman empire that inflicted humiliation on God's people (Carter 2001:75-90). The saviour is their prince in the form of God-with-us (Mt 1:23), who has come to rule with them in God's kingdom (Mt 3:2; 4:23; 5:3, 18:1; 25:31-46).

This stands in contrast to the Roman temporal occupation and exploitation of Palestine. Matthew's aim is to introduce a Messiah (Mt 1:21; 2:4), a servant (Mt 12:18-21), who will proclaim God's will in a corrupt, destitute and desperate society. Carter (2001:1-3) is convinced that, from a political point of view, the Gospel of Matthew resists Roman imperialism. Matthew presents social and theological challenges to the existing foreign political structures by introducing Jesus as representative of God's justice and righteousness to a wretched humanity.

According to Crossan (1998:182-208; cf Weinfeld 1995), justice, righteousness and purity are intertwined with Israelite as well as with other ancient Near East traditions.[6] From a religious point of view, these terms define the character of God which is both protecting and liberating.

[5] See chapter four below.

[6] Moshe Weinfeld (1995) deals with the concept of justice and righteousness in ancient Near Eastern countries: Israel, Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Abraham was called to reflect God's image of justice and righteousness (Gn 18:19).[7] The concept of justice and righteousness (Weinfeld 1995:7) is associated with God's power and mercy in ameliorating the situation of the destitute (cf Is 6:9; Jr 7:5-6; Zch 7:9-10). It is important to note that in the ancient Near East tradition of justice and righteousness, explicit mention was made of justice to the weak and the poor, such as widows, orphans and aliens (see Dupont 1969b:54-90). These vulnerable members of the community needed God's special divine royal protection (Crossan 1998:158; cf Hamilton 1992:130) for they lacked paternal linkage into kinship safety nets.

In such a context, amelioration of the situation of the destitute, elimination of exploitation and oppression, liberation of slaves and the establishment of equity were key elements in returning justice and righteousness to the community. The precarious situation of the voiceless and the weak whose rights are abused by the powerful, the rich and kings, touches the heart of God and forces God to act on their behalf (Ex 22:21-27; 23:6, 9; Dt 24:12-15). Crossan (1998:185) also explains how in Mesopotamia, the gods and goddesses "called the king to be prosecutors of justice".[8] Hammurabi (see Stewart 1966; Dupont 1969:54-59; Weinfeld 1995; Richardson 2000; Nardoni 2004:8-18) of Babylon enacted justice in the land and destroyed the wicked and the evil so that the strong might not oppress the weak. This also applied to the Egypt, [9] Ugarit (Canaan) [10] and the Israel[11] as Dupont's (1969b:59-60; see Weinfeld 1995) observations indicate.

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[7] "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just" (NIV).

[8] In Banyamulenge culture, spirits of the ancestors warned the people to do good and be just especially to widows and orphans. Failing to do so, the spirits would punish either the whole community or those who have failed to honor god by doing what is right. An example is the story of a family whose widow and orphans had no milk for the young ones. Normally, during the dry season, all cows are taken for *transhumance***.** One or two cows are kept close to the village to provide milk for the children, the old people and the sick. But on one occasion a widow and her children did not receive any milk. The spirits went to the grazing field some 40 km from the village and brought one milking cow with her calf back to the village. They (the spirits) took possession of one person in the family and spoke through her asking the elders of the community why the widow and her children were being mistreated? The elders asked for forgiveness, gave the widow and her children milk and further took care of them. In this way ancestors are part of the community.

[9] For instance, Dupont (1969b:60) notes that the swearing in of Rames IV around 12th century BCE was celebrated as "good news", which is similar to that of Matthew (4:12-17, 23-25), or what he would call the Beatitudes (5:3-11): "*Heureux jour! Le ciel et la terre sont dans l'allégresse, car tu es le grand du seigneur de l'Egypte. Ceux qui étaient en fuite rentrent dans leur villes, ceux qui s'étaient cachés reparaissent. Ceux qui étaient affamés se rassasient gaîment, ceux qui étaient assoiffés s'enivrent. Ceux qui étaient nus sont revêtus de lin fin, ceux qui étaient en guenilles portent des habits blancs. Ceux qui étaient en prison son mis en liberté, ceux*

God's justice and righteousness is a liberating power that manifests itself within the world of the living. Weinfeld (1995:20-22; cf Crossan 1998:188-187) points out three ways in which God's justice and righteousness manifests: in Creation; in the Exodus and in future redemption. Justice and righteousness are executed by God. During the creation of the world, God imposed "equality, order, and harmony upon the cosmos and elimination of the forces of the destruction and chaos" (Weinfeld 1995:20). The Psalms refer to the just rule of God as a redemptive mission to all creatures (Ps 33:5-6; 96:10-13; cf Gn 1).

God's redemptive mission in the Exodus stories, whereby God administers equity and political salvation, has been widely adopted by liberation and black theologians (Loader 1987:147-171; Gutierrez 1974:155-160; Lochhead 1983:74-94; Fierro 1983:473-481; Croatto 1984; Boff 1987; Mosala 1989). The theme constructed from phrases such as "I have … seen the misery of my people … I have heard them crying out … I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them…"(Ex 3:7; 15:8; 20:2; Dt 33:4-5; cf Js 5:13-14; 1Sm12:7; Mc 6:5),[12] is rather decisive.

Fretheim (1991:18-20) and Weinfeld (1995:17) regard the Exodus story as symbol of a holistic mission, connecting socio-economic-political liberation to the enactment of God's presence, which takes place when giving the Law at Sinai (Ex 19-24). This represents a

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qui étaient affligés se trouvent en joie; ceux qui fomentaient des troubles dans le pays sont devenus tranquilles." (Blessed is day! Heaven and earth are in joy, because you are the great lord of Egypt. Those who were in refuge are back in their towns, those who were in hiding, resurface. The hungry are filled, the thirsty are drunk. The naked are clothed with fine linen, those who were in rags, wear white gowns. Prisoners are set free, the afflicted have found joy; troublemakers in the land are quiet.)

[10] The Canaanite Prince Yasib challenged his father Keret for not doing justice to the poor (Dupont 1969b:59-60) "*Tu n'a pas jugé le jugement de la veuve, tu n'as pas fait droit au droit du malheureux, tu n'as pas chassé ceux qui dépouillent le pauvre, tu n'as pas nourri l'orphelin devant toi, la veuve derrière ton dos, te montrant un frère pour le malade, compagnon de son lit de souffrance.*" (You did not pass the judgment on behalf of the widow, you did not do justice to the poor, you did not prevent those who exploited the poor , you did not feed the orphan before you, the widow at your back, [you did not] show as a brother to the sick and a companion at his bed of suffering.)

[11] Yahweh of Israel is a just God who takes care of the poor and is described in Psalms (68:5-6) as "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows …. God sets the lonely in families". God also "upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous" (Ps 146:7-8).

[12] The New International Version (NIV) is used for all Bible quotations in this research.

continuity of God's involvement in social liberation on behalf of the oppressed. The divine concern of social justice, as Fretheim (1991:246) explains, is mainly to protect the weak, the fatherless and the homeless (aliens, widows and orphans) from socio-economic exploitation and political exclusion. Suffice to say that the presence of God among his people represents the fullness of life – shalom, freedom from the bondage of oppressive politics, poverty and sin. The Gospel of Matthew portrays the continuing image of Emmanuel – God with us – God of salvation among the afflicted (Mt 1:1:21-22; 6:10-14; cf Lk 4:18-19; 11:2-4).

Furthermore, justice and righteousness is the responsibility of the individual (Weinfeld 1995:17-19) in ameliorating the situation of the destitute (Lev 25; Dt 15). Elimination of the exploitation of other people (such as slaves) was to come from the exploiter (the owner of slave) himself. As Weinfeld (1995:17) notes, justice and righteousness "in individual realm incorporates the duties between man and his neighbor over which the monarch and the state generally have no control."

According to Weinfeld (1995:45-56), justice and righteousness are the responsibility of the ruler. "The establishment of a just society is the responsibility of the king" (Weinfeld 1995:45) who is the agent of God in the land. The ruler acts on behalf of the poor and the weak and delivers them from oppression, and as a result, the land becomes prosperous (Ps 72: 2-4, 12-14). Matthew refers to righteous and just kings in his parables (Mt 18:21-35; 22:1-13; 25:31-46). Moreover, the king's responsibility to the poor is "to abolish evil and suppress the oppressors and tyrants" (Weinfeld 1995:49); to establish justice and judgment of the poor and the weak (Is 22:15-16) and the slaves. The command for the manumission of slaves is part of the theocratic inauguration in Israel (Lv 25; Dt 15). Weinfeld (1995:152-178; cf Amit 1992: 47-59; Levine 1989:168-180) sees the meaning of jubilee[13] as the proclamation of liberty. In their work on jubilee in the New Testament, Volschenk & Van Aarde (2002:811-837) argue that jubilee "was a symbol of transformation and emancipation."

[13] According to Levine's explanation (1989:172), jubilee *yovel* means both "ram" and "ram's horn". This is because the advent of jubilee "is proclaimed by sounding the ram's horn".

Hartley (1992:442-443) explains that jubilee, as proclamation of justice and righteousness in the land, maintained "the solidarity" of the people "by keeping alive the ideal of the equality of all Israelite citizens under the covenant." For Amit (1992:50-55; cf Chaney 1991:127-146) the introduction of jubilee law and its "appendices – the subjects of loans and slavery" has a new economic perception, which is intended "to moderate and blunt the sharpness of economic extremes." This is because God wants to prevent material temptations that encourage discrimination against the weaker classes. In other words, the law has the aim to create a different society which, once every fifty years, offers the opportunity to reduce the ever-increasing gaps.

Raiser (1992:160-161) argues that the link of jubilee to social justice entails the defense of human dignity, liberation from oppression, and building a just, righteous and participatory social "system of government and of the economy". This law, which embodied equity and fair judgment in the community, provided the opportunity for people and the land to experience freedom as a God-given gift – the year of the Lord.

During the post-70 period (Overman 1996:10), the interpretation of the law and the administration of justice and righteousness in Palestine became problematic. Firstly, the region was subjected to Roman colonialism. Secondly, war had ravaged the country, killing its inhabitants. Survivors were orphaned, widowed, homeless, displaced and refugees, whose lives were at risk. Thirdly, the war destroyed Jerusalem and the temple that had provided social, religious and political identity of Matthean Israelites. In the absence of land, Jerusalem and the temple, the Matthean community and Formative Judaism found themselves in a difficult situation.

Consequently, internal misunderstandings on how to ensure the community's survival after the war arose (Overman 1990, 1996:8-12; Saldarini 1991:38; Menninger 1994:25; Sim 1998:116). It is for this reason that Neusner (1991:2) refers to "two sectors of the same people". Each group claimed to have the right interpretation of the law and the prophets (cf Saldarini 1988; Overman 1990; Neusner 1991; Stanton 1992; Sim 1998; see Crosby 1988:199-203).

Different interpretations then have focused their attention on community differences that separated the Matthean community from the main parent body of Judaism. The theological argument of *intra* and *extra muros* (Carson 1982:161; Stanton 1992:114-145; Saldarini 1991:56-60; Vledder 1997:141) came about as a result of this argument. Those who argued in favor of this view, made Judean community the primary audience of the Gospel and excluded the Gentiles until the post-paschal missionary work (see Van Aarde 1989:1-12; 1994:248-260; 1999b:671-692; Menninger 1994:48). The inclusive and exclusive debate that dominated and divided Matthean scholarship (Sim 2001:268-280; 2002:767-783) is, however, not the main concern of this study.

The main question that has divided theologians, centers around the social identity of the Matthean Gospel.[14] This theological polemic of "chosen-ness" and exclusion has come under criticism from postcolonial theologian-theorists. Postcolonial theory challenges these traditional views on the ground that the impact of social political consequences of Roman colonization has been neglected.

A serious critique of the traditional view, however, is that, consciously or unconsciously, it has confined people to cultural enclaves, where they have been devoid of the good news (Mt 4:23-25; 11:28-30; 21:14) of justice and righteousness. This approach deliberately ignores two important aspects of Matthean structure, which constitute the backbone of the narrative. In the introduction, Matthew presents (Mt 1-2) his main characters in the *biblos geneseos* (Sabourin 1982:185); and in his concluding remarks (Mt 28:16-20) Jesus commissions with no ambiguity his followers to all *ethne*. Clearly the proclamation of the good news is universal, but more importantly, is aimed at those who are destitute and oppressed by existing socio-political and economic structures.

The people who want to hear the good news, are the destitute and the mourners whose loved ones are victims of colonial force (Mt 2). The outcasts find themselves excluded on account of their social status imposed on them by the ruling class, religious leaders (Mt 12:1-14; 21:12-

[14] The group of scholars who support the thesis that the conflict between the Matthean community and Formative Judaism has led to separation of the community are, among others, Stendahl (1968); Stanton (1992); Hare (1967); Luz (1989:79-89) and Hagner (1990). Another group supports the view that despite the conflict within Judaism, the Matthean community remained within the parent body. The view is supported by among others Bornkamm (1963); Overman (1990); Saldarini (1988, 1991, 1994); Sim (1995, 1998, 2001).

16) and the rich (Mt 19:16-30), and on account of tribal differences (Mt 15:21-28). People from the Third World have a similar problem. They are marginalized because of their social status; they are dispossessed of their dignity and excluded from decision making; their cultures are suppressed or have been dismantled by colonialism (see Said 1987; Young 2001; Ashcroft at al 1989). These people hunger for justice. The Matthean experience is one of the preferences of *Self* over *Other*. This is what concerns the Matthean community whose Jesus proclaims the will of God.

By way of example, the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28) finds herself at the heart of such criticism. Those who favor an anti-colonial reading find that the story portrays cultural, ethnic/tribal, economic, political and gender discrimination, as well as imperial ideology (cf Dube 1996, 2000; Guardiola-Saenz 1997:69-80; Donaldson 1997:1-12; Wainwright 1998). Hare's (1993:176-179) interpretation of the story of the Canaanite woman is well argued. He presents three possible theses for the reading of the anecdote. (i) The story is to be read as "inauthentic". It was credited to Jesus by Jewish Christians who were opposed to Gentile mission; (ii) the story is to be treated as "authentic" but argues that "Jesus' behavior is not harsh as modern readers think". It is used as an expression of "the charity begins a home", as a way of testing her faith and "if she passes the test, he will accede to her request"; (iii) the narrative is to be accepted the way it stands in all its "harshness". It presents Jesus as a "Jewish man of his days, chauvinistic toward women and non-Jews."

The problems with this last reading is its exclusivity and its failure to disassociate a Matthean christology of Jesus whose healing mission (Van Aarde 2005:19-20) is to do justice and righteousness beyond social political and religious boundaries. Thirdly it may be argued that the socio-political influence shaping the Matthean context, is underestimated. The harsh language Matthew uses (e.g. Mt 23) against his own compatriots (see Overman 1996:324-326), and the resentment shown towards foreigners (e.g. Mt 15:21-28) is to be understood in light of the general overview of the consequences of war. It could have been influenced by cultural conflict that existed between communities (see Guardiola-Saenz 1997) on account of their history of being conquered (cf Gn 12:4-6; Ex 3:7-10; Js 13-22), now exacerbated by the Roman occupation (Carter 2001).

Those reading the story of the Canaanite woman through the lens of postcolonial theory, can also overreact, as is the case with Guardiola-Saenz (1997:69-80) and Wainwright (1998:84-92). Both authors argue from a feminist perspective. They draw attention to the cultural, gender and ethnic discrimination in the text. Guardiola-Saenz (1997:70) argues that the Canaanite woman is a victim of the author and the reader who "mistreated and incarcerated [her] in the oppressive boundaries of the text … for their own benefit, maintaining the status quo." Moreover, Wainwright (1998:91-92) argues that the structure and legitimacy of the healing power of Jesus is highly "genderized" and "oppressive of women and others designated as outsiders." The power of healing and doing justice and righteousness attributed to Jesus in this story, "veil the violence that can be inherent in such power".

Wainwright believes that the power predicated of Jesus and the household metaphors that proclaimed it as such "may well have been – and hence can continue to be – deconstructed". More critically, Guardiola-Saenz, says that the recognition of Jesus as the son of David by the Canaanite woman is not "a statement of faith" on her lips but "it is an asseveration of protest and a demand of her rights from the 'invader' and 'oppressor'" (Guardiola-Saenz 1997:76-77).

Such feminist reading of the story creates another polemic, which fails to understand the contours and circumstances from which Matthew's Gospel emerges. In other words, their theological argument seems to be as reactionary as Matthew was to religious leaders and Roman imperialism. Secondly, Jesus is not exclusively motivated by cultural and traditional rites, which at the end will dictate to him what to say and do. He has come to do the will of God, which is universal in scope (Mt 1-2; 28:16-20). His divine mission is neither limited, nor can it be confined within the coloration framework of cultural boundaries, which is to be found on the surface of incidents. Rather, his divine mission is to be seen and defined within the borderless framework of justice and righteousness.

The important issue is not only to recognize what has been denied of a person by existing power structures, but also to determine how the situation can be reconstructed and remedied, so that justice and righteousness can take its course. From this political reading, Jesus' mission is to abolish the work of evil and colonialism that have turned people into captives. It is to proclaim liberty to the world and to create a hybrid family of brotherhood in God's kingdom.

Notwithstanding these debates, Matthean teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) gives a profound significance to the earthly ministry of Jesus, and at the same time, it provides the basis for rebuilding a new community in the aftermath of war. Arguing from Jesus' teaching, this study looks at the interpretation and application of justice and righteousness amidst human confusion caused by war and colonialism.

This study wants to contribute to Matthean scholarship by reading the gospel from a postcolonial perspective.[15] The main concern is to investigate the concept of justice and righteousness in the Matthean context, which was severely affected by Roman imperialism (see Horsley 1989; 1993; Carter 1999, 2001, 2000; Stark 1991). Another concern is to unearth how such a reading can bring a voice of those on the margins and oppressed by any form of domination and colonization (see Nkrumah 1968, 1973; Gandhi 1954; Said 1987; Fanon 1965, 1967; Young 2001) or a dictatorial regime.

1.2 Relevance of the study

From the viewpoint of postcolonial theory,[16] the study of justice and righteousness is appropriate to the context of Matthew and beyond. Over the years, contextual theologies have been developed. Their intention was the liberation of the oppressed. Victims of oppression can be found throughout history: from slavery in Egypt (Pixley 1991:229-240; Ela 1995:244-254) to the South African struggle against apartheid (Mandela 1994; Mandela and Castro 1991; Mosala 1991:267-274); from African-Americans against slavery and racism (Warrior 1991; Connor 1996) to Latin America (Guitierrez 1974; Segundo, 1976; Sobrino 1987). Black African (Mosala 1989) and feminist theologies are examples of such liberation theologies (Fiorenza 1999; Wainwright 1998; Schroer & Bietenhard 2003).

The politics of exclusion and division, tribalism and ethnicity, exploitation and injustice in the Great Lakes Region have thus far killed millions of innocent people, leaving in its wake a deeply wounded and vulnerable region, which experienced genocide at the end of 20th century

[15] See chapter two below.

[16] See chapter two.

in Rwanda. Among those affected is the Banyamulenge community whose socio-political identity in the DRC was interfered with by colonialists; its citizenship has been contested by Congolese governments ever since independence,[17] and their call for justice has not yet been heeded.

The ongoing political crisis in the Congo, particularly since the early 1990s, has drawn particular interest to the plight of the Banyamulenge [18] on account of the conflict. What is clear, however, is that this community always seems to be on the periphery of its own country. It has been excluded and dispossessed, as various studies such as Weis (1958), Muzuri (1983), Kidogi (1985), Gatimbirizo (1988), Mutambo (1997), Mamdani (1999), Ruhimbika (2001), Sarkin (2001), Koen (2002), Mangu (2003) have indicated. Even when one of her sons was elected as one of the four vice-presidents of the country in 2003, the question of Banyamulenge citizenship was still raised in the transitional parliament!

The afore-mentioned studies comment on the situation in the Great Lakes region from a socio-political perspective and point to a number of political injustices, as well as external and internal conflicts to which the Banyamulenge have been subjected. From a theological perspective, different monographs (mainly at a church denomination level) have been written by, amongst others Rukema (1985), Ruseruka (1986), Mudakikwa (1988) and Buhungu (1992). These studies focus on the development of church activities within the Banyamulenge community.

What is still lacking, however, is a link between the socio-political context of the Banyamulenge community and an application of biblical teaching. This study contends that

[17] The nationality of Banyamulenge and other Congolese of Rwandan and Burundian origins is one of the most controversial and highly politicised issues in the Democratic Republic of Congo (see Muzuri 1983, Kidogi 1985; Gatimbirizo 1988; Mbonyinkebe 1994; *Resolution du HCR-PT sur la nationalité* 1995; Mutambo 1997; Ruhimbika 2001).

[18] The researcher wants to show how the media or researches have also contributed to bring confusion and amalgam to the issue of Banyamulenge. Consciously or unconsciously, some of those who have taken the courage to research (write or report) on the community have often misapprehended the case. Some of them do not know that the Banyamulenge is an ethnic group. For others, the term Banyamulenge is mistaken with that of political parties, rebel movements. Some times, they are presented as victims, other times as aggressors. This is done either by ignorance; the use of inaccurate information about the community; or the research is influenced by extremist tendencies that want to falsify the history. This may include the famous *Rapport Vangu* in 1995, an investigation lead by Zairean parliament in 1995.

such a link can be established with the help of a postcolonial hermeneutical approach. The reconstructive approach of the Matthean context as it pertains to the concept of justice and righteousness finds its parallel in a contemporary reading of the Banyamulenge community. It should be borne in mind that, because of the limited scope of this study, the Banyamulenge community will be taken as a case study and not treated as though it were the only existing case which deserves attention in the DRC.[19] On the other hand it should also be stressed that, as a matter of political exclusion and contestation of social and political identity, the case of the Banyamulenge and that of other Congolese of Rwandan and Burundian origins, is unique in the DRC.

Furthermore the Banyamulenge community has also become victim of researchers whose findings as to the amalgamation are misleading. Examples are the work of highly acknowledged academics in political studies of the Great Lakes Region, Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002:229-230) and Lemarchand (1999:1-21).

In his book, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A people's history*, Nzongola-Ntalaja's information about Banyamulenge politicians is inaccurate. The scholar either lacked sufficient information, or was misinformed by his sources and did not counter-check his sources. Thus, his contribution misrepresents information pertaining to members of the Banyamulenge community. On the other hand, Lemarchand (1999:1-21) deals with the issue of ethnicity in which he qualifies the term Banyamulenge in terms of "myth-making." He also adds that it is absent in "colonial records." However, existence and evolution of a people do not necessarily depend on their recognition by the colonial world. Secondly, his globalization of the Banyamulenge, especially during the conflict of 1990s, is also misleading.[20] This is the view that Fanon (1967:226-229) challenges by pointing out that the natives are obliged to accept the European definition of their race/identity.

[19] Within a situation of anarchy, war and tribal conflict in DRC, acts of injustice and impunity that lead to continued atrocities are countless. The selection of Banyamulenge is a case among others. However, for reasons stressed above, it demands careful scrutiny.

[20] For more discussion, see chapter three.

1.3 Methodology

With the help of traditional exegetical methods such as redaction criticism, literary criticism and narrative criticism, theologians have dealt with biblical texts. They were able to point out theological concerns, identify sources and primary audiences of the text (Briggs 1971; Collins 1983; Gillingham 1998). In recent years social scientific approach was introduced and large contributions were made by, among others, Elliott(1981:1-13; 1986:1-27; 1990, 1993), Malina (1983, 1988), McKnight's edited work (1989), Malina and Rohrbaugh (1992), Esler (1994, 1995[21]), Van Staden (1991:26-64), Horrell's edited work (1999) and Van Aarde (2002a). This new approach helped many scholars to focus on the Matthean social location. The introduction of postcolonial theory (Sugirtharajah 1999:3-5) to biblical hermeneutics is also gaining ground. However, the question remains: Is postcolonial theory relevant to biblical reading?

Initially, a postcolonial reading and the Bible form a strange association, especially when seen from conservative background. Firstly, politics is associated with bad governance, ruthlessness and malice.[22] Secondly, traditional European and American missionaries' teaching warned Christians not to become involved in politics, because it is a "dirty game", it is "worldly" and holds no gain for Christian life.[23]

Embarking on such sensitive issues causes a dilemma. The question is how such a method will help to make a difference in a dying world? Would such a study contribute towards finding solutions in a world of inequalities and injustices? Can it bring consolation and hope to innocent people dying in refugee camps across the African continent? Can a voice challenging the powerful, make them realize that every person has the right to citizenship?

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[21] This is an edited work with various contributions to social scientific work in New Testament scholarship.

[22] One old Babembe tribesman in the DRC said *"politike ili michingo*." Literally it means that politics is cheating. This conception is influenced by the kind of socio-political life they lead. Some politicians do take advantage of the populace for either votes or any other selfish interests with little or no benefit to the common people.

[23] This is an ongoing debate in many Pentecostal churches in Africa. In Burundi for instance, some local churches threaten to excommunicate its members who want to form political parties. Although this is not the case with churches in the DRC. Church leaders in the DRC have taken up important and high positions in the current transitional government. However, the motives of such ventures are queried. Some support church leaders who, as citizens, should play their civic role by serving their nation in every capacity, as best one can. Others criticize such a move and fear that politics may compromise the testimony and the prophetic stand of the church. They say that, whoever would like to help politicians, should be outside of the political ring (see also the argument of Van Reken 1999:198-202; Meulen 1999:202-206).

Conversely, if such an endeavor is not undertaken, is there any another hermeneutical approach that would not only "speak the truth to the powerful", but would also "speak to the poor about the powerful" (Sugirtharajah 1999:5). For this reason I believe that postcolonial theory is a worthwhile undertaking.

From the history of politics and literature, postcolonial theory (Young (2001:15) is defined as a "product of resistance to colonialism and imperialism." It is an ongoing struggle against socio-political and economic injustices within a decolonized setting. Ashcroft, Griffins & Tiffin (1989:2) add that postcolonial theory takes into account "all the culture affected by the imperial process" from the period of colonization to the present day, because "there is a continuity of preoccupations" throughout the history of European aggression. But at the same time, Spivak (1999:1) warns that postcolonial studies, "unwittingly commemorating a lost object, can become an alibi unless it is placed within a general frame." Her fear is that, if the emphasis is focused only on the colonized or on the issues of the colonies, it can serve "the production of current knowledge by placing colonialism/imperialism securely in the past, and/or by suggesting a continuous line from that past to the present."

A similar warning, namely that it would be erroneous to think that the colonized are innocent, whereas the colonizer is "all innately culpable, greedy and responsible for all social evils", also comes from Sugirtharajah (1999:3). Such a deliberate conclusion is only an "inverted colonialism" and "absolves the Third World elite of their patriarchal and vassalizing tendencies." Sugirtharajah (1999:3) therefore suggests that, in looking at the postcolonial paradigm, the researcher should take cognizance of the "complexity of the invader and the invaded", because it is about "critical exchanges and mutual transformation between the two."

Having said that, what should not be neglected here are the effects or consequences of colonialism. Ashcroft et al (1989:9) talk of the damage of *self* by *dislocation* from which an identity crisis emerges. This results from migration and other enslavement experiences or the "self" may have been "destroyed by *cultural denigration*." For Van Aarde (2004a:9) this dislocation is even more acute. He refers to it as "permanent dislocation." In other words, natives do not regain their original cultural values nor can they be fully assimilated into the new context. They seem to be included, but yet are excluded from the new society.

According to Spivak (1999:309), natives live in slow but constant mutation, which unfortunately does not allow them to be equal. They cannot return to their previous position, nor can they be fully integrated into the new situation. This is the part which most challenges postcolonial criticism. The issue of how to remedy the "torn-halves" (Young 1996) and "hybrids" (Young 2001:69) among "us", is the most challenging aspect of postcolonial criticism. Postcolonial theory calls on mutual responsibility and accountability in re-establishing justice, which is an obstacle to former colonizers and the colonized elites alike.

According to Young (2003:1-16), postcolonial theory concerns itself with the following areas: (i) nations seeking independence from sovereign states; (ii) indigenous peoples in border territories seeking independence; (iii) those suffering from the decision of decolonization who seek union with an adjacent decolonized state; (iv) tribal peoples who seek nothing more than their own survival, or those who were forcibly transported under colonial occupation; (v) "fourth-world" nations who seek the basic rights of legal and social equality (e.g. native Americans, the Aboriginal peoples, etc.); (vi) those suffering from social stigma of caste exclusion; (vii) disadvantaged ethnic minorities and impoverished classes in most countries of the world. This study poses the question of how the reading of Matthew could respond to these needs by challenging the powers to enact justice in the lives of the marginalized.

1.4 Reading Matthew from a postcolonial perspective

For the last decade, theologian scholars cautiously began exploring a political hermeneutical venue by using postcolonial theory particularly in the third-world countries (see Donaldson 1996; Dube 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000; Guardiola-Saenz 1997, Segovia 1998, 2001, Sugirtharajah 1995, 1996; 1999, 2001; Punt 2000, 2001; Van Aarde 2004a). A postcolonial approach to biblical studies is gaining ground as a new attempt to challenge existing power structures in human societies in order to heed the voice of the margins reclaiming justice. R S Sugirtharajah is one of the main campaigners of this theory in biblical scholarship.

Following Sugirtharajah's (1999:3-5) argument, postcolonial criticism as a biblical hermeneutics can help (i) "revalue the colonial ideology, stigmatization and negative portrays embedded in the content, the plot and characterization." It consists of looking for colonial intentions (be they political, cultural or economic), which informed and influenced the writer's context. (ii) It helps in "reconstructive reading" which enables the reader to see the concerns of liberation struggles against colonialism and imperialism and their local agents both in the past and present context. It is concerned and interacts with circumstances that have been produced hereto, such as hybridity, fragmentation, land dispossession, statelessness, double or multiple identities. (iii) Postcolonial criticism interrogates colonial interpretation and draws attention to "the inescapable effects of colonization and colonial ideals." It investigates interpretations that challenge colonial interests. Such a view of postcolonial theory helps the researcher to look into both colonizer and the colonized situations in order to produce a remedy, and reconstructive argumentation based on justice and righteousness for all.

The call for active participation in this reading also comes from Donaldson (1996:1-14). Criticism has been leveled at the church and other religious institutions for having facilitated colonial conquests all over the world. Donaldson (1996:2) is of the opinion that postcolonial criticism helps to fill the "intellectual and ethical void" and requires not only "a systematic accounting of Christianity's participation in imperialism", but also that of individual congregations to actively engage in the work of decolonization. Carter's (1999, 2000, 2001) works are relevant to this study, particularly with regard to how he treats Roman imperialism, contrasting it with the kingdom of God in a Matthean context. Although he does not draw any contemporary parallels, the situation of the Banyamulenge community would certainly be one of such example.

Carter (2001:1) demonstrates how Matthew resisted the powers of his day and how he, through his teaching, contended "that the world belongs to God and not to Rome" and that justice and righteousness should prevail. This study aims to challenge every social and political institution of influence, particularly the church, to become involved with and to engage with stakeholders in order to restore justice and righteousness for all, but specifically for the poor and others marginalized on the basis of their social, religious, gender and ethnic appurtenance.

1.5 Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study are:

- that the theme of justice and righteousness is an important one in Matthew's theology;
- that all people, poor and rich, Judeans and aliens, the powerful and the powerless are equal before the law and thus are entitled to fair judgment, regardless of their social, economic and political status;
- that the act of contesting Banyamulenge citizenship by successive governments of the DRC constitutes a threat to justice and righteousness and should be challenged because it is a political result of colonial and postcolonial devices;
- that postcolonial theory is the appropriate method in terms of which not only Matthew can be read constructively from context to text, but which also gives it a more contemporary significance as it is applied to a contemporary neo-colonial context.

1.6 Aims of the Study

This study seeks to contribute towards a postcolonial reading in Matthean scholarship, specifically by examining the concept of justice and righteousness. It deals with the question of how justice and righteousness is applied in the Matthean community and beyond. The argument is based on the social and political setting of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). This approach is further applied to the most controversial reading of the story of the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28). The aim of the study is to draw a contemporary parallel to the case of the Banyamulenge community, whose social and political identities have been opposed by the government of Congo since early 1960s.

Due to the nature of this study, some available data were collected in their original languages rather than in English. For the purpose of this research, the original language is maintained and a literal translation is provided by the researcher.

1.7 The plan of the study

This study comprises six chapters. Chapter one covers the general introduction, research gap and the aims of the study. In chapter two, the researcher deals with the formation of theory and

method. Postcolonial theory is developed from secular and biblical perspectives, and towards the end of the chapter, principles which are helpful for the reading of Matthew's Gospel, are identified. The concept of justice and righteousness will be defined and developed from social scientific and biblical usages thereof.

Chapter three explores the social location, namely the Banyamulenge community. This analysis is based on the community's cultural, political and religious formation. Chapter four concerns itself with the social location of Matthew. This chapter comprises a general overview of the social, economic and political realities of the Matthean community under Roman occupation.

Chapter five deals with a postcolonial exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7); the Sermon's teaching on justice and righteousness as background for understanding the story of the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28) and its present-day meaning for the Banyamulenge context. Finally, the conclusion and recommendations are contained in chapter six which is followed by an appendix and a bibliography.