

**A SOUTH AFRICAN POST-COLONIAL
INTERPRETATION OF PAUL'S CROSS
THEOLOGY IN ROMANS 3:21-31**

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1. INTRODUCTION

21. But now righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known, to which the law and prophets testify. 22. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall of Glory of God, 24, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that come by Christ Jesus. 25. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished - 26. He did this to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justified those who have faith in Jesus. 27. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? 28 No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God, the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, 30 since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. 31 Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

(Rm 3:21-31 – N I V [1973] 1984:642)

The centre of Paul's theology is his interpretation of the soteriological meaning of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rm 3:21-31). In Romans 3:21-31, Paul turns from his reflection on the consciousness of sin to a message about the righteousness of God. Here Paul explains to us how the cross works for those who believe in our saviour Jesus Christ. Paul shows us the differences between the Israelites¹ and Gentiles of that time, and their

¹ The term "Israelites" or "Israelite" is used instead of "Jews" or "Jewish". The latter is an anachronism. The term "Judean" (not "Jew"), a translation of Ἰουδαῖος, is a regional designation for an inhabitant of Judea (Ἰουδαία), in distinction of, for example, an inhabitant of Galilee (Γαλιλαῖος) (see Pilch 1997,119-125). In this study the temple-centered religion of both Judeans and Galileans will be referred to as the religion of post-exilic "Israelites". "Insiders", who supported the ideology of the Second Temple, referred to themselves as the "people of God" or the "house of Israel" (e.g., Matt 10:6). Geographically seen, Galilee and Idumea, which were situated concentrically around Judea, were regarded as regions with a lesser claim to purity than Judea. The reason for this was not only the fact that they were further away from Jerusalem and the temple, but also that they were more populated by "outsiders" – people from "mixed" marriages, that is marriages between Israelites and non-

belief in the righteousness of God. He realises the problems between them and their understanding of issues such as circumcision. In that time it was difficult for him to explain the reason for Christ's crucifixion on the cross because this was the severest punishment imposed on criminals when they committed a serious crime (e.g., murder).

The point should be made that for the people at that time, the cross of Christ was different from those of the criminals being put to death on a daily basis. Christ's cross is the one that came to us by the mercy of God. God made Christ a human being in order to suffer with us and experience physical pain and to live with us so that he could suffer, and God showed us his righteousness by making Christ a ransom for us, even to the extreme of the ultimate punishment of dying on the cross for us.

When we Christians today see the sign of the cross it is meant for us to know the suffering of Christ and that by spilling his blood on the cross, he was washing away our sins. We are the people who are living in sin and God has shown his righteousness to us by sacrificing his only son on the cross. Our suffering was paid for by Christ's suffering on the cross.

This message of the cross has opened the gates of freedom for us as Christians, and the message must be spread to this world of inequality, to the people with a different context: the people living in a post-colonial society, who claim the right of all people on this earth to the same material and cultural well-being. This message must be spread to these people who do not have rights because of the conditions prevailing after colonialism. Post-

Israelites (*mamzerim*). In spite of this, Idumea and Galilee were still part of the "house of Israel". From the perspective of Israel, outsiders were often stereotyped as "non-Israel". They were referred to as *goyim* (גוים) or *ethnoi* (ἔθνοι), which are often translated as "Gentiles". The term "Christianoi" (χριστιανοί) is a similar example of stereotyping used by Judeans and Romans to refer to Jesus followers in, for example, Syria (see Acts 11:26, which refers to the followers [μαθηταί] of Jesus who were called χριστιανοί for the first time [πρώτως] in Antioch) (cf Van Aarde 2005a). From an "in-group" perspective, the narrator in Matthew did not depict the followers of Jesus as "Christians".

colonialism is also about a changing world, a world that has been changed by the struggle for freedom and independence, and a world which disadvantaged post-colonial people intend to change further.

The message must spread to them in their different situations because they are also people who belong to this world. They may have different wishes and not know how this message of the cross applies to them as people living without hope. But Paul shows them the way; even through they have lost their hope because of their difficulties and their long struggle, God is still with them. God has shown his mercy to them through the cross of Jesus Christ. They have to learn to have hope and not to put their trust in the political, social and economic upliftment taking place in this world.

They have been slaves of this world controlled by their bodies, but now by the grace of God, their status has been changed and they are the slaves of God.

The metaphor of slavery belongs to the world of the flesh. *Sarx* (σάρξ) in its character as weak and corruptible was always an ambiguous category for Paul, both at individual and corporate level. *Sarx* is an important technical and linking term in Paul, which is why it is translated consistently by the same term, "flesh" (Dunn 1998:70). Here Paul would like to show us that slaves are under the control of their masters but the masters are corrupted by *sarx*.

The number of times that *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) is used in Paul's letters is uncertain. For Paul the gospel is not about an innate spirituality awaiting release, but about the divine spirit acting upon and in a person from without (Dunn 1998:76-77). The spirit is evidently that dimension of the human person by means of which the person relates most directly to God. Paul also believes the human spirit is but a manifestation of the divine spirit.

The fact is that Paul was influenced by the Hebrew scriptures and in line with his Israelite heritage, he also speaks of the human spirit, a still deeper depth or higher reality of the person. Paul's conception of the human person is of a being who functions in several dimensions.

In most instances, Paul speaks of a human body as "the body of sin" and "the body of death" (Rm 6:6; 7:24). By contrast he speaks of Christ as the body of flesh and the resurrected body (1 Cor 15:44) of the sacramental bread and of the church as the body of Christ. Paul states that to live "according to the flesh" is the antithesis to Christian living (Rm 8:4-13), as the flesh is a soil which produces corruption (Gal 6:8). For Paul, flesh was neither unspiritual nor sinful. There is redemption for the body (Rm 8:23) but salvation in the last day involves the destruction of the flesh. In broader terms we could say that Paul's distinction between *soma* (σῶμα) and *sarx* (σάρξ) made possible a positive affirmation of human createdness and creation and of the interdependence between humanity and its created environment.

Just as Christ's servitude to God involved suffering (Phil 2:7-9), so does the Christian's sharing in Christ's slavery involve suffering. This suffering involves being patient and obedient to the Lord who is our saviour in all spheres. As this issue will be discussed in this thesis, it will be demonstrated that Paul wants us to share Christ's suffering and wants to show us the centrality of the cross and the resurrection in his theology.

The chapters which follow discuss the research on the way Africans live in their worlds. Because of post-colonialism, Africans are supposed to be equal but at the same time they are not equal. Most of them suffer the social ills of poverty, crime and unemployment, trapping them in misery. This thesis will show how we can preach the gospel of Christ, as expressed in Romans 3:21-31, to the abandoned people of our country. The metaphor of slavery contained in the New Testament will explain how to deal with these social ills in the context of the present situation in Africa.

2. CROSS THEOLOGY

The cross is a wooden structure, consisting of two beams placed either at right angles or diagonally across each other. The cross was used in ancient times for the crucifixion of criminals, namely for executing a condemned criminal by binding or nailing him to a cross. Yet today the cross is the symbol of Christ's redeeming death. His crucifixion and resurrection are pivotal to Pauline thinking. This cross is the symbol of redemption and an illustration of God's righteousness. In stark contrast, to the Romans the cross was a public event and a symbol of violence. Since for Paul the message about Jesus Christ always implies death and resurrection, faith gives him the conviction that Christ is God's representation and the confidence that victory comes only through defeat (Grayston 1997:22-23).

In Christ Jesus, God has provided a means of setting right what went wrong, which is available only through faith and is can be obtained through Christ's death and his resurrection. What Christians see today in the cross is the courage and humanity of Jesus Christ. From this perspective, Paul cares mostly about "Christ who is crucified" (1Cor 1:23). Furthermore Paul wants to emphasise the conviction that if Jesus dies, then all his followers will die too.

The death of the one is the death of all. Those who in faith identify themselves with Christ find that Christ's death has an inclusive significance (Dunn 1998: 112). As Christians, we also believe that Christ who is crucified is also he whom God raised from the dead. The important point is that without the resurrection the cross would be a cause for despair; and without the cross the resurrection would be an escape from reality. Paul even states that if Christ had not been raised from the dead, all preaching would be empty. The resurrection was itself the exaltation which endowed Jesus with his new status (Dunn 1998: 235-236).

The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth is as eloquent testimony as any to the depth and the clarity of the threats he overcame. The cross at Golgotha was the public place of execution where Jesus was left to die a slow and painful death under the weight of his bruised, naked body. This was a public show which the Roman officials used to discourage criminality and rebellion. The faith and hope that Jesus inspired in his followers were greater than the despair and pain of the crucifixion before the Diaspora. Jesus was regarded as the prophet-martyr who had died for the cause of the renewal of Israel. Jesus' resurrection was the start of the age of redemption (Horsley & Silbermann 1997:109).

Paul also explains the crucifixion as an event of cosmic dimensions, a divine drama in which the political and spiritual fate of all the world's people was at stake. The cross became the symbol both of Roman violence and of the faith of those who dared to resist Roman dominance. Paul had come to believe that in an age when patrons and their clients exploited power, status and possessions, the figure of the crucified Jesus Christ could be the model to renew and redeem the world (Garnhsey & Woolf 1989:1117-136). Through his death and resurrection, Jesus redeemed all of humankind, irrespective of wealth or poverty, status or cultural group such as Israelites or Greeks or Gentiles.

The crucifixion of Jesus makes the signs of the kingdom unmistakable wherever the "assemblies of the Saints are gathered" (Horsley & Silbermann 1997:149). The grace of Christ on the cross is for all who have faith in him (Horsley 2000:71). In his explanation, Paul includes the Gentiles in the union of those who are saved in Christ.

Romans 3:25 can therefore be read as implying that God proposes Christ as an ongoing sacrifice through faith, by means of His blood. The death of Christ forms the basis of the Pauline theology of atonement, and one of his most lucid explanations of Christ's death, is his understanding of the crucifixion as

propitiation (*hilasterion*) (ἱλαστήριον) in Romans 3:24. Here Paul speaks of Jesus “whom God set forth as propitiation through faith in his blood”. *Hilasterion* is derived from the adjective *hileōs* (ἰλεως) which means graciousness and the change from being hostile to being well-disposed towards a person. Propitiation is synonymous with expiation for sin, and when it is used as an attribute of God, it means quite simply to forgive (Obijole 1986:196).

If Paul intended to have the technical meaning of *hilasterion* in mind, Jesus becomes the place where humankind and God meet, and where a person’s sin meets the atoning love of God. The cross is where Jesus was sacrificed for the sins of humankind and this brought about the mercy of God and averted God’s wrath. It has been suggested that Paul may have had the Maccabean “Jewish” martyr theology in mind, which find its clearest expression in 4 Maccabees 7:21. In Rabbinic Judaism, the blood of the martyrs was believed to have atoning power for the removal of national sins and consequently of divine wrath. In Romans 3:25, God has sent forth Jesus as *hilasterion* or as a means of averting God’s wrath through Jesus’ blood (Obiyole 1986:197).

In a certain sense right way we can note that *expiation* depends on the *propitiation*. Humanity’s sins which might have evoked God’s wrath are expiated through God’s will and therefore no longer do so. *Hilasterion* therefore has a meaning related to the removal of sin and divine wrath.

From our study of Romans 3:25, Paul seems to see Christ’s death as a means for human beings to atone and achieve righteousness and total well-being through the death of Christ who removes divine wrath, restoring humankind to the position of blessing, favour or total well-being (Obiyole 1986:199). Here also Paul wants to emphasise that the righteousness comes from God, not from anyone else, and is available for both Gentiles and Israelites through faith only. We should always remember that Jesus became the atoning sacrifice for us on the cross by the power of God.

The cross shows how God makes miracles for Israelites and Gentiles, slaves and free people, patrons and clients. The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ saves those who are oppressed by the law. The primary purpose of Jesus' death is therefore to remove sin, which calls forth God's wrath. Jesus' death is both the means of removing sin and of averting this divine wrath (Dodd 1971:107-108). It is not difficult to affirm that "true theology and knowledge of God are to be found in the crucified Christ".

The problem starts when Luther relates the suffering of God in Christ on the cross to the suffering of a Christian in the world. Luther coined the phrases, "theology of the cross" and "theology of glory" and juxtaposed them, demonising the latter. He also decided to disregard creation as an inadequate source of revelation, claiming that God must be hidden and could only be revealed in Christ on the cross. With the concept of *imitatio Christi* (the imitation of Christ) in the background, Luther and others make a conspicuous shift from the suffering of the followers of Christ, from the unique cross of Christ to the crosses of Christ's followers: shifts that he takes to be axiomatic (Gregersen et al 2005:102-103).

According to the theology of the cross, it is tempting to say that God actually becomes manifest by hiding God self in the life and experience of the suffering people who, as it were, are bearing their crosses. Through their suffering they are ironically experiencing the might and power of God. When it comes to the suffering of the believers as a manifestation of the disguised mighty works of God, Africans probably find this notion ridiculous and unethical. The cross comes across to Africans as the symbol of the power and glory of God that brings deliverance from suffering. Instead of being the symbol of death, "the physical cross, like the staffs and stools looked upon as material representations symbolising the presence of the ancestors, becomes the symbol of Christ's being the ever-living" (Gregersen et al 2005:107-108).

There is a clear connection between the cross and the blood, even in the theology of Paul, though Lutheran theologians have long neglected it. The theology of the blood calls for the whole world to know that we are one, to know that the sacrificial blood of Christ has brought us all together in unity.

The cross of Christ has efficacy and is not limited by historical time. The cross was instituted to justify our receiving God's grace, righteousness and justice. There is no basis for our justification except through the cross of Christ. Jesus the Messiah and his completed work of redemption on the cross are the eternal objects of faith (Turaki 1999:340). Moreover there must be an ontological balance between God and the person, the divinities and humanity, the living dead and human beings of all races.

Jesus, for his part, offered himself of his own violation as a ransom for humanity, thereby reconciling people to God. There is an example of the myth among the Yoruba of how Elegeru offered himself as a ransom for his own people (Ubrurhe 1998:211). He came fully prepared to perform the sacrifice and die for his own people.

Now let us compare and see the differences of this sacrifice of Elegeru to that of Jesus. Elegeru feared the complete annihilation of his people by the annual genocidal deluge, whereas God saw that if human beings continued to commit sins they would all be damned. Elegeru's *salvific* work was realised eschatology (here and now) whereas Jesus is realised and futuristic eschatology. However, the greatest contrast between Elegeru's death and its salvific work is that they were localised and mundane, but by contrast those of Jesus had universal and spiritual value leading to eternal salvation for all believers. To acculturate the concept of Christ's salvific death, local examples should be used as illustrations (Uburhe 1998:211).

Christ's death on the cross was a substitution sacrifice or redemption – the Pauline letters use 'deliverance' (ἀπολύτρωσις) (Rm 3:24; 1 Cor 1:30)

although in Ephesians 1:7 there is the idea of the blood of Christ as the price of redemption price (ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων). Reconciliation is not a process, but a completed act of God through Christ his agent by means of his atoning death (Rm 5:6-11) (Abe 1996:5-6).

Jesus Christ himself when he was hanging on the cross felt the agony of suffering in solitude and cried, "My God. Why have you forsaken me"? This is why the detention, uprooting and other burdens inflicted on the peoples of South Africa should be understood in terms of Christ's suffering on the cross. Black people of South Africa find comfort when they see that they are in the same boat as others, and gain a sense of solidarity with others (Moila 1989:253).

The proper understanding of the cross is that the cross does not signify suffering for its own sake but rather the suffering and shedding of blood that brought salvation to the world. The salvation that Jesus Christ brought to the world was because God the Father sent his beloved Son to save the people of this world. God's righteousness is beyond price because nothing can buy the love and mercy that God shows to us.

3. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

What is righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) in Romans? Only God is righteous, according to Barth's interpretation. God's righteousness expresses itself in God's capacity to remain merciful, not condemnatory, so that sinners can obtain forgiveness. Humankind may be declared righteous without being made righteous, that is without being changed in any conceivable way to become righteous.

Righteousness is part of the reality of God, which is not at the disposal of human beings (Grenholm 1990:42). In Romans, God's righteousness is mainly

God's justice (δικαίωσις): since human beings have been given moral responsibility, it is God who holds them responsible and punishes their transgressions. Human righteousness is a new state of being. However, righteousness is interpreted in different ways. Karl Barth interprets it as being theocentric in Romans, Cranfield as anthropocentric and Nygren and Wilkens in an ontological sense (see Grenholm 1990:44).

Paul understands humankind to be righteous in and through faith. Faith is not the work of human beings; it is God's acknowledgement of humankind. Human beings are declared righteous forensically (Barth 1926:76). Righteousness is achieved through faith and excludes all other human endeavours. According to Romans, righteousness is obtained solely by faith. Such faith means openness to God, which God creates in human beings. Human beings who are righteous have also been morally transformed. Righteousness creates new premises for the present state of existence.

God's action reveals who God is. God is fair to all creatures. Likewise, God's action not only "makes them righteous" but "shows that he is righteous" (Rm 3:26). When Paul speaks in Romans 3:22, then, of "all those who are faithing", he makes those people respond to God's gift with hearing, belief, trust, hope and obedience (Johnson 1997:54).

Romans 3:21-26 is the centre and heart of the book of Romans. The righteousness of God in verse 25 is represented by God's faithfulness to God's covenant. Accordingly, the righteousness of God in verses 25-26 refers not to a quality or attribute of God, which must be preserved, but rather to the saving action of God, which justifies sinners (Porter & Evans 1995:184). For Paul the demonstration of God's righteousness and God's being righteous is not the same: the latter is the outcome and purpose of the former, but this means that the God's action is to be righteous.

Accordingly, God has now replaced a "justification" or righteousness based on doing the works of the law with God's own new righteousness or justification

based on faith, with novel implications and consequences yet to be seen. Also, it can be seen when reading verses 21-22 that Paul announces that the righteousness of God is set apart from the law and that only through faith in Jesus Christ we can be saved. In contrast to this, faith is defined in verses 22-24, as the bond of unity between the Israelite and Gentile Christians. Israelites and Greeks are in the same position because they have sinned in the same way and they are justified in the same way. In this case, faith means that the distinction between Israelites and Gentiles is abolished (Watson 1989:131). Since Luther's great awakening, Paul's statements on the righteousness of God have become a clarion call for Christian theology.

The battle for the meaning of righteousness is seen as the battle for Paul, and hence, indirectly, for the scriptures and for salvation itself (Campbell 1992:20). Paul constantly wants to emphasise that righteousness comes from God, not from anyone else and is available for Gentiles and Israelites alike but only through faith. The righteousness of God will help them to be saved by the blood of Christ on the cross. The Torah will only be their guidance on a daily basis but the righteousness of God through Christ will save them.

Divine righteousness, social justice and ritual purity are interwoven in Israelite tradition like three strands in one and the same rope. According to their numbering, each strand shows us its meaning. Paul's use of the term emphasises that God prefers justice to injustice, righteousness to unrighteousness and therefore God is God the liberator (Crossan 1998:182).

Finley (1970:29) summarises his understanding of the concept of justice as follows: "... the distribution of equal shares among unequal persons, or of unequal shares among equal persons, would be unjust. The principle of distributive justice is therefore to balance the share with the worth of the person." Justice as equality is demanded not only by God's decree but also by God's character, and it is up to human beings to figure out how that works in practice. Righteousness and justice came from God to Abraham and the

divine promises to Adam's descendants are contingent on their establishing and maintaining that righteousness and justice on earth.

The one and only God, the God of righteousness and justice, made a covenant with people under the law of righteousness and justice. The God of Israel, Yahweh, was a divinity demanding righteousness and justice (Crossan 1998:198-199). Once again, we should note that it is God who rejects ritual in the absence of righteousness, and dismisses worship as worthless in the absence of justice.

"Righteousness" and "justice" are two synonyms for the same concept. As seen earlier, they appear repeatedly in the Bible as a tandem set. In the Psalms that tandem set makes mention of justice and righteousness.

It is first and above all, the attribute of God, in Psalms 33:5; 89:14; 96:13. but from then on it is supposed to be an attribute of the earthly king as God's representative, as stated in Psalms 72:1, 7. Finally, righteousness has to be an attribute of everyone, according to Psalms 106:3; 112:4-6. Here is one example from each of these three cases: "[O Lord] righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you" (Ps 89:14). "Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son. May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice? May the mountains yield prosperity for the people and the hills in righteousness. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor" (Ps 72:1-4). "Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times" (Ps 106:3) (Crossan 1998:206-207).

Israel's God is the one true God of all the earth and all the nations on the earth because God alone is a God of justice and righteousness for the systematically vulnerable, for the weak, orphans, the lowly, the destitute and the needy. This God takes a stand against injustice and wickedness because

that is this God's nature and character. God intervenes with righteousness to “rescue” the orphans, widows and the poor because they are regarded as lesser beings owing to their lowly status. The merciful God takes care of the helpless.

In Romans 3:26, Paul states that the demonstration of the righteousness of God involves both God's being righteous (δικαίος) and making righteous the one who has faith in Jesus Christ. The righteousness now available to sinners, no matter what their ethnic background is, has become so through the shedding of Christ's blood as expiation for their sins. This expiation of a sinful offence has the object of absolving the offender from guilt.

One of the most frequently used words in Romans is *dikaiosune* (δικαιοσύνη) (righteousness). God's righteousness is granted to all who believe (Rm 3:20; 5:8-9) (Grenholm 1990:39). Paul holds that God had to act like this so as not to violate either God's own righteousness, or human responsibility. God in God's righteousness punishes sin in Christ, instead of punishing humanity. In this way, God shows his love and mercy to human beings (Cranfield 1985:200).

By showing love, God makes justice through God's only son, Jesus Christ, with the people who were unjust to God. Only by faith in Christ will they be saved. Being justified by faith in Christ means that people commit themselves to working for justice for all of God's people and for their justification by God as they participate in the justice of God. This means that God's justice demands not only the right vertical relationship but also its horizontal manifestation in community, as we live the philosophy of *Ubuntu*.

If we believe that the justice of God is revealed in Jesus Christ (Rm 1:17) and that we are Christ's disciples, our task cannot be divorced from creating a just society, because that is the reason for the death and resurrection of Christ (Gregersen 2005:154). That just society is a society with different situations

or in a different context, though with the same faith to the Lord. But each society whose members have the righteousness of God in their hearts generates a sense of belonging, and identity, in which its members become socialised.

4. IDENTITY AND ETHNICITY

The twin and related issues that arise in connection with the warring pairs of groups mentioned above, are identity² and ethnicity³. Each of these groups installs in the hearts and minds of its members a distinctive identity, a sense of what they are that is derived from belonging to such a group, and that identity is distinctively ethnic in character. The heart of this approach is that every group generates a sense of belonging and identity, in which its members become socialised (Esler 2003:11).

As far as "ethnicity" is concerned, books have also appeared on Romans that either have "ethnic" in title or use the notion in the text, but fail to explore the meaning of the concept. As far as the epistle to the Romans is concerned, Philip Esler (2003:14) argues that Paul pursues such a strategy and that the common identity he proposes is intimately associated with being in Christ in accordance with the purpose of God, expressed in the gift of the Spirit. Paul describes a process whereby God communicates an aspect of God's own identity, namely righteousness, to those who have faith.

"Social identity is genuinely socio-psychological since it covers the group experience but also interests itself in how this affects the hearts and minds of individual Christ-followers in the cognitive, emotional and evaluate dimensions of group belonging" (Esler 2003:20). Another important issue in Romans about social life is time, since Chapters 5 and 6 of this epistle look to the past

² It is the state of being the same as a specified person or thing (the *New Choice English Dictionary*).

³ Ethnicity is the races or large groups of people classed according to common traits ad customs (the *New Choice English Dictionary*).

and Chapters 8 and 9 to the future as well as to the present in shaping the identity of the Christ-followers in Rome. By writing this letter to the Romans, Paul is trying to bring them together by reminding them of the single category they have in common: faith and righteousness in Christ.

In Romans 14-15, believers were already arguing about group identity. Ethnic identity is a fundamental aspect of an individual's self-concept and esteem, so is unlikely to be abandoned.

In this book of Romans there is the in-group, which is the insiders or Israelites, and the out-group which is the outsiders or the Gentiles.

The principal point of contact is that Paul is enthusiastic about reminding his audience of their status in their relation to God. Christ and his gospel can be interpreted as an attempt to revitalise their common in-group identity in the face of the threat that their original identities pose to it. The concept of ethnicity has become popular, as a way of talking about the differences among people, where these differences do not depend on the discredited notion of race.

Any ethnic group, for example the residents of a city in Asia Minor, which spoke Greek and practised Greek customs would almost certainly have claimed or invented its ancestral link to the Greek founders of their "polis" from mainland Greece. Bruce Malina (2002:608-631) points out that *ta ethnē* (τὰ ἔθνη) is the designation the Israelites used when referring to people other than Israelites, that is for all non-Israelite people. Another suggestion is that one of the causes of ethnic conflict in modern times has been the tensions produced where, in the context of a new form of regional government, one ethnic group sensed it was falling behind another in the allocation of resources, including honour (see Esler 2003:75).

Romans 3: 21-26 is extremely rich with theological, moral and social issues. It has clusters of interest: a righteous God, the expiatory role of Jesus Christ and sinful human beings who are now able to be righteous through faith in Jesus Christ (Esler 2003:155-156). Paul makes it clear that God is the agent of this transformation. In Romans 3:26, Paul states that the demonstration of the righteousness of God involves both God's being righteous (*dikaios*) and the state of being righteous is the state of having faith in Jesus Christ.

In opposition to intellectualising the understanding of faith that sees it as a holding fast to the truth or as a new self-understanding, Von Dobbler (in Esler 2003:157) seeks to characterise faith as a comprehensive interpersonal occurrence encompassing two broad and inseparable dimensions: access to God and entry to the community. Faith permits access to God only via entry into the communal relationship of the congregation, not on an individual basis.

Jesus is a model of faith, yet Christ is not an object of such faith but rather its supreme exemplar – indeed its creator. The righteousness now available to sinners whatever their ethnic background has become so through the shedding of Christ's blood in expiation for the sins of humanity. Elsewhere Paul says that Christ "died for us" (1 Th 5:10), died for our sins (1 Cor 15:3) and died to reconcile us with God (Rm 5:6-10).

It is difficult to determine precisely how Paul understood the redemptive function of Christ's death on the cross (Esler 2003:159-169). John Ziesler (1989) makes the following suggestion on this point: "Paul may have seen the death of Christ as the divinely provided way, in the new Christian scheme of salvation, to deal with sin and its effects, without trying to rationalise how it worked beyond seeing God himself as its effective agent."

We have faith in Christ; God accounts us righteous, so that in this way we obtain remission of our sins. Sin is still present in us, but for Christ's sake God

disregards it, or prevents it from being imputed to us (Esler 2003:160). For Paul righteousness and reconciliation (Rm 3:11) begin in the present period. Paul employs righteousness when he is writing to a mixed group of Judeans and non-Judean where the question of the Mosaic law is inevitably a pressing one and where there is tension between the two subgroups.

In terms of Mediterranean culture, righteousness as Paul describes it is a form of ascribed honour, that is, an honour gifted (i.e. δωρεά in Rm 3:24) to someone by a notable person of authority, in this case God, as an exercise of will and choice by that person, not that recipient of the honour has done anything to deserve it. In short, Israelites saw righteousness as a central element of their identity. Righteousness would still describe a privileged identity, equivalent to life and the experience of the spirit, the primary content of the blessing. But the language of righteousness was necessary for Paul whenever he wrote to a mixed audience of Judeans and non-Judeans as Christ-followers in the congregation (Esler 2003:168).

Israelites had claimed the honour for themselves on the strength of their relationship to God (Rm 2:17) and their possession of the Mosaic law (Rm 2:23). In the last verses of this pericope, Paul appeals to the fundamental Judeans' belief in monotheism, paradigmatically expressed in Deut. 6:4, to legitimise his claim that righteousness through faith comes to Judeans and non-Judeans alike. Paul proposes that God's equal treatment of both groups depends on their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul challenges the collective memory of his own people in an area long central to their identity (Esler 2003:169).

Paul explains that the law has not been abolished but will be established accordingly (Rm 3:31). However, it was difficult to explain this to the Israelites because there is also the negativity of the law in the book of Romans. Paul emphasises that this new people who have been justified, now

have a new identity and all of them will only be saved through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul voices again the wretchedness of our universal hopelessness: since all have sinned all are presently lacking of the glory of God (Rm. 3:23) "and hence have no basis to hope for the future glory of God". But now that the righteousness of God is manifested apart from the law, there is a firm foundation for new hope of the glory of God. "This New Hope based not on the works of the law but on faith, as righteousness of God" is now appropriated through faith in Jesus Christ (Rm. 3:22) (Heil 1987:24-25). Although all have sinned, there is still hope. All who have sinned have been justified as a gracious gift of God through redemption, which is in Jesus Christ (Rm. 3:24).

Gager (2000:107) interprets Romans as Paul's attempt to clarify for "Gentile followers" of Christ their relation to the law, Israelites and Judaism and the current place of both Israelites and Gentiles in God's plan through Jesus Christ. Israelites and Gentiles alike are righteous by faith in Christ.

In Romans 3:21-30 Paul develops the positive side of divine impartiality or, which amounts to the same thing, the redemption of the Gentiles. It is also clearly about the inclusion of the Gentiles. The righteousness of God is manifested in the faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ (Rm 3:22); the formula relates primarily to the inclusion of the Gentiles. Paul understood the faith (faith in Christ) with the divine promise by opening the door to the Gentile nations (Gager 2000:120). God has now opened a new way for Gentiles, no longer through the "works of the law" but through faith (πίστις). Divine righteousness reveals itself by passing over former sins (Rm 3:25ff) that is, the sins of the Gentiles (Gager 2000:121).

Through the resurrection of Christ, the true relationship between God and humankind is revealed and established as the life of the new humankind.

According to Nygren's interpretation of Romans (see Grenholm 1990:40) Jesus Christ has overcome four destructive forces: wrath, sin, law and death, which have dominion over this aeon. The victory of Christ is interpreted also as a cosmic drama. Through death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God is righteous, including God's love, triumphs over the power of sin and makes possible the justification of sinners (Wilckens et al 1978:184-187).

Romans 3:21-26 is the core of the book of Romans (Granfield 1975:199). The righteousness of God in verse 25 is God's faithfulness to his covenant. Accordingly the righteousness of God in verses 25-26 refers not to a quality or attribute of God, which must be preserved, but rather to the saving action of God, which justifies sinners (Porter & Evans 1996:184).

For Paul the demonstration of God's righteousness and God's being righteous is not the same thing: the latter is the outcome of the former (see Van Aarde 2005b:222-243). This means that the action of God in justifying believers (vs 26c) is not interchangeable with God's being righteous. In putting Christ forward as a propitiation, God acts for the sake of God's glory, that is God actively demonstrates inviolable allegiance to the honour of God's name in order that God's inexorable love for God's own glory may not be weakened, so that God might remain and be righteous (Porter & Evans 1995:201).

In verse 21, Paul returns to and begins to develop the spirited optimism of his opening announcement of the gospel as the theme of the letter (Rm 1:16-17). As can be read, it is in this "gospel" (see Van Aarde 2002:516-532) that the power of the "righteousness", "justice" or "rectifying faithfulness" of God is revealed and available to all who believe. This righteousness of God is received and appropriated through faith in Jesus Christ and it extends to all who believe.

The universal power of sinfulness is thus offset by God's universal justification of all who believe. God has openly and publicly given Christ Jesus to the world

as an “expiation”, a means of propitiation or atonement for sins, an expiation which is acquired through faith. Christ has become such an “expiation” for sins, but not by pouring out his own blood in death. All of this distinctly and definitely demonstrates and proves beyond any doubt that God is truly and faithfully “just” and that God generously “justifies” any person who believes in Jesus. Here also Paul continues to strengthen and encourage his audience through their mutual faith (see Rm 1:11-12) (Heil 1987:40-41).

Accordingly, God has now replaced a “justification” or righteousness based on doing the works of the law with God’s own new righteousness or justification based on faith. This has novel implications and consequences. As readers we should also note that there is only one God for both Israelites and Gentiles. This God will justify both the circumcised Israelites and the uncircumcised Gentiles through and in the same faith in one and the same God (Heil 1987:43).

All these statements made here, do not reject the work of the law but show us again how important the law is. According to Westerholm (1997:47), God, in God’s continued goodness towards God’s sinful creatures, provides for the atonement of their sins. The death of Christ on the cross shows God’s mercy to the sinners, the Gentiles as well as the Israelites. For Paul, the death of Christ represents not the resolution of a tension within the deity, but rather the solution to a human dilemma achieved by God’s *tzedakah* (צְדָקָה), God’s faithfulness in upholding creation’s goodness (Westerholm 1997:48).

In short, the message of Romans 3:21-26 is not that mercy triumphs over judgement, but that, in a world gone awry, divine goodness has reasserted itself, giving drastic recognition to the reality of sin, yet restoring what sin has disfigured to a place of glory when God forgives and accepts the sinners for the sake of Christ (Westerholm 1997: 48). The in-group and the out-group now have the same value to God because it is only through faith that they are allowed to come to the Lord. They now have a new identity as the children of

God, and are no longer in-groups and out-groups. God loves them because God has made them righteous through God's mercy and through the cross of Jesus Christ. Their new identity has made them the servants of the Lord, and no longer the servants of their masters. They are now equal in the eyes of the Lord because of the righteousness of God.

5. AFRICAN CONTEXT

The statement is very simple that "all people are equal" in this world we live in, but when we look at the political, social and economical issues, we realise that people are not equal. For example, the poor, widows and orphans are not equal to the wealthy and powerful people of this world. That is why it is understandable for Dube (1997:13) to say that reading the Bible as an African is to take a perilous and sinister journey, that spins one back to connect with dangerous memories of slavery, colonialism, apartheid and neo-colonialism.

Imperialism, as used here, describes the tendencies of metropolitan centres to impose their images, ideas, religions, economic structures and political control on foreign lands (Said 1993:9-13).

Colonialism is a political manifestation of imperialism when it includes geographical control. Imperialism, however, does not always include colonialism, nor does it end with independence. In view of the fact that Christian biblical religion has been "unique in its imperial sponsorship" (Meeks 1983:1), in ancient and present times and over different peoples and different places, the Bible is also a colonising text: it has repeatedly authorised the subjugation of foreign nations and lands. As the Bible is also a colonising text, it has come to us as a book of faith, teaching us about equality and how Christ saved us. It teaches us how the people of different nations lived in biblical times. People from different places and with different cultures lived together. In sum, the Bible as a Western book is inextricably bound to its imperialist history of subjugation and oppression (Dube 1997:23). The Bible is referred to as a Western book because it was written in the ancient

Mediterranean world. Today our world needs the contribution of theological backgrounds and biblical studies, so this Bible has to be relevant to our present situation.

According to Schlusser Fiorenza (1999:54), a "critical rhetorical-emancipatory process of interpretation challenges practitioners of biblical studies and readers of the Bible to become more Theo-ethically sophisticated by readers by problematizing socio-political location and functions in global polis." The reality, though, is that the world today is a world of inequality, and much of the non-western White culture was regarded as the basis for ideas of legitimate government, law, economics, science, language, music, art and literature – in a word, Western civilisation.

In the words of Segovia (1998:51) "[p]ostcolonial studies reflect broadly on the discourse and practice of imperialism and colonialism from the vantage point of a situation where imperialism and colonialism have come – by and large but by no means altogether so – to a formal end but remain very much at work in practice, as neo-imperialism and colonialism." According to Segovia, "[p]ost-colonial consciousness means that the very experience of the 'other' will be taken seriously from their own perspective. Interaction and communication will be symmetrical and not from above" (cf Gandhi 1998:39-40).

Postcolonial analysis focuses on the positive and negative changes that have taken place to transform the copy into something completely new. When colonialism subordinated the indigenous cultures to the culture of the colonial power, all aspects of the original culture were transformed. However, at the same time, certain aspects of the original control over the language, culture and people were being translated (Young 2003;140).

In addition, Young (2003:7) points out that post-colonialism is about a changing world, a world that has been changed by struggle and which its

practitioners intend to change further. Its radical agenda is to demand equality and well-being for all human beings on this earth.

In many ways, the “Third World” is a more appropriate term to use than post-colonialism. Post-colonialism begins from its own knowledge, much of it more recently elaborated during the long course of the anti-colonial movements, and starts from the premise that those in the West, both within and outside academy, should take other knowledge, other perspectives, as seriously as they take those of the West. Post-colonialism is a general name for the insurgent knowledge that comes from the subjugated, the dispossessed, and seeks to change the terms and values under which we all live (Young 2003:17).

The experience of dispossession and landlessness is also typical of settler colonialism, and is historically the most difficult problem to resolve. To think about landlessness is to think about peasantry and the whole spectrum of the needs of the world’s poorest people. In alignment with this statement, people in South Africa are struggling to obtain a piece of land for themselves and also to cultivate it so that they can get something out of it – and these are the poorest of the poor in this country (Young 2003: 50-51).

As a larger body corporate, to which its citizens necessarily belong without choice, the nation becomes an empty space in which all forms of potential identification can be filled: race, religion, language, culture, history and the land: what makes you a part of your nation? It had always been assumed in the past that, in order to become a nation; the people of a nation should resemble one another as closely as possible. There is one significant kind of difference in the US, but also a lot of poor people, many more poor people in fact. Hanging on to cultural differences merely papers over the cracks and successfully neutralises the fact that some groups are rich, and other groups are poor.

The mistake of the post-colonialism state was that it often took over the alternative German-Romantic version of a nation, developed at the State level in Europe by Nazi Germany, as the only possible way in which a nation could be constructed: a holistic people with a common language, history, culture and race. The ideal of the nation is often seen as a woman, and the ideology of nationalism often invests the nation's core identity in an idealised, patriarchal image of ideal womanhood. If Palestine is taken as an example, other people live and die every day in fragments. In political terms, *rai*, (an opinion) like many post-colonialism cultural forms, was first of all concerned with articulating the problems and situations, as a necessary first stage in moving towards any possible resolutions (Young 2003: 60-72).

Modernity is defined by its technology and its political concepts of equality and democracy, which necessarily involve the end of patriarchy and the institution of equal rights for women. The colonisation of common land through privatisation, and colonisation through the introduction of exotic tree species, work in the same direction against the interests of local people, making their lives literally unsustainable by taking away their means of making a livelihood.

The general use of the term post-colonial as defined in a historical sense, may be applauded a whole range of different politics. The work of women can be described as post-colonial, but as women activists their politics remain distinct. What makes politics post-colonial is a broader shared political philosophy that guides its ethics and its political aims.

Post-colonialism as a political philosophy means first and foremost the right to autonomous self-government of those who are still being controlled politically and administratively by a foreign power. It also stands for the right to basic amenities – security, sanitation, health care, food and education – for all the people of the earth, young, adult and aged; women and men. Post-colonial politics are equally opposed to discrimination by caste or race, wherever it

may be practised. It seeks to turn the differences due to the basic forms of oppression into a culture of positive, intercultural social diversity (Young 2003:111-20).

With regard to South Africa, this country, according to Moila (1987:253), is "full of the least important (cf. Matt. 25:34-40), discarded, condemned, isolated and shunned members of our society, who need Christian physical expression of solidarity." There are imprisoned neighbours, banned relatives and politically detained acquaintances. Behind the pained expression on these faces and twitching bodies is the face of the crucified Christ. These people cast the shadow of Christ behind them so as to be with Christ. Physical presence is of crucial importance to them. According to Moila (1989:258), "[i]t [black theology] wants to describe Christ as a fighting God, not a passive who allows a lie unchallenged." It is believed that Christ liberates us from both internal bondage and external enslavement. That means Christ is our liberator and our saviour, we must have hope in him as Christians.

The post-colonial world has become a place of mixtures since McLuhan invented the concept of the global village in 1968; the cultures of the world have become increasingly interlayered, mixed and juxtaposed. There are few societies today that have not felt the impact of their place, whether it is in the world economy or the international division of labour. One example is the government of Ethiopia, the poorest nation on earth, suffering from emergency food aid, had offered \$1,5 million (Young 2003:129-30).

Another example is the situation in India, where people starve to death nowadays, not because there is no food, but because they are not entitled to the food that is there. According to Young (2003:135), more than half of the children in India today are underweight. Poverty and starvation, then, are often not the mark of an absolute lack of resources, but arise from a failure to distribute these resources equally or, in the case of India, a failure of will to distribute the food that is literally rotting in central government warehouses.

The world is rich and the world is poor, the world's population live their lives somewhere along the broad spectrum from poverty to riches (Young 2003:136). Capitalism has apparently even managed to make a commodity of resistance to the extent that it also organises and increases the production of that resistance. The people must be colonised because the colonised are also in a state of being translated men or women. Where the indigenous culture is being opened up for appropriation by the conquering culture, any act of translation therefore involves an act of treachery. The necessary, traditionally lamented failure of translation becomes a positive force of resistance, resisting the intruder.

Fanon's two best-known books are themselves about translation, or more accurately, retranslation. In his book, *Black skin, white masks*, he argues that black men and women have already been translated, not only as colonial subjects in the regime of French imperialism, but also internally and psychologically their desires have been changed into another form, carried across into the desire for whiteness through a kind of metempsychosis. Their desires have been transposed, though they have never, of course, actually become white. They have black skin, with a white mask. Post-colonialism remains irrevocably haunted and inspired by Fanon's analytical work and his impassioned example, as translator, empowerer and liberator. All the misery the people had suffered during the era of the post-colonial system was because they had to face the social, economic and political powers of that era (Young 2003:144). These powers had to be faced during the time of post-colonialism, all the wounds caused by the struggle had to be healed. Now that freedom had come, equality was needed. All people are now equal without fear of anything. The former slaves are now recognised as human beings.

6. SLAVERY AS METAPHOR

Slavery formed an integral part of the Romans' way of life. Slaves could be found everywhere – in the countryside, in the towns, in the houses, in the

shops and in every corner of state administration. There was no work in which they were not employed, from the most menial of tasks to key positions in business and government, and they mingled at all levels with the free population (Williams 1999:111).

Paul's treatment of the subject has also been vulnerable to criticism because it seems too accepting and unquestioning of slavery as institution. Firstly, slavery had not yet come to be thought of as immoral or necessarily degrading. Secondly, slavery was an established fact of life in the ancient world. In 1 Cor 7:20-24, Paul encourages his readers to "remain in that situation in which they were called". Slaves should not be "troubled" about their status as slaves, but if they were able to be freed, they should take advantage of it (1 Cor 7:21) (Dunn 1998:698-699). Also, Dunn (1998:700) states that in relation to the Lord, the slave is a free person and the free man is Christ's slave.

Paul wants Christians to be slaves of no human, if they can avoid it, and to be indebted only to mutual love. Here the new empire of inclusion is seen as replacing the empire of privilege, power and domination. On the premise of the cross and resurrection of Christ, all nations have fallen short and entered into deadly competition with divinity. Since God's grace is equally available to all, no claim of superiority remains valid and with it, the basis for every kind of imperialism has been removed (Horsley 2000:112-114).

Jesus not only assumed the "form of slave" but became vulnerable to the social degradation of slavery in its most extreme form. "Crucifixion" was the form of execution for slaves and criminals, and was the most feared and despised form of capital punishment. For Paul all Christians were theologically slaves. As creation shares in humankind's futility, so it will share humankind's liberation from the "slavery of corruption". Generally in ancient literature, though there is a reluctance to confront the brutality of slavery; nonetheless it is depicted (Fitzgerald 2000:32-41).

In Paul's letter to Philemon, Paul's main concern was evidently for a positive reconciliation between the two. The clear teaching is that the primary relationship to Christ makes everything else relative (Dunn 1998:700-701). The call for masters to treat their slaves with "justice and equality" assumes a higher of equality than was normal. By examining Paul's argument in the context of 1 Corinthians, we see how Paul opposed both the function of standard Greco-Roman rhetoric and the Roman imperial order. Paul used their own methods to oppose them and their orders. He used the standard political rhetoric of unity, concord and common advantage versus civil strife, in effect to subvert the establish "political order" (Horsley 2000:91).

Paul taught the alternative gospel, that of a leader of a subject people who had been crucified for his resistance to the imperial order. In offering his assembly an alternative to Caesar, Paul in effect presented Jesus as a true emperor, the true Lord and saviour who was engaged in subjugating all things to himself. Such imperial language could only reinforce the relationship with subordination in the assembly.

In God's final intervention, the oppressive rulers would be judged and destroyed, the people would be delivered or restored, and those who had been martyred for their persistence in leading a traditional life and their resistance to oppression, would be vindicated or resurrected in order to join in the finally restored life of the people (Horsley 2000:92-96). Paul used their style and language to win them over and also to induce them to follow the teachings of the gospel. Bradley (1994:10-30) aligns himself with Williams, when he says the Roman Empire was a slave society.

Slavery is a process or a set of degrees of domination; it is always related to the signification of power and powerlessness in the culture where it exists. Slave orphans in antiquity had an opportunity to accumulate savings, out of which they might purchase their freedom. Manumission was not common in

Greece and the obligation that a freed person owed his/her former owner was more of a burden to an orphan in the Greek context than in the Roman context. Paul's admonition in 1 Cor 7:23, that Christians should not become the slave of women masters, is directed as much at a slave as at a free person (Horsley 2000:112-113). The slaves were housed, fed and clothed by their owners. Paul once uses the metaphor of slavery to remind Christians that they do not own themselves and their bodies (1 Cor 6:19-20). Only in Paul's letter to Philemon is there an implication that Philemon should physically punish Onesimus (Callahan 1997:4-19).

Burtchaell (1998:7-8) shows that Onesimus was a slave whose hope for liberation had been snuffed out; the recommendation by Paul still left him entirely at his master's mercy, and Philemon evidently had no other motive to reward him. Men and women became slaves by being captured in war, condemned, forfeited for debts, seized by pirates and kidnappers, abandoned as a newborn babe by parents through either sale or exposure, or bred by slave parents.

They had only one purpose left in their lives: work. Their masters required legal permission to scourge or crucify them. When looking at Paul's letter to Philemon about slavery, one also realises how Paul was ashamed of these poor slaves, such as Onesimus, because in the letter, Paul says if Philemon needs something, like money, Paul will be responsible for it. We can see how Paul was tackling the issue of slavery in a metaphor. He reminds Philemon to take his slave back amicably. Though Paul was not clear about this issue to Philemon, he wants to tell him that he should free Onesimus, no longer let him be a slave.

Everything has been turned on its head. The Christian slave, as Paul tells the Corinthians, has made a "freed man of the master" and the owner has become the slave of Christ. Paul, Timothy, Epaphras, James, Peter, Jude, the Seer of Patmos and Moses, the prophets and the martyrs and saints and

worshippers are all presented in the scripture as slaves of God and of Jesus Christ, a lamb. Paul says that slavery had always been their status; but previously they had sold themselves into the slavery of sin which led to their death, and now they are bound over to uprightness as they were instructed, and God has rewarded them with holiness (Burtchaell 1998:15-18).

According to Paul, Christians share in the enslavement and extreme social degradation of Christ. Paul was a free Roman citizen but not a member of a social elite. When Paul uses the imagery of slavery, he portrays sin (personified) as paying his slaves a wage (Williams 1999:118). "The wage that sin pays," says Paul, "is death" (Rom 6:23), death in the sense of exclusion from God, who is the source and centre of life. When a slave was freed, the master lost his slave but gained a new client from whom much was still to be gained.

Broadly, what Paul says is that in the long run, the outward circumstances of our lives do not matter. What really matters is our relationship with Christ. Paul addresses as slaves his readers who were free men and women, bringing home the need for them to be subject to Christ. But when he addresses Christian slaves, he does not call them free, since doing so would have suggested that they are cut off from all care and protection. In short, all Christians, however placed in the world, owe to Christ their whole-hearted service. And in their vulnerability they are assured of his whole-hearted care.

Most of Paul's readers undoubtedly associated his letter with the manumission of slaves, and on the evidence above, it seems likely that this image was uppermost in Paul's mind. Paul's book of redemption shows a predilection for metaphors drawn from the practice of slavery and a familiarity with the vocabulary of the trade. It was precisely this notion of cost that made redemption such an appealing metaphor of the work of Christ, and it may have been suggested to Paul in the first place by his awareness that Christ Himself had taught in this vein (Williams 1999:121-123).

The standard of living and of education of Paul and other slave-owning Christians were more similar to their slaves than to the social elite. Christian freedom as children and heirs of God was not be perceived as a challenge to the status quo by encouraging slaves' dissatisfaction with their place in the social hierarchy of this world (Horsley 2000:123). When Paul pictures himself or other Christians as enslaved, especially when they are enslaved to one another, he sometimes means that self-interest has been sacrificed to the interest of the other (for example Gal. 5:13) (Martin 1990:51-55).

Slaves of Christ are those who represent Christ, they are active in the world as Christ's agents and wield His authority. Furthermore, it is expected that they should be rewarded with higher status, more authority and more power. The slave's power was, of course, inextricably linked to that of the owner. Therefore, the perceived status and authority of the leader as a slave depended on the perceived power of Christ. To despise Christ is to despise the slave's representative, but conversely, and this would be the position of the early Christian, to accept and respect the power of God is to assign a great deal of authority to his live slave agent, the Christian leader. This brief survey is above the use of the slave of Christ: God in early Christianity as a title of leadership provides a necessary context for Paul's use of this metaphor (Martin 1990:56-57).

When Paul speaks of "redemption through his blood" he means that the blood of Christ was the price at which the freedom of Christians was bought. In Romans 3:24-25, he declares that believers "are justified by God's grace ... through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God intended ... as a propitiation by his blood". This statement employs three metaphors: one legal (justification), one sacrificial (propitiation), and one (presumably) from the manumission of slaves. The latter speaks of redemption (at no cost to the redeemed; it is a gift) as being achieved at the cost of Christ's "blood". Christ's death (for that is the meaning "blood") was accepted in the place of

us "slaves", so that we might be free. The price of redemption is not always mentioned. In 1Cor 1:30, Paul simply says that Christ is our wisdom (all that we need to know as far as God is concerned), for Christ is "our righteousness from God, our holiness and our redemption" (Williams 1999:123).

According to Martin (1990:68), therefore, Paul picks out precisely the high-status Christian (not even the freed person, but free man) and makes him the slave of Christ, while the slave is elevated to a higher position as a freed man of Christ. Paul thereby redefines the hierarchy of status in the church by employing the existing soteriological motif of the Christian as slaves of Christ and readily recognised status implication of the master-slave, patron-client social structure.

Paul claims that he does not work for wages, he is simply showing us that he characterises himself as Christ's slave agent. In other words, Paul's language would have been heard in at least two different ways. To people with some education, familiar with moral philosophical discourse, Paul's self-description would sound shocking. To their ears Paul was admitting, in the worst way that he was not, after all, a free man, a wise man, a true philosopher.

He does not know a philosophical freedom but rather servility and weakness. A person untrained in philosophical terminology would hear Paul's language as symbols signalling that he is a slave. Paul's slavery in 1 Cor. 9:16-18, therefore, might sound positive, because it portrays him as having a higher status by association with a form of slavery, as a slave of Christ (Martin 1990:75-76). The reward that Paul gets from preaching the Word of God or for being a slave to Christ is the opportunity to give up his authority, his power. Paul was also looking for the reward of eternal life for his commitment. He preached the Word of God to the nation as a slave of Christ.

Slavery is one of the main metaphors that has been used in the description of the relationship between the women and the divine. The understanding of

God expressed in the Hebrew tradition often takes the first of these forms, and God is shown as having a special ownership of a certain people, namely the Israelites, "for the people of Israel are slaves to men, they are my slaves whom I brought out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 25:55). This is real slavery to God and as such, has practical implications: the Israelites are slaves of God and therefore cannot be enslaved by anyone else without violating their relationship with God. Slavery to God is just as real as earthly slavery and is therefore inconsistent with any other slavery (Combes 1998:42-43).

Also Paul continues by asserting the desirability of becoming the slave of God but this is at odds with the readers' experience of the physical and psychological implication of slavery in a secular world, the description of salvation as entry to God and lastly there is a confusion that arises from the inevitable blurring of the boundary between metaphor and reality. This blurring is mostly clearly exemplified when, for instance, Paul must speak of the Christian who is himself a slave or master while maintaining all are equally slaves of God and that we all have one "master in heaven" (Col 4:1) (Combes 1998:69-70).

Paul's self-portrayal as Christ's managerial slave, who must preach the gospel by compulsion and not from free will, is a clear sign of the moral philosophical discourse that speaks of the benevolent patriarchal wise man. Yet Paul's slavery to Christ does not function to represent self-lowering on Paul's part. Indeed, it establishes beyond dispute (at least it hopes to preclude dispute) that Paul is the authoritative, high-status representative of Christ (Martin 1990:117-118).

In Roman law, slavery was contrary to the natural order because all people are born free and because slavery resulted from war (Harris 1999:25). Writing from a sociological perspective, Patterson (1982:13) describes slavery as a permanent, violent, domination of natively alienated and generally dishonoured persons. According to Patterson, in both ancient and modern times slavery

was essentially a relationship of human 'parasitism', in which domination characterised the master and social death was the plight of the slave.

In short, compared with other modern theologians, we can define a slave as someone whose person and service belong wholly to another person. At the heart of slavery, ancient and modern, are the ideas of total dependence, the forfeiture of autonomy and a sense of being owned wholly by another.

A slave lacked the power of denial, in the sense that he knew that if he refused to obey his master he would suffer dire consequences. As a newly constituted being in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), he not only saw Christ as God's promised messiah but also viewed human in the light of the cross as being either united with Christ by faith or devoted to the knowledge of Christ. The apostles encouraged all Christians to have unselfconscious interaction with those people who were commonly regarded as valueless and unimportant (Harris 1999:50-51).

The metaphor of slavery belongs to the world of flesh. Both the masters and the slaves are servants of Christ, as Paul explains in his letter to the Corinthians. If you also belong to Christ, you will always have the status of being the servant of others through Christ. Slaves and owners, all are sinners and they all lack the glory of God. This glory of God can only be found by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Paul's scheme of salvation, the glory of eschatological salvation must be preceded by debasement, one must descend in order to ascend. Yet in order to see how slavery functions as a metaphor of salvation in Pauline Christianity, we have to see how it played a role in Paul's theology of humiliation and exaltation (Martin 1990:129).

Paul's letters to the Philippians shows that the metaphor of slavery plays an important role. When he starts this letter, he says Timothy and he are "slaves

of Christ Jesus” (Philp 1:1) and later Paul says that Timothy has worked like a slave for the gospel (Philp 2:22). In this hymn, Jesus shows himself in a slavish way, and he even suffers the death sentence meted out to slaves.

The slavery to Christ to which Paul alludes in Rm 9:16-18 can be understood as a claim to high status by association, and therefore authority, for it draws on forms of slavery in which a managerial slave exercised power on behalf of a patron. This kind of slavery includes low status and unconditional obedience (Martin 1990:130-133). The enslaved leader actually gains power by taking a step down in status. Paul, however, depicts his leadership as derived authority by association with his master Christ.

Paul’s theology of the cross as the representation of God’s power resident in a human and despicable form may well lie behind Paul’s willingness to embrace low status in 1 Corinthians 9. Indeed the centrality of the crucified messiah in Paul’s thinking was probably one reason that Paul, a person of relatively high status, could use rhetoric that seemed so radical to other high-status people. This central image, the slavery of Jesus, ruled Paul’s world-view, as can be seen from its role in Philippians. For Paul, the stumbling block of the cross challenged any easy acceptance of the usual connection between normal indicators of status and leadership (Martin 1990:135).

Harris (1999:58) indicates that here is Paul, a highly educated Roman citizen, pleading the cause of a runaway slave whose life was potentially forfeit because of his fight and his theft. This indicates that Paul believed that the same brotherly love that would be shown to a free person should be shown to a slave. In most cases Paul wants to show us that Christ has set us all free and that we must stand firm and not be tied again to the yoke of slavery. Paul always warns the Galatians who were free, to enjoy that freedom and not tempted again to suffer the yoke of slavery.

In Romans 3:21-31, Paul wants to show us the glory, which is given freely to us by God. Because of His righteousness, God gave us His only son who is Jesus Christ, who died for our sins on the cross for us to be saved. This love and righteousness of God will take care of the widows, orphans and the slaves of this world. We have the new identity of belonging to Christ or of serving Christ.

The most important aspect the metaphor of slavery in the New Testament is the use to which it is put in Paul's writings as a pattern of faith for all believers. Paul's own enslavement is presented as an example to those who follow him and is modelled on the kenosis of Christ himself.

Slaves of Christ would have confirmed him in their eyes as one who held great power and authority by virtue of his relationship with Christ and his position as "manager slave" in the hierarchy of the ecclesiastical household. All Christians are called to be slaves of Christ, but first they must escape the slavery to which they are currently bound. The slavery to be avoided may be slavery to the body and its appetites, or to sin: Romans 7:14. "I am unspiritual, the purchased slave of sin" (Combes 1998:77-81).

There is a sense in which all people are Christ's possessions because he created them and sustains them. Christ is the one through whom all things were made and through whom we live (1 Cor 8:6) but in every sense believers are his special possession, people of Christ's very own because he purchased them as God's slaves (1 Cor 6:19-20) along with their freedom from all iniquity (Titus 2:14) (Harris 1999:125).

Paul's slavery to Christ did not connote humility but rather established his authority as Christ's agent and spokesperson. Paul believed the unity of the church demanded that those of high status should be willing to place themselves below those of lower status. Paul himself exploits the prejudice of the higher-status Christians, admitting the servility of his labour and then

calling on the strong to imitate it. By contrast, Paul sides with those at the bottom of the social scale and in a more perceived radical sense in his times, he calls on the other higher-status Christians to give up their own interests and to identify themselves with the interests of those Christians of lower status (Martin 1990:147).

If Paul's use of the metaphor of slavery is therefore taken in the context of the crucifixion, the paradox of the individual as both slave and free ceases to be a problem. If slavery as death is the central metaphor, the consequences are that Paul can accommodate both the concept of the entire commitment of the slave of Christ and the freedom of the son or daughter of God in one image. The death of the believer in Christ through baptism, leads to the surrender of the entire life and being of the individual to God. (Combes 1998:88-89).

Equally, the believer through this death becomes entirely free from his or her previous master. Paul and other Christians are the slaves of Christ. They are, therefore, dead to the world and its priorities and are participants in the humiliation and crucifixion of Christ. The believer is called upon, not only to be the slave of Christ, but to be a servant to all (the world). Paul equally urges a mutual slavery of life, and points to his own actions as the demonstration of such principles, "although I am free, I have made myself a slave of all."

Paul's identification with the suffering and the death of Christ is clear: "all I care for is to know Christ, to experience the power of his resurrection, and to share his suffering, if only I may finally arrive at the resurrection of the dead" (Phil 3:10-11). To be a slave of Christ is Paul's recommendation to every Christian, to be a slave to one another is to him the natural consequence of mutual love, and he sets himself up as the pattern of this. It is only in relation to this theology of the cross that Paul says you are good as long you are the servant of God.

As Christians we must be servants to one another and serve one another. God wants us to be obedient to our masters as we are supposed to be and always to be aware that our great master and our saviour is our lord Jesus Christ.

7. FINDINGS

As we are dealing with the interpretation of Romans 3:21-31, about the theology of the cross in South Africa, this does not mean that people are going to be saved through political rights and economic rights. They can only be saved through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The proposal being made is how the theology of the cross in Romans can be preached to people from different political and economic situations. Everyone who reads newspapers, books and looks at TV and listens to the radio, hears about people who are suffering, without food, shelter and water in their areas. Most of these suffering people have lost hope and are living in extreme poverty.

If you were to approach them and preach the word of God, they would not listen to you because they are hungry, they have no power or strength to listen to the words of salvation. In such a situation, the theology of the cross does not mean people will be saved through political rights and mastery, but only that they must know that political rights have never saved people - only faith in Christ will save them. Destitute people should not lose hope while in bondage to this world. Instead they must have faith in the blood of Christ on the cross. If they believe and have faith in Christ, they will live according to the spirit, not according to the flesh that is full of sin.

Christ is our liberator in all spheres of our lives. Through free will it is our power or wisdom to gain the righteousness of God; it is God Himself through Christ Who shows us mercy. Post-colonialism has made people believe they are equal and have rights, those who are victimised and have no power. The

righteousness of God will make the people be cared for, those who are poor, and the widows and orphans.

The righteousness of God will guide the people who exploit other people to have mercy on them and to change their hearts and to take care of other people's needs. The situation in Africa as explained in the previous pages is difficult because people are suffering and people no longer live in a communal way, they live without solidarity. This means each one takes care of himself or herself, and does not care about anyone else. There are orphans, widows and the poorest of the poor in our country. They are suffering but no one takes care of them.

The theme of my topic about the theology of the cross does not mean all people will be freed from political bondage by the blood of Christ on the cross. Many books by different theologians cited in this thesis indicate that the problem of equal rights and political freedom is extremely difficult to deal with, because sometimes these rights mislead people into thinking that their problems will be solved.

From our perspective, what we are dealing with is emphasising the righteousness of God, which is shown to all people irrespective of whether they are rich or poor. The mercy that God shows us through God's only son Jesus Christ is universal, not individual: it includes all people. People are not saved by the power of this world but they are saved through the only saviour who is Jesus Christ. The Africans face many difficulties in their countries, especially the problems of unemployment, poverty, HIV/Aids, crime, civil war and orphans, but they must not lose their hope, they must always look at the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross and have hope in it, because they will not regret it. They will be the people of the spirit and be controlled by the spirit, not by the powers of this world as they were before.

In conclusion, we understand why Paul treated this issue of slave as a metaphor. In the beginning it is clearly indicated that the centre of Paul's theology is the cross and the resurrection of Christ. Many people should understand that, how can we interpret this pericope of Romans 3:21-31, that only through our belief in the cross of Jesus Christ can we be saved. Our priority must be to have faith in the Lord. Then God's righteousness and glory will be ours.

Also we will be slaves of Christ but we will have a new identity. We must encourage the people to have hope in Christ and He will provide. People must know that God is the only source of mercy for us with His righteousness. We must have hope in the cross and resurrection of Christ and we will be saved and have eternal life.

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