CHAPTER V
JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN MATTHEW 5-7 AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE BANYAMULENGE COMMUNITY

5.1 Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount, lays the foundation for the Matthean community's structure which is based on law – justice and righteousness (Mt 5:17-20), order (5:21-48) and social responsibility (Mt 6:1-7:1-26). A number of theologians have drawn some connections between the Sermon on the Mount and the rest of the narrative (Anderson 1988:496; 1996:233; Overman 1990:94-101; Vledder 1997:27; Carter 2000:128-129). It provides an alternative for the oppressive, chaotic and unjust environment caused by Roman colonization and its local collaborators which need to be dealt with. According to Carter (2000:128-129; see Crosby 1988:147-195), the Roman empire is dominated by the *pax Romana* (Wengst 1987) which, however, is disruptive. The Sermon on the Mount, on the other hand, presents an alternative world marked by restructured societal relationship based on equal redistribution of resources.

The aim of this chapter is to understand the utility of the Sermon on the Mount from a postcolonial reading in a postwar community. The attention will be drawn to the relationship between the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) and the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28), and the Banyamulenge community. The argument is that Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom is not a matter of comforting those in need and encouraging them to wait for their deliverance in the consummation of times. Rather, the implication of the kingdom's happiness starts from the announcement of the king's birth (Mt 1:23), the beginning of his ministry (Mt 4:23) to the consummation of ages (Mt 28:20). In other words, the concept of Emmanuel is a non interruptive presence, which in fact, finds its dwelling place among his people regardless of social, political and religious circumstances. John's revelation defines the concept of Emmanuel in terms of the Alfa and Omega (Rv 1:8), making his dwelling place among his people (Rv 21:3).

Salvation which is promised to the poor, the hungry and the mourners and a process of reconciliation between the Judeans themselves and the Gentiles, thus already becomes a reality. Because Jesus, the Messiah, is turning to the *déclassé* (Luz 1990:231) in his public contacts and (re)claiming their justice. Justice and righteousness, being the core value in Jesus' teaching, guides this study in finding the most effective postcolonial interpretation inherent to it. The findings are then applied to the situation of the Canaanite woman and the Banyamulenge community within the context of its social location, described in chapters three above.

5.2 An overview of the Sermon on the Mount

The Matthean community is called to live according to the new way of life by doing God's will and by living a brotherly life in the community where justice and righteousness prevail. Traditionally, Luz (1990:229-231) agrees with Sabourin (1982:333) and Dupont's (1973:312-313) views on the three triads of the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-11). This section of the Sermon can be divided into (i) impartation of grace; (ii) ethical admonition; and (iii) order for the community life (see Overman 1990:94-100; 1996:103-110). The main purpose of these *macarisms* (the Beatitudes), is to respond to the very social, religious and political circumstances in which the disciples of Jesus and the crowds (peasants, women, children, the sick and unclean, the poor, the Gentiles) are living. Luz argues that the background of the Beatitudes is the apocalyptic hope for a complete reversal of circumstances.

The Sermon on the Mount is a social-political and religious discourse by which Matthew responds to his situation. The Matthean context was largely influenced by social, economic, and political realities which eventually shaped his Gospel (see Freyne 1980; Stambaugh & Balch 1986; Oakam 1989; Horsley 1993; Overman 1990; Stark 1991:189-205; Carter 2001).[306] Thus Luz's (1990:231) interpretation of the term "poor" does not need to be given a spiritual connotation in the first instance. For him the term "poor" in terms of its Semitic interpretation, does not only mean those who are lacking in money but, more comprehensively, "the oppressed, miserable, dependent, humiliated – but by no means *only* a

[306] See chapter four above.

certain type of piety and/or *only* a poverty which is separated from external circumstances and is internal."

As it is delivered, the Sermon on the Mount, has about three audiences around the newly (or intended) created structure of brotherhood (Mt 5:22-24, 47; 7:3-5; 18:15-20). The main groups addressed in the Sermon include the crowds (Mt 5:1; 7:28), the disciples (Mt 5:2; 7:29), and the rest, the world at large (Mt 5:20, 22; 6:10). Within the proposed structure, unconditional love, care for the needy, forgiveness, tolerance and communal prayer were to be practiced. Therefore, the teaching within the Sermon (Luz 1995:42-62) is a universal manual, which is to promote justice as a standard for all (Mt 5:17-20; 7:12). Overman (1990:94-100) sees the Sermon as a "constitution" with its primary focus being on "the ordering of relationships and behaviour" within the Matthean community for it to survive the pressure of Formative Judaism and implicitly the Roman occupation. It contains "values and norms" and self-definition that legitimize the life of the community, which are summarized in *dikaiosyne*.

Consequently, justice and righteousness (Mt 3:15; 5:6; 6:1; 21:6) becomes the highest standard in fulfilling God's will. According to Allison (1993:183), righteousness is seen as "doing more". By conveying its message of Jesus' teaching and the principle of righteousness, Matthew should not be seen to be subversive, according to Bornkamm (1971:31) and Overman (1990:87). What Matthew does, is to show the new interpretation thereof which fits in with the will of God. The distinction between violating the law and fulfilling it through a different interpretation is an important argument. Bornkamm (1971:31) puts it as follows:

> Matthew understands the law in a way which does not differ in principle from that of Judaism …The sadness in his contrast to Judaism arises from the discrepancy between doctrine and deeds on the part of his opponents, and at the same time … from the misuse and failure of an interpretation of the law, which does not enquire concerning the original meaning of the divine demand and refuses to perceive the essentials of the law.

Matthew is reacting to some relaxation in obeying the law by some unidentified teachers of the law (Mt 5:19). But at the same time, he is convinced that the way to know and to teach the law, is by doing it (Mt 7:12; 12:50; 21:31). This new interpretation is explained in the Matthean antitheses (Mt 5:21-48) and its essence is to be found in loving God (Mt 22:37-38) and the neighbor (Mt 22:39). In his examination of the new interpretation of the law, Allison (1993:183) sees a "continuity" of the Mosaic Law and some "newness in the present, and it does not surprise when 5:21-48 goes beyond the letter of the law to demand even more." Here again, responsibility and accountability are not measured by the legalistic stand of the law, but in its fulfillment, which is to do justice and righteousness. Hence, observance of the law is an entrance requirement into the kingdom (Mt 5:17-20; 22:40). Its fulfillment in doing justice and righteousness sets a standard for rewards at the day of judgment (Mt 25:31-46), where the doer of justice and righteous is at peace with the judge.

Matthew is familiar with policies of the *pax Romana*, which in itself is repressive and exploitive (see Horsley 1989:74-77; 1993:33-43; Carter 2001:26-27). This system must be replaced by a just kingdom, whose sons are peacemakers (Mt 5:9), who do not cause chaos, but judge with love and equity (Mt 7:1-5). They do not avenge, but forgive (Mt 5:21-26; 6:12); they do not exploit, but give to the needy, showing them respect and giving in a discreet way (Mt 6:1-4). This is the way of the kingdom in which Emmanuel (Mt 1:23) is proclaimed, in contrast to the Roman imperial regime which is ruled by injustice.

5.3 The Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12)

5.3.1 Jesus and the crowds at the mountain (Mt 5:1-2)

It is important to take note of Jesus' attitude at the introduction of the Beatitudes.[307] In the interest of the crowds, *ochloi* (Mt 5:1), Jesus engaged with the realities of his time. He met

[307] See the works on Beatitudes in three volumes of Jacques Dupont, *Les Beatitudes, Tome I : Le problème littéraire. Les deux versions du sermon sur la montagne et des Beatitudes.* 2nd ed. Paris: J Gabalda et Cte Editeurs, 1969; *Tome II : La bonne nouvelle*, 1969; *Tome III: Les Evangélistes*, 1973. See also James M Boice, *The Sermon on the Mount: An exposition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972; U Luz, *Matthew 1-7. A commentary*, translated by W C Linss. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989, pp. 209-460; Dennis Hamm, *The Beatitudes in context*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1990 (cf also Sabourin 1982:335-353; Powell 1996:460-479).

people who were weary and burdened (Mt 11:28-30), who could no longer bear the rule of injustice imposed on them by political repression, socio-economic and religious exploitation.

Reading the Sermon on the Mount from the perspective of anti-colonial struggles, particularly in line with Cabral's (1980:81) perspective of "unity and struggle", solidarity with the peasants comes to the fore. It is quite probable that after seeing the devastating conditions of the crowds, of which neither the Roman regime nor religious leaders took any heed, Jesus was forced to give a revolutionary lecture. Cabral's conviction is that every struggle is owned by people only if the reason for that struggle is based on the aspirations and the desire for justice and the progress of the people. Thus, those who are able, regardless of their color, status and provenance, must show solidarity with those who are struggling to overcome injustice.

Jesus was definitely not talking in a vacuum. He is challenging the existing power structures that were not doing justice and righteousness on behalf the poor and the weak. Instead, they abused their *raison d'être* (cf Ex 22:21-27; 23:9; Lv 23:23; Dt 24). Hagner (1993:86), like Allison (1993:172-181), is tempted to use Moses typology which has been referred to by among others Sabourin (1982:325-327). Matthew may well have had in mind a picture of Moses who went up to Mount Sinai to receive the law (Ex 19-20). Jesus, in a way like a new Moses, ascends to the mountain "to mediate the true interpretation" of the Torah. However, Hagner is not that decisively convinced that the evangelist was emphasizing the Moses typology. For Sabourin (1982:325), however, Jesus on the mountain speaks like a "new Moses proclaiming the new law of the kingdom."

If the parallel of Moses (Luz 1990:224; Allison 1993:172-181; Garland 1993:51-52; Carter 2000:129-130) is to be used in the Sermon of the Mountain, it is necessary to refer to his charismatic leadership. Israel placed its hope in Moses' leadership, which was better than that of Pharaoh (Ex 1:1-2:10; 5:1-6:1-13). Moses consecrated his time in leading the Israelites who came to him to seek the will of God (Ex 18:15). It is equally important to see that the Matthean crowds were going through an apocalyptic episode in the aftermath of the war, and sought a wise counsel for their survival.

Thus, the crowds were yearning for a leader, a Messiah who would bring deliverance (Mt 1:23) and would take care of their worries (Mt 6:25-34). The crowds were anxious to be healed by Jesus (Mt 4:24-25; Mk 3:7-11), to be fed (Mt 5:6;14:13-21;15:29-39; Mk 8:1-10), and the mourners longed for consolation and comfort (Mt 2:18; 5:4) because of the persecution (Mt 5:11) and the killings they witnessed (Mt 14:10; 23:35-37). In the crowd were those who were dispossessed of their land because of indebtedness as well as many depressed and hopeless people as consequences of war and colonial regime.

Therefore, ascending the mountain (see Carter 2001:129-130) was to challenge imperial rule and to reclaim the land and proclaim the kingdom of justice and righteousness on behalf of the poor. The way the "mountain" concept is used here is worth noting.[308] Camping on the mountain (Mt 5:1) and calling the crowd seem to be a sign of defiance to the existing power structures that unjustly occupied the land. Jesus had previously engaged and defeated evil powers on the mountain (Mt 4:1-11). He healed multitudes and fed great crowds at the mountainside (Mt 15:29-39). A transfiguration ceremony took place on a mountain during a consultative meeting with heavenly emissaries (Mt 17:1-11). On the Mount of Olives (Mt 24:3), he led his disciples in an eschatological teaching. He met his disciples at a mountain after overcoming death, which is the last measure of punishment imposed by a tyrannous government (Mt 28:16-18). In his post-paschal address, Jesus commanded his disciples to go and claim not only Palestine but the world back for God's rule (Mt 28:19-20).

Abraham, of the Israelite nation and the father of faith strengthened his friendship with God at Moriah (Gn 22:1-19). At mount Horeb (Ex 3), Moses negotiated with God about the political future of Israelite refugees and slaves. Moses camped on a hill while Joshua fought against the Amelekites (Ex 17:8-15); Moses sojourned at Sinai in the company of the divine host, whereby Israel was given a new identity (Ex 19:1-17; 20:1-21). Elijah at the mountain Carmel (1 Ki 18:16-39) challenged Ahab's exploitative rule, which had fallen from God's standards of justice and righteousness.

[308] See Terence, L Donaldson, *Jesus on the mountain: A study in Matthean theology*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985.

In the twentieth century, Martin Luther King's (1992) prophetic speech "I have a dream", the image of the mountain is paramount. In his speech on the struggle against racism and social injustice inflicted upon the poor by the United States government, King (1992:192-203) took fellow African-Americans and other members of his audience with him up to "the mountaintop,"[309] and he saw in his "dream" the promised land, where equality and mutual respect reign.

Therefore, territorial occupation by or on behalf of the oppressed is a revolutionary position which offers a better space for the Matthean Jesus to defend the dignity of the defenseless and be the voice of the voiceless. The Matthean Jesus places himself in a locality which implies his march in the footsteps of the God of Exodus, whose definition of justice and righteousness means taking side with the oppressed (cf Pixley & Boff 1995:218).

The Matthean Beatitudes on the mountain can be taken as a summary of Jesus' socio-political and religious discourse in the Sermon on the Mount (Dupont 1973:316; see Van Tilborg 1986:164), and as a springboard for the rest of the teaching and ministry in the narrative. Quoting F Grawet, Dupont (1973:316; cf also Sabourin 1982:332) mentions an existing correspondence between the Beatitudes and the rest of the Sermon as follows: Mt 5:3 and 7:7-11; Mt 5:4 and 7:3-6; Mt 5:5 and 7:1-2; Mt 5:6 and 6:1-34; Mt 5:7 and 5:38-48; Mt 5:8 and 5:27-37; Mt 5:9 and Mt 5:17-26; and Mt 5:10 and 5:11-16. For Carter (2000:131), the Beatitudes are constructed in a descriptive manner in order to point to the "oppressive situations of distress" that characterize the Matthean context. They expose and challenge the existing social, political and religious structures which infringe suffering upon people. At the same time they also express God's transforming power that delineates the Roman empire and all its oppressive structures.

5.3.2 The poor and the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:3)

There are three Greek words that translate the word "poor" or "poverty" (Dupont 1969b:19-34), namely *penichros*, *penes* and *ptochos*. *Penichros* refers to the poor or the needy (Lk

[309] This is a figurative concept in King's speech.

12:2); *penes* refers to a poor person or day labourer, and *ptochos* means a beggar. The latter term is used by Matthew to refer to the poor (Mt 5:3;11:5; 19:21; 26:11). Van Tilborg (1986:14-19) argues that the term beggar is used in Matthew for those who depend on nothing but God's provision.

Luz (1990:231) concedes that *ptochos* is the strongest available Greek word for social poverty. The term *ptochos* is also used in the Septuagint and it emphasizes the social aspects that correspond to Jesus' meaning in the Beatitudes. Unlike Luke, who clearly states poverty in social circumstances (Lk 6:20), the Matthean addition "in spirit" can be ambiguous. Dupont (1969a:216-217) and Luz (1990:232) prudently question the use of *ptochos to pneumatai*, which shifts the meaning by moving from a social to a spiritual connotation: piety or voluntary poverty. Bligh (1975:43-44) and Hagner (1993:92) argue that Matthew is talking about voluntary poverty, while Sabourin (1982:342-343) thinks that the connotation carries a religious signification. Bligh's implication is that the term "poor in spirit" seems to refer to "something other than real, economic poverty".

Hare (1993:36-37) on the other hand, argues that the phrase "the poor in spirit" refers neither to those who are poor for religious reasons (voluntarily poor), nor to those who are deficient with respect to spirit, but to those "who manifest the attitude, appropriate to their condition", that is, humble dependence on God's grace. However, quoting A Pieris, Phan (1997:226) explains two kinds of poverty: "forced poverty" which is the fruit of injustice, and "voluntary poverty" which is "the seed of liberation." In other words, voluntary poverty can be embraced in solidarity with the poor in protest against imposed poverty. Consequently, liberation can be seen as twofold: as "an interior emancipation from spiritual slavery", and as a "release from sociopolitical and economic enslavement."

The argument is that Jesus is talking to people whose poverty has been imposed on them by social, political and religious circumstances in which the victims have no control. Powell (1996:463-464) adds that the Hebrew word *anawim* is semantically equivalent to "poor in spirit" and that this emphasis on spiritual poverty "redefines them as people who may be on

the verge of giving up." It can be convincingly argued that the Matthean audience is "poor in spirit" because they have no reason for hope in their current unjust state.

However, Jesus' proclamation that the kingdom of God belongs to "the poor in spirit" implies the accomplishment of God's will as a holistic mission. Arguing from the perspective of the Mediterranean societal codes of honor and shame, Malina and Rohrbaugh (1992:48) comment that to be poor means to fall below the status into which one was born.[310] The proclamation of the kingdom of heaven to the poor (Mt 5:3b) therefore means a complete reversal of circumstances and a complete restoration human dignity.

The essence of "belonging" is in itself a revolutionary concept for the poor and the marginalized. It implies something similar to a certitude of citizenship – and in a Roman colony not everyone had a right to citizenship. This is clear in the account of Paul and Silas' imprisonment at Philippi (Ac 16:35-40). It was mainly prominent people in politics and businesses who were given Roman citizenship. Kee (1997:200-201; cf Witherington 1998:499-502) explains "select … indigenous leaders in the *coloniae* would be designated as Roman citizens" while other residents were called *incolae* (resident aliens). Citizens generally served as members of the civic councils and were chosen from the wealthy families in the community. They were appointed for life. However, an exception was made for slaves who were "manumitted by citizens", as well as military veterans and their sons. Consequently, Palestine had many people who were stateless, and it is these people to whom the kingdom of God gives preference.

As part of his ministry to the needy, Jesus proclaimed a kingdom of justice and righteousness by healing the sick (for example, in Mt 4:23-25; 8:1-17; 9:1-8, 18-34; 12:9-14; 17:14-18) and welcoming tax collectors, prostitutes, Gentiles (Mt 21:31;15:21-28) and the rejected children (Mt 19:13-15; see Van Aarde 2001). He challenged the rich on behalf of the poor (Mt 19:24). He fed the hungry (Mt 8:5-13; 12:1-8; 14:13-21; 15:29-39) and defied the religious rulers on behalf of justice and righteousness (Mt 12:1-14; 23:15-39; 23).

[310] Beyond this definition, there are also those who are born poor. According to Israelite tradition, all those born with infirmities were considered unclean and thus poor.

Carter (2000:131) argues that the meaning of "poor" in Matthew's gospel should not be understood in either a figurative or a spiritualized way. There were the literally and physically destitute people in the Judean community. There were those who "lack adequate resources." They were exploited and oppressed by the wealthy and powerful. These "poor" included aliens, widows, orphans, and the physically handicapped persons (Lv 19:10, 15; Dt 24:19-21; Job 29:12-16; Pr 14:31; Mt 19:13-15; 21:14). Van Tilborg (1986:19) mentions that Jesus' proclamation of the *basileia* restored the "quality of a person" because it implies that God's power reigns against the power of dictatorship and leads to the liberty of subjects (see also Is 61:1-2, as quoted in Lk 4:18-19). Therefore, "the poor in spirit" is to be understood in the light of hopelessness and despondency in the lives of those who were oppressed by the existing power structures.

Dupont (1969b:105-123; cf Horsley 1993:165-172) also explains the essence of God's *basileia* as "good news" proclaimed to despondent people. God's *basileia* became a reality for and among these people because the *basileia* belongs to them. According to Sabourin (1982:341), this promise of the kingdom points to the whole "divine economy" of the messianic age, proclaimed and enacted by Jesus, who defended the weak. The good news to the poor, according to Dupont (1969b:104), is that "*Dieu … va prendre la défense de son peuple opprimé et lui accorder le salut.*"[311] God invites all men to co-work with him in doing justice to the poor and in comforting the afflicted.

Van Tilborg's (1986:83-89; see Bligh 1975:119-121; Sabourin's 1982:386-367) argument about the giving of alms to the poor (Mt 6:2-4) in a world of inequalities, maintains that "justice must be the governing factor with equality as guide". And it must be construed within economic realities that people are living in. Moreover, the act of giving must be motivated by mercy and compassion. According to Ulrich Luz, the practice of welfare and almsgiving was not common in synagogues after the destruction of the temple (cf Carter 2000:158-160):

[311] "God … will come to the defense of his people who are being oppressed and he will save them."

> In the period of early Christianity, there was not the care of the poor in the synagogue which was organized on the community level and was unique in antiquity, but the distribution of the tithe for the poor was left to the judgment of the individual. Benevolence was recommended all the more strongly. Jewish sources demonstrate that almsgiving was also abused and offered opportunity for advantageous public self-display.
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> (Luz 1990:356)

The synagogue played an important role as a replacement for the temple and people who gave more were actually given a preferential seat, such as "sitting next to the rabbi." The teaching of Matthew is opposed to those who do not practice giving for the sake of justice and righteousness: not "for mercy" (Carter 2000:159), but for their own fame, because in the Matthean community, no-one should take advantage of the needy (Ex 23:21-27) as those – in economic, political and religious positions of power – are seen as hypocrites, who are "self-deceived" (Garland 1993:78; cf Crosby 1988:205). The principle is that whatever is done to the needy, is done on behalf of God (Mt 10:40-42; 25:35-42; cf Mk 9:40; Heb 6:10; Ja 1:27).

5.3.3 Consolation for the mourners (Mt 5:4)

Those who mourn will be comforted. According to Dupont (1969b:35-37; cf Sabourin 1982:344), two Greek words are used to refer to mourners and the afflicted. *Lupe* is a general word for pain, sorrow and affliction "*le mot caractérise l'état d'âme de celui qui est affecté par un événement malheureux, ou simplement désagréable.*"[312] The word *penthos*, on the other hand, refers to an affliction that is more acute, which is externalized by tears and lamentations: "*elle est si violente qu'elle se manifeste par des larmes, par des lamentations.*"[313] Often, *penthos* is associated with the word *klaio*, to weep.[314]

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[312] The term that characterizes the state of mind of him who is affected by an unfortunate or simply unpleasant event.

[313] It is so violent that it manifests itself in tears and in lamentation.

[314] S v *penthos*. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1968.

As a consequence, Luke can indeed refer to those who weep (Lk 6:21). Mourning rituals are culturally diverse, but what is important to note is that regardless of the culture, the bereaved need to be comforted (Is 61: 2-3; Mk 16:10; Lk 8:52; 23:27; Jn 11:1-44; Ac 8:2; 9:36; Rv 5:5). Matthew refers to mothers in Bethlehem mourning their innocent children (boys) killed in the brutal and ruthless massacre by Herod (Mt 2:16). This is reminiscent of Pharaoh's plan of ethnic cleansing (*kurimbura igitsina gabo*)[315] – where baby boys were killed, which left Israelite mothers uncomforted (Ex 1:15-2:1-10); and is reminiscent of the Egyptian women's grief (Ex 11), whose firstborns were innocently killed by an angel in punishment of Pharaoh's oppressive regime against the refugees.

Josephus records the killing of many leaders during Herod's death, so that the country would mourn them with Herod (Barbour 1988:43-44). According to Van Tilborg (1986:21), Matthew opens his narrative with "violence, deceit, and royal arbitrariness", the realities of suffering people. In sorrow, fear and confusion, families fled their homes and country with little hope of returning to their country or region of birth (Mt 2:22); mothers could not be consoled (Mt 2:5-6; Mc 5:2) in the land where tears and lamentations of the innocent go unheard. People mourned and longed for justice and righteousness, because they had been denied justice (Carter 2000:133), and they lived under the pressure of debts, taxes and landlessness. In other words, the people constantly lived under the shadow of death (Mt 4:16).

Jesus, a *rescapé* (a survivor) of the massacre (Mt 2:13), who grew up in a refugee camp (Mt 2:14-15) and in a displaced location (Mt 2:19-23), turns into a "liberated liberator" (Wainwright 1998:60-66), and a comforter (Is 40:1; 49:13. 51:3; 61:2; Jr 31:13). Jesus and his family, who had experienced the injustice and misery of the Roman brutal force, understood the language – the heavy heart – of the mourners. Van Tilborg (1986:22) is convinced that Matthew presents Jesus as "someone who knows whereof he speaks." The Matthean audience is no stranger to mourning, as it is the victim of daily injustice and

[315] This is an ideology of genocide in process. In Kinyamulenge, it means to wipe out the male gender.

violence perpetrated by brutal and colonial powers. But now, the suffering should come to an end, for God's salvation has come to rule with justice and righteousness; to restore people's joy and turn their mourning into gladness (Jr 31:13). One of Matthew's contemporaries, John on the Island of Patmos, presents Jesus in his revelation as one who has won a victory over death (Rv 1:18) and mourning (Rv 18:8; 21:4) in the same way as Paul edifies the Corinthian believers (1 Cor 15:54-57).

The Roman regime used (excessive) force to discourage any attempt at opposition to its interests, ironically called *pax Romana* (the peace of Rome). The crucifixion of Jesus (Mt 28:32) was politically and religiously a relief to both the Romans and the religious leaders of Israel. As the "mourning of mothers" anticipated his death in Matthew, in Luke he comforted the "women of Jerusalem" when he faced this death (Lk 23:28). Matthew refers in the Beatitudes to the same kind of comfort. The implication is that, even in death, Jesus challenged the Roman and the religious leaders' failure to do justice and act righteously. His joyful and victorious resurrection therefore caused a scandal that shook these same rulers, but brought hope and strength to the community of his followers (cf Neh 8:10).

5.3.4 The meek and the inheritance of the land (Mt 5:5)

The term *praus* refers to those who are meek, gentle or humble and Matthew uses it three times (Mt 5:5; 11:29; 21:5). It can also mean the powerless, the poor and the afflicted (Carter 2000:132-133; see Dupont 1969b:19-90). The meek (Mt 5:5) referred to those dispossessed of their land and who lost their dignity as a result, while others were evicted from their land as a result of debts. The land of their ancestors was grabbed by the powerful, while the meek watched on helplessly and become more disillusioned with the socio-economic, political and religious exploitation and discrimination of their day. Land (see Lohfink 1997:236-237) is an ancestral inheritance affiliated to the socio-economic, political and religious identity of a people (cf Lk 2:1-7). Landless people were constant strangers and wanderers, a people with no identity, with no physical location (cf Ex 2:22; 1 Pt 1:1).

In Israelite culture, land ownership (Van Tilborg 1986:23-27; Freyne 1980:155-170; Oakman 1986:141-156) was a family's inheritance whereby the ancestral land could only be sold to

another member of the family, or a countryman (Lv 25:25-28). This was in accordance with jubilee principles when the land reverted to the original owner (Lv 25:8-34). While the land could be leased to a stranger in times of need, it could never be sold to him (see Van Tilborg 1986:23-26). The land was furthermore divided among different clans (Jos 14-19) according to God's will, because, he still owned the land (Lv 25:23). Van Tilborg (1986:24) quotes Philo who said that "the whole country is called God's property, and it is against religion to have anything that is God's property registered under other masters." In such circumstance, it was difficult, if not impossible, to conclude any sales agreement in respect of the land. Only its produce, such as fruit, could be sold. The story of Naboth and King Ahab is of particular relevance here (1 Ki 21).

Since the Judeans had lost the war against the Romans, everything had to be reformulated and had to function according to Roman laws. According to Van Tilborg (1986:24), legal protection of the land was abolished or was simply ignored and the land became "an object of trade". Moreover, in circumstances of war and in the aftermath peasants lost their land. Some were forced into exile, thereby losing their land. Others were forced to sell their land because of taxes and indebtedness or to get a means of subsistence (Mt 6:25-34). The parable of tenants (Mt 21:33-41) explains the hardship and desperate situation of the peasants. In this new form of selling, land had apparently "lost the protection of the clan" and the family.

Van Tilborg (1986:25) notes that in the postwar period, the Roman emperor grabbed and confiscated "vast tracts of land, declared them as his personal property and/or gave them on loan to veterans and collaborators." Mishnah also refers to "the [*siqariqôn*] – the laws dealing with the purchase of the confiscated property –, it is clear that Jewish countermeasures were necessary." It is from these sins of oppression (Carter 2001:70), domination and economic greed, which the world's need for a Savior heightened. It is in such circumstances that Matthew evokes the second Beatitude, namely that the powerless, those who cannot defend or speak for themselves, the subalterns (Guha 1982a, 1982b; Spivak 1988:197-221; Young 2001:352; Loomba 1998:231-245), those whose land was taken from them, would be restored. Matthew did not submit to and did not concede this

defeat; he still expected a comeback through a divine messianic plan that would make Israel whole once more.

Again, according to Van Tilborg (1986:27), the idea of submission is used to refer to /to describe animals which carry heavy burdens. It can also be used as a parallel word to refer to the poor who is subjected and "covered by injustice." For Matthew, the use of meekness, humility or submissiveness, does not in this particular context refer to a coward. Rather, it denotes a sign of resistance and defiance to an oppressive scheme. Matthew presents Jesus as a leader who introduces a kingdom – an empire of justice and righteousness – in contrast to the Roman empire which exploits and extorts the land from the peasants.

God's reign is ever present among his people. This reign is also different from the Roman empire. Emmanuel (Mt 1:23) is also evoked in the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:9-15): "may your kingdom come." Here again, Matthew being Judean (cf Allison 1993:172-206; Luz 1995:30-41), reminds himself of the theocratic reign of the Exodus, when God's presence dwelt among Israelites (Ex 33:12-20); when jubilee was celebrated, debts forgiven and slaves set free, while the land was restored to the owner (Lv 25; Dt 15); when community leaders ruled with justice and commitment to the cause of the people (Ex 18:13-26); when the fatherless, widows and aliens were taken care of (Ex 22:21-24; Lv19:9-10; Dt 24:14-22); and where food, shelter and health were provided daily and in equal measure (Ex 16, 17:1-10; Nm 21:8-9).

Moreover, the same presence of Emmanuel is in the reverence of God's name,[316] as the provider, protector, benefactor and most importantly the ever present, comforting God in times of need. Self-identification of God is a common feature in the Old Testament tradition, but the most interesting example is Moses' encounter with God "*ehyeh asher ehyeh*" : "I am whom I am" (Ex 3:13). For Waetjen (1999:59-62), the self-identification to Moses is not to be construed as a name, but rather as "a notification" that God cannot be confined by any

[316] In Banyamulenge tradition, the praise of the name of a benefactor is common and is called *kwirahira umuhanyi*. This tradition is seen in the Israelite tradition too, when Israel remembers God of Abraham, Jacob and Isaac.

human title. Consequently, God's presence among his people becomes an ever present solution to the meek, which gives them right to belong and the power to possess.

Matthew sees God's will being done in a form of a re-visitation, this time not from the ancient past, but from within the community (Mt 1:21-22) living in darkness and in the shadow of death (Mt 4:15-16), because the empire of God is with them (Mt 4:23:4; cf Lk 7:16-17). Oakman (1999:139) makes the point that Jesus' religion spoke to an "immediate need in concrete terms". That is, God's kingdom of justice and righteousness, means to resist the massive illegal accumulation of land which was occurring through taxes and defaults on high-interest loans, which deprived peasants access to those resources that were vital for survival (see Carter 2000:133). Once again, Matthew contrasts God's kingdom with that of the Romans and the temple leaders who failed people's expectations (cf Jr 7:1-8; 22:1-10; Am 2:4-8).

From John the Baptist's proclamation (Mt 3:2) to Jesus' own teaching and action (Mt 4-28) the kingdom of God became a reality among the people. He taught members of the community (Mt 6:10-13) to constantly pray for the presence of the kingdom (Van Tilborg 1986:103-130), in which God's will would be reestablished on earth. Debts would be cancelled, food would be provided on daily basis and deliverance and protection would be assured. In this regard, Horsley (1993:170; cf Carter 2000:165-166), points out that the kingdom of God is a "political metaphor and a symbol" because, it includes the "social-economic-political substance" of human relations as willed by God. That is, God is experienced as a king who provides basic necessities, land, shelter, peace and security to the people in need – a "life giving- kingdom" (Carter 2000:165). This designation is in contrast to the Roman emperor whose rule is exploitive and oppressive. According to Warren Carter, the purpose of the Matthean type of kingdom is to destroy/crush the evil kingdom which caused

> [t]he suffering in 4:23-25 and oppressive and exploitive actions in an imperial system which deprives many of the earth's resources

> in 5:3-6 – not to mention the murderous actions of the imperial puppet Herod in 2:13-23, the resistant religious leaders in 3:7-12, or the devil's claim in 4:1-11 – have established widespread rebellion against the divine will.
>
> (Carter 2000:165)

Horsley (1993:169) sees the divine activity of the kingdom of God as focusing "on the needs and desires of people." This is in line with Jesus' reply to John the Baptist's enquiry while in prison (Mt 11:2-5). It is also similar to the Lucan community' enthusiasm when they looked at him and said "God has come to help his people" (Lk 7:16). Therefore, the presence of God's kingdom is a consolation to the landless, the powerless unable to defend their own rights. It is also important to note that the good news preached reminds the powerless of their right to re-possess what was theirs, but robbed from them by exploitive regimes.

5.3.5 The hungry and thirsty for righteousness (Mt 5:6)

The joy that it brings is not only to the mourners, but also to the hungry and the thirsty who would be satisfied (Mt 5:6). According to Van Tilborg (1986:28), by remodeling the Beatitude, which refers to those who hunger for a meal and thirst for water into a desire, explains how people longed for justice. Carter (2000:133) argues that the concern is with "unjust practices" in connection with land, access to resources, taxes and debts. People are dissatisfied with "the status quo of exploitive social relations."

But hunger and thirst must not, in this case, be entirely taken as a metaphor, because it speaks about real life in the Matthean times. According to the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (1968), two Greek words are used to express hunger. The word *peino* means "to desire for something". It can refer to people who are "painfully deficient" in basic needs of life and since they cannot help themselves, they turn to God. On the other hand, *limo*, "to lack", denotes an acute lack of food as a result of the absence of, literally, means of supplies.

In ancient Near East societies: (Mesopotamia, Ugarit, Egypt and Israel (see Dupont 1969b:54-90; Weinfeld 1995, Nardoni 2004:1-90), it was the social and political duty of rulers to ensure a subsistence level which would keep their subjects from hunger and protect them from afflictions. Pharaoh and Joseph in Genesis (41) are a case in point. Hammurabi (Richardson 2000:33, 37) said that he was a king who "protects the people of Malgium from catastrophes, who secures their habitations with plentiful supplies" of food and water; God identifies himself as the chief supplier of food and water for Israel (Ex 15:22-27; 16:1-17:1-7; Ps 23).

In Palestine, a desert country where the sun was scorching and sand and wind storms were frequent, "thirst was man's constant companion" (Boice 1971:46-47). In such a situation, for people in refugee and displaced camps or people who did not have the necessary means to survive, hunger and thirst became a real concern and struggle for survival (Mt 5:6; 10:42; 11:28-30; 25 35; cf Rt 2:10; Jn 4:7; 6:24; 7:37; 19:28; Rm 12:20). As it has been argued in previous chapter, the Matthean times saw severe famines, caused by either, droughts, poor harvests, earthquakes or insecurity and wars, with peasants being unable to cultivate and harvest their fields. Life was expensive, and people in cities with no jobs or any means of living, or refugees and internally displaced people (Segal 1991:28, Stark 1991:189-205) were the worst affected. Dupont (1969b:38) explains "*[a]voir faim c'est le sort habituel des pauvres et des indigents.*"[317]

Ethics, according to the Israelite tradition, demanded sharing with the needy (e g, Dt 24:12-15, 17-22; Job 22:7; Pr 25:21; Is 32:6; 58:7-10; Ezk 18:7). Matthew would know this old tradition (see Mt 6:2; 10:42; 14:13-21; 15:29-39; 25:35-46). On humanitarian grounds, even non-Israelites helped in emergency feeding programs. Elijah was rescued by a Sidonian widow (1 Ki 17:7-15). The Judean Jesus asked water from a Samaritan woman (Jn 4). Paul personally invested much to make a collection in Diaspora on behalf of the poor in Judea a success (e g, 2 Cor 8-9). Hence, according to Dupont (1969b:39), the audience that the Matthean Jesus addressed consisted of people with no means of survival. Not only were they

[317] Hunger is the usual fate of the poor and indigent.

hungry, but they also had no means to procure food and water to quench their hunger and thirst – these were the "*pauvres, qui ne disposent pas du minimum vital*."

From an African perspective, Ukpong's (1992:55-64) reading of the parable of the sheep and goats (Mt 25:31-46), a reading in search of an "African christology" – is important. Ukpong argues that the hungry and thirsty could have been those people in Africa who do not have the basic necessities of life. These include millions of destitute people, wandering in the streets of African cities and their suburbs from Cape Town to Cairo via Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Africa has millions of street children, refugees, internally displaced people and poor whose lives are reduced to starvation. They are the kind of people with whom Jesus identified himself. In search of an "African women hermeneutics", Oduyoye (1998:362) argues that "African theology" has ensued from an actual experience of living. Africa lives with its "poverty and wars" that have caused famine, the destruction of properties and social structures, and its remnants are at risks of starvation.

Matthew records examples in which Jesus participated in feeding programs. In the wilderness, Satan tempted the hungry Jesus with food (Mt 4:2-3). In a controversial story of the hungry disciples (Mt 12:1-9), Jesus allowed them to pick corn on the Sabbath. Jesus disagreed with his disciples, who were reluctant to engage in this feeding program without adequate food supplies (Mt 14:13-21; 15:29-39). Jesus pleaded with those who had to share with the people who were hungry and thirsty (Mt 10:42; 25:35-46). Jesus encouraged the people to trust in God, who took care of their basic needs such as feeding, clothing and shelter (Mt 6:25-34). Matthew's argument is that "divine supplies" challenged the Roman empire and the Israelite patrons on their failure to attend to the needy. Thus, blessed are those who desire to help those in need, because they are seen as "representatives of the Son of Man" (Van Tilborg 1986:29) on the judgment day.

At this stage, a minor debate with regard to the fourth Beatitude needs to be dealt with. According to Van Tilborg (1986:28-31) and Sabourin (1982:347),[318] this Beatitude concerns

[318] Sabourin (1982:347) states that to hunger and thirst for righteousness "is a source of beatitude, not a social condition of misery as such". But he overlooks the fact that body and soul alike need salvation. Luz (1989:237-238) also sides with those who are of the opinion that that the Beatitude refers to human behaviour.

those who desire to do justice and righteousness, whereas Dupont (1969b:39-51) and Carter (2000:133-134) are of the opinion that the Beatitude actually concerns those who were denied justice and righteousness. Jesus' audience includes all of these categories (Mt 5:1-2), and the message applies to everyone in his/her own capacity. Matthew is rebuilding the Judean society, a society based on a new understanding of the law under the concept of brotherhood.

According to Luz (1989:238), Israelite and even Hellenistic traditions take 'hunger' and 'thirst' to mean "to long for and to make an effort for". In this case, those who were hungry and thirsty to do and see justice and righteousness are members of the community, in contrast of those in the Roman empire and its Judean religious collaborators who fail to give effect to these principles. On the other hand, those who unjustly suffer oppression are saved by the coming in their midst (Mt 6:10; Lk 7:16-17) of God's kingdom of justice and righteousness.

A statement such as "for they will be filled" (Mt 5:6) is a reminder of those days when Israel experienced God's presence and fullness. Even in the wilderness, God fed (Ex 16:1-35), gave water (Ex 15:22-27;17:6-8) and provided shelter (Nm 2) to wandering refugees in the repatriation process. God had commanded the Israelites to feed the hungry people, especially the homeless, among them: orphans, widows and aliens. During harvesting time, the Israelites were instructed not to harvest on the corners of their fields and to leave some sheaves behind (Lv 19:9-10; Dt 24:19-22), so that something would be left for the poor. The story of Naomi and Ruth (Rt 2) serves as an example in this regard.

In those early times, everyone considered it a duty to do justice and to show righteousness, to show mercy by alleviating human suffering in every way possible. God had instructed Israel to give tithes and offerings so that those with no land inheritance, the Levites, the fatherless, widows and aliens would eat and be satisfied (Dt 14:29). Hence, Psalm 23 encapsulates it all. God's presence as a shepherd among his people is an assurance for the Matthean community that their human and spiritual needs provided for, because a righteous

king, who is also merciful, "*est celui qui réprime les oppresseurs et les empêche de nuire aux plus faibles*"[319] (Dupont 1969b:56).

5.3.6 Doing justice in a corrupt society (Mt 5:7-12)

Generally, mercy, purity, peace and compassion are individual responsibilities towards others in society, while persecution is the opposite. The Matthean use of this cluster is rich in meaning. The merciful will experience the mercy of God (Mt 5:7). Mercy (*eleos*) refers to biblical covenant traditions, which bound partners in fidelity in serving or helping one another. In other words, it is a required attitude of man to man or of man to deities and vice versa. Mercy also refers to the emotion roused by contact with an affliction which comes "undeservedly on someone else."[320] As Van Tilborg (1986:31) observes, the practice of mercy as part of a covenant entails "all kinds of contracts" between nations, families and individuals. It can also be between deities and people.

God initiated such a covenant with Israel (Dupont 1973:604-617) in which mutual obligations, an oath of fidelity, punishment in the case of such covenant being breached, are stated. Henceforth, in such covenant (Ex 34:6-7; 1 Sm 20:12) there is an element of dependency and interdependency of obligations that the respective partners have to observe and implement. Van Tilborg (1986:31-32; see Davies 1964:109-190; Sanders 1977:147-182) argues that it is unthinkable to have an Israelite covenant without love, mercy, compassion, pity or fidelity.[321] The Matthean community was under an obligation to be merciful and forgiving to one another (Mt 6:12-15; 18:21), whereby, human compassion becomes "the touch-stone for Israel regarding its fidelity to its covenant with God". The showing of mercy (Pr 14:21; Hs 6:6; Tob 4:5-7; Mt 9:13; 12:7) was not just a desire, but an obligation and a responsibility toward one another, not only to those covered by a covenant contract, but also and particularly to those in need.

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[319] Is he who restrains the oppressors and who prevents them from hurting the weak?

[320] S v *eleos*. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1974.

[321] The ritual of *igihango* (pact of blood) was a regular practice of many tribes in Eastern Congo and in the region. In the case of Banyamulenge, see chapter three section 3.7.1.

The example of David and Jonathan is striking (2 Sm 9). Jonathan was dead but Mephibosheth, a cripple – "a dog" (2 Sm 9:8) was still alive. David asked "Is there no one still left … to whom I can show God's kindness [mercy]" (2 Sm 9:3), "for Jonathan's sake" (2 Sm 9:1)? Mephibosheth represented the many destitute, desperate, poor and marginalized people who needed the support, love, mercy and kindness from the strong, wealthy and the powerful. There are also those who do not necessarily fall under the covenant, but who desperately need help. The Lucan reference to the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) is an interesting example. These examples are very close to the Matthean commentary on the Beatitude of mercy (see Dupont 1973:618-632; Luz 1989:238; Garland 1993:56-57; Carter 2000:134-135).

The Matthean world was a highly insecure world (Klausner 1964:135-175; Barbour 1988, Stark 1991:189-205; Horsley 1993). The violation of human dignity, arbitrary arrests and killings of innocent people, looting and the destruction of properties that occurred, were unbearable. Displaced people in search of humanitarian shelter; wandering stateless people: refugees, the poor, women, children, the sick, the blind, the maims and the hungry, strangers of all kinds, including the Canaanite woman's demon possessed daughter, all needed a language of compassion. The Matthean thesis of mercy for his community stands in contrast to the attitude of the Pharisees and other religious leaders and the rich men, who had neither care nor compassion for the needy (Mt 9:13; Mt 12:7; 19:21-24; 23:23). Luke refers to the Samaritans (Lk 10: 30-37) and tax collectors (Lk 19:5-8) who are merciful in defiance of religious leaders - the hypocrites.

The key words here are mercy and compassion, not tithe and sacrifice (Mt: 9:9-13; 12:1-8; 23:23; Hs 6:6; Am 5:21-24), because God's law is fulfilled in doing justice: showing mercy to the needy (Crosby 1988:198-205). On the other hand, the unforgiving servant (Mt 18:21-35) is a reference of the lack of mercy and human understanding. Van Tilborg (1986:34) says that hunger, sickness and debt are things which Jesus "finds and which call forth his mercy." Matthew confronts the Roman empire and its local agents whose responsibility to protect, and to show mercy to the people, is being jeopardized by the same institutions.

The Matthean leader not only comes to do and show justice and righteousness, but he instructs his followers and hearers in the community to do the same (Mt 6:1-4; 10:1, 8-9, 40-42; 19:16-24). Jesus is preaching about unselfish brotherly love, that is, if one wants to be helped, one must feel obliged to help others as well (Mt 7:12; 22:34-40). By practicing these principles, one is fulfilling the will of God (Mt 7:21) and is above reproach. Those with no reproach, who are pure at heart (Dupont 1973:557-603) are blessed because they will see God (Mt 5:8; cf Ps 24:3-6).

Van Tilborg (1986:34) notes that Israelite anthropology shows that the heart of man plays an important role in the theoretical concept connected with human visions. The heart is the center of man "from where he opens himself as a living creature to his environment." He/she reacts to it, gives him/herself up to it, is capable of taking good and bad decisions as his/her own accountable responsibility. It is through the heart (Carter 2000:135) that courage, love, pity, desire, excitement, sorrow, joy, lust, anger, pride and the likes, are expressed. According to Matthew what comes from the heart are "evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Mt 15:19). The heart can be a center for lust (Mt 5:27-28); for love (Mt 22:37) or it is where decisions are made (Garland 1993:57). Therefore, purity of heart (see Dupont 1973:55-603; Sanders 1992:70-76; 214-230; Borg 1994:49-59; Overman 1996:222-227) is to Matthew as important as it is in the Mosaic Law (Lv 11-15; Dt 14; 23:1-14).

There are cases in conflict between the Matthean community and the Pharisees (Borg 1998:8-9), which are centered on the matter of purity (Mt 15:1-20; 23:25-32). Paul's reference to true love that comes from a pure heart and a good conscience (1 Tm 1:5) is an indication of the hypocrisy that was prevalent at the time. Dupont (1973:567-572) explains how the Israelites distinguished between the physical and the spiritual dimensions of purity. He refers to two examples of a pure heart in Isaiah (1:18 and 6:7) which denote a purification of sins; while Psalms (24:4; 73:1) "*qualifie l'attitude intérieure qui trouve son expression dans le comportement qu'on adopte à l'égard du prochain*" (Dupont 1973:570).[322]

[322] Determines the internal attitude which finds expression in the behaviour one adopts towards the neighbor.

As far as purity of heart is concerned, Matthew draws attention to a number of issues such as sexual immorality and corruption which merit further examination. The issue of a pure conscience versus sexual immorality: adultery and divorce (Mt 5:27-32; 19:1-12) constitute a crucial argument (cf Van Tilborg 1986:35, 57-65; see Sabourin 1982:370-373; Anderson 1988:498-500; 1996:237-239; Luz 1989:290-310; Garland 1993: 66-70; Overman 1996:82, 277-285; Carter 2000:146-149). By having a pure heart, good desires, clean thoughts one is thinking positively of others, in contrast to having destructive thoughts, to abuse power and privileges at the expense of the weak.

The issue of adultery and divorce must be discussed in the light of having pure heart. The Matthean use of evil thoughts that cause adultery (Mt 5:27-32; 15:19) and divorce (Mt 19:1-12) suggests the occurrence of these practices in his time. On this theme, the issue of rape, which is implicitly evoked in this *macarios* of purity, is also relevant. A girl was pure by virtue of her virginity, and a married woman by virtue of remaining exclusively true to her husband.

The argument here is that Jesus had in mind the weak, among them women who were vulnerable to rape, and other sexual abuses, in which they were constant losers, when delivering this Beatitude. The victims had to undergo the trauma of physical and psychological pain inflicted on them and the trauma of being disgraced and loosing their dignity and public honor. Jesus showed compassion with this stituation and settled the issue of divorce on an equal basis. Men used their masculinity in a violent and merciless manner to destroy the beauty and security of women whom they counted as objects or as merchandise (Van Tilborg 1986:57). Again due to masculine oppression, lust and general absence of concern for women, Garland (1993:66) notes that “unconditional fidelity was specifically required only of the wife.” This is the situation of Tamar and her father-in-law (Gn 38:24-26), or in the rehearsal of the bitter water (Nm 5:11-31). The account of rape

among the Benjamites (Jdg 19) is shocking and here again women found themselves not protected.[323]

Israelite tradition (like any human society) was strongly prejudiced in favor of men. As Van Tilborg (1986:57) observes, there were three ways in which to contract a marriage or to acquire a woman: "by money, by a document or by sexual commerce." All three ways have the nature "of a sales contract" in terms of which the man is considered as the main buyer and the woman as the merchandise. For reasons of hidden defects such as unknown promises made, promised virginity which is found to be not the case, wrong information on social and financial standing, a man could bring a case against his wife to court. And the man would win the case because he bought the goods "in error".

The wife was a property of the husband, and was viewed as "an infringement of the rights of her husband" (Van Tilborg 1986:57). This was an act of stealing and amounted to a termination of the existing marriage. Against this background, men and women were identified in unequal terms. A husband does not commit adultery, only the wife does (Garland 1993:66-70). For this reason she is considered to be the guilty party whenever marriage problems arise. Van Tilborg (1986:58-59) argues that adultery "is a question of right of possession which begins when a man has laid claim to it." In contrast to the Israelites, the law of Hammurabi charged both wife and husband caught in adultery (Richardson 2000:83).

The issue of divorce (see Tenney 1982:58; Luz 1989:298-310; Garland 1993:67-70; Carter 2000:147-148) became a serious concern in the Judean schools of Shammai and Hillel **(**Van Tilborg 1986:63; Carter 2000:378-384). The Hillel school held a liberal view and argued that one could divorce from his wife under any circumstance and for any reason even "if she has spoiled food" of her husband or has shown a lack of submission (Van Tilborg 1986:63). The Shammai school, on the other hand, was conservative. It advocated that a wife could be divorced only if the husband had found "something of nakedness in her" (Van Tilborg 1986:63). This issue is the basis of a dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees (Mt 19:1-12).

[323] The same scenario at Lot's home in Sodom (Gn 10:1-9) exposes the vulnerability of unprotected women.

In the introductory chapter to the Gospel, Matthew presents the heightened tension between Joseph and the "innocent" Mary (Mt 1:18-20) who was pregnant out of the wedlock. There were laws which governed the society in matters of sexual relationship (Van Tilborg 1986:59, 64). But these laws were either not implemented or were not strictly enforced during Matthean times, particularly, when war raged and banditry and violence reigned. The Roman empire had also imposed its own laws which were not necessarily in line with Judean traditions. The circumstance surrounding the death of John the Baptist (Mt 14:1-1; cf Klausner 1964:241-244) is a good example.

Jesus' Sermon, therefore, aimed to bring people to reason and to establish some measures to protect women from sexual abuse. According to Luz (1989:295), in "Hellenistic Judaism, under the influence of the four Stoic *pathe*, lust often became the reason for all sin." Lust (Mt 5:28) drove men to sexual abuse against women. Carter (2000:146) says that lust against a woman is sin because "it is predatory in seeking to exploit her." According to the law (Van Tilborg 1986:64), a girl who was raped was required to marry her seducer.[324]

Furthermore, irresponsible men would terminate their marriages for no reason whatsoever (Carter 2000:378-379) and dismiss unprotected wives, who subsequently became adulterous or prostitutes without a permanent home. Powerful men also, because of lust, were often responsible for the break-up of others' marriages, thus causing enmity between brothers (Garland 1993: 66). Jesus' teaching comes as a social revolution to bring an end sexual exploitation of women, which the Roman regime, together with religious leaders was practicing (Mt 14:1-12; Mk 6:17-20; Lk 3:19). Therefore, committing adultery was to sin against one's partner, community and against God (cf Nardoni 2004:76).

Therefore, God's presence is to be experienced by having a pure heart, a pure desire, pure thoughts and a pure action. Again, the lesson from this Beatitude is to do justice and righteousness by protecting the weak from any sexual exploitation driven by the lust of

[324] This measure was also practiced in Banyamulenge community.

uncontrolled men. Today, it is as relevant as ever, because many of the domestic crimes committed against women in societies all over the world, are sexually motivated.

Matthew (15:19; 23:23-38) also deals with other issues in which the concept of purity plays a role. He mentions corruption and theft, the murder of innocent people and prophets, false testimony or the collapse of the judicial system, slander and idolatry (Carter 2000:320). Israelite traditions were strongly opposed to corruption and theft (Lk 3:10-14). The Old Testament taught and preached against corruption (Ex 23:8; Dt 10:17; 16:19; 27:25; 1 Sm 8:3; Ps 15:5; Is 1:23; 5:23; Ezk 22:12; Am 5:12; Mc 3:11; 7:3). In the first century, corruption was exacerbated by war and lawlessness that was characteristic of the time of successive foreign occupations of Palestine.

Klausner (1981:163) quotes Philo of Alexandria (*Ant* XVIII iii I) in saying that Judea under Pilate, was marked by "bribe, vainglorious and insolent conduct (*ubreis*), robbery, oppression, humiliations (*epereiai*), men often sent to death untried, and incessant and unmitigated cruelty". It is believed that corruption was even prevalent in temple courts (see Van Tilborg 1986:132-139; Crosby 1988:199-201) among religious leaders and their money changing agents (Mt 21:12-14) while the Roman rulers exercised influence on the temple's economic affairs.

Excessive taxes and tributes beyond the means of peasants were imposed out of greed and corruption on the part of the Roman and religious rulers (Mt 17:21-24; 22:15-21). Josephus (Barbour 1988:124) records a corruptive scheme involving religious leaders and the governor Florus at Caesarea in 66 CE. Religious leaders made a deal with one of Jesus' disciples who betrayed him for thirty silver pieces (Mt 26:14-17). In the resurrection story, religious leaders – chief priests and elders - corrupted Roman soldiers (Mt 28:12-15); Luke refers to a conversation between John the Baptist and tax collectors and soldiers (Lk 3:10-14) concerning corruption.

Matthew shows how corruption and extortion were rampant in his time. He investigates the values of landownership and trade in the parables,[325] in which people were obsessed by wealth (Mt 6:24), illegally acquired in most cases. Thieving had also become a growing concern in Matthew's time (Mt 6:19; 24:36-44). Van Tilborg (1986:141) also explains how the Romans, especially in the post-70 CE, were involved in the confiscation of land from peasants which "contributed to the fantastic growth of big landownership."

Matthew is concerned with the present generation whose heart is set on earthly gain which turns out to be ugly. Every means possible, including killings, grabbing and confiscation, theft, deceit, looting people's properties, unbalanced economic structures which exploited the poor, were used to acquire wealth. But the Deuteronomist clearly states that the God of Israel "shows no partiality and accepts no bribes." Instead, "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widows, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing" (Dt 10:17-18). For Matthew, the presence of God is hidden from exploiters and oppressors, and is revealed to those who are humble and willing to depend on his provision (Mt 6:25-34).

The kingdom of God that is proclaimed is a kingdom of justice and righteousness, a kingdom that challenges existing corruptive mechanisms that are set to exploit the poor. Thus, only one who cleanses his/her heart from all evil desire "fulfils the Law" (Van Tilborg 1986:36) and is the son/daughter of God. The Sermon on the Mount challenges the existing Roman political and economic system and the uncaring behavior of religious leaders, by introducing the golden rule (Mt 7:12). That is, if any one wants economic progress he/she must stop his/her heart (desire) from evil thoughts and from being exploitive. For one to live in peace, one must give it to others, because the community has a new outlook: it is a community of brotherhood.

[325] Mt 13:1-45; 18:21-35; 20:1-16; 21:31-41; 22:1-5; 25:14-31.

5.3.7 The peacemakers as sons of God (Mt 5:9)

Why does Matthew link peacemaking to sonship?[326] The war of 66-70 CE was over by the time Matthew[327] took on the task of writing his story as one of the surviving followers of Jesus. Matthew and his contemporaries who survived the war, contemplated their current situation, while their memories flashed back to scenarios of the lost battle for their independence (see Van Tilborg 1980:37).

Memories of fallen heroes, of Jerusalem, once called the "city of God" laying in ruins; of the temple which is now destroyed; memories of slain priests, and God's prophets, of loved ones decimated in the carnage, while those who escaped were scattered all over the country and beyond, fleeing the repressive measures of Roman rule. All these were still fresh in Matthew's memory. Van Tilborg (1986:37) sees the Beatitude about the peacemakers as acquiring a very "specific meaning in such a setting", because the message was heard by

[326] Certain difficulties are associated with the connection between peacemaking and the sons of God. According to the works of Paul Billerbeck, produced around the 1920s and as quoted by Van Tilborg (1986:39), Billerbeck stated that he "did not know of any rabbinical text which made a connection between making peace and being called the child of God." According to Van Tilborg (1986:39 note 144), Billerbeck's conclusion was contradicted by the findings of J A Fitzmyer (1972:92) arising from a Qumran text which says "O King. All men shall make peace, and all shall serve him. He shall be called the son of the Great God, and they shall call him the Son of the Most High." However, Fitzmyer is not completely sure of his reconstruction of the fragmented text as "it is surrounded by mystery". There are, however, two assumptions of understanding this connection between peacemaking and the sons of God. Matthew is not convinced that the peace of Jerusalem can come from foreigners – the Romans. They do not belong to the covenant, nor do they have any share in the inheritance of the land. As much as they grab it, it does not belong to them; as much as they destroy it, sooner or later they will have to move out. The second assumption is directed at those who belong to the land, who have shares in land inheritance, but for various reasons, particularly their implication in violence, destruction, killings, banditry or collaboration with the colonizer, have been disqualified from being patriots. In one way or the other, they have contributed to the destruction and interruption of peace of Jerusalem. Matthew is thus looking for those who love their country and who can work diplomatically to restore the peace of Jerusalem. In chapter three above, the example of the Banyamulenge community and the conflict of 2002 illustrate these assumptions. Due to the political and social instability that divided the community, some soldiers and rebels, members of the community, turned on one another and caused damage to themselves and to their own community. The common term of *abana* (children or sons) used in the community before this division, referred to all whether soldier or rebel, but who were jointly combining their efforts for the cause of the community. For this reason, the term has a connotation of community support. Once they were divided and started fighting among themselves, the connotation of *abana* fell into disuse because the 'children' or 'sons' no longer qualified to be called the *abana*. They either compromised and worked with foreign armies or local armies that were regarded as enemies of peace of the community. Therefore, what Matthew is talking about must be interpreted in light of conflict within his context.

[327] See chapter four.

people who had experienced war and knew what it was about and how destructive it can be for mutual relations.

The understanding of peace as *eirene*, *shalom, pax, amahoro,*[328] means well-being or wholeness. To make peace (*eirenopoieo*) refers to the establishment of concord between people (see Luz 1989:241). It must be noted that peacemaking is not only when one concedes defeat in war or in times of conflict, but it is part of one's life obligation. Sabourin (1982:350) argues that to make peace is an act of love, humility and self-denial. Matthew had reason to use pre-war materials when the temple, Jerusalem and the land still functioned normally (Van Tilborg 1986:37). Peacemaking was a prescription found in the law (Ex 22:25; 23:1-9; Lv 19:12-18; Dt 19:16-20). The Torah taught Israelites about good neighborliness, not to kill, not to think evil against a brother or a neighbor, not to do evil to a foreigner (Dt 10:18-20). However, the context in which Matthew is coming from has gone through changes, it is a context of war, a context typical of the aftermath of revolt. Peace and purity are thus seen from a clear social and political dimension (Borg 1998:77-84).

In these circumstances, as Van Tilborg (1986:39) argues, the implication of peace (shalom) is much more that a mere saying of salvation, it is a reality which "must be achieved, connected with and rooted in a society full of conflicts, injustice and imperfections." Again, Luz (1989:241; cf Garland 1993:57) notes that peacemaking is a mission that goes beyond the limits of one's own community to include even enemies. According to Sabourin (1982:350-351), the use of "peace maker" in the Israelite tradition "*oseh shalom*", extolled pacification as an act of love, humility and self-denial for the sake of others. It is important to note that the peacemaking that Matthew is preaching automatically challenges the presence of *pax Romana* (Theissen 1978:63-64; see Wengst 1986: 64-72; Carter 2000:135-136).

Circumstances surrounding the Beatitude of peacemaking need to be closely examined (see Dupont 1973:633-667; Van Tilborg 1986:37-40; Hamm 1990:102-106). The Sermon is in

[328] The word for peace in Kinyamulenge but also in Burundian and Rwandan languages.

fact, a reaction to the prevailing Matthean situation. Matthew is using the Sermon as a way of coming to terms with his context, but is far from conceding defeat, because Roman colonizers (Horsley 1993:5-8) are still occupying his ancestral land. Matthew is willing to change tactics of his resistance: instead of using violence as the Zealots did (Klausner 1964:135-175; Freyne 1980:229-247; Horsley 1988:183-199; 1993:20-58), he uses a non-violent means (Horsley 1993:147-245), but which equally challenges the colonizer. The revolutionary teaching targeted existing power structures that advantaged the powerful at the expense of the poor. Gandhi who eventually inspired Martin Luther King (Davidson 1986:33) had developed the "love force theory" by which the enemy was to be won, not by violence, but by a touch of heart.

In the Sermon, Jesus as the leader of the Matthean community, sets the new way of life and shows how the community should keep the spirit of the freedom struggle alive. The reward is clear, they will be called the sons and daughters of God, in the spirit of *abacu*[329]/ *brotherhood*. According to Theissen (1992:135-136), the concept of sonship here is "a representative force." The sons will rule and not the Romans, who use excessive force to kill, subjugate and occupy their land illegally. A peacemaking strategy in the spirit of *brotherhood* is quite similar to *companiero* in Latin America; the concept of *Negritude* of Senghor and company; the concept of *black consciousness* of Steve Biko; *unity and struggle* of Cabral or Gandhi's *satyagraha* (truth force) and the *Orientalism* of Said,[330] whose mission is to negotiate a space for peace and justice.

5.3.7.1 To make peace one must not kill (Mt 5:21-26)

In order to avoid Roman court, one should not kill. The judicial system was not only foreign, it was also tyrannical and corrupt, full of false testimony (Mt 15:18). Moreover, it worked in complicity with religious leaders. Matthew's conviction and advice to his community was not to be close to, nor associate with such an institution. Matthew is still remembering the trials and unfair judgment of John the Baptist (Mt 14:1-12), Jesus (Mt 26:47-67; 27:11-54)

[329] See chapter 3 section 3.8.2.

[330] See chapters two and four, section 4.4.3.

and the case of the massacre of the children which was never brought to court (Mt 2:16-18). Josephus (Barbour 1988:43) refers to the killings of students and their teachers by the orders of Herod, when after his death, the public demanded justice, they were violently repressed. In the parable of the unmerciful servant, Matthew illustrates how the court never protected the poor and jailed them without proper hearing (Mt 18:21-32).

Matthean contemporaries, such as Luke, noted how this judicial system was unfair, turning a deaf ear to widows and the poor (Lk 18:1-8). Apostles were persecuted (Ac 5:17); Peter and James (Ac 4:3; 12:19), Paul[331] and Silas (Ac16:16-40), were all jailed and persecuted unjustly, while Stephen was killed (Ac 6:8-15, 7:54-60). For the evangelist John, the judge of such courts were to be replaced by the Son of God who comes to save and rule with justice (Jn 5:22; 8:15-16; 12:47). Matthew (12:18-21) and Luke (4:18-19) respectively refer to Isaiah (42:1-4 and 61:1-2) to challenge the existing corrupt judicial system, which denied the poor, the peasants, women, children, the masses a fair hearing.

The Old Testament warns against such misconduct of the judicial system (Ex 23:8; Dt 16:19; 27:25; Ps 15; Is 1:23; 5:23; Ezk 22:12; Am 5:12; Mc 3:11; 7:3). This type of court is to be avoided by not committing murder. Matthew instead sets a way that the community has to follow to settle issues among themselves. Mutual love (Mt 22:37-40; cf Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992: 56-57), understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation (*diallasso*) must replace the Roman and religious court systems.

Reconciliation will turn enemies into brothers and sisters, so that they can be called sons (Dupont 1973:656) [and daughters] of God (Mt 5:9).[332] Van Tilborg (1986:54-55), correctly argues that in an exchange of positions, “the hostile brother is made into a friend again, because there is no access to God in a community which is divided by enmity.” Implicitly Matthew leaves the reader with the idea that what is at stake is that there is a common

[331] Paul’s long trials, see Acts 21:17-28:1-31.

[332] According to Dupont (1973:656) the term sons of God is attributed to members of the heavenly court who are identified as servants of God. It can also refer to the kings who represent God’s will on earth. Finally, it can also be used to show the good relationship between God and his chosen people.

enemy (Roman imperialism and its collaborators) which the Matthean community must avoid. In other words, the Matthean community is not to expose its weaknesses and internal conflict, which the Roman court can take advantage of to keep exercising its oppressive and unfair judgment on the sons and daughters of God. Living in peace with one another prevents the Roman court's *immixtion* (interference) in the internal affairs of the community.

5.3.7.2 To make peace is to be patient with people (Mt 5:38-42)

Matthew introduces a very innovative way of life in the community. For Matthew, Jesus did not come to abolish the law (Mt 5:17), rather he is giving a new interpretation to it (see Dupont 1973:633-667; Van Tilborg 1986:37-40; Wink 1988: 210-224; 1992a:102-125; 1992b:133-136; Horsley 1992a:72-101; 1992b:126-132; Carter 2000:135-136). Mosaic Law maintained balance in its judgment. But it could be cumbersome, especially in the event of an accident. During the sojourn in the wilderness, cities of refuge were built to restrain unjust vengeance (Nm 35:6-34; Dt 19; Jos 20).

Under Roman colonization, especially at the height of the revolt, lawlessness set in. Killings of innocent people and looting of properties were common. In such anarchy and in such a confusing situation, assassinations of people by organized banditry (Barbour 1988; Horsley 1988: 210-224) and acts of vengeance frequently occurred. Therefore, the *lex talionis* "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"[333] (Mt 5:38) was not new to the Matthean community (see Weaver 1992:32-71). This was the tradition of ancient Near East communities, and was practiced by both the Israelites (Dt 19 21) and the Babylonian king Hammurabi (Richardson 2000:104-105).

According to Meier (1976:175; cf; Banks 1975:196; Van Tilborg 1986:71), some changes took place during the Pharisaic time when the practice of redemption money was in use to control the taking of vengeance. This practice is also found in the Hammurabi practice against assault (see Richardson 2000:104-105). But there is not evidence of the exact period when it started as a practice within Judaism. The general principle behind redemption money was that it (money) was to compensate for the damage caused, subject to the victim being

[333] See Foster (2004:122-139).

satisfied and agrees with the terms of such payment. Apparently, as Van Tilborg (1986:71) states “people have discovered that a mediating body is useful to limit conflicts.” The solution is in harmony with the attempt from the Pharisaical movement to broaden their influence over the people in practicing the law (Mt 5:21).

Jesus’ lecture does not accept the pharisaic redemptive money system, rather, he tells his audience what to do: “do not resist an evil person” (Mt 5:39). Matthew is dealing with the Roman regime and its local agents who in this case are to be taken as “evil”. Van Tilborg (1986:71; cf Weaver 1992:32-36) defines an evil person as one “who abuses his position of power”. Mishnah, according to Van Tilborg, calls “evil” one who “beats deaf-mute, an idiot, a minor, a woman and a slave.” Matthew is persuading his community to avoid engaging such a person in a fight.

Does this mean that submissiveness and an apolitical position were being advocated? Does this really show that Matthew has accepted Judean defeat in the war? Or does avoidance mean non-violence, but resistance nonetheless? These are some of the pertinent questions that come to the fore when reading this Matthean pericope. In this regard the possibilities of interpretation are diverse. In the main, two views seem to pertain to a reading of this section. One view is that Matthew teaches his community to be submissive (Theissen 1992:115-156) and to literally not resist the evil person. The second view holds that a Matthean reading is political and defiant of the evil (Horsley 1986, 3-31; 1992a:72-101; 1992b:126-132; Van Tilborg 1986:70-79; Neyrey 1998:190-211; Wink 1992a:102-125; see Carter 2000; 2001).

According to Wink (1992a:102-125), the teaching is highly political and represents a way of humiliating the oppressor. Dealing with resistance (Mt 5:39), Wink shows how a backhand slap was “the usual way of admonishing inferiors”. Masters backhanded slaves; husbands slapped wives; parents, children; men, women; and Romans backhanded Judeans. All those who were in unequal relations suffered the indignation of being slapped. The only normal response in such cases “would be cowering submission” (Wink 1992a:105). The question that Wink asks is why does Jesus “counsel these already humiliated people to turn the other cheek?” Wink’s answer (Wink 1992a:105-106) is very interesting:

> Because this action robs the oppressor of the power to humiliate. The person who turns the other cheek is saying, in effect, 'Try again. Your first blow failed to achieve its intended effect. I deny you the power to humiliate me. I am a human being just like you … You cannot demean me.' Such a response would create enormous difficulties for the striker … If he hits with a fist, he makes the other his equal, acknowledging him as a peer … [I]n the world of honor and shaming, he has been rendered impotent to instill shame in a subordinate. He has been stripped of his power to dehumanize the other.

Moreover, Van Tilborg (1986:73; cf Wink 1988:215-216) shows that the command to go the extra mile (Mt 5:41) was common practice among landowners and Roman soldiers. Landowners imposed forced labor, *corvée* on peasants (Lenski 1966:267-268; cf Vledder 1997:128-129), and *angareia* (Wink 1988:215; Horsley 1992a:88) in their fields. In other instances soldiers would instruct porters to carry goods and arms for them. An example is that of Simon of Cyrene who was requisitioned on the street and was forced to carry Jesus' cross (Mt 27:32).[334] The argument in this instance is that by going another mile, the porter challenges the oppressor (Wink 1988:215-218;1992a:108-109;cf Carter 2000:152-153).

Van Tilborg (1986:75) is convinced that shaming the evil by "such paradoxical behaviour" would hopefully turn him from his wrongdoing. Justice is realized by the voluntary acceptance of injustice. It is an attempt to break "the vicious circle of rage and revenge". Wink (1988:218) adds that by going another mile (Mt 5:9) with the oppressor, the victim throws the oppressor "off-balance by being deprived of the predictability" of the victim's response. Jesus' invitation is to those whose lifelong pattern had been to cringe, bow, and to

[334] According to Wink (1992:215), such "forced service [*angareia*] was a constant feature in Palestine from Persian to late Roman times, and whoever was found on the street could be compelled into service". The experience of the DRC soldiers during Mobutu's regime and those followed in various rebel movements or armed groups up to today is similar. This practice of requisitioning people by force to transport baggage, ammunitions, and whatever belongings they may have, is still common in war torn countries such as the DRC and Burundi.

cower before their masters. The message of this form of defiance is that the victims should liberate themselves from both "servile action and a servile mentality".

Responding to Wink's argument, Horsley (1992b:126-127) finds the teaching of Jesus against violent resistance relevant. The logic of Jesus' teaching is far from defeat, what it says is "do not acquiesce in your own oppression, but on the other hand, do not react violently to it either". There is a third way (Mt 5:39b-41), which is equally resistant to evil and which can also secure human dignity by changing the power equation. This is the philosophy that Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King (Bishop 1981) adopted in their struggles against colonialism and racism respectively. By the humble resistance of the victim, as Wink (1988:222; 1992a:115; cf Horsley 1992b:131) notes, it breaks "the cycle of humiliation with humor and ridicule, exposing the injustice" of the oppressive regime.

5.3.7.3 To make peace is to love one's enemy (Mt 5:43-48)

There is no evidence from Jewish literature (Davies 1964:245; cf Banks 1975:200; Van Tilborg 1986:200; 2000:154) indicating that people were commanded to hate their enemies, although hatred is part of human failure. It is not something which can be demanded as "a positive commandment" (Van Tilborg 1986:75). In the Sermon on the Mount, it was established that the poor could bless his/her poverty (Mt 5:3). Such paradoxical behavior should be interpreted in the context of loving one's enemy. Humanly speaking, it is very difficult, if not impossible to overcome one's bitterness, hatred and sorrow and to love an enemy. Measured against recent examples of war, genocide, tribal conflict, or domestic violence, Matthew is no lesser victim. He is talking from personal experience.

However, Matthew does not want to accept defeat and the status quo which would give the oppressor a sense of victory. He wants to humiliate the oppressor, the enemy by doing good – by loving him/her (Ex 25:4-5; Pr 25:21-22; Mt 5:44; Rm 12:20). The issue here is that only if persecuted and pursued (Van Tilborg 1986:77), can one truthfully state that "an offer of peace is the only solution". Van Tilborg' s (1986:79) understanding of the saying is that, it is attempting to lay the basis for the universality of love – that all people must be loved – but rather in the totality of love: love must reach even the personal enemy. In the foregoing

interpretation, this aspect had been implied several times. Now it is explicitly stated. One must be prepared to not only reject all revenge, but one should even go one step further by wishing one's enemy and persecutor well. Regardless of what they had done, one must wish for them the good gifts of sun and rain as one would for one's friends of course.

The implication of loving one's enemy, according to Luz (1989:340-341), is a tradition which is echoed "in Judaism, among the Greeks, especially the Stoics, in India, in Buddhism, in Taoism." Jesus' comprehensive call to love entails "the *entire* person which does not exclude feelings". Lucan examples of the Samaritans[335] (Lk 10:27-37; 17:11-19) in Jesus' entourage are witnesses of his teaching about love for the enemy. According to Donahue (1992:143-147), the teaching of Jesus challenges "both historical reality of viewing the Samaritan as enemy and the deeper religious attitude that divide the world into outsiders and insiders." The love that Jesus teaches is without borders; it penetrates and breaks patriarchal and colonial prejudices; it demystifies social classes and gender discrimination; it gives those once called unclean access to worship God. Simply, love is a revolutionary weapon that turns the world upside down for the glory of God and the recovery of human dignity.

Martin Luther King, like Gandhi (Bishop1981:82-128), preached the power of love of one's enemy which conquers hatred and creates a new class of people. The oppressed does not become a new oppressor, rather he/she becomes an equal around the table of brotherhood. The preaching of love and equal respect by Martin Luther King and his fellow revolutionaries, brought about change in the North American society. Consequently, the recovery of humanity and the worship of God meet in heavenly perfection (Mt 5:48).

Therefore, perfection is the fulfillment of the law (Mt 5:17) for those whose justice and righteousness supersede that of the Pharisees (Mt 5:20) and who do not let their hearts be ruled by evil thought (Mt 5:8). Anger, evil desire, sexual immorality, slander, murder, injustice, (Mt15:18-20) are the things that make one impure and hinder one to reach God's

[335] Although, on his way to Jerusalem, a Samaritan village refused to welcome him, Jesus rebuked his disciples who wanted to call on fire from heaven to destroy it (Lk 9:51-56).

standard of justice and righteousness. No-one can be perfect but to strive for this perfection, is a way of showing the face of God to the community.

5.3.7.4 To make peace is to keep mutual relations (Mt 7:1-12)

Van Tilborg (1986:163) calls this section (Mt 7:1-12) "a mutual relation" in light of the law; while Carter (2000:180) refers to "a community of compassionate correction." Surrounded by the needy in the aftermath of war, people were blaming one another for the mistakes and failures in the war, which were now resulting in Roman repression, and it is in these circumstances that the evangelist is set to control emotions. As Van Tilborg (1986:163) observes, Matthew uses a "metaphorically homogeneous language," known to his local audience. Examples of such language usage would be the judge who passes judgment or not and the merchant who uses his measure to judge his wares (Mt 7:1-5); beggars whose survival depends on wandering in city streets looking for food and knocking on doors (Mt 7:7-8) in contrast to the sons who ask for bread and fish from their fathers (Mt 7:9-11).

The point that follows this parallelism is that those who wish to be treated as sons and daughters of the Father-God must comply with the Law and the prophets. That is, to treat others in the same way as one would like to be treated (Mt 7:12). Looking for food in the Old Testament (Dt 24:19; Lv 23:22) was regulated as all farmers had to follow certain regulations in order to take care of the needy among them. In contemporary African cities, from Cape Town to Cairo and beyond (especially cities in war or postwar situations), the so-called street children and beggars everyday search for food in dustbins on the streets, while others go begging from door to door. The survival of beggars totally depends on the charity of others (Ex 22:21-27). Therefore, the saying dealing with he who asks, searches and knocks, is understood in the light of this reality in the Matthean context.

Lack of possession according to Van Tilborg (1986:190; cf Carter 2000:184), "gives them an awareness of largeness of the promised riches". There must be some clarification on how Matthew uses these two terms "sons" and "evil" in light of his teaching. Previously, "evil" was clearly defined as being associated with one who misuses his position of power. In this case fathers are called "evil" (Mt 7:11) in relation to the "evil" person (Mt 5:39) in contrast

to the "good Father" in heaven (Mt 7:11). Carter (2000:184) believes that the argument proceeds by shifting from the earthly fathers to the celestial Father, from evil to good. What is apparent is that the Matthean audience of the Sermon is a mixture of social classes and the presence of *ochloi* makes sense. On the one hand Matthew speaks to members of his own community, while on the other hand, he challenges both patriarchal and religious structures and implicitly also the Roman regime. These power structures have neglected their social duties of taking care of the poor, and are being driven by greed.

Returning to the issue of judging one another (Luz 1989:415-416; Garland 1993:85), the tendency is to read it in the light of defiance of the Roman court (Mt 5:21-25; 18:15-20). Does a statement such as "do not judge, least you will be judged" (Mt 7:1) indeed refer to the Matthean collaboration with the existing judicial system? Van Tilborg's (1986:165; see Sabourin 1982:425-426)) argument is that at the very least Matthew "accepts the functioning of existing legal practices [Mt 5:21-25; 18:15-20]" and "has placed all human judgments in a legal framework." The implication of this reading is that no contradictory view about the court is to be entertained. Matthew is totally opposed to Roman courts. Instead, he intends to create a "theocratic court of justice" in the community, in order to avoid any contact with Roman justice, which to him is corrupt.

Roman justice stands in contrast to the Israelite justice known in the wilderness. It is clear that Matthew is referring to those times when God was the "Chief Justice" in their courts. From the counsel of Jethro (Ex 18:21), Moses instituted a court of justice where justice and righteousness would prevail. The code of conduct of judges was also clearly stipulated. Judges had to be impartial, had to give small and great, Israelite and alien an equal hearing; they had to be men of integrity, avoiding corruption and favoritism (Ex 18:19-22; Dt 1:15-17).

Again by referring to the position of Matthew's contemporaries, the full picture of the existing tension emerges. For Luke one is already acquitted if one does not judge (Lk 6:37-38). Paul (Rm 2:1-16; 14:1-15:1-13) and James (4:11-12) follow the same line of thought. The admonition is that, one should not judge a brother/sister or a neighbor. Paul's opinion

even goes beyond the inner circle to include a Gentile. This would support the "anti-legal attitude" (Van Tilborg 1986:165) in the very situation where people's faith in the Roman court is betrayed. Hence, Jesus' lecture forms part of the criticism of the courts, the judges and the jurisprudence. It is therefore fair to say as Van Tilborg (1986:169) also argues that criticism against the Roman judicial system was widespread throughout the time of their occupation of Palestine.

5.4 Blessed are the persecuted because of righteousness (Mt 5:10-12)

Finally, the last Beatitude reinforces the first (Mt 5:3), thereby summarizing the teaching in the very context of Matthew (Carter 2000:136-137). As was already established from the social location of the first-century, the Matthean community lived in a situation where physical violence, banditry, sexual abuse and war were daily occurrences both at a local and a national level. This violence developed between different groups, locals and foreigners, between brothers and also individuals; between rulers and peasants. Van Tilborg (1986:40) states that when such "violence starts from a lawful authority or is fostered by it, it is called persecution".

In this case, reference to Lucan accounts is most appropriate.[336] Although Van Tilborg (1986:40) argues that Matthew's experience of persecution is geographically limited, and that he therefore does not have similar access to experiences as Luke had, the various cases, whether in Jerusalem or in Galilee, were equally painful. Matthew refers to the various forms of persecution that people were subjected to in the mission sending speech (Mt10:16-24), in the woes' speech (23:30-38) and in the end time speech (Mt 24:1-16).

Persecution for the sake of justice and righteousness or on account of Jesus is central for Matthew (see Sabourin 1982:351-353). In this regard John the Baptist (Mt 14:1-12), Zechariah son of Berakiah (Mt 23:35) and Jesus (Mt 26-27) are some of the Matthean examples of such suffering for the sake of justice (see Klausner 1964:241-242; Barbour

[336] See persecutions of apostles and other believers in the Acts of Apostles.

1988:61; Luz 1989: 242-243; Garland 1993:58-59; Carter 2000:136-137). Matthew's experience reflects those times of conflict between the Law of God and the Roman imperial law, disputing the control of Jerusalem and the temple. Fidelity to the law and the prophets takes a stand against the lawlessness and injustice of the oppressor. The struggle for justice is an uncompromising value which must be preserved at all cost. This is particularly important when the defenders of justice are told to be faithful till death (Rv 2:10; Ja 1:12), because the kingdom of heaven, which is just and stronger than that of the Roman empire, is theirs.

It must be remembered that this was at the time when the Roman rulers practiced the unthinkable sacrilege of erecting statues[337] in the temple, thus reducing the temple of God to level of the temples of Roman gods (Freyne 1980:261-266; Horsley 1993:110-116; Van Tilborg 1986:41; Carter 2001:20-34). It is for this reason that Van Tilborg (1986:42) says "keeping the Law, doing justice was a dangerous business in Matthew's time". Matthew does not want his community to be identified with the Roman empire and its local agents, that are persecuting and killing innocent people and prophets for speaking the truth and for doing justice.

Moreover, Matthew is aware of the fact that his community is being falsely accused because of their sense of justice and righteousness. And according to Van Tilborg (1986:42), this persecution is seen "in the reality of ridicule and slander", while the place of justice and righteousness is replaced by Jesus himself. That is, Jesus becomes a reason for persecution. In other words, Matthew is convinced that his Jesus, the Messiah is the real doer and giver of justice and righteousness, whose example is to be followed (see 1 Cor 11:1; Rm 4:12). For Matthew, persecution for the sake of justice and righteousness is a "structural code" (Van Tilborg 1986:42) for those to whom the kingdom of heaven is promised because of their suffering. This preparedness to suffer even unto death is yet another way of resisting injustice. This is the fate of many tricontinental world freedom fighters.

[337] See Daniel (1-6) about resistance against idol worship by Hebrew captives in Babylon.

5.5 Summary

The Sermon on the Mount, summarized in the Beatitudes, is a challenge to everyone's responsibility and obligation towards the society. Luz (1989:243) argues that the Beatitudes involve "a series of uncompromising demands" which confront us to live according to God's will. The challenge is whether Christians in the socio-political, religious and economic upheavals of the day, are still able to act on behalf of God, and proclaim his kingdom among the needy. In other words, can Christians in a world of inequalities still make their faith a reality in their relations with the needy?

In traditional societies the Sermon on the Mount in general and the Beatitudes in particular would be interpreted as an initiation rite. The rites of a community do not segregate people from their social classes, or into poor or rich, town or village. Everyone in the community, on an equal basis, is entitled to be initiated, thus the concept of brotherhood is well enacted. At the same time the Sermon represent the will (testament) of a statesman elder in his village who calls on his people to give them a last message.[338] During the initiation, peers are told about a community's norms. What is interesting about Jesus' oration is that it sounds like a renewal of the testament in light of charismatic leadership of Israel (Dt 28-33) where the community was called to renew the covenant with their God.

The revolutionary speech of Jesus, not only targets the existing oppressive social-political-economic, and religious structures, but also some undesirable behavior from within the Matthean community itself. The principles of brotherhood (Mt 5:23-24; 18:1-5; 25:31-46) create an opportunity for those who were previously regarded as unclean, and for Gentiles, the poor, outcasts (Mt 3:23-25) to become sons and daughters in the kingdom of God (Mt 5:9). They join in table fellowship (Mt 9:10-13; 21:31-32; 22:8-10; cf Rv 3:20) as free citizens in their land with equal access to the temple (Mt 21:14) and to the kingdom matters (Mt 16:19).

[338] In Banyamulenge community, this is called *irage*.

5.6 The Canaanite mother and identity crisis

5.6.1 Introduction

The story of the Canaanite mother[339] (Mt 15:21-28) is at heart of postcolonial criticism, with campaigners being of the opinion that the story portrays cultural, ethnic/tribal, racial economic, political and gender discrimination (Wainwright 1994: 650-656, 1998; Guardiola-Saenz 1997:69-80; Dube 1996:111-129; 1999:33-59; 2000:157-195; Donaldson 1997:1-12; Levine 2001:22-41). Hare's (1993:176-179) interpretation of the story of the Canaanite mother is well motivated. He presents three possible theses of reading the anecdote. (i) The story is to be read as "inauthentic" in that it was credited to Jesus by Judean Christians who were opposed to Gentile mission; (ii) the story is to be treated as "authentic" but argues that "Jesus' behavior is not as harsh as modern readers think." It is used as an expression of the principle that "charity begins at home", and as a way of testing her faith "if she passes the test, he will accede to her request"; (iii) the narrative is to be accepted as is in all its "harshness". It presents Jesus as a Judean man of his days, "chauvinistic toward women and non-Jews."

Hare's argument can be interpreted as making the point that the Matthean Jesus is a tribal Messiah whose mission is primarily limited to cultural boundaries, which could eventually change, depending on the receptivity of Israel or its rejection by Israel, whereas the conversion of Gentiles would be effected by divine miracle. Prior to this moment, however, "repentance had to be preached to Israel" (Hare 1993:117).

The difficulty inherent in such discriminative reading is the failure to disassociate the christology of Jesus, whose healing mission is to do justice and righteousness in a borderless world, from a cultural ghetto. It may be argued that the socio-political, economic and religious context from which Matthew emerged, particularly under Roman colonization, had influenced the Gospel's redaction. The Matthean cultural conservation can be seen as reactionary

[339] Some years back, I was invited to preach to a local Anglican congregation in a suburb of Bujumbura, Burundi. My message was on the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28). My Bible references were Swahili, French and English, and had not taken attention to Kirundi translation. But as I started my sermon, I asked one mother to do the Scripture reading for me. As she read the first verses, she used the term "*umugore*" which simply and generally means a woman or a wife. At the last verse, instead of using *umugore*, the Kirundi version uses "*nyina wanje*" which literally means "mother of mine" or simply a mother. This reading changed my understanding of the story, especially on how Jesus was completely revolutionalized in his understanding of the Other. Therefore, in the following section of this study, the term "mother" would be implied.

measures against Roman imperialism (see Carter 2001), which undoubtedly created tensions between neighbors, including the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon.

The other argument is that Matthew had been influenced by cultural and traditional conflict that existed between the Israelite and Canaanite communities (see Guardiola-Saenz 1997) from the conquest history (cf Gn 12:4-6; Ex 3:7-10; Jos 13-22). To be led solely by this argument would mean that the long and good diplomatic ties between Israel and Tyre and Sidon (cf Jackson 1992: 35-41) during Davidic reign (1 Ki 5) would be overlooked. Tyre and Sidon had played a very important role in the commercial exchange with Judea (Freyne 1980:114-121). It should also be borne in mind that during the Judean anti-colonialism struggle from 66-70 C.E, the Sidonians[340] protected the Judean population, while the anti-Semitism campaign and massacres of Judeans swept across the whole region (Barbour 1988:132).

The argument is that the Matthean Jesus confronts Roman imperialism and Israelite cultural and religious structures (Wainwright 1998:41-45) that stand in the way of justice and righteousness taking its course. Justice and righteousness is the essence of the whole existence of Jesus, the law and the prophets, which in its simple definition represent "the will of God". From a psychoanalytic reading (Dolto 1980:16-19; Mukendi 1997:56-57), both Jesus and the Canaanites (mother and daughter) are liberated from their respective cultural and religious boundaries, from demons and cultural prejudices. Healing (Crossan 1989:293-304; cf Dube 1996:123-127) as part of God's mission, is to be interpreted as a means of resistance against social, political, religious and economic ills.

Being whole, being free from all forms of anomaly and disease, reestablishes the complete identity of the victim in the society. Reading the story of the Canaanite mother in light of *Semoya*[341] in Botswana, Dube (1996:126; 2000:186-187) states that healing is "a political struggle against structural forces behind unemployment, breakdown of family relationships,

[340] However, according to Josephus, Tyre killed a great number of Judeans during this time of war (Barbour 1988:132).

[341] According to Dube (1996: 111-129), *Semoya* means "of the Spirit".

poverty and lack of success." In other word, the Spirit of God empowers God's people to heal social ills. The Marcan and Lucan references to healing a demon-possessed man present an interesting example. Roman oppression is implicitly referred to when demons identify themselves as legions (Mk 5:9; Lk 8:30). Theissen (1978:101-102) explains the issue of "transference" in a psychoanalytical approach.

According to Theissen, resistance against the Romans is interpreted through exorcism, in terms of which demons that lived in the herd of pigs "behave like the occupying power." The demons spoke Latin like the Romans, they presented themselves as a legion, and had one wish: "to be allowed to stay in the country." As far as the Judeans were concerned, they would have wanted to see the Romans being drawn into the sea as happened to the herd of swine. This is indicative of how strongly the Judeans felt about and opposed to the foreign occupation.

Nonetheless, those who have adopted a postcolonial theory to read the story of the Canaanite mother can also go the other extreme of "deconstructive theology" (Wainwright 1998:91). This would apply to the approach of Guardiola-Saenz (1997:69-80) and Wainwright (1998:84-92). Both authors argue from a feminist perspective. Guardiola-Saenz (1997:70) argues that the Canaanite mother is a victim of her writer and her reader who "mistreated and incarcerated [her] in the oppressive boundaries of the text … for their own benefit, maintaining the status quo." Furthermore, 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 that is attributed to Jesus in this story "veil the violence that can be inherent in such power" (Wainwright 1998:91-92). Wainwright believes that the power predicated of Jesus and the household metaphors that proclaim it as such "may well have been – and hence can continue to be – deconstructed." From African point of view, Dube (2000:170) identifies with the Canaanite mother as a victim of "patriarchal and imperial ideology." More rigidly, Guardiola-Saenz (1997:76-77), says that the recognition of Jesus as the son of David by the Canaanite mother is not "a statement of faith" but it is an asseveration

of protest and a demand of her rights from the "invader" and "oppressor". The point that needs to be made here is that by reading this story in such a passionate way, the reader risks being left in disarray. To avoid such temptation, one needs to construct a theology of hope around Jesus' divine mission, which is essentially liberating.

5.6.2 Social and political boundaries

The encounter of Jesus and the Canaanite mother in Matthew (Anderson 1983:14-16; Wainwright 1994: 635-677; 1995:132-153; 1998:84-92; 2001a:126-137; Donaldson 1996:10-14; Dube 1996:111-129; Guardiola-Saenz 1997:67-81; Humphries-Brooks 2001:142-145; Jackson 2002; 2003:779-792), is one of the most interesting experiences in putting the law "do not deprive justice to aliens among you" (Ex 22:21), to the test. Moreover, the context of the Canaanite mother fits the contemporary issues of discrimination based on race, region, tribe, ethnicity, class and gender. As Garland (1993:164) mentions, this story raises modern sensitivities. Jesus' treatment of this Canaanite mother poses certain difficulties and continues to trouble. Most readers want to ask the same question Garland grapples with, namely "[w]hy does he give a frantic mother the cold shoulder when she pleads for her demonised daughter?"

Spivak (1988:197-221; cf Loomba 1998:231-245; Young 2001:354) argued that the subalterns do not speak. President Fidel Castro (Young 2001:215) once said "colonies do not speak" and "are not known until they have an opportunity to express themselves". The silenced voice (Wainwright 2001a:127-128) of the Canaanite mother is a real example of what goes on in a world of inequalities. Like many colonized and marginal voices, the space to speak from is never peacefully negotiated, rather it is (re)claimed by means of resistance[342] and insistence.

This was also true of the hemorrhaging woman (Mt 8:20-22) who forcefully negotiated her healing by breaking cultural and religious barriers, which in normal circumstances subjected her to a life of isolation from the rest of the public (see Anderson 1983:11-12; Garland

[342] Resistance does not necessarily mean violent, it can also be through non-violent procedures.

1993:107; Carter 2000:320-321; Levine 1996: 379-397; 2001:71). The Lucan reference to the widow and the bad judge (Lk 18:1-5), demonstrates how another marginalized person was silenced by social and political structures. She forced her way through to get justice which she was otherwise denied.

Unlike the woman with the alabaster jar of perfume (Mt 26:6-7); the woman (widow) with the offering who caught Jesus' sympathy (Mk 12:41; Lk 21:1-4); or the widow whose son had died that won Jesus' favor (Lk 7:11-13), the Canaanite mother is a real destitute, a stranger in her own land in contrast to Moses who became "an alien in a foreign land"(Ex 2:22). At face value there appears to be nothing good, nothing positive about her, nothing attractive; she does not represent any material interest or political position, which might have endeared her to the crowd, the disciples and to the Judean Jesus. Consequently, Jesus is confronted with ethnic, cultural, religious and political barriers (Carter 2000:321), from which his psychological worldview had to be liberated.

Moreover, the mother's status is not revealed (Levine 2001:26), nothing is known about her relatives, neighbors or friends, in contrast to the paralyzed man (Mt 9:1-8) who was carried by "some men", probably his relatives or neighbors. In this pericope only the woman and her demon possessed daughter feature. She stands alone in a similar situation to that of the hemorrhaging woman (Mt 9:20-22). Was she married, a widow or a single mother? None of these questions is explicitly answered, but what is known is that she came on her own, pleading for help.

According to Wainwright (1994:651), the matter of her identity is more serious. She maintains that the identity of the mother is "a disability that made her unclean", because the woman is ethnically categorized as a "Canaanite", a term that makes her "an ethnic and religious outsider" to Judeans. She is thus doubly marginalized by "her gender and her race" (Dewey 1994:484; Wainwright 1994:651), and economically by "her class" (Sibeko and Haddad 1997:84).[343]

[343] Sibeko & Haddad note a "triple oppression" of African women, which is equally applicable to women in the first century.

Nevertheless, the interaction between Jesus and the mother indicates that although not equal in social-political-economic status, they are "equal in faith" (Anderson 1983:12). The mother portrays the same outstanding character of patience and consistency as that of Gentile women in the genealogy story (Weren 1997:288-305): Tamar (Gn 38:13-30); Rahab (Jos 2:1-30); Ruth (Rt 1:16-4:1-12); Bathsheba (2 Sm 11:1-27); the Samaritan woman (Jn 4); and Kibihira,[344] the Banyamulenge woman whose resistance – faith – crossed cultural, religious and political boundaries to claim God's justice and righteousness to nations.

Although women were never assigned prominent roles as disciples (Wire 1991:87-121), they were part of his circle. As Anderson (1983:17-20; cf Osiek 2001:204-220; see Perrin 1977:29-31) explains, women outscored men in the testing of their faith and in their resistance to the conspiracy of the religious leaders and the Romans to kill Jesus and other noble, innocent people and prophets. While male disciples fled from the scene and deserted their teacher, the women stood bravely by him at the crucifixion (Mt 27:55-56; cf Mk 15:40-41; Lk 23:55-56) and resurrection (Mt 28:1-10; cf Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-10; Jn 20:1). Only the evangelist John mentions one male disciple standing with the women at the crucifixion (Jn 19:26).

The woman anointing Jesus in Bethany village (Mt 26:6-13) and the women, at the worst scene of political and religious travesties at the cross and the tomb (Mt 27:55-56, 61; 28:1-10) serve as foils for the disciples (Anderson 1983:18) and play important roles that the disciples should have played. Moreover, women became the reconciliatory means by which the deserters (disciples) are reunited with Jesus and are commissioned. The Bethanian woman's act became a stumbling block to disciples (Mt 26:8-9), while she earns honor before their Master (Mt 26:10-13). What must be deduced from these roles played by women is that these roles were not assigned to them by religious, patriarchal or political systems, but they (women) forcefully claimed them.

[344] See chapter three above section 3.7.4.2.

The geographical location of the meeting between Jesus and the Canaanite mother remains unknown. But it must have taken place around the frontiers of Judea and the region of Tyre and Sidon (Mt 15:21). Matthew remains ambiguous, for he does not let Jesus leave the region of Galilee. By contrast, the Marcan version tells us that Jesus crossed the borders (Mk 7:24). The use of the Canaanite identity is a Matthean version, while Mark uses a Greek, Syrophoenician identity. Jackson (2002:35-59; 2003:784:785) argues that Matthew alludes to four functions of Tyre and Sidon in the Old Testament, namely "negative ethical behavior, as an outsider of the Jewish faith, as friends of Israel, as participants in the same salvation as the Jews". During the first century, the Canaanite community was no longer in existence as a people or a tribe. But the term was used to denote a disgraced people (see Dermience 1982:29; Selvidge 1987:79; Jackson 2002:60-100, 2003:785).

It would be viewed as ingratitude towards the Canaanite women (Humphries-Brooks 2001:138-156), if the Judeans forgot or underestimated the political role that Rahab (Js 2) played in hiding Joshua's spies at Jericho – and along with mother Tamar (Gn 38) by keeping alive the lineage (Mt 1:3,5) of the same man – Jesus – of whom the Canaanite mother would be an aunt or a cousin.[345] According to Gottwald (1979:556-558), the alliance between Israelite spies and Rahab (the Canaanite woman) at Jericho must be given some consideration.

In ancient cities prostitutes formed one of several groups of occupational outcasts whose services were desired, but because of taboos, it carried a stigma and "worked under decided disabilities". For Rahab, this reality presents enough reason for resentment of the ruling class in Jericho. She might have hoped that by siding with the rebels it would improve her economic situation and social status.[346] It must also be understood that economic pressure could have been the reality that pushed Rahab to harlotry to earn a living. Be that as it may, her deal with the spies was important for Israel.

[345] From an African point of view, kinship counts and keeps ties within close and extended families.

[346] The class of outcasts in the ancient world included slaves, leatherworkers, butchers, barbers, prostitutes and lepers.

In contrast, Josephus (*JW* 2.478; *Con Ap* 1.70), quoted by Carter (2000:321-322) demonstrates how the people from Tyre were enemies of the Judeans and in the 60s CE clashes between them often occurred. "Along with ethnic conflict, there are competing religious understandings". In addition, there were economic and political interests which, from time to time, united and divided them as well. For instance, during Roman colonialism, Josephus notes that many of the followers of John of Gischala, who revolted against Rome, came from the region of Tyre (*JW* 2.588, cf *Vita* 372). Nevertheless, the social and political relationship between Galilee and Tyre-Sidon was based on the interest of the moment and at best could be described as lukewarm.

The Canaanite mother was caught up in this lukewarm political and diplomatic relationship which was highly unpredictable. In most cases, innocent people living on the borders were the main victims of such inconsistent diplomatic relationships[347] (see Freyne 1980:118-121). However, at the time there might have been either some temporary political alliances or a laissez-faire strategy at the border crossing which allowed some free movement of people and information exchange. Therefore, the mother might have learned about Jesus' charismatic leadership in terms of which an advent of a just and healing kingdom (Mt 4:23-25; Mk 3:8; Lk 6:17-18), different to that of the occupying force, was announced. In those days when the Roman regime oppressed all the region (see Klausner 1964:135-173), the desire to have independence was strong, not only among the Judeans but also among other people in the region, although the Judeans were more outspoken.

Levine (2001:26, 40) correctly argues that both tribal communities (the Judeans and the Canaanites) were victims of Roman oppression. "It is Rome that occupies the land held by the Canaanites; the [Judeans] are under the same political domination as their Canaanite neighbors. This historical reality to some extent mitigates the claims either group would make for dominance".

[347]Diplomatic relations between the DRC and Rwanda are a case in point. When there is no problem in the respective policies of the two countries, the people, particularly those on the borders, live in peace. But when it changes, they become victims. The example of the Kashmir border between India and Pakistan, and the border between Poland and Germany during World War II are examples that can be mentioned in this regard.

The news about Jesus as the "son of David" (Mt 15:22) which the Canaanite mother invoked, thus had political significance. The mother presented the Matthean Jesus as a regional Savior. This could also be a reference to the diplomatic ties which existed between kings David and Hiram (1 Ki 5:1-12). However, the conversation between the mother and the Judean delegation does hint at the antagonistic relationship between the two regions. The mother was fully aware of whom she was dealing with. It is for this reason that her insistence could not be discouraged or frightened by a few harsh of words.

5.6.3 A psychoanalytic approach: Self-consciousness and self-determination

Matthew's account contains detail, such as Jesus' silence following the woman's request, (Mt 15:23a), and the rude, undeserving treatment she received from Jesus' entourage – the disciples (Mt 15:23b), which does not appear in Mark. The mother said a simple and polite prayer "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me" (Mt 15:22). The Canaanite mother appeared to be familiar with the Judean liturgy or could she have been a proselyte? Could she have learned about this Judean charismatic leader and a healer during Jesus' ministry in Galilee (Mt 4:23-25), which drew crowds from regions across Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon (Mk 3:7-12)? She certainly engaged Jesus in a prayerful manner using a particular wording of one who had been in contact with Jesus' milieu (Mt 15:22, 23, 27). She used the same words generally used by and found among the "lost sheep" – the marginalized of Israel (cf Mt 8:25; 9:27-28; 14:30; 17:15; 20:30-31; Mk 10:47).

The attitude of Jesus' disciples (Humphries-Brooks 2001:142-143) towards this mother is rather disturbing, especially taking into account the physical and psychological stress, depression and trauma that the mother and her daughter were going through. Firstly, the request was not directed to them (disciples), at least not according to Matthew and Mark. Secondly, Jesus did not ask them for an opinion. Thirdly, they acted in a culturally bound and discriminating manner. Fourthly, they showed ignorance with regard to the fulfillment of the law – doing good to the needy even to the aliens (Ex 22:21-24; 23:9; Lv 23:22; Dt 24:17-21; Jr 22:3; Zch 7:9:10). Lastly, they were equally ignorant of Jesus' divine prospects in mission beyond Israel (Mt 4:23-25; 12:21; 24:14; 26:13; 28:19-20).

The mean attitude shown by the disciples, the Pharisees and the crowd towards Jesus' compassion and intention to render justice and righteousness to the needy, is repeatedly mentioned in the narratives (Mt 9:34; 12:1-14; 14:15-17; 15:33; 20:29-31; cf Mk 6:35-36; 8:3-4; 10:46-48; Lk 13:10-17; 18:15, 35-39). In this situation they still had to learn that this was the way to fulfill the law and the prophets (Mt 5:17; see Lk 24:44).

Upon the insistence of the mother (Mt 15:25), Jesus gave an even harsher response "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs" (Mt 15:26). Jackson (2002:54-58) emphasizes the use of the dog in biblical and rabbinic literature. What needs to be realized is that dog, *keleb* in Hebrew and *kusin* in Greek, is used as a metaphor to refer to the abuse of persons of lower classes, the latter being determined according to Israelite social standards.[348] In this regard the Lucan story of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31) is significant. Lazarus, the beggar needed support from the aristocrat and only wanted to have access to the leftovers from the rich man's table.

According to Van Aarde (1999:107), eating leftover food was not considered acceptable in terms of the purity regulations of the temple. Lazarus shared the bits of food with the dogs, his only companions. In this story, the dogs "nursed" him for they came and licked his sores. Lazarus as a beggar was thus considered as unclean, impure and equal to dogs.

Although Jesus did not listen to the advice from his disciples in the encounter with the Canaanite mother, his reply was equally as shocking. In Mark, the answer comes rather with some good intentions "first let the children eat …" (Mk 7: 27), while in Matthew it is a direct answer in the negative to the effect that he was sent to the "lost sheep" (Mt 15:24; cf Mt 10:5-7).

In most cases, such *dénigrement* (humiliating treatment) would be discouraging and would make a person retreat from the scene to his/her own agony in solitude. It is equally disappointing when the cries of the weak are reduced to mere noises. Due to cultural,

[348] This is also true in many African cultures. In the case of the Banyamulenge, *imbga* (dog) is metaphorically used to refer to a despised person and a coward.

religious, social-political, economic and ethnic differences, she was in the end reduced to the level of the dogs (Mt 15:23b, 26). Even then, the Canaanite mother still persisted because her need remained unattended to. The polite answer from the patiently waiting mother became a reprimand to an unbelieving Israel, compared to Tyre and Sidon (Mt 11:20-24; Lk 10:10-14); the little faith demonstrated by Peter (Mt 14:31), and by Jesus' disciples (Mt 16:8-10; 17:17).

The Canaanite mother said "even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the masters' table" (Mt 15:27). The knowledge she displayed about the master and the dog eating the same food, is of paramount importance. As Levine (2001:40) puts it, the mother "provides a major means by which social hierarchies can finally be broken down." In the Israelite tradition the dog does not only denote Gentiles, but also the maimed, crippled, lame and undeserving Israelites. This is the case of Mephibosheth (2 Sm 9:8). Unlike Mephibosheth who won the favor of David because of his father's kindness, the mother when, compared to the diplomatic approach in Jesus' dialogue with the male Gentile who was a military officer (Mt 8:5-13), faced gender and social class discrimination. From the Lucan pericope of the centurion, it is clear that Israel (the Judean community in Capernaum) could get some political (Lk 7:5a), economic and religious benefits (Lk7:5b) from the soldier, benefits which the Canaanite mother could not offer. The Judean emissaries of the centurion pleaded with Jesus that "this man *deserves*[349] to have you do this" (Lk 7:4).

Nevertheless, the mother was unrelenting in her plea for justice, until Jesus overcame barriers (cultural, religious and political prejudices) and did the will of God. The Canaanite mother's reclaiming of the wholeness of her daughter, demonstrates not only her resistance to injustice done to women and foreigners, but also to the misappropriation of God's healing power (see Levine 2001:26). According to Dube (1996:11), the Canaanite mother insisted that "regardless of the nature of her inadequacy, she was not incapable of improving." The mother's plea liberates Jesus from the Judean cultural ghetto and helps him discover a desire. In his psychoanalytic reading, Dolto 1980:16-17; cf Mukendi 1997:56) argues that

[349] Italics that of the author.

Jesus is urged "*de se comporter en Messie.*"[350] The mother confronted the Matthean Jesus with a very disturbing factor, namely the knowledge that his community was undergoing social mutation which eventually has to become a hybrid (see Bhabha 1994:112-116; Young 2001:265-274), a more accommodating community.

Henceforth, the circumstance taught Jesus that he had to take care of all, regardless of their social-political and geographical provenance. Dolto (1980:18-19; cf Mukendi 1997:57) argues that Jesus now understands his mission differently and "*découvre l'entendue des affaires de son Père, de la maison de son Père. Seul au milieu des apôtres, seul hors de ses frontières, il est seul avec son avenir imprécis qu'il découvre au jour le jour.*"[351] It is crucial to realize that the Matthean Jesus is in the process of discovering God's will which is totally different to his Judean background. Using the Johanine reference, a woman (his mother) introduces Jesus to public reality (Jn 2:1-11), while the Canaanite mother introduces him to the universal reality of God's healing mission.

Jesus was surprised and touched by the mother's resistance (faith) and said "you have great faith! Your request is granted" (Mt 15:28b). Although the faith of the Canaanite mother is great (Mt 15:28a), the text in both Matthew and Mark does not show any continuation of the story beyond the healing of the daughter (cf Mk 7:29-30). Did the mother want anything more? Were they both embarrassed by this type of species of diplomatic incident in their dialogue? Of course, the text does not go further than to narrate a healing act. But it is certain that the healing of the daughter turned the mood of mourning into one of joy, and a desire for justice and righteousness into satisfaction. Her poverty and uncleanness were turned into fullness and accommodation in the reign of God's kingdom of justice and righteousness.

[350] To behave like the Messiah.

[351] Discovers the extent of his Father's business and of his house. On his own, in the midst of the disciples and finding himself outside his frontiers, he is alone with his own uncertain future which he discovers from day to day.

In two instances, healing occurs as a result of Jesus' touch, namely the healing of Peter's mother-in-law and the official's daughter recorded by Matthew (Mt 8:14-15; 9:18-25). It is interesting to note that there is an implied association with cleanness and uncleanness (Vledder 1997:184, 215-218). In these two instances (Mt 8:15; 9:25) it is Jesus who touches the sick, while in another, that of the hemorrhaging woman, it is her touching of Jesus that is instrumental in her wholeness being restored. Wainwright (2001b:90-91) correctly puts it "[t]hat which was culturally sanctioned as dangerous to touch was manipulated by that very touch."

In the case of the Canaanite mother, Jesus does not touch, but merely uses a word to answer the request of the unclean foreigner mother on behalf of her unclean foreigner daughter who is demon-possessed. The Canaanite mother shares the same experience with the Centurion (Mt 8:5:13) (see Vledder 1997:179-184). Both are non-Judeans, both are pleading for healing on behalf of the sick in absentia and both experiences provide an opportunity for Jesus and his disciples to learn about the incomparable faith from the culturally undeserved people. In this particular story the concern is not whether the Matthean community is inclusive[352] or not. But the concern is to see justice and righteousness done to the poor, widows, orphans and to strangers among "you" (Zch 7:9-10).

[352] As much as this study does not deal with the inclusive and exclusive debate, there is a strong objection to this theology, which would be seen as "imperial theology" (Carter 2001). If the Matthean scholars would consider the introduction (Mt 1-2) and the conclusion (Mt 28:16-20) of Matthew, they provide enough evidence to challenge such theology. The Matthean introduction takes into account four mothers alongside Israelite men and leaders found in the genealogy story (see Jackson 2002:943), while in chapter two he introduces the presence of the Magi. In the post-paschal commission, nations are again equally included. The other important challenge, which needs to be taken seriously, comes from A-J Levine (2001:39-40). She depicts the two powers at stake not necessarily as Judeans and Gentiles, but as the Church and Rome. "For the story world, the real power is that of the Church; for the historical setting, the real power is Rome. Delimiting discussion to Jews and Canaanites [Gentiles], commentators release from culpability the true power brokers. Once Rome and the Church enter the discussion, the scene changes." Levine puts forward two arguments challenging both the anti-Semitism and anti-Gentile propaganda: Firstly, "the anti-Jewish readings of the pericope – those that highlight Jewish ethnocentrism, exclusivity, clannishness, etc. – appear for what they really are: products of the Church". Matthew is not a text preserved by the Synagogue. Her argument is that the Matthean text emerges out of Judean matrix and that even if the text is to be cited as a form of "temporarily limited Jewish ethnic superiority, this superiority is proclaimed not by the Synagogue but by the Church." Her second argument aims at those who concentrate on Judean ethnic interest and she says "readers risk eliminating the real source of supersessionist oppression in the 1st century. It is Rome that occupies the land held by the Canaanites; the Jews are under the same political domination as their Canaanite neighbors. This historical reality to some extent mitigates against the claims either group would make for dominance". In light of a postcolonial reading, the argument should be further pursued in order to achieve a balance, which might facilitate an understanding of the Other. In another argument, Levine (1996:379), says that the Matthean message of new life for those who follow Jesus, the invitation is inclusive

Arguing from an African perspective and experience, Ukpong (1992:59-62) and Van Aarde (2005:23; see Jackson 2000:940-943) are convinced that the marginalized, "the least of these brothers", *adelphon mou ton elachiston* (Mt 25:40), or the "lost sheep" are included in the kingdom of heaven and are to be "understood in the context of *panta ta ethne*." It is therefore, a responsibility of members of the community to take care of the needy regardless of their origin or status. According to Israelite tradition in the Old Testament, "in order to be fully alive [existent], an individual needs sustenance, health, and emotional stability" (Knight 1989:81). In the case of those who do not have access to these basics, the community around them, their neighbors must provide the warmth. This is what the community of brotherhood is all about.

As a male Judean, Jesus' mission is shaped and delimited by Judean cultural and religious belief, and in this case he is instructed by his cultural milieu that the Canaanites are not *abacu* or are not part of them (see Jackson 2003:781). Yet, as a divine messenger who has to proclaim justice and righteousness to the afflicted (Lk 4:18-19), the illuminative thought of doing God's will – justice and righteousness (Mt 5:17; cf Ex 18:15; Jn 4: 34) prevails. Therefore, ethnicity does not come first when justice and righteousness is to be administered. Instead, human are to be given priority. The kingdom of God in the light of universal brotherhood and sisterhood is a hybrid fabric in which all nations, tribes, races and, both genders find an equal and mutual existence.

5.7 Summary

Becoming one of God's chosen is not just a privilege, rather it is a responsibility. It brings with it the accountability to do justice and righteousness; to carry on a decolonizing and healing mission; to take the good news to the poor and to oppressed (cf Is 61:1-4; Lk 4:18-19; Jn 10:10). The fulfillment of the law in this particular case is the extension of justice and

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from fishermen like Peter (Mt 4:18-22) to the rich, politically connected figures such as Joseph of Arimathea (Mt 27:57). It also applies to all those considered to be marginal or disenfranchised from the Israelite system, among them would count tax collectors, prostitutes, sinners, lepers, women, children, the dispossessed and the sick.

righteousness to the so-called undeserved. Jesus' teaching is a revolutionary teaching that challenges the existing structures that dehumanize the *Other*.

From a traditional Israelite viewpoint, the Canaanite mother must have been aware of her rights (although this is not explicitly stated in the pericope), and it is this awareness that made her insist and persist that strangers should not to be deprived of their justice (Dt 24:17). For anyone to deprive another of the basic necessities for a happy existence "constituted immoral conduct" (Knight 1989:81). Van Aarde (2005:20) is convinced that Jesus' restoration of the daughter to new life is "a manifestation of the liberating and inclusive nature of the *basiliea."* The healing of the daughter is women's empowerment, in the true sense of the word, restoring their strength to face the challenges of life in an unbalanced gender society. Indeed, a society's sense of justice and righteousness is the indication of God's reign among human societies (Amos 5:24).

5.8 Banyamulenge community and Matthean justice and righteousness

5.8.1 Introduction

After studying both the Judean and Banyamulenge communities, a number of issues have come to the fore that will now be examined in light of the Matthean understanding of justice and righteousness. As has already been argued, the Sermon on the Mount has presented an alternative way of living for a community in socio-political turmoil. The DRC provides a case study for Jesus' teaching that favors the poor and dispossessed. As was stated earlier in chapter three, the Banyamulenge community is not the only community in the Congo/the DRC to have suffered because of a succession of bad political leadership since the colonial period. In fact, the Congo is a case in itself, let alone the different tribal groups that inhabit the country.

But what makes the case of the Banyamulenge community unique, is its social and political identity within the parameters of national and regional perspectives.

First of all, because of their uncompromising stance to colonial demand, colonial rule discriminated against them and as a consequence their customary leadership was cancelled

out. In a country where political identity was linked to customs and land ownership, especially in postcolonial Congo, the Banyamulenge were left with no customary authority, thus without land ownership.

Secondly, their immediate neighbors discriminated against them because of the military contribution to the national army in suppressing the rebellion in the Uvira and Fizi territories in the 1960s. The rebellion in the eastern region was largely supported by the very neighbours (Babembe and Bafuliru).

Thirdly, they were discriminated against because of tribalism and ethnic amalgamation in the Great Lakes Region. As minority group and not represented in most of the colonial and postcolonial political administrative spheres, it is as if they never existed, or they existed as foreigners. It is for this reason that Lemarchand (1999:15-16) made the statement that their "name never appears in colonial records."[353] Nevertheless, their cause keeps haunting Congolese politics for many years, until justice is rediscovered.

5.8.2 The meek and the dispossession of land

"The meek… will inherit the earth", while "the poor in spirit", the kingdom of heaven belongs to them (Mt 5:3,5). How would a Banyamulenge peasant read these Beatitudes? Are these promises for him/her today or are they applicable to another world to come? The imperial powers (Carter 2004:264), such as Babylon and Rome, and their local collaborators do not comply with God's will according to which basic necessities should be equally distributed to all of humanity.

The Judeans owned land inherited from their ancestors which entitled every citizen to belong. But with the coming of the Romans and their local collaborators, injustice became the order of the day. The proclamation of the kingdom of heaven – a God-with-us kingdom – encapsulates the essence of resistance against the injustice that was practiced. In his

[353] Lemarchand's argument is somehow misleading (contra chapter three above). Secondly, his argument can also be regarded as a colonial reading in itself. People's identity, dignity and justice need not necessarily be (re)defined by colonial records, because they have been a people long before colonialism, no matter how their history can be (re)written. However, Lemarchand's statement is widely used by many Congolese extremist politicians who would like to continue the politics of divide and rule.

campaign against racism in the USA, Martin Luther King brought the issue of equality and equal ownership to the forefront of his campaign. During that time, former USA President John F Kennedy asked a revolutionary question: “Are we to say to the world that this is the land for the free, except for the Negroes” (Peck 1996:73)? Yet, the very dream and prayer of African-Americans was to belong.

The Banyamulenge who, like any of the other local tribes, migrated to what became the Congo, and had a right to belong to a land where they would express and develop their cultural and national identity. The argument of Young (2003:45-68) on landlessness is quite significant here. By being dispossessed of their rights to own land, the community, however, fell victim to the colonizer. Even after independence, they were victimized by the postcolonial political structures that refused to give them any official recognition. Instead, the Congolese central government often overlooked its responsibility of protecting and administering justice to all its citizens, which left the community in socio-political disarray.

Therefore, to the Banyamulenge, the presence of the kingdom of heaven represents a restoration of wholeness of life, a restoration in which God would reestablish order in the society, in the process, returning to the dispossessed that which had belonged to them. It is not surprising to learn that as the Banyamulenge people became Christians, land rights became one of their most pressing requests. A request made not to colonialists, nor to the missionaries, but in the form of a prayer to God.[354] In 1957 when a group of Banyamulenge elders went to pray in the Bijombo locality, the issue of land ownership was one of their priorities. In 1979-1980, during a church crisis between the Banyamulenge church leaders and the CEPAC leadership, traditional land ownership was among the concerns raised.

Although not formally educated (in the colonial definition of education), the motivation to fight for their rights was part of every Banyamulenge person, particularly when the issue of their nationality also became intertwined with the issue of land ownership. During the rebellion of 1964-1968, when anti-Tutsi sentiment against the Banyamulenge was at its

[354] See chapter three, section 3.7.5.1.

height, the community's dependency on God became their only hope. Mobilization of churches, prayer groups, sermons and songs focused on God who would let them live. From 1966 to 1972, there came prophetic messages that they have right to belong; that "the land is theirs and no one will ever drive them from it."[355] Bicinoni Nyiringoma, Rasito Karikofi and madam Domitila Nyabibone are among those whose prophecies gave hope for living in the land .

In December 1972, a group of intercessors, among them pastor Protais Muzero and Rasto Rungwangwa, were praying at Kahwela, Minembwe. They received an instruction to go to a place called Nyabibuye up on a mountain and stand on a rock which God would show them.[356] There, they would receive a message from God. The divine message they received when they reached the venue, was to look to the west, the east, the north and the south, thereafter they were told that "the land surrounded by horizons that your eyes are seeing, I (the Lord saying) will make it your dwelling place."[357] Among those intercessors who prophesied about the future of the community and the land, are Sefania Munyakazi[358] of the Rutigita village, Musa Gasogi[359] of the Mugeti locality, Simoni Sebaganwa[360] of the Kirumba village, Rasito Karikofi[361] of Kajebwe locality. It must also be understood that false

[355] In April 1995, when the law on nationality was changed to make Banyamulenge and other Congolese of Rwandan and Burundian origins foreigners, and calling on them to leave the country, people were in great fear. An old man called Zakayo Ntihabose of Tulambo, Itombwe was told about the decision and said "*Oyaye, siko Imana yavuze*!" (No that is not what God said!). When they were given six days by, Mr. Lwabanji, the Deputy Governor of Bukavu in September 1996, one other person said, that the "governor is talking about himself. He is the one who will leave." Indeed after that week, the war broke, the Deputy Governor fled.

[356] The prophet was Ezekiel Musinga.

[357] This was recorded during a discussion between the research and pastor Protais Muzero in June 2004.

[358] A pastor with CADAF in the Minembwe location. In 2002, he became a victim of the RPA in Minembwe when he was arrested at an evangelistic conference organized by EMI held from 12-15 September; he was beaten up and was held for two days. He allegedly prophesied that RPA soldiers would not win the war against Masunzu and that they would withdraw. Within a week, the Rwandan troops were called home.

[359] He was a pastor with CADC for many years until his death in 1998.

[360] He is a pastor with CADC in the Bijombo location.

[361] He is a pastor of the Free Methodist church in the Bijombo location.

prophesies and political fanaticism were rampant especially during the early 1980s and in 1998 when the community went through religious and political upheavals respectively.

When the issue of nationality and their status as foreigners became politically and socially unbearable; when the future of the community was bleak in the 1980s, God's word, in the form of a prophecy, once again comforted them. The prophecy said "you will live in this land and that "*abana banyu bazabategeka*."[362] Carter's (2001:75-90) argument dealing with the use of the prophetic announcement of Jesus as the Savior of his people (Mt 1:21), is of importance here. God's purposes to serve Israel neither do nor run through Rome, but through Israel's genealogy. In other words, the presentation of Jesus as the Son of David, takes on the form of political resistance against Roman imperialism. God challenges Roman rule for failing to do justice and righteousness. Thus, Israel will be represented by her own son.

Likewise, for the Banyamulenge, the comfort that comes from their sons, presents a challenge to both the colonial and local powers which had failed to establish justice and righteousness for all Congolese citizens, regardless of their origin or tribal affiliation. Their land rights and national identity would be recovered through God's own intervention. The Banyamulenge people were denied their rights to the land and citizenship unjustly. Neither the other Congolese tribes nor the Banyamulenge had chosen the tribe they belong to. Geopolitical boundaries were drawn by colonial greed and not in the consent with nor in the interest of local people. Nevertheless, what needs to be done, is not to blame each other for what they are today. They are compatriots and each need to have his/her full rights as Congolese citizen and appreciate their cultural diversity in the essence of national hybridity.

For this matter, Horsley (1993:170) is quite correct in saying that God's kingdom brings "wholeness to the individual person" and the renewal of social and political identities. As much as any other Congolese national, don't the Banyamulenge members need to be recognized and be accepted for they way they are? As Carter (2000:133) also argues that the

[362] Your children would be your leaders. Pastor Karikofi is the one who prophesied in 1968 that God will give them a territory and will be protected by an army from their own children.

meek, those who are dispossessed, would soon recover their land, as the occupying force would be replaced by God's empire. The owner of the land, the Lord God (Gn 1; Ps 24:1; Lv 25:23), distributes it justly and righteously, regardless of race, physical appearance, gender, language or ethnic group.

During his ministry to the needy, the Matthean Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of justice and righteousness which gave people rights to belong and to fellowship. In so doing, Jesus is creating an egalitarian society based on justice and righteousness, a society in which every person is entitled to have a fair judgment. The God of Israel had instructed his people to do justice so that they may live in the land (Dt 16:18-20). The DRC is a country of about 2,345,410 km^2 with an estimated population of about 55,000,000. It shares its borders with nine other countries, whose tribal groups are scattered across the boundaries. Furthermore, the Banyamulenge community totals between 400,000 and 500,000 people,[363] and yet politicians feel uncomfortable and are unable to accommodate them and to cohabit with them. Greed for power and possession of wealth has turned the Congo into a poor, miserable and ungovernable country.

Between 1993 and 1994, tribal antagonism between local tribes (the Bahunde, Banyanga, Banande) and Kinyarwanda speaking Congolese which was based on the issue of land ownership and which was instigated by politicians in North-Kivu (African Rights 2000:310-312; ICG 2003, 2005), left thousands of people dead, properties destroyed, and herds of cattle in their thousands pillaged. Thousands of people, mainly Kinyarwanda speaking Congolese, sought refuge in Rwanda and Uganda. One year earlier, in 1992, the ethnic cleansing and eviction of Kasai people (Baluba) from the Katanga province (Nzongola-Ntalaja1999b:46-47) had been instigated and supervised by provincial Katangese authorities. Thousands of Kasai people were killed and their properties destroyed on the grounds that they did not belong to the Katanga province.

[363] For many years, no census has been conducted. The figures for both the Congolese population in general and the Banyamulenge community in particular, are based on estimation.

From the late 1980s through to the early 1990s, the Banyamulenge who lived in Vyura location,[364] in the Moba district of the Katanga province, also became the target of local authorities on the same grounds, namely that they did not belong there. In the Ituri region, the conflict between the Bahema and Balendu tribes (see Van Woudenberg 2004:189-204) over the issue of land, that has been raging since the early 1990s, has claimed thousands of lives. The conflict over control of land between the Babuyu and Babembe in the Fizi territory has been raging since the 1980s but has never been exposed, mainly because the area is isolated and the Babuyu is a minority group, without interlocutors who could raise their plight at provincial and national levels.

If there are people whose desire it is to do justice and righteousness (Mt 5:6) on behalf of those who had been denied justice, the land that is available would be enough for all. If not, those who have lost their land because of their powerless status will have it restored through God's intervention. As Van Tilborg (1986:19) and Carter (2000:131) argue, the proclamation of the kingdom is a quality in which God' power prevails against colonial and dictatorial regimes and proclaims justice to all subjects. The good news, according to Dupont (1969b:104), is that God will come to the defense of the oppressed and proclaim their salvation.

The Banyamulenge community has been generally and globally accused of collaborating with Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. However, all other armed groups involved with foreign support seem not to cause any serious issue[365]. There is a critical question rather that needs

[364] Letter of Banyamulenge local chiefs at Vyura to the Minister of Home Affairs and Local Government in Kinshasa, on 22 December 1989.

[365] Azarias Ruberwa, one of the Vice-Presidents of the DRC was interviewed by le *Soir* on 2 June 2005. In reply to a question on Rwandan support to his political party, he answered by saying that not a single movement in the Congo came to power without local and foreign alliances and that Rwanda should not be seen through him and his movement, the RCD. "*C'est très subjectif de croire que l'occupation rwandaise ne serait préjudiciable qu'à moi. Le pouvoir de Kabila est un pur produit du pouvoir rwandais: nous sommes arrivés par le biais de négociations; eux ont été installés par la force militaire rwandaise à Kinshasa. Et le RCD n'est pas la seule rébellion à avoir été soutenue de l'extérieur: Bemba le fut par l'Ouganda.*" (It is very subjective to believe that the Rwandan occupation would be only prejudicial towards me. Kabila's power is purely a product of Rwandan power: we arrived by means of negotiations, [but them] they, have been put in Kinshasa by a Rwandan military force. And the RCD is not the only rebellion to have been supported from outside: Uganda did the same in the case of Bemba).

to be examined: who else in the country based on his/her origins, had been denied his/her citizenship and became stateless in his/her own country?

In 1996 and in 1998, some Banyamulenge politicians, in alliance with other Congolese politicians from different political views and tribes worked together. They received support from various countries from near and far to fight regimes judged to be dictatorial. At the same time, the regimes being fought, also sought support from neighboring countries and beyond their borders. The argument is that members of the Banyamulenge community have also right, like any other citizen, to express their political feelings, particularly when their basic rights are at risk.

Jesus extends his kingdom and rights to live in the land to the poor, the powerless and to the stigmatized people of the land (see Van Tilborg (1986:19). Those neglected or disliked by existing power systems; those millions who are crying out for justice and righteousness are given preference (Is 46:3; 52:7-8). As Carter (2000:133) observes, God's rule "redistributes" equal access to basic resources with no favoritism. This can be achieved through Cabral's (1969:41-43) national liberation, which is through unity and endurance of cultures as the result of people's history. In this case, all peoples and cultures are equally recognized and appreciated for their contribution in building a nation where love, peace and unity prevail.

5.8.3 Love your enemies and a non-violent approach

In a short overview of the process in terms of which the Banyamulenge people reclaimed their rights, the following events can be highlighted: In 1933, their *chefferies* (local chieftaincies) in the Uvira territory were cancelled by colonial Belgians. From 1951 to 1952 they were evicted from Minembwe and Itombwe locations by colonial farmers. Between 1964 and 1968 their families and herds became the target of rebellion and tribal hatred. From 1979 to 1996, their social and political identity became problematic as a result of discriminatory policies which treated the Banyamulenge as foreigners in their own land.

For their part, the Banyamulenge used non-violent means to reclaim their rights until their lives became endangered. They used legal channels to reclaim their land, but had little success. Even when the *Groupement de Bijombo* was officially recognized by the Ministry of Local Government in 1979, members of the Banyamulenge community could not be candidates for its leadership on the grounds that they were foreigners. In 1982 and 1987, Banyamulenge parliamentary candidates were disqualified, while other politicians (from neighboring communities) still solicited votes from the community. When they were excluded from elections in 1982, they destroyed ballot boxes in different locations of Uvira and Mwenga as a means of protest and resistance against political discrimination.

Their use of force from 1964-1970, was purely in self-defense. The rebellion was not their initiative. Secondly, when it reached Uvira and Fizi, it became a tribal issue and the Banyamulenge became the immediate target. Helplessly, they joined government forces as a means of self-protection, but also in defense of the nation, like millions of other Congolese. Again, in 1996, the use of force (in self defense) was their last resort. Politicians who benefited from the anarchy and the "collapsed state" under Mobutu since early 1980s (cf Young & Turner 1985; Dunn 2003:105-138), worked locally and through the Parliament to frustrate, harass, discriminate against and eventually kill Banyamulenge members. Once more, legal procedures were used, with Banyamulenge mutualities in different places, local chiefs, women and students, pastors and NGOs submitted letters and memoranda to local, provincial and national authorities, but went unheard.

The reason for not being listened to is twofold. First, there was a general lack of responsible people within political and social institutions who would ensure that justice be done, not only to the Banyamulenge, but also to the millions of complaints from other Congolese on various issues. In other words, there was a total absence of responsible government. Second, their case was intentionally suppressed because of the political discrimination perpetrated by those in power, who played the role of the accuser/instigator and judge at the same time. Thirdly, the lack of control over the presence of Interahamwe

from Rwanda and FDD militia from Burundi by the government and the international community, exacerbated ethnic hatred in the Eastern Congo.

In 1996, Kabila with the help of youths from across the nation, particularly from the eastern region of the country, among them Banyamulenge youths, mounted a rebellion that toppled the dictatorship of Mobutu. Unfortunately and paradoxically, the Banyamulenge were accused of being foreigners and traitors, while Kabila who led the rebellion was called a nationalist. Does practicing the principles of the Sermon on the Mount make one a coward? Carter (2001:171) believes that the Sermon is part of the measures denouncing the injustice perpetrated by the Roman regime and its collaborators. The motif behind Banyamulenge resistance is not to kill, but to protect themselves and to let the Congolese politicians see otherness in the *Other*.

The example of church separation which occurred between CEPAC and CADC (as described in chapter three) also bears witness to the injustice that permeated even religious institutions. After a long time of frustration and endurance, Banyamulenge pastors decided to withdraw from the mother church, CEPAC (Mudagiri, et al Mwungura 1980). Moreover, the Banyamulenge church leadership participated in the measures of civil disobedience when the community was denied the right to vote in 1982 and ballot boxes were destroyed. This was interpreted as a subversive act which resulted in the imprisonment of many local Banyamulenge leaders.

According to Matthew, making peace meant that one must not kill (Mt 5:21-26) thus avoiding Roman courts. The judicial system under the Romans was unfair, corrupt and full of false testimony (Mt 15:18). Both the colonial and post-independent regimes in the Congo falsified the history of the people, which left the Banyamulenge community vulnerable and exposed to politics of divide and rule. As a consequence, where the law does not exist, anarchy reigns. From independence to date, the question of who benefited from rebellions, the chaos and anarchy, still remains unanswered.

Neither the central government, nor local politicians or the population at large, including Banyamulenge, was victorious. The refusal of national identity, thus turning people into a state of statelessness; the senseless killing of people, destruction of properties, hardship inflicted on innocent people, forcing survivors into refugee status since 1964 to this day, have only contributed to the collapse of the state and the betrayal of nationhood. Hatred and tribal animosity became uncontrolled. Both politicians and civil society representatives, including religious institutions, were caught up in wars and their consequences (see African Rights 2000:153-191). The involvement of foreign countries from Chad to Zimbabwe (Mangu 2003:242-243); the intervention of MONUC,[366] are the consequences of various political and economic interests of external bodies. However, the Congolese themselves share a greater responsibility for not being responsible toward one another and for not being able to be coherent in their definition of nationhood, in order to avoid this foreign political and military presence.

Today, the labeling of *Self* and *Other* is commonly exploited in political and social representations. Ethnicity has been used as a political tool in earning profit for some, whereas for others, it is the most dangerous road to venture on. Where does love for an enemy start? The use of force as self-defense by the Banyamulenge, among other Congolese military insurrections in 1996 meant that, in no time, the war became a regional war, attracting both foreign regular armies and mercenaries from the region and beyond (Vine 1999:67-69) as was the case in the 1960s (Clarke 1968). The same scenario was repeatedly observed in 1998.

Nevertheless, the most surprising turn in all this, is the fact that Tutsis became more visible than political aspirations of the war. This political stigmatization of the Banyamulenge community, ironically, identified them not as Congolese (their nationality), but as Tutsis (their ethnic group). It is in this regard that Sartre and Fanon's argument on anti-Semitism and blackness (Kruks 1996:122-133) comes to mind. Sartre argued that in an anti-Semitic world, a Jew is "over-determined" and that he/she would never be free not to be a Jew, the Other.

[366] *Mission de l'organisation des nations Unies au Congo* (Mission of the United Nations in the Congo).

Fanon, on the other hand, feels the same pressure of being a Negro (see chapter two) as someone who is determined by the color of his/her skin.

Political and rebel movements such as the AFDL, RCD, MLC, RCD-ML, UDPS, PPRD[367] etcetera, may represent views which are apparently sympathetic to the plight of Congolese society but which are exploitive as they do not necessarily act on a mandate from those very people that they claim to represent. It does, however, not preclude people living in misery from identifying with anyone who can provide any means of protection. The complication of the political scenario in the Congo and the Great Lakes Region since independence is that hatred and tribal animosity have led some people to believe that their security depends on the extermination or exclusion of the other and that tribal majority or minority formation would ensure their survival.

Yet, the message of Jesus is to love the neighbor (Mt 22:39) and the enemy (Mt 5:44). Because, political and social structures in any given context are not beyond reproach (Mt 5:21-22; cf 1 Jn 1:10). Political and social systems built around tribes and based on exclusion can only exacerbate hatred and will never secure peace and security between neighbors, or enemies for that matter. At the same time, a corrupt judicial system cannot promote peace and unity among differing parties.

Speaking purely from a human point of view, it is an extremely difficult, however, if not impossible, to overcome bitterness, hatred, and sorrow and to come to love an enemy. In view of recent examples of war, genocide, tribal conflicts which have left deep open wounds on bodies and hearts, it takes God's grace to forgive. Nevertheless, Matthew was no less of a victim and is talking from experience. Matthew witnessed anarchy, in which assassinations of people through organized banditry and acts of vengeance prevailed (Mt 2:16-17; 14:1-12; 23:27-35) and the *lex talionis* (Mt 5:38) was not a new practice to him (Ex 21:23; Lv 24:17-23; Dt 19:21). But Matthew wants to overcome evil by doing good, by loving one's enemy (Mt 5:44) as a means of resistance against hatred and injustice.

[367] *Parti Populaire du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie* (Popular People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy).

What has happened in the Great Lakes Region can best be described as disastrous. Foreign troops and militia came and waged war in the DRC; local rebel movements waged war against their governments; the governments turned against their own people; tribes turned against one another; groups within one tribe/community turned against each other. And in the absence of justice, survival of the strongest became the only law in the land. Matthew is speaking from a similar experience and is convinced that the way to peace is not to kill, but to love and to forgive. Interventions from the United Nations (UN) the African Union (AU) or the European Union (EU) will not solve the crisis in the DRC unless the Congolese themselves accept in the first instance to make peace with one another. That is to give effect to the command, to love a neighbor and an enemy. To this effect a number of peace initiatives have been organized by members of civil society (churches, para-church organizations) and NGOs in the country and in the Great lakes Region in partnership with international organizations. But much still remains to be done.

It is only by making peace with one another that humanity will be recovered and true and perfect worship of God can be achieved (Mt 5:48). To be perfect in God's eyes is to love one's enemy. In so doing, the Matthean community qualifies to be a community of sons and daughters of God. Matthew makes the basis clear in the golden rule (Mt 7:12) and in the Great Commandment to love God and the neighbor (Mt 22:37-39).

As the war raged in 1996, coalition forces within the AFDL were gaining ground. Banyamulenge politicians and soldiers were instructed to be forgiving and patient and that if they obeyed, God would protect them and would give them victory. However, this was not observed and failures that ensued were blamed on their misconduct. Soon after the victory of the AFDL in May 1997, their sacrifices were betrayed, when in August 1998, they fell victim to anti-Tutsi campaign and massacres (see Nzongola-Ntalaja 1999:46-48; Sarkin 2001; Mangu 2003:240; see Hans 2004:223).

As far as the conflict within the Banyamulenge community itself is concerned, it can be said that lack of political cohesion divided brothers, each blaming the other for the fate that

befell the community. However, using Young's (2003:141-143) argument, the community was going through a process of political, social and religious translation, whereby the desire to live according to old traditions, under the *abacu* concept, was reduced to mere nostalgia, while not being fully accepted in the current situation. At the same time, there was internal political competition and ambition, as was the case in the Matthean community (Mt 20:20-28). The fragmentation of the community since 1998 turned into a mercenary-type affair.

The PPRD of Kabila enjoyed support from one group, with the MLC of Jean-Pierre Bemba forming another considerable force, while a couple of others joined the side of the RCD/ML of Mbusa Nyamwisi . The RCD-Goma remained with another group. Despite the forces of soldiers from Banyamulenge being dispersed to different belligerent movements, anti-Tutsi sentiments grew and members of the community became victims of tribalism (African Rights 2000:168-178, 298-309) whenever they were found across the country.

At a seminar organized by the Eben-Ezer Ministry in 2004,[368] Banyamulenge pastors reflected on the current issues affecting them and the future of the community. As any other community in the midst of apocalyptic times, several challenges were identified: (i) Internal divisions in local churches; (ii) Leadership wrangles both within the church, society and politics; (iii) lack of justice, a culture of impunity and negative solidarity; (v) lack of repentance and mutual forgiveness of various parities in internal and external conflicts. Based on this diagnosis, the Sermon on the Mount applies to the situation. Forgiveness must happen so that sins can be forgiven (Mt 6:12-15). They must love their neighbors as well as their enemies (Mt 5:43-48).

Belgian colonialism must indeed be blamed for having incited political tribalism, but for how long? After forty-five years of independence, whom does the Congo blame for its tribalism, lack of justice and sense of nationhood? When and how will all tribes, particularly those living in the Eastern Congo region, come to love one another and

[368] Eben-Ezer Ministry International, *Compte-rendu de la rencontre de pasteurs Banyamulenge du 22 au 23 juillet 2004*. Minutes of a meeting of Banyamulenge pastors held from 22 to 23 July 2004).

develop a sense of brotherhood? How can the Congolese state come to terms with its failures and begin to find solutions in building a multi-cultural identity in which all tribes, races and social strata will find a sense of unity and security?

These are only a few of the many questions one could ask at this juncture and which desperately need to be answered. The Congolese government has a huge responsibility to lead people in peace and prosperity by introducing and defending a sense of mutual sharing of resources and justice for all.

Senghor (1961:54-55) delivered a very profound speech to the 16th session of the UN General Assembly. In his concluding remarks, Senghor challenged tricontinental countries, by what he called an "examination of conscience". He said:

> We are accustomed at times to speak harshly of the great Powers. I, also, have done this, but when all is said and done, are there no criticism which we should make of ourselves? The truth is that by our ambitions, our weaknesses and our errors, we have discouraged neither the arms race nor the cold war. We have denounced the imperialism of the great Powers perhaps to hide a lesser imperialism among ourselves in the 'third world'. We have sought disarmament on the part of the great Powers while turning our own countries into arsenals. We proclaim neutralism but we do not always support this claim with a policy of true neutrality. It is time for us, the third world or non-aligned world, to do our duty, if we truly wish to influence the great powers … It is time to make our deeds match our words; it is time for us, in turn, to listen to the voice of reason and the voice of the heart.
>
> (Senghor 1961:54-55)

Matthew shows the way for a community to settle issues among themselves (Mt 22:37-40). Mutual love (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:56-57), understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation, *diallasso*, must replace the Roman and religious court systems. If the Congo is to succeed, it must enact a law which offers equal protection to all its citizens and seeks reconciliation beyond subjective judgment (Mt 7:1-5). Likewise, a responsible and impartial government would serve the interests of all its citizens; it is a government which would not corrupt its own systems or squander its own resources; a government that would establish bilateral and diplomatic relationship with its neighbors. If the DRC government adopts principles of good governance, it will avoid unnecessary social and political interference of foreigners and will live in peace.

5.8.4 Family affairs

Matthew highlights a number of issues that merit further attention. One is adultery and the other pertains to divorce (Mt 5:27-32; 19:1-12). Matthew records tension between Joseph and an innocent Mary (Mt 1:18-20) who found herself pregnant outside wedlock. At the time certain laws governed the society in matters of sexual relationships (Van Tilborg 1986:59, 64). The circumstance surrounding the death of John the Baptist (Mt 14:1-1) is another example of marital problems during the time of Matthew, in which women became sexually exploited.

Jesus' teaching comes as a social revolution to terminate women sexual exploitation, which Roman regime was practicing (Mt 14:1-12; Mk 6:17-20; Lk 3:19), together with religious leaders. But what is the situation beyond Matthew's culture? Three issues which are found in Banyamulenge practice need to be highlighted.

First issue is divorce and remarriage. It is true that women had no social status in a Judean and Greco-Roman cultural setting which as Carter (2000:378) puts it, "reflects dominant Jewish and Greco-Roman attitudes to women and divorce." In this regard the case of Mwungura (see chapter three above) can be recalled. In 1945, he was divorced by his wife because he defiled his culture and tradition by being baptized. The families supported this

divorce, because Mwungura dishonored them. In this case, Pauline theology on marriage and divorce permitted Mwungura to remarry (1Cor 7:1-24).

Second issue is polygamy and Christian restrictions. Polygamy is not explicitly discussed in Matthew apart from his reference to the story of creation (19:8). Pauline theology of marriage, however, refers to this issue in a restrictive manner (1 Tim 3:12). To this day, missionaries and church doctrines support the idea that the polygamous must part with some of the wives, preferably the late comers for them to be accepted as committed Christians. However, the one who is discarded has a remote chance of remarrying, thus falling in the category of vulnerable and homeless women, after being separated from her home and children. More severely, this practice of breaking families has a negative impact on children who are victimized and denied the care of their mother.

The Great Lakes region, as many other war-torn countries in the world, experiences a serious challenge as far as the future of thousands of widows in the society and particularly in churches is concerned. How do churches minister to them? Matthew does not deal with this problem explicitly in his community like Paul (1 Tim 5). In the Banyamulenge community, as is the case in Israelite tradition, and in many other African communities, the custom is to take care of widows.

But the restriction of traditions by Christian doctrine endangers the future of the widow who entirely depends on the community. When life becomes unbearable, this widow finds herself having children. This becomes problematic both to the church and the family, because in most cases these children are fathered by (officially) unknown fathers. Who should be responsible for those babies? In most cases, such a widow is not economically independent. In the end she becomes a burden either to ill equipped churches (with no program for widows, nor for such babies) or to the family (disturbed by the fact that they either don’t know father(s) of such babies or do not belong to the family).

Culturally, there is a problem of inheritance associated with such children. Then there is also the danger of these widows, who are left unprotected by family traditions, becoming

involved with several men, “unfaithful” men amongst others, who might cause tragedy by infecting them with deadly diseases. The other issue is when some of the widows would like to remarry. In this case, traditionally and constitutionally, such widows are not protected. The moment they are remarried they lose automatically the right to belong and to own their late husbands properties, and even the right to raise up her children.

Churches which have discouraged the tradition of polygamy have not yet come up with an alternative solution to this issue. Consequently, these women become dislocated (Young 1996:8; 2003:69-92; cf Van Aarde 2004a) from their family traditions and become marginal to Christian practices.

Third issue is adultery. According to Banyamulenge culture, sleeping with someone’s wife as long as it is within the family ties was not an offense. It would only be an offense if committed outside one’s family, and it was a serious and shameful offense when committed outside community boundaries. Traditional life was in all aspects a communal life. With the coming of Christianity, such practices were prohibited in the community.

But still adultery was not considered to be serious enough an issue to be a ground for divorce. But this gradually changed when members of the community were going through a process of acculturation as they mixed with other cultures and were exposed to western civilization and Christian religion. Some cases of divorce on the grounds of adultery have been recorded, but it is still on a small scale. Reference to adultery (Mt 5:27-30; 19:9) as a sin and the message of forgiveness (Mt 18:22) that Matthew implies causes hermeneutical difficulties. What sins are and are not forgivable seventy-seven times and why?