CHAPTER 4.

PROPOSING A SOCIO-ETHICAL UNDERSTANDING FOR THE REDEEMED TODAY.

We have shown that there is a strong link between Israel as the people of God, and the Church as the people of God. The Church, though spiritually connected, is given the same historical roots as the Israelites, in that they too are of the seed of Abraham. All who are in Christ are of Abraham's seed (Gal.3:27f). Like Israel, the Church, whose Passover Lamb is Christ (1Co.5:7), is a community redeemed. They are a community of individuals who have trusted God and have been saved by faith. They are a community of the Presence, not in some theophanic way as with the Israelites, but as the Temple of the Holy Spirit, being the dwelling place of God here on earth. Their relationship to God and to one another is the principle of their socio-ethical expression.

As we have said, the local church is the only form that can interact as a community in and with the world. It is here that we must live out our identity as God's people, as Christ's body and as the Holy Spirit's temple. These three terms must become the expression of our socio-ethical relationship with respect to the Trinity, the Church and the world. This expression is in fact our witness of what God has done *for* us, *in* us, and *through* us for the entire world to behold. The local church is the visible community that can demonstrate any sort of socio-ethical expression. Thus, while the local church's identity is derived from the universal body, this identity must practically express itself religiously and socio-ethically through the local body.

The Church as a divine creation, though made up of imperfect human beings, is called to display the spiritual qualities of their Lord (Erickson 1983:1049). It exists to carry out the will of the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way the Church is the instrument and the custodian of the Kingdom of God. In the world, the Kingdom expresses itself in a spiritual relationship of holiness with God and in a socio-ethical relationship with other humans. Evangelism must therefore, of

necessity, be of both spiritual and socio-ethical dimensions in its endeavor to expand the Kingdom of God. Our interest is therefore in the socio-ethical integration of life among the redeemed.

With social and ethical categories derived purely from Israel's responses in the Exodus narrative as paradigmatic for contemporary principles, we shall follow a generally paradigm-then-principles approach in the following section of our discussion. The socio-ethical principles will be expressed in general terms. In our utilization of the Covenantal aspects of Israel's self-understanding, we mean to refer only to the general idea of the word that includes both Abrahamic and Sinaitic aspects. We realize that these two covenants are not interchangeable, but we believe that the latter is subsumed by the former. The general principles will then be applied in order to propose a socio-ethical understanding for the contemporary redeemed within an Evangelical Ecclesiology.

4A. A Socio-ethical Integration of the Exodus Redemptive Pericopes and its Principles for Our Contemporary Context.

Israel as a nation came from one family. Their historical roots are found in Abraham, whom God promised to give as many offspring as the stars in the sky or as the sand on the seashore. The promise was confirmed to Abraham's grandson, Jacob, whom God re-named Israel, the name this nation inherited for itself. They were also commonly referred to as the sons of Jacob or the sons of Israel, or simply Israel(ites). Their common descent already gave them a common identity so that we may legitimately speak of them as a community.

As a people in relation to other people (e.g. Egypt), Israel must also have the right to bargain and negotiate. In this case it causes an enormously serious confrontation where the stakes are high. The very future of Israel rests on the outcome of these transactions. Pharaoh's future is also at stake. The two governing formulas "Let my people go" and "You shall know I am Yahweh" together join the social and theological issues in the same way as does the basic covenant

formula "I will be your God and you shall be my people". The imperative of freedom and the indicative of sovereignty cannot be separated in the faith of Israel. (Breuggemann 1994:723). At first Yahweh is absent from the confrontation, leaving Moses to negotiate. Nevertheless, Yahweh is committed to social transformation. Egypt could partner with Yahweh, but instead they chose to oppose Moses until Yahweh entered the confrontation, which led to their destruction.

The socio-ethical significance of the redemption texts of Exodus is crystallized under the following headings that naturally flow from it. The headings emanate from Israel's responses as a community within the narrative itself, and as we have applied its theological reflections from the previous chapter. Even their future ethical responses as a nation draw on the narrative of this first redeemed community. The social categories, as well as the ethical categories derive from the narrative itself. The headings which flow naturally from these redemption narratives, we believe, can be used as principles for our present situation too. The motivations for future ethical responses in the rest of the Old Testament are obviously those which only allude to the Exodus narrative of redemption.

i. Israel's Self-Consciousness as a Community.
ii. Yahweh's Presence and the Community's Redemption.
iii. Yahweh's Agent in the Redemption of the Community.
iv. Counter Forces to the Creation of the Redeemed Community.
v. Covenant and Redemption Undergirds Social Identity.
vi. The Socio-ethical Response of the Redeemed Community.
vii. Redemption as Social Dialogue.
viii. Covenant as Societal Establishment.
ix. Covenant and Societal Conflict.
x. Covenant and Societal Self-conscientiousness.

i). <u>Israel's Self-Consciousness as a Community.</u>

The word 'community' usually refers to a group of people living together in one locality who inhabit a culture of shared values (McCloughry 1995:108). Israel had

an identity as a group. Furthermore, they were a group of interdependent people with some form of leadership structure by the time Moses came on the scene. The Elders of the people acted as their leaders (Ex.3:16, 18, 4:29, 12:21). The leaders play a significant role in the narrative of Exodus. They were a well-known institution in that society. It was not their role to frame legislation or establish legal precedents, but to administer the agreed standards of the community and to arbitrate in disputes among the Israelites. By accepting the authority and judgments of the elders society could live harmoniously (Mackay 2001:79).

As in other societies, the structures that promote the cohesion and solidarity needed among the Israelites were evidently in place. They must have developed some sense of distinguishing themselves from their overlords; when the plagues so clearly discriminated against the Egyptians (Ex.8:23; 9:4, 26; 10:23). Moreover, they were able to organize themselves. That ability was demonstrated when the Israelites left Egypt marching in their groups of fifties (Ex.13:18). Finally, as a community they all went united through the divided waters (Ex.14:21*f*). That being the case, allows us also to assume that there must have been experiences, norms and values that kept them together and provided the cement for some sort of ongoing corporate identity. Later the Law given at Sinai would formally become that common norm.

It cannot be assumed that that commonality only came about when they were given the Law. Their very redemption distinguished them as a community which was bounded by the favor of Yahweh. The plagues that came upon their oppressors did not even touch them. Their dwelling places were spared the ugliness of the plagues because Yahweh kept it away from them and their animals (Ex. 8:22-23; 9:4, 7; 9:26; 10:23; 11:7). The people were unified by their preparations for the first Passover. They were united in their households. They were united in their neighborhoods. They were united as a people among the Egyptians, and were distinct from them. They were united in their marching out. They must have recognized that they were distinguished and favored as a community.

For Israel the idea of community had theological importance. They were the people of their God (e.g. Ex.3:7). They were favored by their God from before they entered Egypt. Their self-understanding included the concept that Abraham's God was their God (Gen.17:7). While most other communities focused on the two aspects of justice and economy in their quest for societal harmony, Israel also had the unifying self-understanding that they belonged to the invisible and sovereign God. The promises to the patriarchs were extended to them. Those promises defined the nature of their relationship with God and the nature of the community's existence. Yahweh was the God of their fathers and of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex.3:6, 15, 16, etc.). The promise-making God was indeed also a promise-keeping God. Divine promise distinguished them as a special people.

They had a historical relationship with God. The inter-generational aspect of that relationship was clearly understood and accepted. Yahweh spoke of himself as the God of their fathers (Ex.3:13, 15, 16 and 4:5). He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex.3:6, 15, 16 and 4:5). He appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty (Ex.6:3). God swore to give the land he promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex.6:8). Finally, the historical inter-generational relationship is tangibly demonstrated by the act of them taking Joseph's bones out of Egypt with them to their own land. There was a historical continuity that guaranteed their future too. God's remembrance of the past brought about their redemption and provision in the future. Community cannot only consider the "now" generation. It must have a history of past generations, and it must think of future generations too.

Israelite nationhood was part of their self-understanding, even though two major aspects were lacking, namely, self-determination and own land. Their nationhood still needed to be formalized along the lines of the promise God made to Abraham (posterity, relationship and land). The narrative of Exodus actually sets out to do just that. The book begins by noting the prolific growth in their numbers. The relationship will be confirmed at Sinai, and the movement in Exodus is away from Egypt towards the land God swore to give to their fathers. Yet, it must not be taken that Israel did not already consider themselves a nation before the fulfillment of the

land promise. They understood that they were a nation merely on the basis of the divine act of redemption.

There was also a negative or counter-self-understanding, which was taken on from what became the master-symbol (Jordaan 1984:751f) of their identity to the Egyptians, namely that of 'slaves'. They accepted the status quo by assuming that symbol. They became comfortable with it to the point of rejecting possible redemption from it. They wanted to stay in Egypt and continue to serve the Egyptians (Ex. 14:12). This was for some of them a better option than redemption. Yet, in this counter experience, the community became productive and resourceful. According to Breuggemann (1994:685) they were a society where the question of liberation was little honored. As long as they accepted the status quo and saw themselves as belonging to Pharaoh, they were unable to realize their destiny; the reality of belonging to the invisible and present God. Belonging to the invisible and present God could only be realized by redemption.

Another counter-self-understanding derived from the fact that they knew themselves as victims of the tyranny of the ancient world's greatest contemporary political-military-economic power. They were never allowed military arms or knowledge of how to use them, even though God had just organized them as his army. (Stuart 2006:320). In fact, they were never going to be used in this way against the Egyptians. Their victim-mentality blinded them to the loving and beneficent intentions of Yahweh. Their continual complaining betrayed their distrust of Moses and Yahweh. A new society who was able to operate by faith and a new identity was Yahweh's intention. It was only on the other side of the Red Sea that they finally believed in Yahweh and in his servant, Moses (Ex.14:31).

They needed to be freed from Pharaoh's oppressive regime in order to respond to God's gracious regime. It was God's own will to end the bondage status of his people, and he relentlessly pursued it so that it could not finally be resisted. The irresistible action of divine grace evoked the corresponding human response of gratitude (Webster 1995:4). The reciprocal nature of the relationship was clearly confirmed in the covenantal statement, "I will be their God and they shall be my

people" (Ex.6:7). They will speak of Yahweh as "the God of the Hebrews" (Ex.3:18). This reciprocity encouraged a community of mutuality. This mutuality is weakly demonstrated in the caring mentality of a disenfranchised leadership (Ex.5:19-21); also, when Moses, as "redeemer", acted on behalf of the Israelite against the Egyptian (Ex.2:11-14). Mutuality was there, and it was growing.

Their envisaged destiny showed that one important thing was lacking from both their self-understanding and their master-symbols, namely the presence of God with them. They needed to see themselves as a community in and with Yahweh's presence. The Egyptians on the other hand needed to understand that Yahweh was with the Israelites, and for them. The divine presence could, and had to, characterize them as a distinctive people. This would become their distinctive characteristic because it demanded a particular and appropriate response from them. Our question is; *how did the presence of God in the Exodus narratives influence the Israelite community's socio-ethical interaction?* For now this question must be investigated with reference to the Exodus redemption narratives.

While we agree with Nürnberger (1993:1), that the root of all authentic theology is soteriology, we cannot agree that it begins with human need. It must begin with God. He covenanted with their great forefather before there was a need. Besides, God was willing to show his grace to those who breached his standard. The divine intention was and is, first of all, for him to reveal himself. He revealed himself as "I Am" or "I Will Be" (Ex.3:14). Among all the many shades of meaning of that phrase, its preeminent meaning is a *relational* one. By this name, Yahweh makes it understood that he was a covenant-keeping God, who did not change and who was faithfully for them.

It is because of who He was to this people that the redemptive intention of God was the well-being of his people in all aspects of their individual and communal existence, and in the context of the well-being of their social and natural environments. He saw their plight in Egypt; he heard their cry; he knew their sorrows and was willing to come down to redeem them (Ex. 3:7-8). Their right to such an existence was always to be challenged, and God was ever willing to

intervene in that case. His intervention started by his self-revelation. His redemptive intention was an expression and a result of his self-disclosure. Actually, his redemptive intention was to become the vehicle of his self-disclosure; both to Israel and beyond.

Redemption demonstrated the fact that God's people had great value in his sight. Redemption was the deliverance from the power of an alien dominion and the enjoyment of freedom that resulted from it. Redemption presupposed slavery. The entire nation of Israel had been under the bondage of slavery in Egypt. The Exodus story starts with the redemption of the firstborn of each Israelite, because Israel itself was the Lord's firstborn son (Ex.4:22). Because Israel was a people of great value God was willing to make the stakes high for their freedom. In fact they were a people whose divine election was already in place at the start of this narrative (Fretheim 1991:59).

Breuggemann (1994:680) eloquently describes Israel as a community like none that had yet been – the recipient of God's liberating power, practitioner of God's sovereign Law, partner in God's ongoing covenant, and host of God's awesome presence. This astonishingly odd community was, of course, made possible only by the incomparable God who dared to impinge upon the human process in extravagant and unprecedented ways. He is correct in saying that a canonical reading of Exodus must take seriously a socio-critical reading (p.683). Yahweh's resolve was not just that of a political sovereign, but was also the passion of a parent who would see to the honor and well-being of the beloved heir and firstborn. Thus the great political issue of Exodus is given familial intensity. The most intimate demonstration of community is in the context of family. Actually, they were the "sons of Jacob", the family of Jacob; the firstborn of God and the family of God. They were God's own people, and Pharaoh was given the political mandate to let Yahweh's people go, for he had the political power to let them go.

God's redemptive action was intended for Israel to recognize her own identity and mission in the world. God's action for Israel was not just their motivation for obedience, but also their model for it. Obedience was 'walking in the way of the

Lord', which was expressed in the motive of imitation and in the motive of gratitude (Wright 1995:53). The inter-relatedness of society within the Israelite community therefore also served as the momentum for carrying forward their identity and mission. They had the identity of godly mutuality and a mission emanating from a godly responsibility (Bridger 1995:27). Godly mutuality must be derived from the fact that they were all redeemed. They all walked through the sea on dry ground. They all saw what God had done to the Egyptian war machine. They belonged together because they were redeemed together from a common oppressor. The miraculous intervention of Yahweh was for their common benefit. Such commonality had to give them a sense of being a community; a redeemed community.

Principles:

Israel's consciousness as a redeemed community leaves us with some valuable principles. The first is that every community is made up of people who have a sense of belonging. Community loyalty is derived mainly from that sense. The question remains; how is a sense of belonging encouraged or inculcated? Israel's sense of community was derived from a shared history, shared experience, shared beliefs, values and norms.

The point that history makes for community loyalty is undeniable. Israel's shared history was of the most intimate variety in that the nation all found in Abraham their common ancestor. The story of that family is also the story of the nation. Principally, the only thing we can do about our history is an endeavor to build one together by being united in our vision for the community. We too need to visualize our future, and thereby the building of our history. It is in the building of a history together that experiences are shared, so inculcating a sense of community.

Shared beliefs, values and norms are necessary for community. Without these one cannot expect cohesion and solidarity. Much of this depends on both individual and corporate resolve. Resolve to be united in identity and purpose.

Secondly, faith in God is good for community stability and confidence. Israel's shared identity was encouraged by their sense of being valuable in God's sight. They were God's people. How God esteemed them made them understand that they were favored and special as a community. This understanding was entrenched by a monotheistic belief; if the only and sovereign God was for them, then who can be against them? He was able to save them. He would be faithfully present with them; even beyond any temporal difficulty.

Thirdly, the answers to Israel's lack of self-determination, geographic sovereignty, a paralyzing victim-mentality, and a bondage-stature could only be found in Presence and redemption. Redemption is a source to become productive and resourceful. Redemption seeks to free and to empower.

Lastly, a viable community will organize itself. They will discover their inter-dependency and need for mutuality. They will devise some sort of leadership structure that will facilitate a caring, cohesive and harmonious co-existence. Solidarity will guarantee mutuality, cohesion and harmony.

ii).   <u>Yahweh's Presence and the Community's Redemption</u>.

Even though we cannot yet speak of the ethical interaction of the Israelites before redemption, we can speak of the motivation of that redemption for ethical interaction. The presence of God must have had an influence on the ethical interaction at and after their redemption. We need to explore the extent of such a motivation and of such an influence on their ethical interaction.

We have already shown that the divine holy intentionality was to reveal who Yahweh was; both to Israel and to the Egyptians. This he would do through the redemptive action, and thereby reveal himself also to the other nations. The divine self-disclosure was to provide the Israelites the kind of confidence they needed to embark on the journey to their nationhood and towards their distinctive identity as the people of God. The Egyptians on the other hand needed to know that Yahweh

was sovereign over all things for the benefit of his people. Yahweh's self-disclosure was best exemplified through his personal presence with his people and for his people.

In the first place, God saw their plight and heard their cry and responded by "coming down" (Ex.3:7-8) to rescue the Israelites. The presence of Yahweh was an expression of his identification with the people in their misery. God is depicted as one who was intimately participating in the suffering of the people; he entered into their sufferings and made it his own. Israel was to engage in an internal relationship with those who suffer. Israel was not to be like Egypt, but was to identify with the suffering people all over and all the time. God's compassionate activity became a paradigm for Israel; it was life to be lived in imitation of their God.

By mentioning his name to Moses, Yahweh opened the agenda that he had for the rescue of the Israelites. That agenda was connected to the past; with their ancestors, and was reaching into their future mission as recipients of Yahweh's grace. God's gracious presence was bestowed with the purpose of sanctifying and transforming this nation into an instrument that displayed Yahweh's glory as an omnipotent, sovereign, holy and beneficent God. While the greatness of God could not be emulated, surely his goodness was to be imitated. They themselves needed to be holy and beneficent.

When Yahweh revealed his name, he was effectively saying, "I will" free you from your bondage or "I will" deliver you from the Egyptians or "I will" redeem you as a people for myself. Yahweh was the main mover in the whole process of Israel's liberation. We agree with MacKay (2001:77) when he says that the most appropriate explanation seems to be that which is said in the assertion, 'I will be with you'. The verb form "I am" is the same as "I will be". God was saying, "I will" be with you, and "I will" guide you, firstly to the place of worship (Sinai, where my redemption action will be confirmed), and secondly to your place of inheritance (the land I swore to your forefathers). The presence of God to liberate and to guide the Israelites was the beginning of their walking with him and in his ways. Observing

the way Yahweh led provided for them the paradigm by which they were to lead others, both within the community and those from outside.

God was yearning to be present with those he was to liberate, but that community required to be a community of faith and holiness for "hosting" the Holy. At first this yearning was met with Moses' determined resistance rather than faith. Moses had no problem with the demand for holiness as he readily closed his face and took off his shoes in order to comply with the demand of divine presence. We cannot talk of holiness unless it is preceded by real and obedient faith. The giving of the covenant name of God was aimed at encouraging faith. Faith as a human gesture to the Holy becomes the prerequisite for redemption and transformation, but none of these can happen without the Holy's gesture of Presence. Therefore, Presence and redemption must be the precursors of transformation. Meaningful transformation cannot happen without Presence and redemption.

Not only was the Presence an example of identification with the suffering, but it must also have provided the boldness to sensitize both the victims and perpetrators of suffering to the divine sympathy with the downtrodden. When finally Moses went to the elders of the people, his approach was opened with the statement that the God of the fathers "appeared to me" (3:16). The divine presence made Moses an authoritative representative to the people as well as to Pharaoh. Together with Moses the elders were to use the same authority when they were to appear before Pharaoh by saying to him that Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews "has met with us" (Ex.3:18). God's presence provided both comfort and confidence in the context of oppression and in the confrontation of the oppressors.

Biblical faith is inevitably concerned with political questions, with a tilt towards justice. Salvation is the divine intention of all men. God will always side with the oppressed and against the oppressor inviting, as he had done with Pharaoh, the oppressor to participate in his agenda to liberate the oppressed. God was the defender of the weak. Pharaoh had the choice, whether to partner with or to oppose Yahweh. There was always a chance for repentance and for reparations to be made. When they chose to continue their oppressive labor policies and not to

be part of Yahweh's redemptive strategy, Egypt made themselves the objects of Yahweh's judgment instead.

The story played itself out using the 'mighty hand' motif; the hand of Pharaoh against the mighty hand of Yahweh. Pharaoh decided to oppress the people even more. Pharaoh's hand was the epitome of spite. The height of spiteful action was shown when he withheld the supply of straw from the Israelites' brick-making process, expecting the same production from them (Ex.5:18).

Breuggemann is correct in saying that liberation is slow, hard work. Pharaoh's increased injustice, stubbornness, and resistance to change, was allowed for the old order to give way to God's new intention (1994:729-730). The Israelites had to learn to sever their dependency upon Pharaoh. Moses also had to learn that if his people were to be the possession of Yahweh rather than of Pharaoh, there was to be a complete end to Pharaoh as a resource for them. The people needed to learn that God was their only resource, and the unreasonable-ness of Pharaoh furthered this discovery (Buttrick 1952:888). Salvation is ultimately out of the bound of human effort. Faith, therefore, serves as an encouragement to ethical behavior.

There was a dynamic move back and forth between the covenant commitment and Israel's present pain. The present was addressed with the past in mind. The promise of the past served as the guarantee of the future. Yahweh, on the basis of the past was to act in Israel's favor; to "free" them, to "deliver" them and to "redeem" them. God acted as a kinsman for the honor and well-being of a wounded or abused member of the family, thus bespeaking God's intimate solidarity as a member of the slave community. God's very presence and character is to make relationships, bring emancipation, and fulfill covenant promises.

From the start of the exodus, it becomes clear; Yahweh had orchestrated the entire sequence. He had so guided Israel as to avoid the inevitable but certainly lesser resistance of the coastal road, all the while tempting the Egyptians by an erratic and apparently self-defeating route into a pursuit he both suggested to them and impelled them to (Durham 1987:198). Because Yahweh led the Israelites they were

spared the discouragement and hardships envisioned by the coastal road. The God who displayed his power in the partial delivery through the Passover, also displayed his consideration towards their weakness and guided them away from hazards that would overwhelm them (Mackay 2001:244). The road he led them on was in fact more difficult for the Egyptians too. Yahweh's leading avoided a definite re-capturing of the Israelites. Good leadership chooses the way of lesser resistance, so avoiding the greatest loss or damage. Israel was spared any loss. Conversely, the road along which Yahweh led them provided the setting for the defeat of the Egyptians. God's leadership is thoughtful, prudent, and utterly reliable. When the threat of Pharaoh evoked a crisis of political leadership, Yahweh showed himself more than adequate to the task.

Finally, redemption and creation are firmly kept together. It is the sea crossing that lifted up the cosmic side of the divine activity, bringing God's creational goals to a climax. It was a cosmic victory. Without it, Passover was only a partial victory and Israel's liberation from anti-creation forces was only as far-reaching as the next major body of chaotic waters it encountered on its journey. (Fretheim 1991:153). But dry ground appeared in the midst of that chaos and created new possibilities for God to bring about redemption. Redemption created a liberated people who had the motivation to respond in socio-ethical ways in a new creation setting. The book of Exodus is indeed concerned with God's will for creation and with the destructive capacity of Pharaoh to undo creation. This text is urgent for the idea of a sustainable creation (Breuggemann 1994:684). Yahweh is able to dispatch all of creation for his redemptive concerns, which leads humanity to a new creation. Deliverance is from something to something. The historical goal of redemption must have a creational end.

Principles:

While God is eternal and therefore incomprehensible to humans, by revelation he discloses himself in ways that man can apprehend. The first principle we may derive under the present heading is that God has revealed those aspects about him that can be imitated. The Exodus context tells us that as God had, we can

identify with the suffering. God's goodness is always expressed in spite of human failure and underserved-ness. We must act in the present with the past and the future in mind. We have to act with prudence, looking to spare the community from discouragement and hardship.

The second principle is the converse of the first; we must not emulate the Egyptians in their anti-creation attitudes. Pharaoh abused his power in perpetuation of these attitudes. His actions towards his slaves were characterized by unreasonableness, spite, cruelty, exploitation and injustice. We should be compassionate, always defending the weak.

The third principle we can derive is that grace must have a purpose beyond itself. We are to show goodness in order to bring transformation. Grace is given for the purpose of sanctifying. Redemption must be aimed at a new creation. Salvation is aimed at ongoing justice. Redemption must create the confidence to embark on the road of development.

Fourthly, we should seek to make Presence our departure point. Presence provides comfort and confidence. Presence tilts towards justice. It provides the authoritative mandate to work towards emancipation and transformation. Hosting the Holy brings obedient faith and ethical behavior. It helps sever dependency on oppressive systems and looking to God as our ultimate resource.

iii).   <u>Yahweh's Agent in the Redemption of the Community</u>.

Yahweh's leadership had socio-ethical implications for Israel. Moses was the appointed mediator-leader and agent of Yahweh's redemption activity. Moses was God's conduit for salvation to the people. God appeared to him thus making him both an approved and an authoritative leader of the people; appointed by God himself. He was given signs to authenticate his leadership and at the same time provided the people with the assurances they needed for this project. Redemption is a socio-ethical project for Israel, and requires the appropriate leadership.

The call of Moses happened under rather odd circumstances. He was a man in exile. His people were themselves considered to be in exile. He was therefore in exile from an exile. The people were held captive in a foreign land by a foreign, hostile, and oppressive power. Moses' call was initiated with an appearance of God. For Moses, God was present in the fire. This sight actually demonstrated that God was identifying with the exiled leader and with his exiled people, but the exiled leader needed to learn how to identify with his people.

First, Moses needed to understand Yahweh's agenda. Yahweh's redemptive heart had to be grasped. Moses needed to understand God's re-creative purposes. The revelation of God was aimed at setting things in proper perspective. Moses was invited to reflect upon the nature of vocation, and the power of "call" in the life of faith. An uncalled life is an autonomous existence in which there is no intrusion, disruption, or redefinition; an existence where there is no appearance or utterance of the Holy (Breuggemann 1994:719). The life of Moses was not autonomous and it was to be opened to summons for a higher service. Call has an unselfish purview on the side of the one called. Only as Moses accepted his call was he released from the selfish concerns of self-preservation. He was only then able to make sacrifices for God and for his people. He was now able to fit in with God's agenda.

Call requires obedience. A right sense of call, knowing its demands and the possibility of danger, must first understand Yahweh's agenda and purposes. Yahweh's intentions cannot be trivialized, distorted or domesticated. The call is serious business. A realization of its seriousness may tempt one to find excuses, as Moses did, but excuses only fail to recognize the adequacy of the one who is calling. The one calling promises to be present; it is an enabling presence that uses the one called to demonstrate the redemptive ability of the Creator himself. The call was thus able to reshape and re-define Moses' outlook and life. Divine call and human acceptance cooperated to bring about transformation in the community.

A minor implication of the excuses that Moses gave in the call-narrative must be recognized in the fact that God gave Moses all his faculties (Ex.4:11), inadequate as he understood them to be, and made them useful in his program of redemption (Ex.4:12). Moses doubted his own competence. Whether Moses had a speech impediment or had forgotten the Egyptian language (Chavalas 2003:574), he still was invited by Yahweh to be involved; he simply had to cooperate in order to bring about transformation; and at the same time be grateful for having what he had to offer. Moses' question of competence is answered simply with the assurance of divine presence; he was not to act alone. His personal inadequacies were not to be seen as an excuse for not doing well, and it was to be seen as the basis for showing tolerance of others' inadequacies.

With respect to Moses' commissioning, God's seeing led directly to Moses' sending. Moses was sent because God had seen. The commission of Moses was to take the people out of Egypt. His commission was not reform or to make life more bearable in Egypt; it was to remove them from the situation. He was to give Pharaoh the message "Let my people go". Moses had to become involved in the imperative of freedom by being a witness to Yahweh's will for social transformation. God's presence will be seen to have been effective and Moses would know that indeed it was God who stood behind the commission. This makes it clear that God chose Moses for activity in the socio-political arena; this was no ecclesiastical office (Fretheim 1991:61).

Moses' role also included that of mediation. He was the mediator between Yahweh and the people (often through the elders) and between Yahweh and Pharaoh. Moses was the one who had to demonstrate Yahweh's protest against abusive power. Pharaoh needed to be shown that he was abusing his power, and that he was ultimately accountable and subject to God. Moses became the point of conflict, and Pharaoh responded in three ways that denied any imperative for transformation. He sent Moses away; he denied any knowledge of Yahweh; and he intensified his abuses of the people of God. As mediator Moses had to be stubborn enough to oppose all three ways by exposing himself to the danger of imposing himself and Yahweh's imperatives upon Pharaoh. On the one hand mediation

required a stubborn resolve to end oppression; even in the face of personal danger. On the other hand Pharaoh and the people of Israel had to open themselves to recognize the mediator as one who was able to broker transformation. The recognition was already true of Yahweh who appointed Moses to be mediator. As there was divine acceptance so there had to be political and social acceptance too.

The mediation between Moses and the elders and supervisors helped to keep the question of justice alive. The supervisors as the persons in the middle between Moses and the people found themselves at a place where the immediate state of the people was most important. They lacked in their vision of a future possibility of freedom, but they were acutely aware of the immediate need for relief. They even stood against Moses because his intervention seemed to have caused the increase of their immediate plight. On the one hand they had the obligation to satisfy Pharaoh's demands because doing otherwise caused greater abuse, and on the other hand they needed some relief because Pharaoh was too demanding. It was the latter reason that gave Moses the foothold that he needed. He promised them both, relief and freedom. As mediator Moses had to keep his eye on both the present situation and on the future possibility.

Moses' leadership must be seen in relation to the people themselves. The people were often characterized by their grumbling. Their constant murmuring must have weighed heavily upon Moses. Their murmuring indicated that they were stuck in their rut of dependency upon Pharaoh. Israel had to forsake both Egyptian imprisonment and nourishment if they were to be the people of Yahweh (Hunt 2003:579). How did he respond to their murmuring? At first Moses brought the complaint to Yahweh (Ex.5:22*f*). Later Moses became instrumental in getting the people to look beyond the apparent difficulty and to trust in God (Ex.14:13*f*). Moses encouraged the people and pointed them to Yahweh's redeeming power. As a worthy agent of God in redemption he could not allow the people to be paralyzed by their fear; salvation always requires taking a step of faith. Moses was able to mobilize the people towards Yahweh's creative goal. The partnership between

Yahweh and Moses worked. He partnered with Yahweh to finally bring the people to the point where they reverenced Yahweh and trusted in him (Ex.14:31).

Breuggemann's comment summarizing the point, states that the entire operation intended by Yahweh brought the future to a political reality, and it also depended on his human agent. This human agent could doubt, question, challenge and refuse. Moses was not easily commandeered. God's resolve awaited human readiness. (1994:737). Moses was never forced into anything. God was willing to give Moses the kind of ability, power and authority that placed the people under obligation to acknowledge his leadership and to obey his instructions. This endowment ultimately opened Moses up to the possibility of becoming Yahweh's agent. As a leader he too needed affirmation, and these endowments provided just that. The people finally affirm Moses at the crossing.

Finally, as Yahweh's agent, Moses was to be regarded as God's instrument in creation as well as in redemption. When he stretched out his hand over the waters to cause a dry-ground path through the sea, Moses became a partner to the re-creative activity of God. The waters were separated and gathered in order to form dry land (cf. Gen. 1:9). This was continuous with the "let us make" of Gen.1:26, where creation was shown to be a dialogical act. The extension of dominion to the human in creation was here exemplified in a specific creative act. As in the opening up of the sea, so in the closing down of it, God worked in and through human and natural agencies. They were God's agents in creational judgment as much as in creational redemption (Fretheim 1991:159). Redemption was linked to judgment and Moses was Yahweh's partner in both. Re-creation and judgment are ethical imperatives. The Israelites were redeemed and the Egyptians were judged. The Egyptians were judged because they acted as a counter force to the creation of a new redeemed society.

Principles:

Leadership always has socio-ethical implications. The first principle is that the leader must be able to identify with his people because he understands their situation.

Secondly, the leader is always willing to surrender his autonomy and concerns of self-preservation for the sake of his people.

Thirdly, the leader must be able to see the big picture; he must understand the main agenda and purpose at hand. Call requires obedience to that agenda.

Fourthly, every leader must recognize his own limitations, yet not allow his inadequacies to paralyze his calling. He must display gratitude for what he has been blessed with as the tools available to him for his involvement in the imperative of freedom and social transformation.

Fifthly, like Moses, he must be prophetic and demonstrate Yahweh's protest against abusive power, being willing to expose himself to the danger of coming up against that power.

Sixthly, part of the ethical imperatives for leaders is to be able to be a motivator, not allowing the people to be paralyzed with fear or an inferiority complex. Encouraging hope is a redemptive outcome.

Finally, leaders must show readiness for the tasks of re-creation and judgment, knowing that these are ethical imperatives.

iv).   Counter-forces to the Creation of the Redeemed Community.

The manifestations that negate the creation of community and redemption actually amplify the importance of a socio-ethical community. As darkness amplifies the

significance of light, so the counter-forces would amplify the significance of the forces of redemption. In the case of the Israelites, they were to appreciate their redemption more by recognizing the resistance that needed to be overcome in order to obtain it. Out of their appreciation their response would be unforced. An unforced and willing response was the kind of response that was most desired and lent itself to conscientious interaction, both religiously and ethically.

In this case the oppressive forces that confronted the people of God were directly of a social, political and economic nature. These may be spoken of as "structural sin" because it is sin expressed and embodied in social structures intentionally created and imposed (McGrath 1995:29). Egypt intentionally oppressed the Israelites because their growing numbers posed a threat to their own sovereignty. Redemption had to have a strongly political and social dimension. Yahweh was sovereign Lord, and his people deserved his beneficent intervention in their suffering. Pharaoh had to be deposed as the (perceived) sovereign, and the unjust treatment of the Israelites had to be put to an end.

While Yahweh depicted a life-supporting force, Pharaoh depicted a life-threatening force. This conflict between Yahweh and Pharaoh was to play itself out until finally, Yahweh would come out victorious. Yahweh's victory would become Moses' and Israel's victory too. Israel had to welcome life-supporting measures. Egypt too was to allow the imperative of life-supporting measures. But victory for the life-supporting force must come through confrontation. Pharaoh's stubbornness led them to openly confront Yahweh, but Yahweh was not going to be the passive victim; no, he actually manipulated Pharaoh into taking the aggressor-stance in this conflict. Besides, Pharaoh thought himself to be the sovereign world power; in open defiance against Yahweh. He would not acknowledge Yahweh, nor would he allow the Israelites an unthreatened existence as a community.

Moses' first taste of Egypt's frightfulness is anticipated when Yahweh disclosed that there was to be a match between the hand of Pharaoh and his mighty hand. Pharaoh was not going to give in until by God's mighty hand he was forced to do so. Moses was asked what was in his hand; the staff - that which was his support

became the life-threatening force which must be subdued, even by dangerously grabbing it by the tail. Not only what was in Moses' hand, but his very hand itself God was able to turn leprous. Moses had to understand that both the structural and the personal might of Pharaoh were to be subdued.

The Egyptians were not to be thought of as innocent subjects of a king whose policy was at variance with their own thinking. Spiritually and ethically they were one (Mackay 2001:248). Egypt was culpable for the atrocities committed against its slaves. They ill-treated their slaves. They caused them to be burdened under the heavy demands of their licentious, materialistic, self-serving, self-indulgent and greedy appetite. Their severe oppression was in fact a form of state-practiced brutality. Their consumer mentality caused them to neglect their responsibility to human-beings. Conversely, Yahweh's economy always puts humans above things and prestige. Yahweh's redemptive action was an expression of his creative intention where humans had the highest value. In Yahweh's redemptive action Egypt was to be held accountable for being the way they were and for doing what they did.

The danger invited by Pharaoh's politics of oppression concerned not simply politics, but Pharaoh's own most intimate treasure, his crown prince. No one and nothing was safe that stood against Yahweh's resolve to act on behalf of this enslaved, oppressed people. Pharaoh, acting capriciously and denying any appeal from the people, opened himself up to the dangerous resolve of Yahweh. The level at which he meted out his brutality against defenseless slaves invited Yahweh's judgment against him and his people. In his commentary on the sea-crossing, Fretheim (1991:159-160) remarks, that while Egypt followed Israel's lead into the newly created possibilities of God's creative activity, their anti-creation intention disqualified them and opened them to inevitable judgment instead. The character of the human response shapes the nature of the participation in God's creative realities; either redemption or judgment. The Egyptians' anti-creation activity turned the creation against them and they suffered at its hands. Their military became bogged down in the effects of their own anti-creationism. God is the broker of, and the example of creationist and moral order.

For this very reason the Israelites were made aware of the issue of example. On the one hand they were not to treat others with the kind of treatment they have received from the Egyptians. They were not to be like the Egyptians. They were not to oppress others. They were to remember that they themselves were once slaves. On the other hand they were to follow the positive example of Yahweh, who cared for the oppressed and treated them with dignity. Yahweh always intervenes in order to transform a situation in which the oppressor seems in charge and the oppressed hopeless. God's activity became the paradigm for Israel; its life in relation to others was to be lived in imitation of God.

The Egyptian labor structure was oppressive to slaves. Not only did they apply the policy of forced-labor, but they neglected the basic right of slaves to be provided with the resources that enabled them to do their work. They acted unjustly by neglecting their obligation to render to their slaves what was a legitimate right (Wolterstorff 1995:16). They expected productivity while at the same time stifling it through their unrealistic expectation for the Israelites to provide their own straw. Worker exploitation and degrading working conditions must be excluded as a legitimate way of producing goods (Cramp 1995:119). The Egyptians did not realize that an important source of cheap labor was soon to be out of their reach. All they were doing was to create an even more fervent desire among the slaves to be freed from this rather unbearable situation. Yahweh was going to take the Egyptians' slaves away from them because they did not know how to treat their slaves.

Cruelty is the willful infliction of suffering (Hanson 1995:277). The Egyptians willfully inflicted suffering on the Israelites. They practiced their cruelty for political and economic purposes and made it part of their societal system. Yahweh condemned their cruel behavior and commanded them to set the Israelites free, or at least free to worship. Their actions were particularly reprehensible because their cruel actions were visited upon the weak and defenseless members of society. Their slaves were completely disenfranchised.

Bad enough was the fact of the cruel oppression of God's people, but the Egyptians did not even allow them the freedom of religion. Withholding that basic right would unavoidably breed dissatisfaction among the people; and even though the repressive policy of productivity was used as an off-set to this need, it would create a deeper resolve in the slaves' hearts to worship their God. In itself this was a proper demand for religious freedom. They wanted to worship their God in a way that honored him. According to Mackay (2001:81) Pharaoh regarded himself as a god, and therefore their request amounted to blasphemy. But Yahweh does not co-exist with other gods, for there is no other god but him. He wanted to be worshiped by his people, and when this was resisted by their overlords in favor of productivity, he saw that as an added reason to prepare redemption and judgment.

Finally, no wrong goes unpunished. Egypt was to make reparations for their exploitation of the Israelites. They would indeed do this when the people were to be liberated. Israel was promised that Yahweh would work in a way that was to cause the Egyptians to expel them. Each Israelite woman was to ask their Egyptian counterpart for items of gold, silver and clothing. In their desperation the Egyptians willingly and generously responded, and in this way the Israelites "plundered" the Egyptians (Ex.3:22). Plunder is taken by the victorious party in war. Israel was to anticipate victory over the Egyptians. The Israelites were ultimately to receive the rewards of their slave labor – the poor and the rich were to change positions; rather than being victims, they were to become victors and this was their booty.

Principles:

There is always resistance to renewal and redemption. The first principle we derive is that this resistance ultimately enhances the value and the appreciation of renewal and redemption.

The second principle is that people must rather be open to welcome life-supporting measures than life-threatening ones. They must be able to distinguish between the two.

Thirdly, those guilty of life-threatening measures will be culpable for their atrocities, especially those that are motivated by a consumerist mentality. The level of one's anti-measures will be meted out against the perpetrator. No wrong goes unpunished; like from Egypt reparations will be demanded.

Fourthly, humans had a higher value than things or status.

Fifthly, anti-creation intention always opens one to inevitable judgment because creation will eventually turn against him.

Sixthly, the religious act of worship is a right of every one, even slaves.

Finally, exploiting workers and degrading working conditions must be excluded in the legitimate way of producing goods. To practice exploitation for political and economic purposes is to entrench it in the social system. Withholding basic rights will unavoidably breed dissatisfaction and ultimate uprising.

v).   <u>Covenant and Redemption Undergirds Social Identity</u>.

The social and the religious identity of Israel must be found in the essential covenant statement made for the first time in Exodus, namely, *I will take you as my own people and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians* (6:7). Their religious identity can also be connected with their redemption. They are Yahweh's people and he will redeem them, and as his people they are to have a distinctive social identity which is best understood within the context of covenant. The covenant that gives promise requires fulfillment and the Presence for it to be meaningful.

Israel as Yahweh's own people and what that means is best understood under the double description of their identity which is distinct from all the peoples in the whole earth; as *a people redeemed* and *as a people of Yahweh*. Israel's willingness to

become these two things in relation to Yahweh will bring to pass what he has initiated for their benefit. Yahweh is willing to initiate a covenant with his redeemed people, and this covenant will later be expanded at Sinai, so that it enhances both their social and their theological identities, and which must work together with the Abrahamic Covenant as a witness to affect the nations of the world. This relationship has its historical foundation in the covenant between God and Abraham, and is developed in the Sinaitic covenant between Yahweh and Israel as a nation.

The Abrahamic covenant was mainly unconditional and universal, and moving in the direction of getting all the nations of the earth to be blessed. The Sinaitic covenant is conditional and national. This covenant is subordinated to the Abrahamic covenant and serves its agenda; to bring blessing to all the nations. The nation Israel was to be set before all the other nations as a model community; one having a covenant relationship with the only true God, Yahweh. As the covenant code indicates, God is not only served in the sacral realm, but in every aspect of the social fabric (Oosthuizen 1996:182). For now we refer to the Abrahamic Covenant as the covenant.

When Moses accused God of bringing trouble upon this people (Ex. 5:22) and of sending him on a hopeless mission, God called to remembrance his relationship with the patriarchs and that he appeared to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob (Ex. 6:3). These appearances, though as God Almighty and not as Yahweh, was in a covenanting context. Nevertheless, God established his covenant with them by seeing their plight. This was the covenant that was called to remembrance in the redeeming act of Yahweh (Ex. 6:6). Redemption is aimed at creating a people who know that Yahweh is God, that he rescued them and that he will fulfill his covenant with Abraham's offspring (Ex. 6:7-8). Their context as a people was therefore both theological (and thus ethical) and social in the divine intention.

Principles:

The first principle is derived from the fact that redemption and covenant together enhance social and theological identities. Theology provides the impetus for ethics. God is not only served in the sacral realm but also in the social realm.

The second principle tells us that one community can and should serve as a model to other communities.

vi).   The Socio-ethical Response of the Redeemed Community.

Ethics are the rules of human behavior. It is the scholarly study of moral principles and moral behavior with reference to concrete situations (Deist 1984:56). Strictly speaking, morality pertains to the conduct of life, while ethics pertains to the principles behind such conduct. There is an inextricable bond between ethics and morality without necessarily being the same or one (Motlhabi 1998:120). In our discussion here we are concerned with both the principles as well as the conduct, but we agree that the conduct is derived from the principle. Since our context is monotheistic the consequences are far-reaching for a moral life because man is accountable to God for the whole of his life. We speak of monotheistic ethics when we are considering the effect of God's presence on human behavior.

The people of Israel were privileged to be both spectators and participants in this unfolding story. In fact they were at the centre of all the schemes and happenings, and even though they were not always aware of it, nor always understood it, they were invited to appreciate what Yahweh was doing on their behalf. Yahweh was to utilize his various agents for their benefit, whether those agents were protagonist (e.g. Moses), antagonist (e.g. Pharaoh) or neutral (e.g. elements of nature). There was to be no doubt about who was sovereign Lord for their allegiance to be well-directed. How was their allegiance to the sovereign Lord to be expressed?

It is obvious that Israel's allegiance was to be expressed in two directions; first to Yahweh and then to their fellow Israelites. Their allegiance to their fellow Israelites was in fact an expression of their allegiance to Yahweh. Their response was thus both religious and socio-ethical. The two cannot be separated because the first creates meaning, which in turn creates social interaction. In this case the interaction was "prescribed" by their common experience of redemption. Therefore we cannot entirely agree with Jordaan (1984: 678) when he says meanings are social products and they are formed whenever and wherever people are interacting. This is clearly not the only meaning for Israel. They had a vertical interaction and accountability too.

The people's two-fold response was exemplified in this telling statement after their redemption was brought about, "And Israel saw the great hand which Yahweh used against Egypt, and the people feared Yahweh, and they believed in Yahweh and his servant, Moses." (Ex.14:31). The NIV uses the word "trusted" where we have "believed". We may observe that there was a vertical element (towards Yahweh), and there was a horizontal element (towards Moses) in the people's response. These two responses must be more fully explored.

The first response to Yahweh was that of reverence. They were eye-witnesses of Yahweh's majesty and power. They experienced his personal guidance, protection and rescue. They saw him overthrow Pharaoh and his war machine. Unfortunately, they first had to see these things happen. Their reverence followed sight. Yes, for them "seeing was believing" which motif is demonstrated throughout this story (*c.f.* Ex.14:13, 30-31). The positive thing about their visual experience was that reverence was not only an individual response, but it was corporate too. All the people responded. Yahweh first had to demonstrate his power and in that way evoked a sense of awe, admiration, respect and gratitude in the hearts of his people. Their hearts filled with these attitudes translated into love for God and a commitment to walk in his ways. The "believing" of the Israelites was based on seeing a demonstration, not on propositions and concepts that are invisible or a God who is hidden (Sheriffs 2003:284).

A unified and vibrant religion emanating from real experiences is a powerful motivation for the creation of an accountable and conscientious community. The people's reverence was expressed in their faith and obedience towards Yahweh. The place for that expression must be within the community, and when it is, it serves as mutual encouragement to continue in the activities of faith and obedience. It is also common knowledge that mutuality makes for social harmony.

Faith is often expressed by verbs such as 'believe', 'trust' and even 'hope'. It is the leading biblical term that describes the relationship humans are to have with God. It expresses the orientation of the whole person, and is not merely intellectual assent, but confidence, trust and assurance of the graciousness of God (Okholm 1995:368). Faith is a response to God himself. Later on the content of Israel's faith was developed from their act of believing. Their act of believing looked at God's present acts among them and for them, and his past actions and promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The future of their faith depended on their acceptance of Yahweh's past actions. Faith was therefore not a one-sided thing. Nor was it passive; the Israelites had to act with faith and walk through the sea.

Faith for Israel entails fidelity, "keeping faith with" Yahweh in the manner of a vassal remaining true to an overlord. "Keeping faith with" is thus the opposite of double-mindedness, duplicity and deception, divided loyalties, or outright rebellion (Sheriffs 2003:283). Their full allegiance was actually the counterpart to Yahweh's fidelity. They were to be committed in their faithfulness to God. They were to do what Yahweh required from them. Authentic faith is underpinned by love for God, which is the highest motivation for ethical interaction on the horizontal plane.

Obedience should also result from reverence towards, and faith in God. For Old Testament theology, it is artificial to divorce the inward individual orientation from its out-workings in communal worship and behavior (Sheriffs 2003:284). They believed that love translated to obedience; if they love, they will obey. Obedience is the recognition of God's right to rule and to command (Brown 1995:636). God's rights derive from his supremacy which was demonstrated in his victory over Pharaoh. While they were forced to obey Pharaoh, they were now expected to

obey Yahweh and his agent out of love. That means that obedience to God also implies obedience to others, perpetuating His will.

Their redemption implied that there must be a fundamental change in mindset. Redemption is the precursor and precondition of transformation. They were a slave-people, but now they were a free people. They had to think and act like free people. We agree with Breuggemann (1994:683) when he says that the Exodus text itself shows Israel practicing exactly that kind of imaginative freedom. Thus the "report" of the exodus eventuates in the festival of remembrance, whereby new generations enter into the memory and possibility of liberations. Later, whenever the Israelites were reminded that "I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of Egypt", it went along with a command or ethical injunction (Kaiser 1983:33). Their redemption was the motivation for obedience. The environment for the law was redemption.

Freedom must bring about transformation. The celebration of Yahweh and the faith of Israel were inescapably mediated through the transformation of private and public life; celebration, because redemption happened and God showed them his greatness, and faith, because God was worthy to be trusted. Celebration must also acknowledge that God alone is to be revered and worshiped and to whom Israel's doxologies are sung. Without such a response, the great deeds of God would have been without a voice in the world (Fretheim 1991:161).

As Yahweh's community, Israel was to be holy. They had to bear themselves in a way that affirmed the greatness of Yahweh. Discipline was necessary, and was exemplified in their march out of Egypt (Ex.13:18). Discipline allowed them to submit to leadership. Discipline was necessary to rid themselves of the death-dealing addiction on the reassuring structures of Egypt, because the temptation to return was great. Discipline was necessary to remind them that murmuring was counter-redemptive and that it needed to be avoided in the new community. Discipline told them to be faithful when they were in "a tight fix" and to be still and allow God to do what only he can do (Enns 2000:289).

Gratitude is the affirmation of a certain bond between the giver and the recipient. It motivates actions – most notably giving thanks and doing pleasing acts (Roberts 1995:419). As a virtue, gratitude is not just an occasional feeling, but a well-confirmed trait of personality, character or disposition. The Israelites were to perform good actions out of gratitude to God. Gratitude to God is always fitting. It brings glory to him. The grateful heart never murmurs because it is satisfied. This new community was to be characterized by gratitude.

Finally, as we have already said; Israel had to set the example that it followed. They were not to be like the Egyptians. They were not to oppress others. They were to remember that they themselves were once slaves. Instead, they were to follow the example of Yahweh, who cared for the oppressed and treated them with dignity. Yahweh always intervenes in order to transform a situation in which the oppressor seems in charge and the oppressed hopeless. God's activity became the pattern for Israel; its life was to be lived in imitation of God. Israel was to follow Yahweh's example of love, grace, faithfulness and kindness to all in the community. In this way they were to demonstrate to the entire world that they were Yahweh's prized possession. They were to be a light to the world.

Principles:

Firstly, in a monotheistic context man is accountable to the present God for the whole of his life. Knowing that we are accountable brings about ethical behavior.

Secondly, allegiance to the redeemed community is an expression of allegiance to God. Allegiance thus expresses itself in religion and in socio-ethical ways.

Thirdly, real religious experiences are a powerful motivation for the creation of an accountable and conscientious community, which in turn encourages social harmony.

Fourthly, faith is neither one-sided nor passive. It acts in religious and socio-ethical ways. Authentic faith is underpinned by love for God, which is the highest motivation for ethical interaction.

Fifthly, obedience to God also implies obedience to others who are perpetuating his will.

Sixthly, the environment of the law is redemption. Freedom must bring about transformation that aligns with a new creation.

Finally, gratitude is affirming to both the giver and the receiver. Gratitude is not an occasional feeling, but a well-confirmed trait of personality, character and disposition. The other party is affirmed for its well-deed. Murmuring, on the other hand, is non-affirming and counter-redemptive, and should be avoided.

vii).   Redemption as Societal Dialogue.

The very nature of society is bound up in its ability to facilitate dialogue as no society can remain stagnant. Social dialogue is necessary in every society for it to develop and for it to adequately provide for every member; or for every family; or for every clan; or for every tribe; or for every community. Representation of each member, family, clan or community is best expressed by the right to be in conversation and to be able to negotiate and decide.

We are not talking about the kind of dialogue, as in politics, where it is regarded as a useful strategy to deflate tension and postpone decision, even though that was what the foremen tried to do when they approached Pharaoh trying to solicit relief from his harsh treatment (Ex. 5:16). We are also not talking about the kind of dialogue, as in science, where it has been developed into a convenient method of accommodating differences in order to obscure essential conflict (Alant 1981:15). It must not be a mere cloak of acceptability, but must be seen as the essential tool for forging meaningful relationships based upon mutually negotiated and accepted

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terms. The Israelites had the right to reject, and even blamed Moses and Aaron of bringing them into disfavor with Pharaoh and his officials (5:21).

In the Ancient Near East covenants were a common occurrence. By nature covenants are a form of dialogue. Perhaps, for our interest, we must mention the political covenants. There was the Royal Grant type of a covenant, and there was the Suzerain-vassal treaty. The former is where the king alone is obligated by the promises he makes for the benefit of his subjects. The Abrahamic Covenant is an example of the Royal Grant. The Suzerain-vassal treaty is the type where both the great king (suzerain) and his subject (vassal) have agreed upon obligations. That agreement is the point of dialogue between the two parties. Later, the Sinaitic Covenant would become an example of the Suzerain-vassal treaty.

a.   The Dialogue and Relationship.

The relationship between Yahweh and Israel (Abraham's seed) existed from the time of Abraham through a call. Through redemption they were a nation that belonged to God; him being their God, and they being his people. In the language of the day; we speak of him being their great king, and they being his subjects. Yahweh's obligations in the covenant applied both retrospectively and futuristically, while the people's obligations were to be applied futuristically. Fretheim (1991:213) asks correctly: The issue is what the relationship to God entails: what does it mean to be God's redeemed people in the world?

Yahweh saved Israel from slavery, and this redemptive act was with the demonstration of great power, overthrowing Pharaoh and his whole army. Yahweh was a greater power than Pharaoh or than any other king. In the future, Yahweh will show he is present with his people. His presence with them will be the demonstration of his benefits for them. His presence is a gift of himself to them. The gift of himself is also a gift of his holiness and all that goes with it.

Yahweh's gift of himself had the outcome of trust and reverence, and was what characterized their future covenant relationship. They were to be a peculiar

possession, a royal *priesthood* and a *holy nation* to Yahweh. How to be all of these things required obedience and the keeping of the covenant stipulations by Israel. Breuggemann reminds us that the human actions of Moses, at God's command, were about the work of "making holiness", of generating holy reality. A religious community is always in the process of "making holy". "Making holy" is a daring, awesome enterprise that imagines ways in which the mystery of God in all its inscrutable power may be available to us (1994:914).

Trust and reverence were the precursors of obedience of Israel to achieve God's purpose of mutual relationship (Hahn 2005:3). Holiness is the characteristic of God conferred upon his people. It is a privilege in that from among all the nations, they were chosen by a holy God. But what made them holy? It was the Presence that distinguished Israel; God's self-disclosure in the redemptive act, and later in the act of re-establishing the covenant at the Mountain and later in the Tabernacle. Redemption was the indicative for the imperative that was formalized later in the requirement for holiness. Holiness was ethical in content (Mackay 2001:329). The indicative and the imperative aspects of relationship could never be divorced. So, the measurement of holiness in terms of God's own nature prevented the covenant claim from being given a merely moralistic interpretation (Childs 1974:383).

Revelation and lordship were the actual contributions to relationship made by Yahweh. Israel had to open them up to the experience of Yahweh's goodness. Yahweh's goodness was demonstrated in the exodus, the theophany, and the call. The covenant must remain a witness for all ages of the ultimate seriousness of God's revelation of himself. Lordship and revelation go together because without revelation lordship has no meaning, but revelation is Yahweh's trump-card in the negotiation with Israel to accept his lordship. Yahweh revealed his lordship when he showed himself mighty over Pharaoh. The Lord of Israel revealed himself to them through his mighty acts of redemption and his merciful act of covenant-making. The covenant therefore guarantees dignity and well-being within the community in line with Yahweh's goodness revealed to them.

While there was a special relationship that sets them apart from the other nations, theirs was a relationship not only with God (as His People), but also interpersonal relationships (as a redeemed community). Social security depends upon the right ordering of interpersonal relations between the generations when they were reminded to remember the Passover, and therefore their redemption, annually in celebration. Before the people can have fellowship with God, they must be able to have fellowship among themselves. Fellowship in the community and fellowship with God cannot be divorced either.

Relationship and obedient worship are the consequence of a divine presence. The command is rooted in theophany and redemption, but obedience is a form of worship rooted in the self-disclosure of God who spoke and who redeemed them. Their collective worship also required individual expression within the community. This expression happened with the dedication of each firstborn son and animal to Yahweh. This dedication rendered the firstborns holy unto the Lord.

Relationship is and must always remain a two-way connectedness between two parties who agree to be in relationship. Yahweh would be their God, and they would be his people. Being their God meant doing what only God could do for them; he carried them on eagle's wings and brought them to himself (Ex.19:4). Redemption and revelation was God's "duty". Being his people meant that they had to conduct themselves in a way that was commensurable with their God's purpose; for them to know him and to be his people. Obedience and keeping covenant was their duty. *You have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, and how I have carried you on eagle's wings, and have brought you in to myself. And now, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you are to me a peculiar treasure among all the peoples. The whole earth is mine, but you are to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation* (Ex.19:4-6). These are the conditional points of dialogue in Sinaitic covenant relationship that came later. Relationship will regulate societal behavior.

b.   Dialogue and Process.

The relationship between Yahweh and Israel is something that comes through development. There were a series of actions and changes that brought about the covenant as an outgrowth. Most theologians recognize the call of, and covenant with Abraham as the starting point of the process that finally brought about the covenant that was sealed at Sinai. This process of the covenant with Yahweh comes through the development in time, the development in space and the development in relationship. The development is in actual fact a process of dialogue. Things developed in the way people allowed it to go. Surely, Yahweh influenced the process too, and there were circumstantial influences too.

It is within the development of the temporal, spatial and relational processes that Yahweh, the people and the circumstances made their influences to negotiate the nature of their relationship. That negotiation is what we call the process of dialogue. No society comes into existence without the process of dialogue. It has to negotiate its norms, values, identity and role, and does so through the processes of time, space and relationships.

The temporal or historical process is one that is often alluded to. In most cases it goes back to the time when Yahweh redeemed the people from the land of slavery. He heard their cry. They, who are called Yahweh's first-born son, were taken at the cost of Egypt's firstborn sons. This was an action of Yahweh's initiative and upon his remembrance of his promises to their forefathers. Yahweh carried them on eagle's wings to bring them to himself (Ex.19:4). These deeds of Yahweh within the historical process became the creedal confession of the people, who took Yahweh as the one who dedicated himself for their benefit. Yahweh was their redeemer and they accepted him as such. They saw themselves as a redeemed people.

The spatial process is embedded in the narrative. There was a time and place when they were the servants of Pharaoh. Egypt was a land of suffering for them. Yahweh took them out of that land, and though there were obstacles that tried to

prevent their movement away from Egypt, Yahweh overcame them by the demonstration of mighty signs and wonders. When they were hemmed in by sea and desert, Yahweh opened the sea and they passed through on dry ground. While his people passed through, he at the same time provided watery graves for the Egyptian mighty men.

The people were led by Yahweh personally; his pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night went ahead of them, and they followed. Both Yahweh and Moses are enthusiastic about getting the people to the Mountain of God. They arrive there on the third new moon, on the very day. The mountain rendezvous was where they were to meet with God, hear him speak, and enter into a covenant with him. Yahweh's leading and Israel's following was indeed a dialogue of spatial process where some of their roles as a society were entrenched. Yahweh carried them on eagle's wings; this was their flight from Pharaoh to Yahweh. They were removed from the corrupting environment of Egypt to the consecrating environment of Yahweh's presence.

There was a development in relationship too. Yes, the relationship process runs in tandem with the temporal and spatial processes, but Yahweh intended for it to develop in a specific way. The relational aspects of promise to the forefathers, Yahweh's remembrance, the measuring of his mighty hand against the hand of Pharaoh for the sake of his people, all undergird the process of relationship. The process of relationship was brought to fruition at the Mountain of God. There they met with Yahweh; they heard his voice; they received his laws; they became a nation joined in a special way to their God; they built the tabernacle for Yahweh's dwelling; a priesthood was established with them and from among them; they became Yahweh's specially elected people; and they were to establish the fame of Yahweh through their consecration as his people. Israel was identified as Yahweh's peculiar treasure, kingdom of priests, and his holy nation. Israel was to be a testimony unto Yahweh. Relationships are naturally dialogical and define the role of each member in relationship.

The people's experiences are also processed dialogically. Their experiences of theophany, consecration, law and holy obedience all were processed in a way that defined Israel's identity. Their experience of theophany opened their understanding of their God and his purpose in relation to them and to the nations. The totality of the people saw God and experienced his presence with reverence. They recognized him as a great, awesome and terrible God. He, being a holy God, required them to open themselves up to consecration. Consecration was more a gift of his presence than being a process that was to be followed. Certainly there were ritual requirements and these in themselves were aspects of social dialogue. Consecration was a response to the Presence and a testimony of their relationship with the true, living and present God.

c.   Dialogue and Structuralism.

Any society has to have some sort of structure to foster community and communication for its internal and external benefit. Any sort of structure is the result of social dialogue. In other words it must acknowledge that reality is in process (Maritz 1981:8). For Israel, their human or organic structure was initially ordered upon the lines of family and economic solidarities. They regarded themselves as the sons of Jacob, or the sons of Israel, and they were all slaves together of the Egyptians. We know from early in the Book of Exodus that the people were somehow ordered under the leadership of Elders (socially) and foremen (economically). Because of Yahweh's redemptive intention, Moses and Aaron were imposed as leaders (politically and religiously) because they were willing to take the risk of communicating Yahweh's demands to Pharaoh and to mediate between the people and their God.

Moses did not aspire to be in any sort of leadership, nor did he willingly volunteer it. Aaron was included by default; because Moses would not do what he had to without help. Moses was Yahweh's man and Aaron was only his helper. At first their joint approach to Pharaoh brought reproach to the people, and their leadership was openly rejected. The only thing that kept them staying the course was Yahweh's redemptive intention and the fact that Yahweh was with them as he

had promised. Yahweh was going to have to convince the people. The fact that Moses and Aaron were Yahweh's spokesmen to Pharaoh was what finally set them up for leadership among the people and so beginning to fulfill Yahweh's intentionality with this new nation and with Moses as his approved leader for the people.

By the time of the exodus, Moses worked with the social structures already in place, and by it was able to organize the people to leave Egypt by their fifties (Ex.13:18). Moses was in fact the lone leader, because the other leaders were really only the mediators between Moses and the people (of course Moses could also speak directly with the people). The people's complaints were voiced through them. Moses was however affirmed more and more, until finally the people feared Yahweh and believed his servant Moses (Ex.14:31). Moses is appointed as leader by Yahweh and only later affirmed by the people. That was the process of reality.

When the people arrived at Mount Sinai, both Moses and Yahweh focused the people's attention on the two main events; namely that of Yahweh's coming presence and of Moses' authoritative position as mediator and leader. Bosman (2007:329) reminds us that Moses' leadership was designed to be a model for ethical consideration. He was a lawgiver and interpreter of the Law; he was a model for all true prophets; he was intercessor and mediator; and the word of the Lord was his priority. The positions of Yahweh and Moses with respect to the people were aimed at the Covenant about to be made between Yahweh and the people. Within this relationship between Yahweh and the people the structures of leadership were clearly developed. The process of consecration requires an ongoing action of self-giving to the structures that were being developed.

The covenant confirmed Yahweh to be their God, and they became his people with particular characteristics expected and developed; they were Yahweh's treasured possession, his royal priesthood and a nation holy to him. For the relationship to exist in this way there needed to be priesthood and a place of Presence. It was within the covenant-making process that we have noticed a clear hierarchy of relationship developing, which in turn provided the societal stability that came with

it. Yahweh was God. Moses was authenticated by Yahweh speaking with him "face to face". The Elders represented the people in the ceremony of covenant-making. Some (Aaron and Hur) were appointed judges having to preside over matters in the community in Moses' absence. Each individual within the corporate had to commit to covenant loyalty before Yahweh. The sacrifices at the meeting place were to be a perpetual ritual for the ensuing generations. The leadership structure that was developed was the product of reality in process. Reality in process is in fact social dialogue towards creating social stability. Social stability is encouraged by a healthy social structure.

Finally, no society can know any sort of cohesiveness without anything that cements relationships. The covenant code, that is the Law, served as the thing that kept the society together. In the Law the aspects of symbols, norms, values and ethics were all defined and given meaning and purpose within this society. Yahweh's self-giving was found in the giving of the Law when he came down in their sight, and spoke it in their hearing, and Israel's self-giving was found in their obedience to the Law. Corporate obedience was the expression of holiness in the areas of worship and of ethics and morality. The authentic hearing of the Voice motivated obedience to the suzerain, who acted for their benefit and within the structure, which created stability. Obedience was an expression of an accepted covenant responsibility, and it demonstrated the quality of Israel's existence. They were a new kind of kingdom; and a new kind of nation; with a new kind of priesthood that demonstrated that they were a people of the Presence, and whose conduct was characterized by Yahweh's awesome and terrible presence.

d.   Dialogue and Functionalism.

Israel was to function in a particular way in this world. Again, they could only function in that way if they understood what was required and if they accepted their particular role. Their understanding and acceptance of their role were products of negotiation and dialogue. Israel functioned in three ways; firstly in terms of their *faith*; then in terms of their *obedience*; and lastly in terms of their *role*. These three ways were the realities of their sociological existence with which they were in

dialogue with (Alant 1981:18-21). Faith was the expression of their *metaphysical* functionalism. Obedience was the expression of their *epistemological* functionalism. Role was the expression of their *ontological* functionalism. It was within these functional settings that they were to recognize the meaning of their existence. Function unlocks meaning, and meaning gave purpose, and purpose motivated conduct which was ethically conditioned and which was in the best interest of their ongoing social identity.

On the level of Israel's *faith*, we have to understand that neighboring nations had a multiplicity of deities. It was common to Ancient Near Eastern nations to have family gods and clan gods so that polytheism was commonplace. We may even suspect that Israel herself might have espoused other gods. Israel had to be convinced that Yahweh is the only true and living God. In his redemptive activity, and later in their covenantal context, Yahweh was able to convince the Israelites of that fact. They saw his awesome acts of redemption; they saw his descending presence upon the mountain; and they heard his voice from that trembling mountain. Three times the people pledged allegiance to Yahweh and promised to obey all his words. The covenant required Israel to be absolutely monotheistic and accountable to Yahweh alone.

Their newly entrenched monotheism corrected their retrospective faith too. Yahweh was the God who created all things. Yahweh was seen as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Yahweh had a covenant with these forefathers, which was the reason for his redemptive work. The people understood that all other gods were in fact idols and that as covenant community they were to have no other gods before Yahweh. They were to banish all other gods from their community. They were not to treat Yahweh in the same way that other nations treated their gods; that is, they were not allowed to represent Yahweh in any physical form. They were not to make Yahweh "man-sized". They were to respect Yahweh, not using his Name in vain by profaning the divine reputation through their conduct. Israel's entire life must conform to Yahweh's presence. Israel was to conform to Yahweh as creator and as sovereign. They were ultimately accountable to the Creator and Lord. They

were expected to emulate their creator. As their God, they too were to display an egalitarian and humanitarian society.

The autokerygma, *I am Yahweh*, was a statement of God's self-presentation and self-giving. This self-confession of Israel's God was in essence that which stated he was creator, redeemer, beneficent king and holy God. This statement set Yahweh apart from every other god. These gods were nothing and faith in them was futile. Faith in the self-presented, self-giving and self-confessed God, who said "I am Yahweh", is indeed worthwhile faith.

Israel also had to function according the covenant code. They were committed to conduct themselves in *obedience* to Yahweh. Their epistemological role was that of obedience. They had to know and understand the actions, the words and the Law of Yahweh. Though its stipulations were both vertical as well as horizontal conduct, their obedience was to Yahweh. The words and the Law were indeed revelation, and their pledged obedience was in fact obedience to Yahweh, who spoke in their hearing. Authentic hearing led to obedience to the voice of God. They understood the timeless principles of the code. The Law regulated the fundamental aims of conduct for the Covenant-people. The commandments of God to his people reflected moral laws which were a display of the character of God.

The Law was God's personal address to his people; the substance of the covenant. Clements (1972:122) asserts that the laws are addressed directly to the individual in the second person singular, but they relate to actions which concerned the entire community. They therefore have a strongly social character, and both the religious and social laws concern conduct which was regarded as disruptive of the life of the community. The people had to consider its stipulations, and their pledge to obey had to be one that followed an intelligent decision or agreement. The agreement included their relationship, both vertically and horizontally. The call to obedience was a call to holiness, and holiness was a reflection on the horizontal plane of what existed on the vertical plane.

Lastly, the *role* of Israel was a display of their ontological existence. Their role was derived from who they were to be or become. They have accepted the role that Yahweh chose for them. They had a covenant responsibility. They had to be something for Yahweh's sake; they had to be something for their own sake; and they had to be something for the sake of the nations. What they had to be on all three these levels was whom they were really meant to be. While we do not agree with McBride (2006:134) stating that it was envisioned by Israelite theologians, we want to use his words and say that Yahweh envisioned the possibility of life in community as a distinctive sacral vocation.

They were to be a *peculiar treasure* to Yahweh. Out of all the nations of the earth, Yahweh chose Israel to have this special relationship with himself. This relationship was to show that God was good. He was able to make them a special people who were related to him on his terms. They were to be loyal to Yahweh as he was loyal to them. The character of God, particularly his goodness, was to be displayed through these people for all to see. This relationship was often understood on the level and intimacy of a marriage relationship. It was exclusive.

Israel was to be a *holy nation* for Yahweh and for their sake. They were a holy nation among the nations because they alone belonged to a holy God. They were a holy nation because they were called to obey and emulate Yahweh. The holiness required of Israel was always ethical in content (Mackay 2001:329). They were a holy nation because they were to "house" the presence of a holy God. They were to show that the Presence could not be trivialized nor domesticated through ungodliness. Yahweh's presence was a holy gift. They were expected to give a holy response to a holy God. They themselves had to be dedicated to Yahweh. Their holiness was both Yahweh's initiative and Israel's response. Holiness is created to enable Presence. God's presence among the nations was to be found in the midst of this holy nation. Holiness has everything to do with conduct; holy conduct was ethical behavior and more.

Israel was to be a *kingdom of priests* to Yahweh for the sake of the nations. As a kingdom they were to be a theocracy. Yahweh was their sovereign king. They were

under Yahweh's rule. As a kingdom of priests they had the privilege of the presence of Yahweh. They could enter that Presence, and they could enjoy the benefits of it. Their service as priests was exercised in two ways; first to Yahweh as the one to be worshiped and second, to be Yahweh's servants towards the nations. This 'nation' would be unlike other nations which aim for the glory and dominance that characterize earthly politics. They would be a servant nation whose task was to mediate between the divine world and the ordinary world of mankind: that was the essence of priesthood (Mackay 2001:328). There is the emphatic "you alone are to me a kingdom of priests" to show their unique relationship with Yahweh. "Kingdom of priests" is a phrase which is unique in the Bible. The people as a whole were set apart to this worldwide service. They were to be a servant nation rather than a ruling nation. They were called to demonstrate the glories of their God to the world.

e.   Dialogue and Stability.

The irony was that the Presence was both de-stabilizing and stabilizing. Yahweh's stunning promise to come down to meet with his people caused a frantic preparation by each individual and by the community. They had to wash their garments and they were to abstain from other intimate relationships. That third day was a day of unexpected things. Yahweh was an alien presence, threatening and destabilizing. The people trembled and the mountain trembled. Presence and fire descended, but the people did not want Yahweh to speak directly to them. They were scared; it seemed like God could break out against them at any moment. Their fear was also a response of ethical significance, because the fear of God amounts to a moral concept and an ethical stance (Davies 1962:75). Later, people who feared God were those who acted according to a moral imperative. The fear of God was to be with the people so that they would keep from sinning (Ex.20:20).

The people were theologically naïve about the dimensions of divine holiness. Nevertheless their willingness to obey all the words of Yahweh required them to listen to those words; whether spoken directly in their hearing or through Moses. In fact, God's personal address gave them some confidence because they knew that

this was indeed the substance of the Covenant. Divine presence incorporated "guidance" for individuals and Israel as a whole (Bosman 2004:4). Therefore, not only their theological naïveté, but also their day to day navigation through life was satisfied by the Presence. In Durham's words, the presence of Yahweh is the centerpiece of Israel's unity serving as a theological anchor and compass (1987:xxi).

The presence and glory of Yahweh was able to create holiness, which in turn again enabled Presence. God chooses a place because he has entered history with a people for whom place is important (Fretheim 1991:273). The place is where the society finds itself and where they can express themselves religiously (to God) and ethically (to fellow man). The mountain was that place. Later the Tabernacle was going to be against all forms of idolatry, yet in their midst becoming the stabilizing Presence among the people. The self-revealing God, who is not silent, elects to be present among his people. This is the essence of the Covenant promise: "I will make my dwelling with you". It is a deliberately gracious act when God said, "I will meet" with the sons of Israel. It will be an active and encouraging Presence. It was this meeting that authenticated their social identity.

Within the Covenant the people's entire life was to conform to the Presence by obedience to the divine speech. Conforming to the Presence became a stabilizing and beneficent experience. The people came to know Yahweh personally; he who said "I will be God to them" and "they shall be my people". The promises: "They will know" …"and I will dwell with them" provided them with a confidence in their relationship with Yahweh and with each other that enabled them to keep covenant and to obey the Law. Obedience that comes from Presence is in fact the stabilizing force in the community. The whole experience that moved from de-stability to stability within the community is the point of dialogue in the becoming of the Israelite society.

Principles:

Firstly, social dialogue is necessary for societal development and for the community to stand upon mutually negotiated and accepted terms.

Secondly, dialogue with the Presence is an awesome enterprise that imagines ways in which the mystery of God with its inscrutable power is made available to the community for becoming holy. Holiness was ethical in content.

Thirdly, the community can accept God's lordship through negotiation and revelation, and is expressed in faith and obedience. Faith and obedience is a form of worship.

Fourthly, relationship is a two-way connectedness, and can only happen by agreement. This applies to relationships both vertically and horizontally. God decides to redeem and we decide to "obey his voice". Relationship comes through dialogue; a process that is developed and sustained along temporal and spatial lines.

Fifthly, community requires structure through dialogue for its internal and external communications and solidarities. Structure through self-organization is a dialogical process which provides social stability.

Sixthly, every member must commit to an egalitarian and humanitarian society in the expression of his role and community loyalty.

Finally, those things that foster or threaten stability in the community must become known to all in the community. Stability is thus a dialogical necessity.

viii). <u>Covenant as Societal Establishment</u>.

Communities and societies function as such because they have agreed rules of establishment or a system of interrelated and interconnected institutions, collectivities and groups. We may talk about agreement of systems, cultural norms, institutions, market mechanisms, legal and other structures, values, collectivities and roles (van Eeden 1981:73-96). In short, social integration is maintained by organic solidarity developed within the history of the community.

While we may talk of some sort of history of this nation, we have to remember that they existed as an independent group for only three months by the time they entered into a covenant with Yahweh. When they made the covenant they constituted as a nation in some sense of the word. The Covenant code spelt out the rules of agreement that applied both vertically (in religious matters) and horizontally (in ethical matters). The Covenant was the main mechanism of societal establishment for the nation of Israel. The Covenant code was mainly religious, moral and ethical in nature. There was a widespread link between the sacred and the secular, and the two were not always easily distinguishable in Israelite society. The principles of *creation*, *election* and *Law* were central to the Covenant. That means that nothing was purely secular for the people of Yahweh. The scope of our discussion excludes dealing with the Law in any detail.

a.   Creation.

Yahweh is the creator of all that exists; therefore the whole earth belongs to him (Ex. 19:5). He owns all that exists. So, therefore, ultimately all of creation is accountable to God. The Covenant includes creation principles, such as mutualism, equality and personhood (McCloughry 1995:111). The creation perspective illustrates God's original intentions for the created world. All we have comes from God. What he has created is his gift to creation in general and to humanity in particular. Creation theology is a prevailing principle in the book of Exodus, and we may integrate cosmic order and social order (Fretheim 1991:204). The Covenant stipulates some requirements from the covenant people in respect

of the creation. The doctrine of creation is a powerful motivation for ethical interaction. The creation insight about people is expressed by the concept "person in community".

There are three definite allusions to the aspect of creation in the Exodus covenant pericopes that are significant redemption concepts. In Ex.19:5 Yahweh says that the whole earth is his. The idea of ownership comes from the doctrine of creation; that Yahweh created all that was created. All that Yahweh has created is at his disposal. He can use it as and how he chooses to do. If God chooses anything to bless, such a choice is based upon his grace. Out of all the earth that was at his disposal, God chose Israel. They were privileged and dealt with according to the grace of God. Their response must then be a response to his grace.

Another reference to the creation is found in the Decalogue. The commandment on the Sabbath calls as its support the fact that God ceased his creative activity on the seventh day. Because God rested on the seventh day, his people were called upon to emulate him and also rest from all labor on the Sabbath Day, and allowing all under their control to rest. The social effects included the aspects of rhythm between work and rest for all living creatures involved in work; it included the principle of egalitarianism where all levels of society were allowed recovery time, which also upholds the principle of humanitarianism.

We know that the Sabbath Law extended to include *release* and *restoration* of land and *freedom* in the covenant community. These three are the foundational aspects of the Sabbath Law and of the doctrine of creation. The Sabbath is about resting and consecration, as they were to remember to keep it holy. This law, incidentally, was unique to Israel among the ancient nations. It fostered the idea of a community of well-being. Society is encouraged to creation-keeping for its own future good. Dumbrell (1988:37) articulates the purpose of the Sabbath well: "The concept of rest becomes increasingly significant as the biblical goal of redemption is seen as rest in God's presence".

Yet, another, though indirect, reference to creation in the Decalogue is the commandment to honor parents. Parents are representatives of God as providers of life to their children. Such is the order of creation. We are to respect the source of our lives, and when we do so we actually respect God as the ultimate giver of life. This commandment creates an inter-generational connection. Only with this generational consideration can we guarantee a future well-being in society. It helps to keep the integrity of the family in tact.

b.   Election.

The covenant between Yahweh and Israel is eminently about Israel's election. Yes, we have already seen that they were elected among all the other nations of the world. They were chosen, not because they were better or more numerous than the other nations (Dt.7:7). They were slaves. They were chosen simply because of God's gracious initiative and *hesed* (faithfulness). He is a covenant-keeping God. God chose them for their benefit.

They were elected so that they could be Yahweh's people. Yahweh's presence with them confirmed them as his people. As the people of Yahweh, they were to fill a particular role as a light to the nations. They were to bear testimony to Yahweh. God envisioned Israel to be a holy people with a global ministry of demonstrating to all the nations of the earth what it meant to participate in the holiness of God (Hahn, online:4). What we have said under functionalism above may be appropriately repeated here. There is the emphatic "you alone" are to me a *kingdom of priests* to show their unique relationship with Yahweh. "Kingdom of priests" is a phrase which is unique in the Old Testament. The people as a whole were set apart to this worldwide mission. They were to be a servant nation rather than a ruling nation.

c.   Law.

The Commandments were given to a people who had already experienced salvation. There was no other nation so great to have such righteous decrees and

laws as the Law that Yahweh gave them. The Law was given to instruct the people of God in the way of righteousness. It was given to fence Israel; in to keep them from conduct which would mar their continued fellowship with God (Mackay 2001:339). Stuart adds that the Law was paradigmatic, giving models of behaviors and models of prohibitions/punishments relative to those behaviors, but they made no attempt to be exhaustive (2006:442). The Law has its origin in Yahweh himself, and that is why the Law is the expression of Yahweh's self-giving. The giving of the Law was enveloped in the presence of Yahweh. Yahweh spoke the Law by solemn declaration. The Law is perfect, holy and good. The Law was God's standard for his people to live by. Negatively, the Law is not understood as something to be obeyed just because God says so. The Law is to be obeyed because it can be seen to serve life and well-being (Fretheim 1991:205). The people were committed to the Law of Yahweh because Law is integrated with life.

Before the Law was given, however, the community operated under a system of consensus and an eldership judiciary. The eldership was the judge in small matters that came up in the community. It is clear, that when Moses and Joshua were to ascend the mountain, Moses appointed Aaron and Hur to judge (big?) matters during his absence. They must have used the established societal norms and values as the standard for their judgments. When the Law came their standards became more established in society.

Childs is correct in saying that the Law defines the holiness demanded by the covenant people (1974:383). While the people were committed to the timeless principles of the Law, they were not always required to memorize it for verbatim recitation, though we do not have a stated requirement for verbatim recitation and, in fact, Deuteronomy 5 does not recite the Decalogue verbatim. In the Law lays the fundamental aims of conduct for the covenant people. The character of God was seen in the moral laws. The measurement of holiness in terms of God's own nature prevents the covenant claim from being given a purely moralistic interpretation (Childs 1974:383). It was his personal address to the people, and was the substance of the Covenant. The Law reflected the will of God for his people. In the

Law we understand Yahweh to be merciful and faithful, showing unending goodness to his people.

God spoke the Law to a people who united-ly and enthusiastically gave full acceptance to it. The people's response was not presumptuous; it was their resolve to do. Their acceptance was their willingness to be party to the covenant. Their commitment to the Law and to the covenant was based upon their confidence in God. The Covenant with all its symbols, including the Law, was fully, voluntarily and in unison accepted by all the people. We must, however, remember that Yahweh committed first to the Covenant.

Because the Law comes from God, its essence is love. It encourages love for God and love for neighbor. Love is, and must always be, active and self-sacrificial (Field 1995:9). Obedience to the Law is being active and self-sacrificing, and could therefore be an expression of love. God is faithful to his covenant promises, and therefore provided redemption and the Law to his people. The giving of the Law is God's self-expression of love. Obedience to the Law was an expression of loyalty to Yahweh, and that loyalty was to be protected by social responsibility (Wright 1995:54). That loyalty was an expression of the people's love.

It is worth our while to recount the ethical aspects of the Law as it was applied to the community of God's people. Every law was bound up in the identity of Yahweh, for he identified himself with it when he uses the *autokerygma*, "I am Yahweh". His person is not only tied to the Law, but was tied to the redeeming benefits he provided. Yahweh was part of Israel's narrative and so is the Law. Life in relationship with God means that certain words and acts do justice to that relationship. His redemption became the basis of his claim upon this generation. They belonged to Yahweh and were expected to be loyal to him as their only God.

As they kept the Sabbath they made holy time. They were motivated to rest because God rested. In Breuggemann's words, "This God is not a workaholic" (1994:845). Their creation-keeping was God-emulating, and provided the principles of egalitarianism and humanitarianism in total contrast to what the Egyptians

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provided them. Israel is commanded to observe the Sabbath in order to remember its slavery and deliverance (Childs 1974:416). They understood that the underlying principles of *release* and *restoration* of land and *freedom* in the covenant community was what they were to aspire to. By those principles they were not allowed to exploit the weak, but instead, provide them opportunities to fully recuperate. Aliens, widows and orphans were given special care by the community. The Sabbath is a great day of equalization in which all social distinctions are overcome, and all rest alike (Wolff 1974:139). The humanitarian concern of the Sabbath is a bridge to the commandments concerned with inter-human relationships.

The second tablet was dedicated to the imperative of loving one's neighbor. Communal relationship was at the core of its intention. Honoring parents was a way of the child taking God's hand and the hand of the ensuing generation. Parents represented God. Honoring parents was facilitating the blessing of the previous generation to pass on to the next. This is the beginning point of the well-being of society; when we highly regard the integrity of the family, and the position of authority in the community. Mackay (2001:351) aptly states that the status of father and mother had to be jointly acknowledged to preserve the integrity of the family and also promote the well-being of society.

The Law is not only meant to serve the judicial system, but it provides an open-ended possibility to do what is good. It facilitates creation and redemption. It is not so much about what we must not do, but about what we must do to create community according to God's standards. The Law allows us to emulate the God of the Covenant by proactive positive action. The Law thus becomes the norm within that society. It also clarified societal and individual rights and responsibilities.

Principles:

The first principle is that social integration is maintained by organic solidarity.

Secondly, Yahweh is the Creator of all, and all creation is accountable to him. The creation perspective integrates the cosmic order with the social order. The doctrine of creation is a powerful motivation for ethical interaction.

The third principle relates to the second. The Sabbath calls for God to be emulated by allowing all under our control to rest, and thus creating a rhythm between work and rest for all living creatures involved in work. It fosters egalitarianism and humanitarianism in its prospects of release and restoration.

To honor parents is another principle of creation-keeping. It is about respect for the earthly source of life, passed on from generation to generation.

Fifthly, God's election of Israel (and of the Church) is to set apart a servant community for the benefit of others.

Finally, the Law, which has its origin in God, is his self-giving standard for his people to live by. The Law reflects the will of God for his people, encouraging love for God and for neighbor. Every law is bound up in the identity of Yahweh encouraging the God-emulating principles of egalitarianism and humanitarianism. The Law facilitates creation and redemption.

ix).   Covenant and Societal Conflict.

Any society is open to the possibility of conflict, and every society negotiates ways to resolve those conflicts in a way that has the least damage on it. Much of the conflict is already resolved if there are societal norms in place, because often conflict is nothing but a deviation from those accepted norms. Our concern is societal conflict within a covenantal setting, and we shall not look at it from a general understanding. We shall first mention the conflict in general, and then show the particular covenantal alternative, which will also serve as a proposed solution for the conflict.

Community refers to those who have an identity as a group (McCloughry 1995:108). Societal conflict is nothing but the threat to damage that identity, its justice or its interdependence. Sometimes these threats come about by the pace of change. Therefore, societal change must be managed in a manner that obviates conflict as far as is possible. Unfortunately, sometimes change is not so easily managed because it is often suddenly forced upon societies by circumstances. However, certain societal tenets are able to help control and soften the effects of change and resolve conflict.

a.   Hierarchy and Class.

We have already said that the Covenant has as its underlying terms the rule of egalitarianism. That means that we cannot talk about class distinctions in a way that is commonly understood. There were no class distinctions in the redeemed Israelite society; whether on religious, economic or political levels. Class distinctions showed preference for certain groups over other groups and created power-structures. It created a situation where some groups were denied privileges simply because they were of a disadvantaged group.

Class distinction often creates a superiority complex in the higher classes which is often expressed in abuse. Ill-treatment of any kind was not to be allowed among the covenant community on humanitarian grounds. The lower class is often a socially marginalized and exploited group. Both class and power structures are to be condemned within the covenant community.

Can we speak of equality in legitimate hierarchical systems? Yes, we can. In fact the covenant people had developed a social structure of leadership that described role rather than class distinction. We recognize a legitimate hierarchy in a society when it comes through social contract that secures a *network* of rights and obligations required for the viability of proper social life (Williams 1995:796). This hierarchical network ensures proper government in society. We recognize within Israelite community a hierarchical system as follows: Yahweh as God was over all, and all are accountable to him; on the human level the hierarchy was Moses, the

priesthood, the elders, the judges, fathers, the people, individuals and the generations (families) that follow. Under the people we find tribal, clan and family structures too. Actually, this hierarchical system best operates through dialogue. It is within this hierarchical system that role was defined.

Israel's egalitarian and humanitarian societal hierarchy was necessary for social order, and social justice could best be facilitated through hierarchy. Every individual within the hierarchy saw themselves as a vital part in making social order and justice work as it should. Hierarchy expedited social order and justice. Hierarchy facilitates both the upward and downward flow of communication according to authority structures. It is a system of mediator-ship and counselor-ship. Mediators always seek the best for those they represent before a higher personality and the counselor always has the client's benefit at heart (Meier 1992:301).

No hierarchy is of any value unless there is an ultimate authority to which all are ultimately accountable. In Israel's case that ultimate authority to which all accountability is due, is Yahweh, the God of Israel. It is really under Yahweh that the whole society becomes united. He is Lord and ultimate judge. The Covenant that exists between Yahweh and Israel has caused all the people to unify in obedience under Yahweh. Only in their recognition that they are subject to Yahweh, are they able to recognize the need to be subject to the authority structure that Yahweh and they have set in place. Obedience must therefore be the operating concept downward in the community, because all authority is really vested in God. Corporate obedience facilitates mutual relationship and respect.

b.   Commitment and Coercion.

Coercion includes force or the threat of force, and other actions or threats of adverse actions (Attwood 1995:387). Social coercion inevitably leads to social upheaval or revolution. In fact coercion at any level, even down to the individual, leads to rebellion of some sort. Even though the children of Israel often rejected

Moses' (really Yahweh's) leadership, they always 'came around' because they became convinced.

Yes, they were often forced into a situation by their circumstances, but they were never forced into anything by any person representing Yahweh. They were forced into situations by Pharaoh; to a point where it became worth their while to opt for emancipation. Pharaoh represented coercion, but Yahweh opened to them the possibilities of choice, even if it was for what was, in their eyes, the "lesser of two evils". Coercion was not the way of the covenant community. Coercion is the opposite of love (grace), because love is not coerced and it never coerces.

The community established the existing covenant with Yahweh freely and voluntarily at Sinai. Three times did they commit themselves to obey all the words that Yahweh had spoken. They were convinced by the powerful portents of Yahweh's presence and by Yahweh's speech. They realized that the powerful Presence was indeed a strong motivation to obedience, consecration and allegiance. God had a message for the people, and when they heard it, by direct speech or through Moses, they were convinced.

They also understood the conditional nature of the established Covenant; *If you obey…and keep…*then* you will be to me….* They had to make an open-ended commitment in this covenant. They understood that they needed to *be* and *do* something in this covenant relationship in order to be part of it. In short, they were to *be* a holy nation of priests who belong to Yahweh; and they had to *do* according to all that Yahweh had spoken. They accepted the role Yahweh chose for them by pledging faithfulness to him. We know that their pledge to obedience came before and after the Covenant terms were spelled out. Israel began a new life of obedience (Breuggemann 1994:881).

The self-giving autokerygmatic statement, *I am Yahweh*, indicated Yahweh's own commitment to the Covenant. Because of the divine commitment, all the stipulations of the covenant code were enthusiastically, voluntarily, unreservedly and in totality accepted by all the people. Their enthusiasm was seen in their united

response of commitment. There was full acceptance by the people. Their response was not presumptuous, but was what they wholeheartedly resolved to do. They understood that conformance to holiness was conformance to the will and purpose of the King, in whom they had great confidence.

c.   Cohesiveness and Divisiveness.

We are sure that the principle, "unity brings strength and division causes a fall", was understood by the Israelite community. Divisiveness is not good for any community, and it brings about social disorder. Division causes strife in the community. We find nothing of division among the Israelites in our present texts. On the contrary, we are able to demonstrate cohesiveness in the community throughout these present narratives.

The community is always referred to in a corporate way. They commit themselves corporately even if the stipulations were intended for individuals. This was a mechanism of creating, if not confirming, corporate identity. Every individual was always a part of the whole community. Each personal "you" of corporate Israel heard the revelatory words spoken in two supremely authoritative voices, those of God and Moses (McBride 2006:137). The community was always both individually and corporately responsible. Therefore, an individual was always accountable to the community.

The totality of the people saw God and experienced his presence with reverence. The whole community heard in an authentic way the voice of God. They experienced the Presence as a community together. Their corporate response was to corporate obedience and to corporate holiness. They all accepted the role Yahweh chose for them. They all pledged faithfulness and obedience to Yahweh and to the Covenant. The Covenant code spelled out their conduct promises. Oosthuizen (1996:182) concludes correctly that the Covenant code indicates that God is not only served in the sacral realm, but in every aspect of the social fabric. Their service to one another was an expression of their service to God.

d.   Solidarity and Exploitation.

Exploitation is supported by the erroneous and unethical belief that those exploited are worth less than the perpetrating individual or group. It emanates from the premise of greed and is ultimately selfish. It is encouraged by a spirit of superiority, domination, ruthlessness and greed. It boils down to disrespect of those exploited. Exploiters use others for their own benefit and at the expense of those they exploit. Hill identifies the crux underpinnings of exploitation: "Exploitation is the inevitable product of class struggle. It presupposes that a worth is contradicted, and a power is abused" (1995:367). Israelites are never to exploit others, because they themselves were slaves and exploited before.

Humanity is our first point of solidarity. To be human is to be-in-relation. Humanity is a social identity. Human beings stand in relation to the rest of the created order in terms of personal-impersonal (Bridger 1995:25). Again, the ideas of mutuality and equality cannot be avoided, and our responsibility in community is to prevent exploitation because of this basic solidarity. We are all created in the image of God.

Israel's solidarity as a nation is further derived from their common call, and experience of the Divine Presence in redemption and covenant. The "blood of the covenant" created solidarity between the two parties (Breuggemann 1994:881). No other nation had such an experience. This nation was the special creation of Yahweh as a new community to be the vehicle for blessing to the whole world of nations (Wright 1995:51). Being Israel meant having an ethical agenda by showing the way of the Lord. Ethics stand between the election and mission of Israel.

The Covenant community is called to solidarity with the downtrodden because they themselves were slaves at one stage. As an expression of covenant society, they were to pay much attention to the protection of the weak. They were called upon to the practicing of impartial justice (Ex. 21-23). God's favor was always understood to be with the oppressed. The Covenant community had to recognize that creation

in general and human life in particular have a spiritual worth beyond merely utilitarian considerations, which calls for a due order and mutual respect in human society on earth (Hill 1995:368).

Another point of solidarity is found in their liturgical action; they all were under the blood of the covenant, having a common destiny and identity, and the reference to blood is a witness to profound solidarity, wrought by the initiative of God (Breuggemann 1994:882). In this liturgical action of covenanting, both Yahweh and Israel as a whole, being parties to the covenant, pledged themselves individually to the other party. Yahweh was pledged to Israel and Israel was sworn to Yahweh. The Decalogue stands as a critical principle against every kind of exploitative social relation. By keeping the Decalogue Israel created a social vision of possibility that every society can be transformed and made into a liberating rather than exploitative force.

e.   Mutuality and Selfishness.

We understand that every person is unique, and therefore individualism is necessary to some extent. Individualism, however, can be counter-productive when it stands in the way of community. Yet, community must not stifle individualism to the extent that human individual freedom is lost. When this freedom is lost, then so is accountability. We notice that the Commandments are addressed to the community, but it requires the individual's deliberate response. Love for God or neighbor is in reality a subjective experience, or better still, *decision*; yet, practiced only within community.

Self-centredness and autonomy always goes against community, and lack the tenets of love and self-sacrifice. It may even extend to the point of belittling one's neighbor, and to belittle one's neighbor is to belittle one's community (Tutu 1999:127). The existential stress exaggerates freedom of choice and ignores the dependency of the individual on the community. Autonomy must always be limited in society (Cook 1995:180). People are not free to do what they want to when they live in community. Again, the Decalogue shows us that autonomy is limited,

because where the best interest of another is at stake, then we can't just take another's strength, or wife, or goods, or life. Self-centredness and autonomy are always limited as we are responsible to God, who created, redeemed and included in relationship with him.

Selfishness stands against the principle of self-giving. The Covenant community is unique in that it has as its core value the principle of self-giving. Breuggemann (1994:914) comments about the Covenant community whose preoccupation is with "offerings"; it is clear that the capacity to "make holy" depends on the fullness of giving. Where there is no rich offering, there will be very little "holy making". In a community that is unable or unwilling to give or to yield, the outcome can only be profanation, whereby neighborhood, environment, and finally self become mere objects, commodities for exploitation.

Israel's future depends upon the attitude of mutuality. They were redeemed together. They made a covenant with Yahweh together. The promise of land in the future is that which they will share together. They are stewards together of what God has given and is going to give them. The mutuality between them and Yahweh is the encouragement for mutuality on a horizontal level too. Mutuality is also built upon the foundation of respect.

Principles:

The first principle must be to recognize that societal conflicts derive from deviations from social norms. Resolving this kind of conflict must aim at having the least damage. Societal conflict is nothing but the threat to damage its identity, justice and solidarity.

Secondly, societal change must be managed in ways that softens its effects and its possibility to bring disruption.

Thirdly, egalitarian aims must guard against building class and power structures.

Fourthly, equality and hierarchy can co-exist where distinctions are made on the basis of role rather than on the basis of class.

Fifthly, hierarchy facilitates societal order, social justice and communication. Yahweh is the ultimate authority to whom all are ultimately accountable. He is Lord and ultimate Judge.

Sixthly, social coercion leads to social upheaval and rebellion. Coercion is the opposite of love, for love never coerces. Israel began a new life of un-coerced obedience.

Seventhly, divisiveness causes social disorder; cohesiveness brings unity.

Eighthly, exploitation is supported by the unethical spirit of superiority, domination, ruthlessness and greed. Solidarity on the basis of our shared humanity, experience, belief and call, is the better option.

Finally, un-stifled individualism should never stand in the way of community. Mutuality must be built upon the foundation of respect.

x).   Covenant and Societal Consciousness.

Their societal self-consciousness was that of a united people. They knew that the integrity of the individual was integrally woven to the integrity of marriage, and thus the integrity of family, which in turn made for the integrity of the community. They were above all else to be known as the covenant community. Their covenant with Yahweh required that kind of community outlook. They were a community where each one knew their place in the hierarchy that Yahweh established.

Family integrity was undergirded by healthy marriages and healthy parent-child relationships as the fifth and seventh commandments required. They were to honor parents and show faithfulness to their spouses. Every individual and every family

had to treat others with dignity and respect in that they were to guard their property and character as the eighth, ninth and tenth commandments required. In fact the very life of every individual was to be treated as sacrosanct according to the sixth commandment. They were to be a community of individuals for the community united.

All of these grand ethical ideals meant nothing unless they considered themselves ultimately accountable to Yahweh. Yes, the accountability structure within the established hierarchy also was regulated by the fact of their ultimate accountability to Yahweh. Yahweh, the creator of all things, is the ultimate judge according to his creation principles, redemption principles and according to his Law. The Israelite was provided with the possibility of forgiveness through shed blood. In this way they were able to make peace with Yahweh and avert punishment. There was communal celebration after atonement efficacy. Sometimes the punishment for the sins of the individual was placed upon the individual alone; but sometimes the punishment for the sin of an individual would visit the community as a whole, for they understood their corporate identity. Only Yahweh decided the extent to which corporate punishment was to be applied.

The Israelites now were able to worship Yahweh in the way that he prescribed. Certainly, their liturgical system was not yet fully developed at this stage, but it provided a possibility for corporate worship. Their social self-consciousness was enhanced by the corporate-ness of their worship. Their young men could become involved for their strength; the people were involved in their communal promise to Yahweh, so creating both insipient priesthood, and later, a formal one.

The totality of the people experienced the Presence as they "saw" and "heard" God. Their worship allowed them an enthusiastic response to the holy God. Together the people presented themselves to God, and in that togetherness expressed their social self-consciousness.

Their corporate formal agreement to the terms of the Covenant was both a pledge to God and to each other among themselves that they would keep its terms. The

whole congregation accepted all the words of Yahweh. Together they submitted to the covenant ritual, regarding themselves as a corporate party opposite the other party, Yahweh, to this covenant. They and Yahweh are bound by the blood of the covenant to each other. God identified with them, and they identified with him. From then onward every worship service was to be a covenant renewal service. Every worship service was an anticipation of revelation and Presence as a covenant benefit.

Yahweh made provision for their generations to come, so as to perpetuate togetherness in the community. The very tabernacle whose blueprint was provided would become the center among the community because it was going to be the symbol of Yahweh's presence with his people. While a specific place for worship is important, a specific geographic locale is not; the Tabernacle was portable (Fretheim 1991:274). God is on the move, and so are his people, moving where He moves. The Presence was going to move from the top of the mountain to the tent in the midst of the people. The people will be united and sanctified by the Presence among them. This will be a beneficent and stabilizing Presence. The people will be identified by the Presence, so being a unique people among the nations. Their uniqueness will come not only by their possession, but also by their profession and practical holiness. Yahweh will be God to them, and will dwell among them. They will know that he is God, and they will make him known among the nations. This is the self-understanding and self-consciousness of the people of the Presence.

Politically, Israel saw themselves as a theocracy. Yes, a hierarchical structure of leadership also operated within this political setting, but Yahweh was their king and they his subjects. Yahweh is a beneficent king and they are the recipients of his kindness and faithfulness. They have committed themselves to be obedient subjects to their king. In their covenant relationship with the king, they understood that they too had covenant obligations, and promised Yahweh with united enthusiasm to obey his Law and to keep his covenant. Their socio-political self-consciousness recognized that they were a people united under the kingship of Yahweh.

It is safe to assume that Israel's community loyalty will already have been established in Egypt. They were connected by the certain solidarity that they were fellow-slaves. Community loyalty was challenged more and more by the redemption and covenant experiences they have had. There was now a loyalty to Yahweh that was expected; seen by the terms of the first commandment. There was a loyalty to the Covenant (which in fact was a loyalty to Yahweh) as this is what they promised to keep. They understood that a solely community loyalty was modified to include a loyalty in matters of faith. Community loyalty is, and must always be, subordinated to their loyalty to Yahweh. The Presence convinced them that their loyalty to Yahweh was in any case beneficial for the community. Later they would ask for the Presence as this is what characterized their new identity.

We conclude that the people of Israel saw themselves as a community united in their relationship with the suzerain, in this case Yahweh, with whom they are in a covenant made at Sinai. They saw themselves as a united community pledged to corporate obedience to Yahweh. In this regard Breuggemann aptly reminds us that the verb *obey* ("really listen") insists that biblical faith focuses on ethical reality (1994:837). Corporate obedience requires individual obedience too.

The people pledged themselves to resist any profanation of life that dismisses their relationship with Yahweh and with one another. They saw themselves as a holy nation united under Yahweh, and their holiness is perpetually derived from their covenant relationship with him. Their conduct of holy obedience to Yahweh is also based upon the stabilizing gifts of Presence and Law. Their covenant relationship with Yahweh is guaranteed to include future generations, providing a perpetual order of fidelity and renewal to and of the covenant. Their self-consciousness as a united people will serve them well when they face the hostile nations in the land they have inherited.

Principles:

Firstly, societal self-consciousness that recognizes the integrity of social institutions brings about social unity.

Secondly, social self-consciousness is enhanced by corporate-ness.

Thirdly, Presence enhances our community self-understanding and self-consciousness.

4B. Proposing a Socio-ethical Understanding within an Evangelical Ecclesiology Using the Socio-ethical Integration and Principles Derived from the Exodus Redemption Presence Narratives.

We have shown that as the Old Testament people of God, Israel's faith and theology can be imitated by the Church as the New Testament people of God. Theology and ethics are inseparable in the Bible. You cannot explain why and how the Israelites lived as they did until you see why and how they believed what they did (Wright 2004:17). The Old Testament Scriptures are also the Scriptures of the Christian Church, and therefore Israel's theology will for the most also be the Church's theology. If this is so, then the socio-ethical integration and principles for living which Israel applied as a community are principles that may also be applied in the Church. Obviously, the conditions between then and now are very different; therefore theology must be seen as having timeless principles. These timeless principles are what we may apply as the Church.

Our proposal will therefore find its basis in our theological observations from the Exodus redemption and Presence texts. There our findings were categorized under the headings *Revelation, Redemption* and *Relationship.* Here we shall use the categories **God** (*Theological*), **Man** (*Social/ Political*) and **World** (*Economic* – as it is applied from land). Each of our present headings will be integrated with the three categories of Revelation, Redemption and Relationship. Overlap and repetition are sometimes unavoidable. Moreover, moving from the general to specific, we shall

apply the principles enumerated from Israel's socio-ethical integration in the previous section under 4A above in a contemporary Evangelical Church context.

The critical questions posed in the area of social ethics are best articulated by Carl F. H. Henry (1964:15), and which must be considered here:

> The Christian task force is divided today about the best method for improving social conditions. The problem may be stated this way: In seeking a better social order, to what extent shall we rely on *law* and to what extent on *grace*? How much shall we trust *legislation* and how much shall we trust *regeneration* to change the social setting? What should we expect the *state* to contribute, what should we expect the *church* to contribute, if we are seeking a society ruled by justice and love?

In our endeavor to consider these important questions, we must understand that the answers will be colored by what we presuppose as a method of social change. The methods available to bring about social change are *revolution*, *reformation* and *regeneration*. Regeneration as a method seeks to change the status quo. Evangelism and the dynamic of supernatural regeneration and sanctification in the individual have mostly been neglected as a method of seeking a better social order. The purpose of redemption is to bind man's will afresh to the purpose of the Creator. Reformation seeks to bring gradual but pervasive ethical amendment through democratic pressures. Revolution seeks a radical change through overthrow by compulsion and/or violence.

Evangelical Christians do not consider revolution as an option for social change. They set the social problem in the larger theological framework of divine revelation and redemption (Henry 1964:20). The Church derives her social message from divinely revealed principles. Man as the image of God is the highest motivation for social action and evangelism. Social action, on the one hand, must be congruent with our biblical worldview. Evangelism, on the other hand, is the basic method to bring about regeneration. Our aim is to establish model communities. Our opinion is that we must accept that while we can establish many model micro-communities in the Church through regeneration, we need reformation structures to affect society more broadly, and we must allow for a broader society that is largely secular in nature.

Holiness and love are the underlying principles for Old Testament ethics; concepts that must be applied to the Church because these have also become New Testament imperatives. Bruckner (2003:226) is correct in asserting that the term *holiness* has no content apart from its missional context (Ex.19:5-6). God's people were to be a blessing to all nations. The laws which underpinned holiness for Israel were always introduced with the statement of redemption: *I am the Yahweh who brought you out of the land of Egypt.* Our mission of redemptive action is also underpinned by this understanding; in providing a blessing to the world. Holy practices represented a contrast to the social practices in Egypt and Canaan back then, and today in the world at large. The desire to provide blessings is redemptive, and therefore an expression of love. As Christians we are to receive and to give love; or more inclusively stated, to receive and to give redemptive actions. Redemptive actions are also creative actions.

We must believe that society can change. Narrative discloses this reality and has the power to transform a community. The exodus narrative has the story of redemption that can transform the reader, and was used as a motivation in later Scripture to encourage social transformation through redemption. Fretheim (1996:230) puts it this way: "This move from slavery to worship … is also about change for God." If change happened in the past, then it can happen in the future too. In this regard, Bruckner (2003:231) says that communities of faith become and remain ethical in the hope that God's salvation is always possible. Narrative was thus an ongoing motivation for social action and change.

The Church's own narrative, together with the biblical narrative, also serves as motivation for continued social action and change. We have a great history of social involvement (Schwambach 2008:123-125). Evangelical humanitarian effort in history, though spearheaded by evangelicals, came with the cooperation of the government. Examples are: the abolition of slavery, prison reform, Factories Acts for humane working conditions, child protection, against the cruelty to animals, education, healthcare, legislation, democracy, human dignity, private ownership, and many more can be demonstrated. Evangelicalism must, therefore, not have an

ahistorical thinking. In our history we have also made many mistakes, and must be willing to learn from them. Our history is filled with social success stories.

Yet, on the other hand in many contexts Evangelicals have had an apathetic attitude towards oppressive governments, often based on the understanding that church and state must be separated. The role of government is justice (law) and the role of the church is love (redemption). The Church must nevertheless inform justice. Justice has a preservative role, while redemption has a restorative role (Henry 1964:154). This separation, however, should not confuse righteousness and grace; or dilute justice with love. While we hold to the principle of freedom of conscience and choice, we are of the belief that Government needs the input of the Church and that the Church needs the cooperation of Government. There must be cooperation between Church and State to bring about social change.

i)   Social Ethics as it Relates to God – Theological.

In the Old Testament ethics is fundamentally theological. Ethical issues are related to God as Creator and as Redeemer. The creation depicts his intentions and his redemptive acts depict his desire to be in relationship with fallen man. Fallen man has turned away from the divine creation intentions. Redemption is therefore the act of bringing back the creation intentions. The creation intention tells us who we are; we are created in the image of God for a relationship with him. The Exodus narratives bring out these aspects of redemption, creation and relationship when God revealed himself. Divine revelation is the basis for ethics; humans are not ethically autonomous, but they are ultimately accountable to God for he has created them (Wright 2004:32). Evangelical Christians subscribe to these tenets.

On the level of *revelation*; the revelation of God is a light to guide every member of God's community. Social ideals are always considerate of the nature of God (Henry 1964:146). His revelation demonstrates that he has acted and that he is continuously active among his people. Israel did not just emerge, but God called them for a purpose. The Church too has a teleological dimension to their calling as

God's people. God's holiness is thoroughly practical in its generosity, justice, integrity and considerateness, and can be emulated in order to meet that purpose. We too must be generous, just, unimpaired and considerate. God shows no partiality and he takes no bribes. He defends the cause of the weak and marginalized. We too must do just that.

The ethical teaching of Exodus is thoroughly theo-centric; it presupposes God's initiative in grace, redemption and law in Israel's history. God chose the historical route, and revealed himself as Yahweh, the Covenant-keeping God; and thereby, involved fallible humanity in the context of creation, redemption and witness. The historical route for Evangelicals includes the revelation of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit in the life and witness of the Church. The historical route includes the cultural, and thus, societal dimensions. Israel and the Church's role is that of servant community; as having to be witnesses to the world of the Creator and Redeemer who is present with them. We are redeemed with an explicit redemptive purpose. God's long term goal with us was, in fact, his creative and redemptive intentionality.

Theology provides the impetus for ethics. God is not only served in the sacral realm but also in the social realm. Principally, faith in God is good for community stability and confidence. Faith finds its object in God. Faith is neither one-sided nor passive. Faith acts in religious and in socio-ethical ways. Faith recognizes that those things revealed about God can be imitated. Allegiance to God expresses itself in religious and socio-ethical ways. God's goodness can be expressed through his people, who are able to uphold God's creation and redemption intentions. Any anti-creation intention always opens one to inevitable judgment because creation will eventually turn against him.

Presence must be our departure point because Presence tilts towards justice. Dialogue with the Presence is an awesome enterprise in the process of the community's holiness. Holiness is ethical in content. Presence enhances our community self-understanding and self-consciousness. His presence among his people was to demonstrate that everybody was provided for by the Creator. His

action on their behalf was based on his love. He is patient, forgiving and faithful. He is compassionate, gracious and generous. That he is all these things to us is worth more than anything else. The presence of God in the midst of his people is more important than the gift of land. Without that Presence we cannot move towards the land. The worth of human life is infinitely above anything else because we have been made in his image.

Finally, revelation has to include the Scriptures too. Evangelicals have a high view of the Scriptures. The Bible has the transformative power for the practical lives of believers and the believing community. The Scriptures are a continuing resource for Christian ethos and ethics. Mouton (1997:249) correctly understands the Evangelical attitude; that an ethical reading of the Bible calls for continuous imaginative, Spirit-filled, critical and faithful reflection on the active presence and will of God in ever changing times and circumstances. Similarly, Lategan (1994:132) admits that the authority and transformative power of the Bible resides in the continuing encounter with the God mediated and stimulated by these texts. Its use as a resource for Christian ethos and ethics is a moral choice. The Scriptures have much to say about social-justice.

On the level of *redemption*: God's redeeming power was also an act of righteousness and calls forth a response of righteousness. We cannot undermine divine wrath, because it will subvert the concept of divine grace (Henry 1964:147). Having experienced justice, God's people too must show justice. God's people must demand justice. God is righteous as sovereign king and as supreme judge. We are ultimately accountable to our king and judge. He is the Creator of all, and all creation is accountable to him; the cosmic order and the social order. Creation is a powerful motivation for ethical interaction. In a monotheistic context man is accountable to God for the whole of his life. Accountability brings about ethical behavior. That is why we must live in acknowledgement of God. That acknowledgement cannot merely be cognitive; it must be relationally intimate and personal through revelation and redemption.

God is against anti-creation and anti-redemption forces. Whether those are active forces of oppression and exploitation or passive forces that do not propagate life and wholesome relationships, God sets himself against injustice. Maybe we cannot speak about an overthrow such as we saw in Exodus, but we can speak of a God who will let justice prevail – ultimately at the Judgment.

To what extent, then, must the Church emulate God? Mothlabi (1999:93-95) correctly advises that the Church needs to be the prophetic voice in larger society, as it is adequately informed in the areas of theology, ethics and social discourse. It must understand the universal principles and moral issues arising out of the context in order to speak against injustices from an informed position. It must utilize every one of its expressions; its preaching, its writings and publications, its representations, and even in peaceful awareness campaigns. Schwambach (2008:132) exhorts against passive skepticism and encourages active responsibility. They must endeavor to be involved in every sphere of society – political, religious, social and economic. More importantly though, is its positive actions in upholding justice and practicing egalitarian and humanitarian tenets. This must be visible, chiefly, in the way the Church conducts itself within its own communities. The Church must be in a position to propose solutions to social problems. In short, theological ethics, which is the Church's forte, is an imperative for social ethics. More so, because the Church is a new creation in Christ, its members must be able to first apply among themselves the very ethical proposals they make to society.

Preaching against social ills, must not be taken as preaching "political" sermons. We cannot agree that extra-parliamentary protests had no place in a Christian society, or that a Christian must accept everything that government is saying and doing. Conscientious objection must always be an option for a believer. This writer's own denomination boasts the courage of one such a young man during the days of apartheid when military conscription was compulsory for white males. Peter Moll (*The Cape Times*, 05 December 1979) quoted the Baptist Confession of 1646 when he objected to being conscripted in the apartheid regime's forces:

> It is the magistrate's duty to tender the liberty of men's consciences, without which all other liberties would not be worth naming. Neither can we forebear the doing of that, which our understandings and consciences bind us to do. And if the magistrate should require us to do otherwise, we are to yield our persons in a passive way to their power. But if any man shall impose on us anything that we see not commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ, we should rather die a thousand deaths, than to do anything against the light of our consciences.

In this regard, Frederick Hale (1992:77) cites Ellis Andre as saying: The Church's mandate extends beyond the preaching of the Gospel of personal salvation (seen in spiritual terms only) and includes temporal affairs such as justice and morality in society. It must also find social reconstruction programmes to support and participate in. A good example is the United Nations' Millennial Development Goals. They doubtlessly fit our redemptive programme, and we are able to enhance it with the power of the Gospel.

As Evangelicals our ethical intercourse has mainly been *deontological* in its approach. It is prescriptive and imitative, finding biblical rules and imitative fields for personal and social conduct in a literalistic way (Hale 2000:5-6). That is good and well for God's people, who should make the Scriptures the authoritative basis of their intercourse. If, however, we want to propose socio-ethical solutions to society at large, we must think of creative ways to apply the Scriptures more broadly to derive those solutions. We believe that ethics from narrative has the ability to be so applied; whether we consider consequences (*teleological ethics*) or the tenet of love in *situation ethics* in our ethical consideration. In practice, we may have to apply more than one approach, using biblical principles to provide answers. While the Bible does not offer a detailed blueprint, it is an important normative framework (Sider 2008:113). If we start with a normative framework derived from biblical revelation, then our socio-political agenda must reflect biblical balance.

If de Villiers' (1999:76) postulate is correct, then the Church needs to be involved in all four modes of moral discourse. 1. The prophetic mode, where a form of moral accusation and, possibly, condemnation is made and a utopian vision is provided. 2. The narrative mode, where narrative is used to shape the problem, providing a theological, educational and philosophical solution. The stories of suffering and the

stories of role models can certainly be found in the biblical narrative, as we have done in this dissertation from the Book of Exodus. 3. The ethical mode, where argumentation and analysis clarifies the concepts for informed solutions. 4. The policy mode is brought about by the people of position and power; the Church must be at the forefront of informing these influential people. It must, however, never be forgotten that the Church's chief task to the larger society is evangelism. Revelation and redemption are the best foundational principles to create God-pleasing, and, therefore also, beneficial relationships.

Being the *salt and light* of the earth has the same outcome as Israel's injunction in Exodus 19:5-6. Our witness should reach all people; churches, congregations, societies and nations. Our witness is evangelistic and ethical in nature. As Schwambach (2008:118) puts it, Christians are both *witnesses* and *instruments* of the Triune God acting in the world and acting to redeem. He reminds us (pp.134-135) that Evangelical social goals must be social justice; preservation of life and creation; human rights; dignity and welfare of all people; human development; political and religious freedom; order in society; peace and cooperation for good. The categories of Revelation, Redemption and Relationship should form an important framework to this end. Sider (2008:107) is adamant that we should not forget our political involvement for both practical and theological reasons. We must aspire to become ethically relevant on a global scale too, and therefore we must have global unity in terms of our ethical imperative. We need to cooperate in practical tasks, promoting common views on ethical questions.

William Wilberforce's example is one that demonstrates the effect the Christian voice can have in political spheres. John White (2008:166ff) recounts some of the important things he achieved in the name of Christianity. Wilberforce, himself having been influenced by the testimony of the former slave-trader, John Newton, had the conviction and calling to bring an end to slavery. Inspired by Newton to remain a member of parliament after his conversion in 1786, Wilberforce dedicated his political service to Jesus Christ, and had as his objectives the suppression of slavery and the reformation of manners in society. His kind of Christianity was convincing. Instead of speaking as judge, he spoke as convict. Being a compelling

speaker, he reminded many parliamentarians of their responsibility towards God, and persuaded them to vote in the name of principle for laws against slavery, drunkenness and blasphemy. Evangelicals can continue to have such an influence with such a demeanor.

There must be international Evangelical socio-ethical consensus and cooperation. Global consensus on political ethics could give tremendous power to our Christian witness and contribution to questions of international political ethics. We need leaders with a divine call to dialogue at international level; able to hear what our brothers and sisters from other countries are saying with respect to their political situation, and able to express a joint intra-evangelical statement that can serve as a guideline for a Christian ethical response in socio-political matters (Schwambach 2008:121). The political responsibility of the Church is too often articulated in criticism of the government; we need to be more positive by suggesting and providing solutions more often.

On the *relational* level, Henry (1964:151) correctly states: While God is Lord both of this world and the church; he rules the world and the church in different ways. Christ is not related to the world as Head of the Body; he rules the world by Law, and the church by Gospel. Obedience to God also implies obedience to others who are perpetuating his will. The environment for the law and obedience is redemption. The community can accept God's lordship through revelation and negotiation. God decides to redeem and we decide to "obey his voice". By this we are not saying that theocracy is the only acceptable form of government. Yes, it is the best, but God also blessed other forms of human government (Rom.13:1-7). We agree with Schwambach (2008:133) that the Church must submit to both the theocratic government and the instituted civil government, where the only civil disobedience is practiced *ultimo ratio* (Acts 4:19).

The relationship of the Church to God must be seen in the context of worship too. In Christian worship, we experience specific kinds of community, and we participate in specific kinds of practices (Smit 1997:262). Furthermore, holiness joins liturgy and justice – service of God has a bearing on the whole life of the

congregation and therefore includes service to each other and the world. De Gruchy (1986:105-106) correctly warns against false piety in worship:

> The life and worship of churches, and the preaching of pastors, is often determined in practice much more by popular demands than by biblical and theological integrity. If the Church becomes a haven of refuge from responsibility in the world, if sermons are geared to massage the spiritual ego and sanction self-interest, if the liturgy whether traditional or contemporary becomes a mechanism of escape rather than the worship of God as Lord, and priest, preacher, and people somehow combine or conspire to make it so, then false piety not only flourishes, it becomes the norm.

Therefore, the congregation must proclaim God's redemption to humankind in both spiritual and practical ways, and its endeavor to do so is nothing less than the worship of him. They must practice what they preach – faith and action cannot be separated (Kretzschmar 1997:312). They do so by his power in the context of his presence with them.

ii).   Social Ethics as it Relates to Man – Social / Political.

Revelation comes to man in various ways. God takes the initiative to reveal himself to man. He did so at Sinai and as he led the people of Israel. Revelation comes through creation, history, the Scriptures and ultimately in Jesus Christ. These are the expressions of *general* revelation and *special* revelation in Evangelical theology (Warfield 1959:74). Man can utilize these various expressions of revelation in their ethical discourse. We have been fortunate that God's revelation was also enscripturated.

For the Church the chief resource for ethical formulation and decision-making resides in their authoritative Scriptures, the Bible. In Thiessen's (1994:43) words, the Bible is the supreme source of Christian theology. The Bible is the Word of God; it is the Word of God in a derivative sense; through the processes of collection, copying and translation. The Bible must be understood as the only authoritative source for theological ethics.

Because the Bible is authoritative to Evangelical believers, they believe that both their private and their communal life must be regulated by principles from the Bible. Such are essentially ethical in nature. The Bible is the rule of our faith and practice; it is the dependable and inspired Word of God (Erickson 1983:221ff). It is the expression of God's will to us, and it possesses the right supremely to define what we are to believe and how we are to conduct ourselves. By the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, the Bible has a transformative power for the practical lives of believers and the believing community (Mouton 1997:249). This transformative power has an ethical outworking. We must dare to make ethical proposals from the Bible both for ourselves and for society at large.

The indwelling Holy Spirit and the biblical imperative of Christ-likeness finds its expression in ethical ways. The Presence has an ethical outworking which emulates God's character. For Evangelicals God's character is embodied in Christ-likeness, which is also the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22f). So, while we cannot speak about a theophanic presence where we audibly hear God speaking as in the Exodus narrative, we can speak about God speaking in the Bible by his Holy Spirit to bring about the image of Christ to, in and through us. God speaks to us and in his speaking acts in a Trinitarian way.

The preaching of God's Word is the activity that enjoins godly and obedient living. Its effect on preacher and audience is profound. Fred Craddock (1991:24) says that because the preacher is expected to be a person of faith, passion and authority (faith makes him believable, passion makes him persuasive, and authority creates the right to speak), he can be expected to have a profound effect on his listeners. John Piper (2004:84) comments that God-preaching has the ability to stir up "holy affections" – things like hate for sin, delight in God, desire for holiness, and tender compassion. It aims at transforming the spring of behavior. We cannot agree more with Robinson that ultimately God is more interested in developing messengers than messages, and since the Holy Spirit confronts men primarily through the Bible, a preacher must learn to listen to God before he speaks for God (1991:26). The hearers of the Word through preaching are changed by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word. That change is ultimately behavioral, and affects

both personal ethics and social ethics. Preaching, therefore, on a personal level creates the "desire for holiness", and on a social level creates "tender compassion". De Gruchy's (1997:332) statement here is profound:

> Thus faithfulness to the gospel means an ongoing commitment to the struggle for the just transformation of society. It is the task of the church to keep that hope alive through its participation in the mission of God to make all things new.

"Divine speech" for the Evangelical believer therefore comes through the testimony of the Scriptures, the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the preaching of the Word. In this way we think of Presence.

Redemption is fundamentally a re-creating activity. We follow Fretheim (1991a:354) when he says that Exodus is to be understood in the light of Genesis and redemption and law in the light of creation. He continues to say that given the anti-creational forces incarnate Egypt and the Pharaoh, no simple local or historical victory will do; God's victory must be in scope (1991a:357). The liberated nation began as an oppressed ethnic minority within a very powerful imperial state. Because Yahweh is king and not Pharaoh, Israel's deliverance was made possible. The Egyptians violated the right of the Israelites, and the Israelites were never to act in the same way the Egyptians did. They were to identify with the suffering through empathetic and redemptive activities. They were not only bearers of redemption, but they were to be the model of what a redeemed community should be like (Wright 2004:62). The Church, living in obedience to God's will in their social structure, aspirations, principles and policies, model a redeemed community. Like Israel, we are to live in holiness and justice before God and man.

We have to act with prudence. When we strive towards redemption, we know that grace must have a purpose beyond itself. That purpose has to do with identity. The identity of the redeemed community must also become the identity of a transformed community. Transformation is ongoing, developing the new creation into sanctification and confidence in order to perpetuate the redemptive-development cycle (Mouton 1997:250). The redeemed community must develop a prophetic stance against anti-creation attitudes, and thereby enhance the value and appreciation of renewal and redemption. People must become open to

welcome and propagate life-supporting measures, and they must become resistant to life-threatening ones. The redeemed community must be committed to an egalitarian and humanitarian agenda.

Old Testament ethics is a social affair. Even though it is often addressed to the individual, he is part of the community. Individual righteousness is aimed at the moral and spiritual health of the whole community (Wright 2004:57). Ethics must seek the greatest good for the greatest number. It must be aimed at maintaining social harmony and providing solutions to social problems (Mothlabi 1999:97). Decision-making was ultimately vested in the community.

On the *relationship* level, the Church is a redeemed community and has redeeming aims. Both their redemption and their redemption activity are centered in the Gospel. The Gospel is that which is able to save (Rom.1:16) and that which is able to transform (Phil.1:27). With this as the chief message of the Church, they are able to create a community of high moral standards, and so be an example to other communities. Their inroads to other communities must be motivated by their willingness to make the Gospel known; and because they are saved for good works (Eph.2:10), they must be socially active in accordance with what God intended for humanity (Snodgrass 1996:120-121). Their social responsibility and action must be defined by their understanding of Scripture. How will they interact socially?

Firstly, they must start with themselves and present themselves in a becoming and exemplary way. Gathered from our principles above, every community must be made up of people who have a sense of belonging. This will encourage community loyalty, and in turn, community harmony. Bacchiocchi (2007: online) supports this belief when he says: "Experience teaches that a person who does not belong to anyone or anything is in most cases unmotivated, rebellious, alienated and bitter toward all and everything. On the other hand, it is in a relationship of mutual belonging that a person experiences love, identity and security…." They will more easily agree on their shared beliefs, values and norms, so creating cohesion and solidarity. Sam Ndoga (2010b:n.p) pointedly suggests that our churches need to

move from mere multi-culturalism to inter-culturalism. By this he means cohesion and solidarity. Cohesion and solidarity cannot be achieved without the hearts of individuals willing to break down barriers created along cultural lines. We must be united as the community of Christ. Jackson (2005:14) comments:

> South African congregations need to change in order to overcome our historical differences. The church often claims to have solutions for the nation. This is widely acknowledged as being the prophetic role that the church of Jesus Christ is called upon to play in a godless society. If that is the case, then the onus is on the church to demonstrate those solutions in such a way that the nation will come to the church to look for answers.

This kind of community will more easily organize itself, so allowing social hierarchical structures which facilitate social order, social justice and social unity. Societal self-consciousness that recognizes the integrity of social institutions brings about social unity. Equality and hierarchy can co-exist where it is based on role rather than class. Egalitarian aims must guard against building class and power structures.

An important aspect in the redemption story was the understanding of family. The Passover meal was to be celebrated in the family and in the nation of families. It also had the imperative to be commemorated from generation to generation forever. Families are to pass on the knowledge of God so that this global family would become a godly family (Moynach 1995:373). There was family and community loyalty. These are the foundational values for community. Healthy communities come from healthy families. Healthy families are families that are functional because the next generation has been trained by the present one, equipping them with life skills and more (Augsburger 1995:375). The family is the first place of education and training. The Church must be foremost in upholding functional and godly family perspectives and values. Fathers, mothers and children must fill their rightful place and role in the family. Dysfunctional families make for dysfunctional communities and societies. It is true that redemption in Exodus started with the family. The United Nations' MD Goals 3, 4 and 5 are covered here (http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/global.shtml).

Community should never stifle individuality, and un-stifled individualism should never be allowed to stand in the way of community. Social consciousness and social self-consciousness is strengthened by corporate-ness rather than by individualism. In fact, individualism is more likely to lead to divisiveness, and consequently to social disorder. It will always be difficult to maintain the tension between personal and corporate. Revelation and redemption goes a long way to alleviate this inherent tension. Relationship, too, makes a valuable contribution in the areas of corporate identity and goals.

Leadership in a hierarchical structure inevitably has socio-ethical implications. Leaders must identify with their people. They must understand who their people are, and where they come from; what their aspirations are, and what stands in the way of them reaching their potential as God's people. They must be able to see the big picture and continually motivate their people towards fulfillment. Recognizing their personal limitations, and yet not allowing their inadequacies to paralyze their calling, leaders must show readiness for the tasks of re-creation and judgment. They must always be willing to surrender their concerns of personal autonomy and of self-preservation for the sake of the people and community fulfillment.

Secondly, de Villiers (1999:81) perceptively asks: Are we to impose the Christian way upon the world? No, we cannot and should not, even though we know that it is good for them. All must be allowed the freedom of conscience and belief; this indeed is a fundamental Evangelical belief. We cannot deny non-Christians their rights. The supernatural Creator has established a transcendent truth and objective justice. The non-Christians must, however, be made aware of their accountability to God. The Christian community which recognizes and accepts that accountability needs to be a model, and therefore the conscience of the world, motivating them to heed the divine imperatives. They must be exposed to the Gospel of God's love and redemption through Christ.

Thirdly, the Church must function in society taking into account the cultural context and the socio-political agenda of the Government. It is within that context that we must find relevance that is also God-honoring. Richardson is correct in admitting

that the interaction of Christianity and African culture (for instance) has been and continues to be dramatic. New and sometimes unexpected forms of church life and liturgy, and theological insights have emerged and gained (1997:373). The Church must be willing to engage in ethical discussion in the interest of having a Christian identity of unity without necessarily discarding one's cultural identity. Where some cultural things clash with the faith, there must be a willingness to negotiate the issues honestly without breaching our understanding of the Word of God.

Fourthly, the Church has made significant contributions to the development of democratic theory and praxis. This contribution must be seen as an ongoing process, as democracy finds new applications all the time. There must be a relationship between democracy and ecclesiology. The Church is to be the voice in society which must see that the democratic vision is kept in line with the prophetic vision and in which society can know the reality of God's *shalom* (de Gruchy 1997:323). They must therefore counter the sins of racism and any form of injustice, teaching and demonstrating an alternative way through a redemptive social reconstruction. That would mean that the Church cannot sidestep a socialist agenda in its praxis and egalitarian quest. Yet, whatever the Church has to give must invite free-will acceptance.

Fifthly, the Church must be part of the religio-ethical debates and discussions in society. While Evangelicalism is in agreement that the state should not give preference to any one religion, it must represent those who want religion in the public place. Kinghorn and Kotze (1997:406) in their survey have discovered that there is, for instance, a sizeable majority in South Africa, even among the non-religious, who want religious instruction as part of the school curricula. Yes, we say no preferential treatment, but also no exclusion. The advantages will manifest itself in ethical expression. We must tell Pharaoh (the government) that we want to "go and worship" freely, as this is the beginning of the redemptive purpose. The problem is that often the Church cannot adequately present its case, because they are not united, not interested, or not equipped to present our argument.

Therefore the Evangelical Church needs to have a united view on social ethical theory and so be able to make godly proposals for solutions to social problems. We must realize that voices make a difference, and a voice speaking God's heart for the world will make a phenomenal difference (Corbett 2009:18). We must expose people to the issues and solutions from an early age. We must develop young Christians with a heart for social justice wherever they are. We must help them live ethically. Corbett continues to say that in the consumerist context, living ethically is simply about living with an awareness of the social and environmental costs of our lifestyle (p.16). The point is that the Church must serve as an awareness-raising instrument in socio-ethical matters.

Sixthly, according to Sider (2008:107) the Church needs to answer the complex social questions by encouraging a lot of thinking in areas such as the role of the state, the nature of human freedom, and the purpose and limitation of laws, in order to enter the sophisticated discussions with a biblically grounded and informed political philosophy. In Schwambach's (2008:127) words, politics is a legitimate subject of general ethics and of Christian ethics, because politics works to form public life on levels of governments, churches, schools, universities, trade unions, etc.

The Evangelical church, therefore, needs to get involved through social and political cooperation in modes prophetic and policy. We can become involved in the government's new programme of social reconstruction by proposing solutions that are biblically grounded. De Villiers reminds us that the task of "liberating" South Africa is unfinished (1999:82). Mothlabi's comment is valuable, when he says that government's chief motivation to establish its social programme must come through the teaching of social ethics (1999:99). The Church can partner with government in that very endeavor.

We can become involved in the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/global.shtml). These goals align to some extent with our creative/redemptive goals given in the Lausanne Covenant. In September 2000 the UN defined its eight development goals for 2015 as follows:

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;

2. To achieve universal primary education;

3. To promote gender equality and empower women;

4. To reduce child mortality;

5. To improve maternal health;

6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;

7. To ensure environmental sustainability;

8. To develop a global partnership for development.

A summit in New York to happen on 20-22 September 2010 will encourage stake-holders to accelerate progress towards these goals. Eminent Church leaders can become involved in the MDG Advocacy Group promoting the implementation of the goals.

Finally, as the Church we must seriously make volunteerism a mode of social action. There are so many areas where we can be involved and to make ourselves and our testimony visible in society. Our visibility is aimed at setting an example in the community; whether doing mundane things such as organizing drives to pick up litter, having feeding schemes, helping at under-resourced government hospitals and schools, doing relief work at old-age homes and orphanages, helping out at special welfare institutions, and creating own social projects or helping in other projects. Certainly, as Evangelicals we must always use whatever opportunity of involvement to share the Gospel of Christ's redemption with the lost.

We thus summarize that the Church's socio-political involvement must be as broadly expressed as possible. They need to be an exemplary community and thus attracting others to emulate their ways. As a community they are welcoming, egalitarian, in harmony, pro-actively involved, and having members that are loyal to its tenets and identity, operating within the framework of biblical love. They must fulfill a teaching role in society; teaching the will of God in society, promoting freedom of conscience, teaching the ideas of democracy, teaching ethical (personal, religious, social and political) ideas, and teaching organizational skills for social cooperation and projects. This enhances the United Nations' MDG number 2, but we must propagate the aim that all children are provided with at least a

primary education (http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml). In doing all these things, our agenda must always be to raise Christian awareness in the areas of *revelation*, *redemption* and *relationship*.

iii).   Social Ethics as it Relates to World (Land) – Economic.

Creation and redemption have an economic dimension. If that is so, then already we have an economic construct that includes *revelation* and *redemption*. Actually, the line between revelation and redemption in economic discussion is blurred. The divine statement, "the whole earth is mine" (Ex.19:5) immediately connects the discussion on economics to God. God's ownership of everything makes our activities that utilize the resources of God's earth, accountable to him. Our use of what he has given us cannot be haphazard and without any concern for his creation and redemption intentions. Under the concept of revelation, we must answer the question about the scope of God's creation and redemption intentions. Walter Kaiser (1990:415) sees God's first intention as that of blessing; particularly of his people.

The exodus, Israel's *redemption*, was liberation for economic independence (Wright 2004:156). What awakened God's concern was Israel's outcry under economic oppression and injustice. This was contrary to God's intention of blessing his people, and making them a blessing to the nations too. Besides the Covenant promises made to them, economic oppression was perhaps the key motivation for Israel's redemption. Economic exploitation through forced labor caused God to respond. Redemption is God's justice in action.

It is true that the line between *redemption* and *relationship* is also blurred. Exploitation and oppression from either point of view was unacceptable. The intrinsic value of humans, who are of greater value than things, disallows exploitative and oppressive practices. Every human has the right to be free, but that freedom is always limited by the vision of community. Exploiting workers and degrading working conditions cannot go unpunished. The first MDG seeks to achieve decent work for all so that workers may not be forced into vulnerable

employment (http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/poverty.shtml). Exploitation and oppression are supported by the unethical spirit of superiority, domination, ruthlessness and greed. Every person was worthy of fair remuneration and working conditions. There must be a rhythm between work and rest for all living creatures involved in work. Egalitarian and humanitarian principles must always be upheld in the places of economic activity.

God's answer to Israel's lack of self-determination, geographic sovereignty, a paralyzing victim-mentality, and bondage-structure could only be found in Presence (revelation) and redemption. Here they found the source to become productive, resourceful and empowered; the source of justice on the one hand, and of the Promised Land on the other. Revelation and redemption were the answers, providing the freedoms of self-determination, geographic sovereignty because God gives land, and productive empowerment.

The land that was promised Israel would be a divine gift and it would have divine ownership. He was going to give them a land of plenty as we see in the superlative expression, "milk and honey". The very leading of God in the pillar was first to himself (at Sinai), and then on to the land he has promised. They had land because the Lord had given it to them. The Lord could give it to them because, as Creator, the whole earth was his, and it is his to give. Man was given dominion over the land, and man, a creature above all others, has the God-given task to rule creation well. The presence of God in their midst was a gift greater than the gift of land, and was that which enabled him to execute this God-given task.

The gift of land and the God-given task to rule it well, gave shared access to its natural resources, thereby creating work, growth, trade and prosperity, sharing in its productive capabilities and wealth. Negatively applied, conflict over resources could bring corruption in work, uncontrolled growth and unfair distribution of wealth. Community economic well-being must be sought over individual economic well-being. The well-being of the individual is vested in the well-being of the community.

In an agrarian society, land was a necessity for economic subsistence in which the family of mainly parents and children provided the labor to work the land and keep the animals (Matthews & Benjamin 1993:37). The two economic resources were land and children. Both, land ownership and children were seen as a blessing from Yahweh. The labor of every worker was the property of the household (Matthews & Benjamin 1993:12). While this is okay for subsistence farming, there must be a place for small scale and commercial farming. Commercial farming and small scale farming must be encouraged for ongoing food security, as well as for creating jobs in a rural environment.

In an industrialized and technological context skills must be acquired in order to have that needed individual and family subsistence at least. The means to do so is generally through education and training. Education and training must be provided on four levels, namely, family, self, community and government. The first sphere of influence is always the family, but there has to be a willingness displayed by the individual to learn. Fathers must teach their sons skills and a good attitude to work; and mothers their daughters. Community and society at large create the "market" and the institutions of learning, thereby opening to the individual the economic role he/she is to play in society. Besides being the prophetic voice to the family, individual, society and government in economic matters, the Church community can play an important role in the training of people, especially in the areas of entrepreneurship, leadership and integrity. The Government must create a system that encourages the just use and distribution of resources and entrepreneurship.

Within this context, the Church can become instrumental in facilitating what is called social-entrepreneurship (SAfm, *AM-live* talk show of 27/8/2010). That is creating labor cooperatives, where especially unskilled and disabled people are empowered. Small and medium enterprises (SME's) are important job creators. Some of the skilled church members can provide training in the areas of social-entrepreneurship and SME development. In fact some churches are even able to provide the capital for social-entrepreneurial enterprise for their unemployed members.

We would be remiss if we did not speak about capitalism as an economic system. There are two types of capitalism according to Pope John Paul II.[119] Firstly, there is an economic system that recognizes the role of business, the market, private property and the responsibility of production and human creativity. Secondly, there is the freedom in the economic sector, not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework and religious social ethical framework. The second one can be dangerous and anti-democratic in character, and unless non-market institutions and mechanisms are put in place, the open global society that prevails at present is likely to prove a temporary but disastrous phenomenon (Litonjua 1999:224). The Church, as a non-market institution, can certainly be a prophetic voice in this regard, urging companies to implement the *triple-bottom-line* of financial-social-environment profit. The triple-bottom-line is an ethical way for corporations of looking at their bottom lines, and the Church can urge Government to legislate it or to enforce hefty fines on companies who do not comply. Every project will require proper social and environmental impact studies. We cannot go on exploiting resources without understanding the mechanisms of renewal.

Let's explain a little. What does global capitalism do? Finance capital thrives on debt and speculation. Fortunes are made and lost in financial markets without reference to productive activity. There is global competitiveness and the large corporate companies are going where they find the highest profits and the cheapest labor. Capital has triumphed and labor has been betrayed. Greider (1998:78) reckons that governments have become subservient to the demands of global corporations, because national economic performance has become the ultimate legitimating of governance. He continues to say that the most democratic country, United States of America, is now "a democracy for hire". It is held captive by money and the ideas that money can buy. These global corporations have no loyalty to their laborers, their customers, and their countries, except the almighty bottom line. We must insist on accountability here.

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[119] Sited by Litonjua (1999:128)

While it was thought that democracy and capitalism were compatible in that it seeks the freedom of the individual, it is indeed incompatible because democracy also seeks equality of individuals. We can only hope that capitalism will not subvert the democratic foundation of equality. At least there is now a re-thinking of capitalism since the global financial meltdown of 2009/2010. In our recovering, the world has to think more carefully about encouraging a more equitable form of wealth distribution. It is beginning to think more seriously about the ecological, social and religious foundations of the life system on planet earth. Blankenhorn (1995:83) has noticed that the market has affected religious traditions and communities – the church may reconfigure itself and its values into something of a knockoff of the culture industries, and by embracing the advertizing and marketing strategies of hyping the gospel. This kind of capitalism only exploits the poor, and the Church must help create awareness which guards against such exploitation.

That every family should have enough was demonstrated by the preparations for the Passover in the Exodus narrative. Social stability starts with the family. God saw the importance of family in his redemptive activity. Wright (2004:341) makes an important observation from Exodus; redemption was from genocidal intrusion; the family covenant sign happened in the circumcision of boys on the eighth day; the Passover was a family ritual in perpetual remembrance; the consecration of every firstborn was a generational aspect; and the Decalogue speaks about parental authority, sexual integrity and social viability. The family was the ethical teaching substrate for the community. Kinship and family structure is a key factor in preventing and/or alleviating poverty. The church as an extended family must play a similar role.

Global capitalism is not the main villain in Africa, but corruption and greedy misappropriation of resources by African leaders, warlords and politicians. Africa has been blessed with almost inexhaustible resources. David Lamb's list counting Africa's blessings is cited by Ayittey (1999:5-6):

> … a continent with immense and untapped mineral wealth, Africa has 40% of the world's potential hydro-electric power supply; the bulk of the world's diamonds and chromium; 30% of the uranium in the non-communist world; 50% of the world's gold; 90% of its cobalt; 50% of its phosphates; 40% of its

platinum; 7.5% of its coal; 8% of its known petroleum reserves; 12% of its natural gas; 3% of its iron-ore; and millions upon millions of acres of untilled land….

Yet, now we have increasing and unprecedented poverty in Africa. Scores of people in sub-Saharan Africa live on less that one dollar a day. More than 15000 Africans die daily of preventable diseases (Sachs 2005:xvi). One still wonders whether we will reach the UN Millennium Goals for Africa to reduce poverty to half by 2015. Why? It is because of political dysfunction and greed. The Church needs to continue finding ways to be the moral voice in our African society.

Colonialism has robbed us of much of these resources in the past. So has a lack of skills to beneficiate or add value left us to sell our raw materials, just to have to buy it back in the form of products that cost so much more. But now, having recognized our need to add value to our raw materials, Adadevoh (2006:53) reminds that God calls African Christians to do their part in producing what they consume; and even to export. We must harness and encourage both formal and informal sectors to achieve this. The Church is in a good position to "spread the word" of adding value through the innovative and creative use of our labor. We must do as Sachs exhorts; to encourage our people to break out of that dependency syndrome and to take responsible action (2005:20). Africans must develop a "production mindset" (Ndoga 2010a).

There is to be a healthy view of work in the community of God. The Israelites were intent on serving Pharaoh well, but he was intent on exploiting them. Ndoga (2010a:4) in his insightful paper, "The Promotion of a Production Mindset Towards Poverty Reduction in Africa" shows that combining the spiritual transformation ideology, mediated by the Church's redemption message, and a production mindset according to the Scriptures, poverty can be reduced in Africa. A good work ethic can be inculcated over time. There, the community and the Church can work in partnership to promote a good work ethic. Christianity must always motivate and teach their members to work hard and to work smart – "as unto the Lord".

In South Africa, our main problem is to address the economic imbalances. We have been liberated politically, but not economically. Transformation in the South African economy is a challenge to all of us, and the Church must consider themselves party to meeting this challenge. Nürmberger (1999a:125-147) encourages the Church to develop an economic vision which is able to provide direction in our particular challenge. He enumerates aspects that are to be part of this vision, namely; *ecological sustainability* through environmentally friendly and renewable ways, a *healthy livelihood* for all through the availability of food, clothing and housing, *equitable distribution* where nobody should suffer want, concern for the weak and vulnerable where we care for the disabled, aged and orphaned, and the disciplined lives of all. This would also be in line with the United Nations' MD Goal 7 (http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/environ.shtml). We have to reflect on what it is we really want – quick fixes and fleeting thrills, or the self discipline and hard work necessary to lay the long term foundations of equity and quality of life for all and for coming generations. We must build a common loyalty, a common set of values and a common will, in order to stand up against the anti-creation forces of ruthless advertisers, the drug culture, the crime syndicates, the great cartels, etc. Churches, political parties and educational institutions must combine to inculcate wide horizons, inter-generational responsibility and a more sustainable value system. The Church must use its considerable moral authority. They must become the redemptive community in South Africa by engaging and reflecting; actions and teaching.

The Israelites were expected to work for six days and keep the Sabbath on the seventh day. Work must be fair in reward and in rest. Work must not degrade man to being a mere machine or a number. Christians are to serve God and neighbor. Bacchiocchi (2007: online) connects the Sabbath and redemption: "The believer who on the Sabbath stops his *doing* to experience his *being* saved by divine grace renounces human efforts to work out his own salvation and acknowledges his belonging to God, the author and finisher of salvation". The Sabbath is not an object or a place accessible only to a few, but a time available to all. Sabbath is a commitment to non-exploitation. Sabbath is a leveling mechanism. Here we are

particularly mindful of the United Nations' Millennial Development Goal number 8 (http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/global.shtml).

We ought to be diligent and do what we do "as unto the Lord" (Col.3:17). Work is a calling for the Christian; wherever he works, even in a secular context, he is in the service of God. Therefore the believer recognizes the dignity of work; not as an unfortunate alternative to leisure, or simply as a necessity for subsistence or acquisition. We have been given the privilege being co-creators through work. Good work ethic motivates social responsibility because it prevents poverty.

Poverty was a community concern. The preventable causes of poverty were the community's business. Laziness, corruption, excess and exploitation must be fought. Koptak (2003:188) argues that laziness is a failure of love; work was a means to provide for self and loved ones, the loafer wanted to be carried. The lazy person was not a burden-bearer; he was not in community. Corruption is worse because it causes poverty in others; it is gain by dishonesty and exploitation combined. Excess is born of greed for material things and pleasure, being void of prudence and consideration. Exploitation is a form of oppression for economic gain. All these lack love. The Church needs to teach about the nature of true love.

Poverty from natural causes should only be temporary; but if it persists, the community and society at large must take responsibility by aiding the destitute. The exodus was a prototypical event in removing the poor from a system of oppression. Those who must take action are not necessarily those responsible for the problem, but they are responsible under God. Judicial equity is also a key factor in preventing poverty. Ultimately, God will come against us who are careless about the poor, for the poor so easily become invisible and inaudible to us.

The Church, as the people of God, must be and act in ways that represent God. They must set the example of a people who are attached to a holy God. Indicatively and imperatively their response to God must reflect love and integrity, both among themselves and to the world. God is love (1Jn. 4:16) and therefore because we have received his revelation, aught to relate to God and to others in

love. God is altogether righteous (Ps. 7:11) and therefore we must be righteous in all our ways and relationships. If, on the horizontal plane, we live in love and righteousness, our socio-ethical expression will be God-pleasing and worthy of his self-revelation to us. Our socio-ethical expression will strive for the equality, dignity and freedom of humanity in our religious, social, economic and political outlook, and our eco-ethical expression will strive for prudent stewardship. The programmes and institutions we as the Church promote and support, must also promote and support the principles of equity, dignity, freedom, prudence, stewardship and integrity.

CONCLUSION

God is ontologically *omni-present*, yet he is spoken of as being present or even being absent. The presence and the absence of God are relational concepts. His presence generally shows his favor and is for the benefit of his people; and his absence indicates his disfavor. But sometimes his presence was for judgment. The people of God are his people precisely because he is favorably disposed towards them. God's presence with his people bestows upon them a special position in relation to him, and a blessed future for them.

God is Spirit, and his presence is not limited to visible forms. Many times God's presence is simply indicated by divine speech. God's presence is symbolized in different ways, and some of these symbolisms are expressed in forms. We have seen that God chose at times to reveal himself through theophanies, and these appearances related to humans in different ways. Finally, God revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The Word, who is God, revealed himself in the flesh full of glory and truth (Jn.1:14). For the Christian, Christ dwells with us and within us by his Spirit and through him we have access to the Father (Eph.1:18).

The presence of God is redemptive. Israel was redeemed by the present God, Yahweh; and the Christian has been redeemed by the present God, the Lord Jesus. As Evangelicals we believe that they are one and the same person, and the method of redemption is metaphorically equated in the New Testament. Those in Christ, however, have an inward power to live an obedient life. The Christian is empowered by the Holy Spirit and a new creation; two inseparable concepts that give us our identity. While Israel was redeemed as a nation, we are a redeemed people who are individually united in the Church of Jesus Christ; and in our local assemblies we are to maintain and reflect our unity by being a community. As Israel was a nation *for* the nations, so the Church is a community of witnesses to God's righteousness and rule for the nations. The Church must therefore live and lead by example. They are an ethical community fostering ethical interaction between humans and God, humans and other humans, and humans and creation.

Humans are to relate to God as Creator and as Redeemer, because they are accountable to him according to his creation and redemption (or re-creation) principles. Accountability is meaningful only in an ethical context. Man relates to God by acts of obedience to his creation and redemption intentionality. The chief duty of the Church is to make known the available person, purpose and power of God.

God's loving expression is his availability for a relationship with man. His self-revelation and gifts are for our benefit. His creation and creative intentions are for our benefit. His redemption and redemptive intentions are for our benefit. While his gifts are free, he will hold each one of us accountable for what he has made available for us. More so, we are accountable for the imperative to perpetuate God's creation and redemption intentions. If they are expressions of love and intended to benefit, then they are ethical in nature. Our response to God and to creation at large must therefore also be ethical in nature.

Our concern in this dissertation is to realize the socio-ethical significance of the Presence in redemption for the people of God, and in particular for the Evangelical Church. Having explored the Exodus texts from a *synchronic* approach, and from a

canonical perspective, we have used the final canonical Exodus-narrative of Presence through socio-rhetorical and theological reflection to derive socio-ethical principles for our contemporary application. These principles are applied in specific contemporary contexts and questions in order to posit ethical social proposals, social responsibility, and social action.

We were able to see how our Exodus pericopes were employed in the biblical Old and New Testaments. Their use in the Psalms, Prophets and New Testament reflected an authoritative theological interpretation of these Exodus texts for Evangelicals, merely because they are in the Bible. These Scriptural theological interpretations were a warrant for us to seek a theological interpretation of the canonical texts as the platform for socio-ethical interaction. Because we are so far removed temporarily, socio-ethical transfer from then to now was by no means cut-and-dried. Only through theological reflection are we able to derive socio-ethical principles for contemporary application, at least within an Evangelical Ecclesiology. If we are able to do this, we are able also to extend such application in broader contexts; certainly with some limitations because the broader contexts do not have the empowering Presence as do believers.

Presence was applied theologically under the categories *revelation*, *redemption* and *relationship*. We were able to show how the categories of revelation, redemption and relationship related God and his people in ways that gave them a special identity as a community that must respond in a special and particular way to God and within itself. The people had to be monotheistic. Their response had monotheistic ethical implications and social implications.

Presence was also applied socially under the categories derived naturally from the Exodus narrative:

11. Israel's Self-Consciousness as a Community.
12. Yahweh's Presence and the Community's Redemption.
13. Yahweh's Agent in the Redemption of the Community.
14. Counter Forces to the Creation of the Redeemed Community.
15. Covenant and Redemption Undergirds Social Identity.

16. The Socio-ethical Response of the Redeemed Community.
17. Redemption as Social Dialogue.
18. Covenant as Societal Establishment.
19. Covenant and Societal Conflict.
20. Covenant and Societal Self-conscientiousness.

These categories were discussed under the same sub-categories, namely, *revelation*, *redemption* and *relationship*. We were able to derive socio-ethical principles in this way; principles which could be applied in an Evangelical ecclesiology.

Indeed, the Church was the best social context in which these principles could be applied, and within that context we were able to derive socio-ethical proposals. The Church is posited as a multiplicity of microcosmic communities, all related to God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We were able to make social proposals for the kind of social responsibilities and actions required within the church community. These socio-ethical proposals must emanate from the social vision of the Church, which is theological and eschatological in nature.

We are of the belief that the Church, as an eschatological community, must serve as an example and vision for society at large, recognizing that society at large also has a different and more complex make-up, and that socio-ethical transfer of Christian principles is not simplistically cut-and-dried. We have to find creative ways to translate the biblical imperative in a contemporary social context. This, we have concluded is only possible because we were able to apply it from and in a narratological context. We could however not simply use the same categories of revelation, redemption and relationship in a socio-ethical application.

Ethics in general and social ethics in particular needed to be considered according to categories that were naturally attached to ethical discourse. But these categories were also to be integrated with the theological categories in such a way that does not strain the ethical discourse. Surprisingly, the ethical categories of *God* (theological), *man* (social/political) and *land* (economic) easily lent itself to be discussed with the sub-categories of revelation, redemption and relationship. In

fact, while it was fairly easy to do so under the *theological* and *social/political* categories, it was not so easy to distinguish the sub-categories for discussion under *economy*. We were forced to blur the lines between revelation and redemption on the one hand, and between redemption and relationship on the other.

We could obviously not make proposals dealing with every socio-ethical issue. This was not our intention. We were, however, able to provide a socio-ethical vision for the Church, and thus, to a limited extent, for society at large. Because of our socio-ethical vision, it has become necessary for us to sketch the Church as an eschatological people which is a blessing to the world by its functioning in particular roles; as example (salt and light), evangelist, prophetic voice, teacher, agent, facilitator, negotiator, and partner.

As example the Church is meant to be a pattern for society. Yes, we know that this is the ideal, but here is a community living in unity, yet having and encouraging diversity. Here we have a community who lives by the principles of peace and justice; they are able to do so by the power of the Holy Spirit maintaining the unity in the bond of peace (Eph.4:8). Here is a community who has equity and recognizes that leaders and all are ultimately accountable to God. This community knows how to care for their own members and for others who are destitute because they understand the value of humanity. Here is a community that understands how to function as a body where the "least" functional role has as much value as the member who has an "important" role. Here we have an eschatological community who lives with a future perspective to individual and community existence. We can mention more points of example, but a Church who founds its indicative and imperative values upon the biblical text, can be a blessed pattern to society.

As evangelist, the Church alone has the message of redemption, and it needs to share it with society. The values of creation can only be revived in a redemptive context. It is more important for the Church to be such a voice that brings about a new creation, first in the individual and then in the community. The most important

function of the Church in the world is to evangelize them. They are first and foremost witnesses of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The best way for society to change is through regeneration. Our first priority is to extend the Kingdom of God through the message of Jesus Christ and then through our godly influence.

As prophetic voice, the Church must make known God's will and ways. It is mainly a voice that speaks to issues of social justice, responsibility and reconstruction. Aspects of oppression, exploitation and other injustices must be condemned, and proposals for redress, reparations and reconstruction must be made. The Church is in a position to make proposals for egalitarian and humanitarian principles in religious, social, political and economic spheres. The Church must be a voice for the poor and marginalized in society. They must be the voice for the voiceless. The Church must entrench democratic values and be the voice that calls for integrity and accountability.

As teacher, the Church is quite influential in society. Their first place of teaching must be on a theological plane. Theological awareness encourages moral and ethical awareness. Specific socio-ethical awareness can become an important educating sphere for the Church. Together with its family and church-community accomplishments, the Church is an important source of proven knowledge and experience in community. They can teach democratic principles. They can teach inter-personal relations. In short, they can teach on a whole range of issues that encourages good relationship, both vertically and horizontally. The Church can even expand their teaching influence to include skills training for life improvement. The Church can train leaders of integrity.

As agent, the Church can act in society on behalf of Government, business and other organizations who have projects that aim at Christian-likeminded outcomes. Conversely, they can also act as agent for the people and community interests. They can act as volunteers for these organizations. The Church can do welfare activities expressing the social concern of these other organizations, where they use these activities to reach out evangelistically. The Church can mobilize volunteers for community upliftment activities; a current example is healthcare and

education volunteers during industrial action in those sectors. The Church must be the redemptive agent in society.

As facilitators, the Church facilitates important co-operations; with Government, business and other organizations. The Church must facilitate truth and reconciliation. The Church can facilitate socio-ethical debates. The Church can facilitate social and cultural forums. They can facilitate community projects, providing human resources, venues, and the like. They can facilitate socio-ethical policy-making and awareness workshops. The Church can facilitate economic pro-active projects. They can facilitate individual, community and social prosperity and well-being. We can facilitate prudent stewardship of our resources. They can facilitate ecological and environmental awareness campaigns. To this end the Church must preach and act.

As negotiators and partners, the Church can act on behalf of the poor and the marginalized. The Church need not chose between the rich and the poor, because it and society need them both and both need the Church. The rich and the poor are to act according to the tenets of love and justice. The Church can help inculcate these tenets, and to teach tenets of good work-ethic. Brotherhood where love and goodness are central must be fostered in and by the Church. The Church must be a redeemed people with redemptive aims; all for the glory of their redeeming God.

We conclude by aligning ourselves with the universal Evangelical consensus in the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 and its statements on Christian Social Responsibility (statement 5), Education and Leadership (statement 11) and Freedom and Persecution (statement 13), which is better stated in full:

> We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all people. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although

reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.   (Statement 5)

We confess that we have sometimes pursued church growth at the expense of church depth, and divorced evangelism from Christian nurture. We also acknowledge that some of our missions have been too slow to equip and encourage national leaders to assume their rightful responsibilities. Yet we are committed to indigenous principles, and long that every church will have national leaders who manifest a Christian style of leadership in terms not of domination but of service. We recognize that there is a great need to improve theological education, especially for church leaders. In every nation and culture there should be an effective training programme for pastors and laity in doctrine, discipleship, evangelism, nurture and service. Such training programmes should not rely on any stereotyped methodology but should be developed by creative local initiatives according to biblical standards.   (Statement 11)

It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace, justice and liberty in which the Church may obey God, serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and preach the gospel without interference. We therefore pray for the leaders of nations and call upon them to guarantee freedom of thought and conscience, and freedom to practice and propagate religion in accordance with the will of God and as set forth in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We also express our deep concern for all who have been unjustly imprisoned, and especially for those who are suffering for their testimony to the Lord Jesus. We promise to pray and work for their freedom. At the same time we refuse to be intimidated by their fate. God helping us, we too will seek to stand against injustice and to remain faithful to the gospel, whatever the cost. We do not forget the warnings of Jesus that persecution is inevitable. (Statement 13)

(http://www.lausanne.org/covenant)