

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to summarize the findings of this study. It will include a summary of objectives, the findings of the study and some concluding marks.

6.2 Summary of objectives of study

From the outset, the main objective of this study was to contribute towards a postcolonial reading in Matthean scholarship by examining the concept of justice and righteousness. The focus was to establish how the principle of justice and righteousness is applied in the Matthean community and beyond. To achieve this, argument formulations were based on the social and political setting of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). The findings were applied to the reading of the story of the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28). Furthermore, a contemporary parallel application with the Banyamulenge community, whose social and political identities have been contested by the government of the DRC since 1960s, has been made.

It was concluded that

- (i) The theme of justice and righteousness was an important one in Matthew's theology;
- (ii) All people, poor and rich, Judeans and aliens, the powerful and the powerless are equal before the will of God and deserve equal and fair judgment regardless of their social, economic and political status;
- (iii) The contestation of the Banyamulenge community's citizenship by successive governments of the DRC was a threat to justice and righteousness. It was a result of colonial and postindependent devices that needed to be challenged;
- (iv) Postcolonial theory is the appropriate method which facilitates a constructive reading of the Gospel of Matthew from a social and political setting to a text which can be applied to contemporary neocolonial settings.

6.3 Findings of study

Chapter two of this research dealt with the development of postcolonial theory. The different stages from anti-slavery movements to anti-racism campaigns were reviewed. Although this was a brief journey through a vast field, the work of Robert J C Young (2001, 2003), among others, was most helpful. Revolutionary movements and philosophies in Latin America, India and in Africa alongside the feminist campaigns were briefly explored. Subsequently, postcolonial theory was transformed into a model/method, which facilitated a reading of the Matthean Sermon on the Mount.

As part of this research, two trends of postcolonial theory emerged and are worth mentioning. First, postcolonial theory was found to be a highly paradoxical exercise especially when dealing with locations and specificities in a world of globalization. Ivison's (1997:154) concern, namely that it was "extremely difficult to establish a general sense of postcolonialism," since it means different things to different people with different histories in different contexts, is indeed valid.

Postcolonial theory is not in fact a theory in the scientific sense of the word (Young 2003:1-8), which understandably is an elaborated and ready-made collection of principles that can predict the outcome of a given set of phenomena. Postcolonial theory rather entails related yet different perspectives. In other words, one's sorrow became another's joy; the loss of one became the fortune of the other; the liberation of one became the subjugation of another (the oppressed became the oppressor and vice versa). Therefore, subjectivity within the definition of surviving identities' framework becomes a fatal flaw in postcolonial theory.

This can be attributed to the continuity within the discontinuity of colonialism and imperialism in the postcolonial era. Secondly, the clash between the political-economic interests of capitalism and the cultural values of traditional societies has further widened the gap in the world of inequalities. Ever since colonial times, the powerful has dominated and subjugated the weak and has kept the latter in a permanent state of dependency, despite political independence. Thirdly, people of tricontinental countries lost their land and traditional identities to their conquerors, who in turn, appropriated themselves the right to subjectively

(re)define and (re)write the history of the colonized. Fourthly, revolutionary heroes became the victims of the colonizer's oppressive machinery, which left in its wake countless, orphans and widows and left countries divided and alienated. Finally, the world's resources are not shared according to the needs of the poor/weak, but are used in accordance with the interests of the wealthy/powerful.

The blending of natives' experiences of oppression with the colonial culture of excessive force can never create equality within a postcolonial setting. It, however, remains a matter of desire. As Nkrumah (1965:xi; 1968:15) had observed on a political level, such amalgamation produced neocolonialism in the name of civilization (Loomba 1998:184). Within this new breed of independent states that have no control but to accept their fate and to become nativized, it eventually creates a culture of dependency. The reconciliation process of the colonizer and the colonized is a never-ending process, because the "post" in postcolonialism is not yet reached, and the struggle for a total liberation remains a lifetime mechanism.

The other crucial point within postcolonial theory is the failure of independent states to create a national consciousness (see Fanon 1995:156). While neocolonialism will be blamed as a continuity of imperialism, the incompetence of national elites in dealing with issues pertaining to the welfare of their nations must also be taken into consideration. They have failed to keep to the spirit of nationalism by putting in place both political and economic structures, in order to reinforce and safeguard the essence of their independence. Instead, nationalism was replaced by regionalism, tribalism and ethnic wrangles. This weakness should not only be interpreted as a mutilation of the colonized by the colonizer, but also because of intellectual slackness of national elites in their "spiritual penury".

On the other hand, as many theorists have foreseen (Riley 1963:704-716; cf Van Staden 1994:166-167) postcolonial theory confronts some crucial translation problems (Van Aarde 2004a:14-15). Certain fallacies arose in research, because either the "methods failed to fit model" or the "methods failed to fit facts". Subsequently, postcolonial theory becomes vulnerable to ethnocentrism and anachronism.

Second, the main essence of postcolonial theory lies in what Che Guevara (1995:20) said: “Man ceases to be the slave and tool of his environment and converts himself into the architect of his own destiny”. Postcolonial theory bears witness to the unequal forces of cultural representation (Bhabha 1994:171) that are involved in a constant competition for political, economic and social control within the contemporary world. Postcolonial theory emerges from the discourse of marginality within the geopolitical spheres of West and East, North and South.

A postcolonial reading challenges any measures of exploitation in postcolonial settings by claiming equal treatment in society. The theory is construed and intervenes as a reaction to ideological discourses of Western hegemony and its local agents in their process of further oppression and unequal development principles. Postcolonial theory formulates its critique around social histories, cultural difference and political discrimination that are practiced and normalized by colonial and imperial machineries. The critique concerns (Young (2001:1-11; 57-69) itself with the history of colonialism in the past and in the present.

Postcolonial theory is inspired by anti-slavery and anti-colonial liberation struggles. Thus it can be defined as a dialectical discourse that marks more broadly the historical facts of decolonization. This critique allows people emerging from socio-political and economic domination to achieve their own sovereignty. It negotiates space for the marginalized to speak. In so doing, a new hybrid society, consisting of a mixture of colonizer/colonized, rich/poor, high/low classes, masculinity/femininity emerges in which all become equal insofar as justice and righteousness are concerned.

According to this study marginality (Duling (2003:14), is defined as structural inequality within systems that arrange people according to a binary social stratification. That is, it places certain persons in the center, while others are placed on the periphery. Marginality manifests in various forms of cultural identification, such as hybridity, subalternity, Negritude, Diaspora. In the Banyamulenge community the concept of *abacu* is used, while the Matthean community took refuge in *brotherhood*. These terminologies not only are used to differentiate *Self* from *Other* in the world of representation, but they are also tools by

which the very act of difference is challenged and serve as derivative discourse which helps the colonizer, the powerful, the racist, the tribalist, the elite, and the wealthy to see equality and otherness in the *Other*.

The concept of marginality in its hybrid sense negotiates a new platform which both the colonizer and the colonized must use as a meeting point after their original identities have gone through a translation process. This allows every culture to have input in the new cultural identity in the making.

Is postcolonial theory an appropriate biblical research method? How can its models be drawn? These are some of the questions dealt with by this research. The answer to both questions is in the affirmative. This research defined a theory as a basic scheme in terms of which a variety of observations and statements become explainable, while a model is an instrument in a social process which facilitates an understanding of a given context being investigated. In other words, theory serves as a foundation upon which models are built in order to produce a working methodology in a particular study (cf Elliot 1993:42; see Carney 1975:7-9; Esler 1995:4-8).

Before narrowing the theory and model down to the Gospel of Matthew, this study looked at how postcolonial theory fits the alternative hermeneutical tool for tricontinental biblical readers. Africa, Asia and Latin America were subjected to slavery and colonialism which was followed by religion and western civilization. The colonizer exercised cultural domination and assimilation (see Dube 1997:20). However, since the Bible is product of colonial experiences (Pui-lan 1996:213), postcolonial reading is to examine socio-political, economic and historical processes that call it into being. In this way the Bible texts contain a voice of justice and righteousness and a call for liberation.

Moreover, a postcolonial reading of the Bible is a war against sin: neocolonialism, corruption, dictatorship and social injustices in every aspect of society, regardless of the agent. In this case a postcolonial critique is not a discourse of historical finger pointing, but a tireless committed struggle for total decolonization and liberation of the oppressed (Dube 1997:14). In other words, the oppressed must find his/her deliverance and revolutionary

message from the Word of God. No matter how the Bible is used or abused by the colonizer, the meaning of liberation of God's people – the oppressed - never loses its power. Rightly so, the Bible (Segovia 1995b:327-330) is and will remain the “effective weapon and faithful ally” in the struggle of liberation against injustice and oppression committed by external, internal and evil powers that come to destroy the likeness of God in the human being.

The above affirmation takes to task the question of biblical interpretation. Who has the right of reading the Bible on behalf of the *Other*? In other words, who has the right of representation in biblical reading? The Bible as Pui-lan (1996:212-213) said, is not “a frozen artifact”, whose meaning can only be activated or given by “the experts in the metropolitan centers” under the rubric of “objectivity” and “scientific” inquiry. The Bible is the Word of God and must be decolonized so that those on the peripheries have access to its healing power (Is 61:1-3). Therefore, as has been established in chapter two, the traditional triangular hermeneutics (the Bible provides the text – the West produces the hermeneutics – the rest reads) – must be reviewed as part of a postcolonial process.

The idea is not to destroy the hermeneutical tools produced by Western theologians, but at the same time, Bible readers must make use of and expand the hermeneutical principles that are being produced from and are relevant to tricontinental realities. African perspectives and contexts for that matter must stimulate exegetes to formulate questions that are relevant to their own situations. Tricontinental theologians must also actively engage in innovative theological research that will open up new landscapes in biblical scholarship. This tricontinental hermeneutics must be relevant to tricontinental contexts but also to the rest of biblical interpretation. The critique of Schroer (2003:1-17) on feminist hermeneutics is very appealing, in that the feminist exegesis need to move from deconstructive to constructive hermeneutical approaches. This equally applies to tricontinental hermeneutics.

With the help of postcolonial theory as hermeneutical tool, the Sermon on the Mount was investigated insofar as it related to the concept of justice and righteousness. This hermeneutical tool was subsequently applied to three other cases, namely the Matthean

community, the Canaanite mother's story and the Banyamulenge community. The study has revealed that these communities had the following in common:

6.3.1 Justice and righteousness as a core value in Mt 5-7

It has been found that justice and righteousness and purity are an integral part of Israelite tradition and intertwined with other ancient Near East traditions (Weinfeld 1995; Crossan 1998:182-208; Richardson 2000). From a social, political and religious point of view, these terms define the character of God which is both protecting and liberating. The concept of justice and righteousness (Weinfeld 1995:7) is associated with God's power, his mercy in bettering the situation of the destitute (Jr 7:5-6; Zch 7:9-10). It is important to note that the ancient Near East tradition of justice and righteousness makes explicit mention of justice the weak, the fatherless and the homeless, including the poor, the widowed, orphaned and aliens. These vulnerable members of the community needed God's divine and royal protection for they lacked paternal linkage to the safety nets offered by kinship.

In such a context, improving the situation of the destitute, the elimination of exploitation and oppression, the liberation of slaves and the establishment of equity and fair judgment were found to be key elements in maintaining justice and righteousness in the community. The precarious situation of the voiceless and the weak whose rights are denied by the powerful, the rich and kings touches the heart of God and forces him to act on their behalf (Ex 22:21-27; 23:6, 9; Dt 24:12-15). God's justice and righteousness, is a liberating power whose manifestation takes place within the world of the living.

6.3.2 The Matthean community and the Sermon on the Mount

A context of oppression and power, hunger and death, war and insecurity, poverty, land reform and economic hardship, exploitation and dispossession (see Van Tilborg 1986:13) is the reality that the Matthean community was facing. Through the Beatitudes, Jesus showed his solidarity with the poor and the afflicted of his time. Resistance against the oppressive structures which left people landless, made them poor, caused them untold grief and which made them the persecuted in their own land, was the main focus of Jesus' speech on the mountaintop.

Both the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed during the war. The question the community had to grapple with was who should be blamed for this crisis? Matthew challenged both religious leaders and the Roman colonizer for not showing justice and righteousness as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets – the will of God (Mt 5:17-20; 7:21) - to his creation suffering under oppression and economic exploitation. The Romans and their local collaborators on the other hand, blamed Judean militants for insurrections against established ruling structures – i.e. the government. Militants blamed religious leaders and other Judean aristocrats for collaborating with an invader and oppressor.

At this stage Judean society was clearly falling apart (Mt 12:25-26). Both Formative Judaism and the Matthean community were making efforts to save it from total collapse in the aftermath of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. The Sermon on the Mount, therefore, is seen as a socio-political and religious discourse by which Matthew responds to his situation. The Matthean context was largely influenced by social, economic and political upheaval. Based on Overman's (1996:19-26) argument the crisis within Judaism groupings can be defined in the following manner.

- Leadership and cultural vacuum: The destruction of the city and the temple caused disarray within the community and provoked numerous contentions between various groups. Matthew viewed the Pharisees and scribes as rivals and threats to his community's security and their way of life and vice versa.
- Legal interpretation of the law: Formative Judaism and the Matthean community were involved in a dispute with regard to the right interpretation of the law. The Pharisees held onto the legalism of the Mosaic Law and the traditions of the fathers. The Sadducees, again, challenged the authority of the traditions of the fathers. Matthew on the other hand, defended his innovative interpretation of the law presented by Jesus (Mt 5-7).
- Structure and order of the community: The Pharisees strengthened the idea of the temple through local synagogues, while Matthew was busy building a new concept

of brotherhood (Mt 18:1-20) and *ekklesia* around his members (Mt 16:18-19). Issues pertaining to discipline, authority, church liturgy and worship were thus examples of the order that Matthew sought to present to his marginal community.

- Community identity: The political turmoil experienced, the unsuccessful revolt and Roman repression, undoubtedly would have cast doubt in people's minds as far as the fate of all Judeans was concerned. More particularly, each group in its own way was looking for solutions to save all Judeans from war. For the Matthean community the Sermon on the Mount represented the response to such crisis. It emphasized the fact that in order to prevent the disintegration of a community, all should be brothers.
- The future of the community: The actual survival of the community became a serious problem. Matthew's community had to deal with several issues at the same time. On the one hand, there was the political and armed repression from the Romans to contend with. On the other hand, the internal division within Judaism deepened. Matthew found his community by and large being marginalized by existing power structures that exercised influence in the social, religious and political spheres of his time. Even more discouraging was the presence of discord and ill-discipline within the Matthean community itself. The community found refuge in the concept of brotherhood under the leadership of the Father-God who is in heaven. Every member of society, from maimed to the rich, had the right to belong to this brotherhood.

6.3.3 The Canaanite mother (Mt 15:21-28)

What was established in the case of the story of the Canaanite mother is that she has to be regarded as marginalized and that her identity was stigmatized in advance: (i) she was a woman; (ii) she was a foreigner both from an ethnical and a religious point of view; (iii) she was pleading for an unclean demon-possessed girl and (iv) Tyre and Sidon too were under Roman colonization. Notwithstanding her status, the Canaanite mother was unrelenting in

her plea for justice until Jesus overcame the barriers (cultural, religious, political prejudices and gender discrimination) and did the will of God.

The Canaanite mother's claiming of wholeness for her daughter not only demonstrated her resistance against the injustice done to women and foreigners, but also to the misappropriation of God's healing power. The mother's plea liberated Jesus from the Judean cultural ghetto within which he found himself and helped him to discover a desire of doing justice and righteousness. Jesus was then urged to behave as the Messiah (Dolto 1980:16-17) not only for the Judeans, but for all in the region and beyond under foreign occupation who yearned for liberation.

Through the mother a very disturbing factor was presented to the Matthean Jesus, namely the knowledge that the Judean community was undergoing social mutation and that the community eventually had to become a hybrid, more accommodating one. This knowledge he had to impart to the disciples. Seen in a different way, it was the beginning of the community of brotherhood. Circumstance taught Jesus that he should take care of all, regardless of their socio-political, religious and geographical provenance.

It is crucial to note that the Matthean Jesus finds himself in a situation of discovering God's will and what he discovered was totally different from his Judean background. Being a Judean male, Jesus' mission was shaped and delimited by Judean cultural and religious belief. Yet, as a divine messenger proclaiming 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) and showing mercy (Mt 9:12) as a servant of all nations (Mt 12:18; 20:28) prevailed. It is also important to note that in light of the concept of brotherhood, the kingdom of God is a hybrid composition in which all nations, tribes, races, genders find equal treatment.

6.3.4 The Banyamulenge community

In light of postcolonial reading of the Sermon on the Mount, it has been found that the Banyamulenge community resisted and continues to resist injustice they suffered since colonial times. This can be summarized in the words of the old poet Muyengeza:

Baje amigobomba, (they came across)

Baje bakikiye Tanganika, (they came around the shores of [the lake] Tanganyika)

Bamirwa n'Isata (they were swallowed by a python)

Isanga ni ibitigiri (it found them too [strong to bite/to crash]).

The fact that the Banyamulenge people's citizenship was contested by successive governments in the DRC right from colonial times poses a threat to justice and righteousness. During the course of time, the Banyamulenge community has been the victim of the following:

- **Belgian colonial regime:**

The Banyamulenge resisted the colonial idea of land occupation primarily because the survival of their livestock was at stake (Kidogi 1985:22-32). Secondly, they resisted being treated as colonial subjects. Thirdly, they resisted the exorbitant colonial taxes levied on their livestock. Whereas the Belgians imposed taxes on rubber collection elsewhere (Slade 1962:177-178), the Banyamulenge were forced to pay taxes (*ikori* or *umurambu*) for themselves and for their cattle. Fourthly, they were seen as potential competitors in cattle farming and eventually, in the early 1950s, they, together with their livestock were evicted from Itombwe and Minembwe. Consequently, they became the victim of the colonial policy of divide and rule and exploitation. During the colonial campaign of restructuring local administrations, they again became victims when their traditional administrative entities – the *chefferies* were banned (*supprimées*) (Gatimbirizo 1988:26-27; Mutambo 1997:65-67).

- **Congolese government:**

After losing their traditional leadership (*chefferies*) linked to the land, the Banyamulenge were administratively represented by their neighbors (the Bifuliru, Bavira and/or Babembe), depending on the locations. In the postcolonial Congo, they were considered as mere outsiders from Rwanda and Burundi (Muzuri 1983:140).

On the other hand, the issue of nationality, which has become the most controversial and the most exploited by politicians in the RDC, is politically motivated. From a constitutional point of view, it has been found that the Banyamulenge people have been victims of bad, tribal and irresponsible governments that have successively manipulated the country's constitution and failed to bring justice to Congolese. The fact that the Banyamulenge people, whose presence in what was to become the DRC, can be traced back to between the 16th and 19th centuries, and being as indigenous as any other Congolese tribe, is completely overlooked. In April 2004, the current transitional parliament adopted a new constitution which stipulates the inclusion of all people who were in the DRC at the time of independence, i.e. 30 June 1960. What is lacking in ensuring a just application though is not so much the letter of the law as the actual implementation thereof by a responsible government.

- **Regional politics and the stigmatization of ethnicity:**

It has been found that lack of good neighborliness in the Great Lakes Region constituted yet another problem for the Banyamulenge community. It must also be understood that since 1993 ethnic hatred in the Eastern Congo was exacerbated by the presence of the Interahamwe and extremist Hutus from Rwanda and Burundi who enjoyed the support of Mobutu's government and later on that of Laurent Desiré Kabila. Moreover, the ethnic discrimination and conflict in the Great Lakes, and the wars of 1996 and 1998 stigmatized the Banyamulenge community who ironically, were generally not identified as Congolese (their nationality), but as Tutsis (their ethnic group).

- **International complicity:**

The selfish political and economic interests of those countries in the region and beyond, that were either directly or indirectly involved in the conflict, coupled with weakness from the Congolese government, tribalism and ethnic differences all contributed to the misery and killings of millions of Congolese, including Banyamulenge. The lack of political will to solve the problems of ethnic conflict and tribalism linked to geopolitical realities and consequences of colonial boundaries in Africa will sooner or later result in further fragmentation of Africa. The failure of the international community to deal with the consequences of genocide in

Rwanda and the presence of the Interahamwe in the DRC is yet another obstacle for any prospect for peace, not only for the Banyamulenge, but for all tribes living in the Eastern Congo and the region at large.

- **The disintegration of the community:**

The lack of a clear and properly articulated agenda in both the short and the long term for the community within local, national and regional perspectives, constituted a further threat to the community. From a church's point of view, cognizance should be taken of the following: Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity brought significant improvement in the life of the community, it was also responsible for creating leadership competition and for dividing the community into several denominational groups. On the other hand, the emerging leadership class in the community must still articulate its political and social principles, which will define and protect the community within the larger scope of local, national, regional and international realities. The community's real threat today is not the Belgians, the Rwandans, nor other Congolese tribes for that matter, but a bad and corrupt political system, supported either from outside or from within the community itself.

Therefore, the Congolese government, in its successive multi-form systems, must be held accountable for not doing enough to secure justice for all its citizens. The Sermon on the Mount compels the government of Congo to do justice and righteousness, for this is the will of God. On the other hand, Banyamulenge community as well as all their neighboring communities are called not to judge but to love one another, in order to live in the land peacefully. As long as the Matthean concept of brotherhood and unity is not practiced within Congolese communities, peace of Congo will be constantly interfered by imperialism and its regional and local agents. Because "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined" (Mt 12:25).

6.4 Concluding remarks

The Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) more than any other teaching in the Gospel, provides principles for justice and righteousness that need to be practiced not only within the

Matthean community, but also beyond. The Matthean concept of brotherhood breaks traditions, cultural barriers, economic, political and religious stigmatization and opens a door for equity. The Sermon is also to be understood as a measure of resistance against imperialism and its local agents that have robbed people of their rights and dignity. Consequently, the stigmatization based on race, ethnicity and gender based exclusion, must be resisted and abolished under the effects of justice and righteousness through Jesus Christ.