READING THE BOOK OF HOSEA IN SERVICE OF LIFE: A PARADIGM FOR THE PROPHETIC CHURCH FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA

BY

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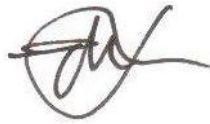Pietermaritzburg Campus: The School of Religion and Theology

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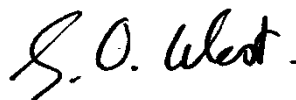
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2011

DECLARATION

As required by University regulations, I hereby state unambiguously that this work has not been presented at any other University or any other institution of higher learning other than the University of KwaZulu-Natal, (Pietermaritzburg Campus) and that, unless specifically indicated to the contrary within the text, it is my original work.

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ABSTRACT

When the liberative paradigm of the Bible is given a privileged position in the South African context, then it can function as a tool from which the prophetic church can glean resources. The heart of this thesis, therefore, endeavours to provide a biblical resource for the church in South Africa whose prophetic vision has become dormant in a context where socioeconomic dilemmas are structurally based. This resource is created from the prophetic book of Hosea which has traditionally been treated in isolation from any socioeconomic issues. However, this dominant interpretation of the book of Hosea has been challenged in recent scholarship with favourable results, especially in combination with interdisciplinary approaches. The theoretical framework of Vital Theology has therefore been employed with its interdisciplinary approach, and integrated with a biblical methodology. Focusing on the marriage-harlotry metaphor of Hosea, this thesis demonstrate that a socio-historical and literary reading of the metaphor can provide the church with a prophetic vision to address socioeconomic dilemmas in South Africa, fifteen years after democracy.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS   Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

ANC   African National Congress

BCE   Before Common Era

COSATU   Congress of South African Trade Unions

GEAR   Growth Employment And Redistribution

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

HB   Hebrew Bible

HIV   Human Immunodeficiency Virus

IMF   International Monetary Fund

NDR   National Democratic Revolution

NEDLAC   National Economic Development and Labour Council

NEF   National Economic Forum

NEM   National Economic Model

OT   Old Testament

RDP   Reconstruction and Development Programme

SACC   South African Council of Churches

SACP   South African Communist Party

SORAT   School of Religion and Theology

Stats SA   Statistics South Africa

STD   Strategy and Tactics Document

UKZN   University of KwaZulu Natal

WB   World Bank

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CHAPTER 1

THE FUNDAMENTAL PARADIGM

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The Bible is a contested document and has, in its contact with the African continent, represented a sight of struggle (*cf.* West 2007b:1). In South Africa it reached the apex of its contentiousness with its use by some theologians for the theological justification of the apartheid regime (*cf.* Mofokeng cited in West 2007b:1). But the same text which "was sacralised to justify so much pain, violence, dehumanization and subsequently severe polarization between people in the name of God" (Abrahams 1997:36), has as a "fundamental paradigm", according to Draper (cited in West 2007:252), "God's *liberative* design for [humanity]" (his emphasis). Many African biblical scholars have tapped into this resource and appropriated the liberative design to bring hope to communities, shattered through the governance of oppressive regimes and biblical interpretations which have justified these injustices (*cf.* Mofokeng cited in West 2007b:2). Appropriating this liberative design is what so many biblical scholars have attempted in their search to provide resources for healing and collaboration on the African continent.

Although the Bible was usurped by unjust regimes, Christians in Africa still hold to the inherent value of the Bible. For them "the Bible is a sacred text with the potential for transforming praxis" (Draper cited in West 2007:252). The notion of the Bible's worth is corroborated by Gottwald and Meyers (cited in West 1996b:252) for whom the "biblical sources are a resource for present communities in continuity with the biblical tradition." Its significance is further confirmed by West (2007b) in South Africa with reference to former president Thabo Mbeki's appropriation of the Bible in the public sphere, which is, according to Mofokeng (cited in West 2007b), "the silo of the masses."

The explicit focus of this thesis is to seek continuity with this "silo of the masses" by providing a biblical resource for the church in a context where its prophetic vision is on the decline. The search will be part of an endeavour to reaffirm the place of the Bible in the public sphere as a prophetic tool to bring about God's vision of a just society and its inherent value for issues of life and wellbeing within the private sphere. This endeavour aims to holistically address socioeconomic issues which are having dire effects on the majority of South Africans. Implicitly,

my study seek to establish continuity with prophetic voices[1] of the past, so prominent during the apartheid era, in an effort to preserve them as custodians of the liberation which has been gained through the blood of so many martyrs in our country.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The demise of apartheid, prompted by a concerted effort of both ecumenical and revolutionary movements in South Africa, brought newly found hope to millions of people who had been systematically displaced and deprived of human dignity and adequate resources to live and flourish in the country of their birth (de Gruchy & de Gruchy 2005).[2] This euphoric moment however, was not adequate in itself to promote reconciliation, narrow the great gulf which existed between the different racial groups, secure the livelihoods of the poor, and cancel the effects of the violent protests and civil disobedience that had been part of the apartheid generation's life. Neither did this moment prepare the new government and the churches for the global world into which democratic South Africa was thrust and expected to participate as an elusive equal partner (*cf.* de Gruchy & de Gruchy 2005:224, 255). Consequently, South African society has been on a decline since the democratic elections and it has the worst inequality and crime rates recorded in the world.

It is in this context that the prophetic vision of the church should read the signs of the times and expose the fundamental factors that contribute to people's dire situations. Concurrently, the church, whose central message is the gospel of life, could employ the Bible's liberative paradigm

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[1] The most incisive theological moment in the history of theology in South Africa is the formulation of the *Kairos Document* (West 2007b:4) drawn up by theologians from different Christian orientations. This document identified three different types of theologies in operation in the apartheid era. These were "State Theology, Church Theology, and Prophetic Theology" (West 2007b:4). The document advocated a Prophetic Theology to call the unjust structure of apartheid unequivocally to the justice of God (West 2007b:4). For our purposes here it would be valuable to briefly expound on the two main theologies which are evident in South Africa presently, with reference to its position in apartheid. From the three mentioned above, the latter two are respectively summarized by West (2007b:4) as follows: ",Church Theology' is in a limited, guarded and cautious way critical of apartheid. ,Its criticism, however, is superficial and counterproductive because instead of engaging in an in depth analysis of the signs of our times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation' (Theologians 1986:9). *The Kairos Document* advocates a ,Prophetic Theology', a theology which ,speaks to the particular circumstances of this crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but is clearly and unambiguously taking a stand' (theologians 1986:18). See Theologians (1986) and West (2007b).

[2] For a comprehensive study on the participation of the church in South Africa, particularly the English speaking churches who brought about the demise of apartheid, see Van der Water (1998) and de Gruchy & de Gruchy (2005).

in order to make a valuable contribution to the emancipation of the majority of South Africans from forces which deny them life.[3] Therefore, in pursuit of biblical motifs that speak of life in relation to life-denying situations, socially engaged biblical scholars seek "lines of connection" between their contexts and the contexts of biblical traditions (West 1996b:253; 2006; *cf.* Brueggemann 2001:xii). However, caution should be exercised in making facile direct applications because the Bible "is not a blueprint, but a paradigm" (Draper cited in West 2007:251). The paradigm which the Bible provides through the book of Hosea for the South African context will be discussed with the aim of suggesting the biblical resources needed by the church.

However, like the Bible's position in South Africa today, the book of Hosea has, until recently, been seen as a comment on the religious observance of eighth century BCE Israelite society, addressing predominantly moral and ethical issues in isolation of the political economy of its day. But the tide is changing with regard to this dominant interpretive paradigm as will be demonstrated in this thesis, providing a legitimate access point for the establishment of a biblical resource addressing socioeconomic issues in South Africa. Demonstrating this connection will achieve two things in the context of this research: firstly, juxtaposing the context of South Africa and the setting of Hosea's message to view the similarities in close proximity; secondly establishing an intersection between the two contexts in order to facilitate dialogue. The South African milieu possesses rich traditions which have facilitated their liberation in the past, but these traditions need to be adjusted to provide a new prophetic vision and the book of Hosea provides such a vision for, unlike his contemporaries, Hosea's literary style elicits a creativity for which there is no precedent.

It is in this regard that this research will show that a socio-historical and literary understanding of Hosea's prophetic utterances within his particular context can provide the church with a new prophetic vision aiding an endeavour to address the socioeconomic forces which impinge on the lives of the majority. While many lines of connection exist in the Bible that relate to the South African context, this study will focus on the book of Hosea with reference to his contemporaries.

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[3] Structural mechanisms which contribute to the poverty and the destitution of the poor and marginalised is seen in this thesis as life-denying situations in which the poor and marginalised have no say in either their wellbeing or the death dealing situations which are forced on them.

1.3   RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

Recent research on the biblical book of Hosea reveals the current trend which connects the prophecy to socioeconomic and political situations within their specific contexts (Keefe 1995; Yee 2001, 2003; Chaney 2004; Kelle 2005), in contrast to the earlier, dominantly religious reading of the book.[4] However, none of these studies has applied the prophecy to a contemporary context. The doctoral thesis of Nsiku's (2002) on the book of Hosea appropriates his findings for the sub-Saharan part of Africa since 1960. However, he focuses on religious and political issues. The time frame and context are also too broad in relation to the research which this thesis is proposing. In this regard not enough scholarly attention has been paid to the question how a prophetic book like Hosea can be used as a biblical resource for the church in its approach to the declining socioeconomic situation in democratic South Africa. Therefore, the research problem is to explore to what extent a socio-historical and literary understanding of Hosea's prophetic utterances in his context can provide the church with a new prophetic vision of how to deal with the socioeconomic forces that affect the lives of the majority.

In order to probe this key question, three objectives need to be established. These objectives will be met by asking four sub-questions. The objectives will therefore be combined with the appropriate questions that will inform this study. They are:

➢   To establish lines of connection between the text of Hosea and the South African context.

   a)   What are the conditions which indicate a socioeconomic problem in the South African context and the biblical context of the book of Hosea?

   b)   What are the areas of conjunction and disjunction between the contexts of Hosea's message and South Africa?

➢   To investigate the message Hosea had for his audience.

   c)   What is the meaning of the text of Hosea in its socio-historical context?

➢   To reinterpret the message of Hosea for the South African context.

   d)   How can we re-use the message of Hosea as a resource for the South African setting?

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[4] These different readings will be more comprehensively treated in chapter 3.

1.4   PRINCIPAL RESEARCH THEORY

The theoretical framework for the research is provided by Vital Theology.[5] This framework emanates from a proposal in an unpublished paper by de Gruchy (2009) where he attempts to scrutinize the Christian theological work done in the School of Religion and Theology (SORAT) at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN). The proposed framework is predominantly informed by the work of the first generation of liberation theologians, particularly the work of Boff and Boff, (1987), *Introducing Liberation Theology*.

The first generation of liberation theologians in South Africa did apply the work of Latin American liberation theologians to the letter. Whilst this model was sufficient in apartheid South Africa, it needs to be adjusted to accommodate the actual liberation as achieved from the apartheid system. It is in this context that de Gruchy proposes a theology in service of life. "And, because there is so much that denies life, Vital Theology is by definition an emancipatory theology – yet one that is concerned not just with initial freedoms, but also with ongoing livelihoods, sustainability and inter-generational relationships" (de Gruchy 2009:4). This is the crucial factor of the theoretical framework, suggested by de Gruchy, and attractive for any study that takes into account the necessity to sustain liberation.

The framework entails an interdisciplinary approach with a socio-analytical mediation as an "indispensible stage" (Boff & Boff 1987:25), integral to any scientific and pragmatic understanding of a social context. De Gruchy (2009) adopts the four phase structure of Liberation Theology but adjusts the content to serve the purposive end, life, towards which Vital Theology is working. The four phase structure will be expounded and integrated to fit the research which I am proposing to do in this thesis. I am mindful as well of the fact that this theoretical framework is structured for the discipline of theology and does not take the complicated methods of biblical scholarship into consideration. I will therefore integrate de Gruchy's framework with West's (1996b) work in order to accommodate biblical research.

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[5] Vital Theology is the proper name for the theological framework of Steve de Gruchy (2009). For the definition, see below.

1.4.1 Phase One: Preliminary Stage

The first phase of Vital Theology is "pre-academic" and focuses on the faith commitment of the researcher. This phase is also considered as the "point of insertion" into the issue to be investigated. De Gruchy (2009:7) suggests that the researcher "starts with faith … engaging critically to seek understanding" and that this faith commitment "does not constitute any part of the research" (de Gruchy 2009:6). However, I would disagree with de Gruchy on this point.   The reflection opening this section – that the faith commitment "has brought [the researcher] to this point, and constitutes a good deal of the motivation for tackling the topic" (de Gruchy 2009:6) – neglects the fact that this motivation also constitutes part of the research and of hermeneutical moves to be made. While we as researchers might attempt to be objective, objectivity is never part of the end result. Therefore, instead of being the elusive objective interpreter, I will follow Black Theologians' (cited in West 2006:312) and West's (2007) example and rather be overt about my "ideo-theological orientation" and though it might not constitute my entire reading I am "partially constituted" by a particular orientation (West 2000). West (2007) suggests that our "ideo-theological orientation" links our current context to the text or any other matter that has to be interpreted.   Hence, I would see my faith commitment as part of some engine in the background that informs my thesis to some extent. Another element, that constitutes part of my reading, can be found in the third phase of de Gruchy's framework of Vital Theology. But before I elaborate on this phase I will introduce the second phase of the framework.

1.4.2 Phase Two: Social-analytical Mediation

The central concern of this section is engagement with the social sciences. Also in this section, the theological student or biblical scholar steps out of her primary field of knowledge and, while this acknowledgment intimates an immediate limitation, the engagement is necessary in order to be socially relevant. At this stage it is crucial to keep in mind that this study, being predominantly a biblical endeavour, will analyse both a contemporary context and an ancient text and, by implication, the eighth century BCE context of Hosea's message. Juxtaposing the two contexts therefore, using Vital Theology, will demonstrate that they are sufficiently compatible to go into dialogue with each other. Here the appropriate social scientific methods need to be selected that match the end toward which a researcher is working. Therefore, analysing these contexts, de Gruchy (2009:8) highlights five important principles to follow, when theological or

biblical researchers engage with the social sciences. Firstly, scepticism or discernment are crucial in this phase. The researcher should apply a hermeneutic of suspicion when engaging with any data. Secondly, arguments must be substantiated through existing data or appropriate and ethical empirical data. It is in this regard that, even for a theological researcher, nothing should be sacrosanct and everything should be subject to scrutiny and be validated through reasonable evidence. Thirdly, the claims that are being made should be rational and verifiable. Fourthly, analyses should be plausible and follow a logical order. And finally, these four points will be brought together to form an adequate description of the issue to be investigated. Only when this step is adequately analyzed can theological work begin, which results in the third step of our framework.

1.4.3 Phase Three: Hermeneutical Mediation

In this section the theological reflection starts. De Gruchy (2009:9) suggests that investigators should use a specific theological tradition, being mindful that there is no monolithic tradition. Concentration on a "clearly defined, logical and coherent theological tradition or perspective" (de Gruchy 2009:10) is necessary. A hermeneutical mediation which speaks to the issue of life is therefore selected. For a biblical scholar, the tradition, suitable for the creation of a resource for the church to advocate life is the prophetic tradition. This tradition is pertinent to the facilitation of socioeconomic equality with its themes of egalitarianism and the eradication of poverty. In this regard the message of Hosea provides an adequate resource for the church to address issues analyzed in phase two. But the movement between these two phases is not linear but dialectical in nature and the service of life provides a mediating link between the two.

1.4.4 Phase Four: Practical Mediation

This section is our academic hands-on approach. In this phase a range of strategies for action are prescribed (de Gruchy 2009:11). However, these strategies should be grounded in the work that has already been done and therefore reflect reasonable suggestions for church implementation. De Gruchy (2009:12) posits that it is in the interaction between social scientific analysis and theological reflection where faith is put into action. It is in this particular area that, in my study, contextual dialogue will take place. Here suggestions to the church will be made resulting from constant dialogue between my socio-analytical mediation of both contexts and the message of

Hosea. It is in this dialogue that an appropriate resource will be constructed for a new prophetic vision in South Africa capable of addressing the current socioeconomic inequalities.

The limitation of this theoretical framework is that it is in its embryonic stage; however, most of the research which de Gruchy has done is informed by this framework and it serves as an important resource for my research to draw on. Besides, in the array of theoretical frameworks to choose from, Vital Theology best suits the purpose of my research because it derives from the contemporary conditions in a democratic South Africa and it consolidates the advances which were made by the liberation theologians in apartheid South Africa. It also facilitates a trans-generational theological vision, relevant to the signs of the times. It will therefore serve as the theoretical framework upon which this research will be based.

1.5   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is important from the onset to note that research methodology is in this thesis defined as a generic term which includes all the theories and methods employed within a particular discipline as analytical tools. Vital Theology will guide us in the choice of tools appropriate to the research, keeping in mind that this study would necessarily be multipronged. Therefore, both social-scientific and theological research methodologies will be employed.

In view of the fact that socially engaged biblical scholars work with ancient texts and current contexts, analyses will be aimed towards the establishment of lines that connect the two in order to locate parts of the biblical tradition that can be employed as a resource within the present South African context. The South African context will be analysed with the help of socio-scientific tools including social and economic theory, together with philosophical and statistical analyses. Reconstructing the ancient Israelite contexts of Hosea will be predicated on the theory of metaphor, making use of existing socio-historical reconstructions and a political-economic reading.

The message of Hosea will be interpreted using contemporary literary reading strategies which endeavour to contribute positively to a community's struggles, as opposed to the historical-critical approach. This thesis will therefore approach the text of Hosea as sacred literature, which is a witness to the religious and cultural beliefs of an ancient people and not as a document recounting precise historical data. It is in this regard that an array of literary methods, ranging

from inter-textual and narrative to poetical analyses, will be used, in addition to the theory of metaphor already applied to the context of Hosea's message. The strength of a literary approach is that it is concerned with the final document which is the document that the leaders of the church use to engage theologically with their congregations and to make pronouncements in the public sphere. In addition, this approach does not ignore other approaches which will be useful in our reconstruction of the historical context of Hosea's message. The underside though, is that such a diverse spectrum of methods might produce isolated analyses, but, because of the multi-dimensional nature of the text of Hosea, I think that such an approach is an advantage rather than a limitation.

Many other research methodologies and tools exist within biblical scholarship. However, the analytical tools listed above best suit the current research in its stipulated theoretical framework and will therefore serve as the fundamental paradigm for this thesis.

1.6   STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

The research design, predicated on Vital Theology as a theoretical framework, consists of six chapters. It is vital to point out from the beginning that the chapters of this thesis will not follow the different stages of the theoretical framework to the letter, because of the predominant biblical elements contained in it, but nonetheless the overarching logic will be maintained. The first chapter introduced the research focus and paradigm. Chapters two and three inform our socio-analytical mediation, the second stage of our theoretical framework. Chapter two describes the context of democratic South Africa, fifteen years after the enfranchisement of the whole nation in 1994. The chapter continues by expounding on the policy orientations of the African National Congress (ANC), both in government and within the party itself. This is followed by analysing the position of the church in South Africa. The chapter positions the main issues to be addressed within the contemporary context. But, while the South African context has a bearing on the lines of connection which are to be established between itself and the context of the ancient text, it must be kept in mind that the dialogue of the two contexts can only fully begin after the analysis of the biblical material has been completed in chapters three and four. Dialogue between the two contexts will therefore properly start in chapter five.

Chapter three starts off, looking at the biblical engagement of this thesis but, importantly, still within the socio-analytical mediation stage. It presents a detailed discussion of the theory of metaphor. This theory is consequently applied to the marriage metaphor of the book of Hosea, in combination with a political-economic reading from which a reconstruction of the context of the message of Hosea materializes. The context, which is therefore analysed within this chapter, has an immediate bearing on the message, which will be analysed in chapter four.

Chapter four enters our third phase, that of the hermeneutical mediation, by employing the context of Hosea's message which was reconstructed in the previous chapter, and discusses the significance of the book's message for its contemporaries. The chapter looks at the main traditions which are alluded to in the book and, because of the book's indifference to developing these traditions in any detail, inter-textual dialogue is prompted in an attempt to get an understanding of the different traditions and analyse them accordingly. Based on the discussions of these main traditions, a main thrust of the message of Hosea is intimated, finally leading to the identification of redemptive images in the book. This brings to a close the biblical analysis, but the hermeneutical mediation will be continued in the fifth chapter. Therefore, the essence of the prophetic tradition identified within the book of Hosea, and consequently our hermeneutical mediation, will be taken forward and reflected in chapter five.

Chapter five will draw lines of disjunction and conjunction between the two contexts of our socio-analytical mediation. Biblically, this is in an endeavour to establish lines of connection between the contemporary context and the ancient text. Methodologically, it will serve as a mediating link between the socio-analytical mediation stage and the hermeneutical stage. From this dialectical movement between the second and third phase, a suitable resource will be distilled which brings us to the fourth and final stage of our theoretical framework. This "distillation" will result from an identification of those elements in the work, done in earlier chapters, which can contribute to a new prophetic vision. These elements will finally be structured into a resource that the church in the South African context can benefit from.

Chapter six will draw the thesis to a close by summarising and reflecting on the results of the research which has been undertaken. This will be done by identifying to what degree the objectives and the sub-research questions have been answered. Subsequently, research gaps will be identified for future pursuit.

CHAPTER 2

READING FROM THIS PLACE: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER DEMOCRACY

What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore – And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over – like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode? – James Langston Hughes

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter has drawn the contours of the work that is about to follow. Being mindful that the most crucial stage in our theoretical framework is engagement with the social sciences, the following two chapters will be devoted to engage with this discipline in an endeavour to systematically order the socio-economic issues facing both the South African context and, in the eighth century BCE, the context of Hosea's message. Although the analysis of the South African context is limited to the fifteen years after democracy (1994-2008), it must be recognised that socio-economic conditions in South Africa have a historical origin. However, though the socio-economic trajectory can be traced back as far as colonial times (*cf.* de Gruchy, J & de Gruchy, S 2004:230), this thesis will only consider the historical background in the apartheid era as far as it impinges on the current policies which will be discussed.

Therefore, the first socio-economic setting which we will analyse in this chapter is the contemporary South African context. The discussion will be structured into three sections. Firstly, we consider the main macroeconomic policy Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) which the African National Congress (ANC) led government implemented and which will serve as a heuristic framework for assessing the socioeconomic situation in South Africa. Secondly, the policy document of the ANC, the *RDP of the Soul*,[6] is discussed to assess the analysis of the ANC concerning what is needed spiritually in South Africa (ANC 2007).[7] Finally,

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[6] This policy document, *The RDP of the Soul* was set on the agenda of its national conference in 2007 in Polokwane but, due to internal tensions in the party, the document was never discussed. Although it is not an official position of the ANC, Thabo Mbeki, who was both the former president and by implication the chairperson of the ANC during his time in office, has made reference to its main elements in the public sphere and therefore the document can be legitimately analyzed as a default position of the ANC.

[7] The document which I have does not have any page numbers but consists of ten pages. I will however enumerate the sections and its subheadings.

the position of the church and its socioeconomic stance in post-apartheid South Africa will be analysed.

2.2   GROWTH, EMPLOYMENT, AND REDISTRIBUTION

The current socioeconomic dilemmas facing the majority of citizens in South Africa have a direct correlation to its immediate past and the legal policies of the apartheid regime. This form of governance had a dual economic policy, for whites and for blacks[8], and its legacy was "staggering inequalities, widespread poverty, unequal access to social services and infrastructure, and an economy that had been in crisis for nearly two decades" (Heintz 2003:1; *cf.* de Gruchy, J & de Gruchy, S 2004:229-236). The demise of the apartheid era bequeathed South Africa with huge government debts and budget deficits. Democracy also intersected with the height of "globalising capitalism" (Jeeves 2004:508). But capitalism was not foreign to the country which operated within its frames "under colonialism, [which] had been extended and maintained since 1910 through the policies of the various governments" (Maré 2003:44). Needless to say, when the newly elected African National Congress (ANC) government took office in 1994, many structural adjustments had to be implemented in an endeavour to bring the dream of "A Better Life for All", the political slogan utilized by the majority during the apartheid era, to realisation.

2.2.1   Changing Gears

The newly elected democratic government had a mammoth task facing it, when it took office in 1994. On the one hand, their victory was partly affected by a Tripartite Alliance (Alliance)[9], which brought together the working class and the three parties' vision of a National Democratic

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[8] The term "blacks" in South Africa is not monolithic since it included Africans, Coloureds, and Indians. All blacks were racially discriminated against during apartheid, but differentially (Mare 2003:30; *cf.* Visser 2004:1-6).
[9] The Tripartite Alliance brought together the ANC, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Leading up to the elections, the Alliance constructed a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (Adelzadeh 1996; Jeeves 2004: 508, 509), predicated on the Freedom Charter of 1955, which would be the "main policy platform" and which would lead the ANC's "fiscal, monetary and international economic policies" once they came into power (*cf.* Bassett 2004:545; Visser 2004:6-7). This programme favoured predominantly organised labour with a socialist orientation. The RDP was substituted by the "RDP White Paper in September 1994". This was the first document that systematically moved away from the original objectives and from the "ethos", espoused by the initial RDP document. It culminated in the formulation and adoption of GEAR in June 1996 (Adelzadeh 1996:66; *cf.* Visser 2004:6).

Revolution (NDR)[10] that would eventually lead to socialism. On the other hand, negotiations with the previous government[11] and a country already in economic difficulties left them with little room to move. Initially, the ANC government started off with a social agenda merging two participatory policy-making bodies, one of which was the National Economic Forum (NEF) which had played a prominent role in forming government policy prior to 1994, into the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC)[12] in 1995. In addition, a special Redistribution and Development Programme (RDP) office, within the then President Nelson Mandela's office (Visser 2004:7), was formed to implement the ideals of RDP. In this regard, Midgley (cited in Visser 2004:7) argues that "the new South African government resurrected the social development approach and elevated it to a position of prominence." However, the playing fields were quickly rearranged with the government's announcement of the macroeconomic policy document "Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR)" in June 1996. The GEAR document was based on a "neo-liberal framework ... offered ... in different variants, by big business, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank [WB], and ... the apartheid state itself in its twilight years in the form of the Normative Economic Model (NEM)" (Adelzadeh 1996:66). This change in policy was decided upon by the ANC government without collaborating with its Alliance partners and was presented by the government as "non negotiable" (Bassett 2004:547; Visser 2004:11), confirming Bassett's (2003:544) observation

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[10] The NDR was a socialist programme within the Alliance, with the objective of creating a non-racial, democratic, and prosperous society (Maré 2003:32). However, the implementation of this programme, according Maré (2003:32, 37), would "not lead inevitably to socialism" but would necessarily be a two-staged process. Firstly, under the inherited society, the revolutionary government would start off with capitalism to rend it from its "capitalist exploitation [and] redefine itself away from the existing racialised cheap labour system" (Maré 2003:32). And secondly, the socialist ideal would be realised "by the working-class organisation, the only elements that 'have an interest in pressing forward with socialist demands meaningfully'" (Maré 2003:32).

[11] The formal end of apartheid in South Africa came about through a series of negotiations known as the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa). These negotiations, in which different organizations in South Africa representing all racial groups participated, were to ensure a peaceful political transition in the country. However, these negotiations left white wealth and resources untouched.

[12] NEDLAC was "[launched] in February 1995 ... into a statutory body mandated to consider all proposed labour legislation and all significant changes to social and economic policy" (Bassett 2004:544). In October 1995, drawing from its constituent groups, it proposed that "[here] is *no other alternative* open to South Africa except to seek a meaningful social partnership. To undo the legacy of apartheid, and to cope with global economic developments, it is vital to both the self interest of each constituency, as well as the interest of society as a whole, that the major social forces in society co-operate with each other" (Bassett 2004:546; her emphasis; *cf.* Visser 2004:8). Despite the implicit rejection of these views by the government in its adoption of GEAR, ten years after failing to meet the objectives set out in GEAR the government seems to return to the essential elements of this particular proposal (see Bassett 2004) which is part of a strategy, identified by Bond below. NEDLAC was however marginalised by the government from the start, although it is still operating at this moment in time.

that the policy making process had become "relatively closed, hierarchical, and expert-driven, which has made it difficult for popular movements to participate" (Bassett 2004:544).

2.2.2 Getting into GEAR

The adoption of GEAR by the ANC government is, according to Adelzadeh (1996:67), a "substantive abandonment of the RDP as originally formulated [and] indicative of a panic response to the [1996] exchange rate instability and a lame succumbing to the policy dictates and ideological pressures of the international financial institutions. "This should also be coupled with the political economic background of failed communism which represented the alternative to the apartheid state (Maré 2003:32; Visser 2004:8). The incisive position by Adelzadeh (1996:67) is predicated on his analysis that GEAR's "proposed framework and policy scenarios represent an adoption of the essential tenets and policy recommendations of the neo-liberal framework by the IMF in its structural adjustment programmes." This policy orientation is "all the more remarkable", continues Adelzadeh (1996:67; *cf.* Visser 2004:7), "in view of the limited, even negative impact of such programmes, especially in southern Africa." Therefore, opposition to this document came from all fronts, including the ANC's Alliance partners. But if government had been informed of the negative effects of this policy, an intriguing question would be: "Whose interests within the country does the adoption of this policy serve if its effects have already pointed towards failure within the area for the majority."

Despite all these concerns, the government adopted this "orthodox fiscal policy stance ... premised on investment becoming the driving force for growth" (Nattrass 2003:149; *cf.* Heintz 2003:2; Visser 2004:10). This meant that the government had to create an environment conducive for investment, adjusting its policies in order that "domestic and foreign investment would have priority" (Jeeves 2004:509). In operational terms it meant that the government needed to restructure in order to limit spending, and according to Daniel (cited in Jeeves 2004:509), the size of the government was diminished. In this regard "social service delivery budgets and municipal infrastructure programmes [would] be reprioritized in order to address the claims of the poor to a fair package to meet their basic needs" (Visser 2004:9). Within the social service sector, it meant that those services "that could not be provided to all, or could be undertaken more effectively by the private sector such as social assistance grants to impoverished children, were to be eliminated or scaled down" (Visser 2004:9). Scaling down on

the government also affected state owned businesses which had to be privatised and in addition all private owned businesses were to enjoy "constrained regulatory over-sight" (Daniel cited in Jeeves 2004:509). This meant that workers and their unions were experiencing limited protection from the government and became therefore vulnerable to easy exploitation by their employers. However, the government's neo-liberal approach to the markets and its favouring of business were designed in order that "[the] poverty problem would be resolved through higher growth rates and the alleged „trickle-down' effect" (Visser 2004:9; *cf.* Adelzadeh 1996:67). Hence, this approach regarded "job creation as the main mechanism for transmitting the additional income created by high economic growth rates to the poor" (Visser 2004:9; *cf* Adelzadeh 1996:84).

In relation to the alleviating of poverty and inequality, the main strategy through which the RDP operated would have been affected by "[growth] through redistribution" (Terreblance cited in Visser 2004:6). The GEAR policy, whose first priority was to create a business friendly environment, would eventually or hopefully lead to creating a better life for the masses, envisaging "redistribution through growth" (Visser 2004:9; *cf.* Maré 2003:36). Economic growth was therefore the linchpin of GEAR and poverty alleviation and the addressing of the gross inequalities created through racism were left at its mercy.

2.2.2.1 Growth

The target of the economic growth rate[13] in GEAR was set at an ambitious 6 percent per annum over a period of five years from its incipient stage. To accomplish this, the government endeavoured to keep interest rates and inflation low in order to promote investment and consumer consumption respectively. The adoption of GEAR did create a reasonable amount of economic growth with "consumer spending and increased exports" for 2000-2002 (Heintz 2003:2; *cf.* Jeeves 2004:509) as its main contributors. However, these were not enough to reach the projected growth targets. They amounted to an average of 2.7 percent for the period 1996-2001 (Visser 2004:10), and for the period 2000-2002 to an average annual rate of approximately 3 percent (Heintz 2003:2). According to Heintz (2003:2), investment which was the fulcrum of GEAR grew "at a lower rate than overall economic growth." The analysis of Visser (2004:11) of investment depicts a 1.8 percent growth rate for real government investment which was targeted

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[13] Economic growth is calculated using the growth rate of the gross domestic product (GDP) of an economy.

in GEAR at 7.1 percent, while real private sector investment plunged from 6.1 percent in 1996 to -0.7 percent growth rate in 1998. Despite the government's endeavours to keep inflation and interest rates low, investments did not materialize as anticipated (*cf.* Jeeves 2004:509; Nattrass 2003:149). But while inflation was kept at bay, it meant higher real interest rates with the diminishing value of the currency on the international market contributing to the "trade-off between interest rates and inflation" (Heintz 2003:3). According to Heintz (2004:3) "a dramatic fall in the rand during 2001/02 led to a re-emergence of inflationary pressures – including a rapid increase in the prices of the basic food items."

"There is evidence" according to Jeeves (2004:509) "though disputed, that rates of poverty and inequality may have worsened since the end of apartheid." That "inequality is worsening" is an observation which is also confirmed by Bassett (2004:547) and Terreblanche (cited in Maré 2003:44) for whom it is "not unexpectedly accompanied by the creation of a small but growing group of black beneficiaries ... whose lobbying powers ensure effective use of the state as site of struggle." Getting to the heart of inequalities in its broadest sense Maré (2003:44) suggests that:

> Inequality indicates discrimination, exploitation and accumulation, as well as the misallocation of the profits made from such exploitation. This applies also to the choices made and pressures applied on decisions on the allocation of taxes gathered by the state. Inequality relates, as well, to power relations that allow certain social groups to ensure the allocation of resources to themselves, or to effectively engage in capitalist accumulation. It also indicates a failure of effective priorities to address the situation. If inequality grows it would seem to be an indication of continuities in the system of economic exploitation, even if democratic reform has guaranteed a greater number of political participants.

From this miscalculation in economic policy by the ANC government emanated other growing concerns. Jeeves (2004:509) suggests that "unemployment remained stubbornly intractable and actually increased for several years after the GEAR strategy was announced." The economy which aimed to increase jobs, the main determinant for the distribution of income to the poor, was rather experiencing a "jobless growth" (Visser 2004:11). Jeeves (2004:511) posits that "[if] the position of the poor and unemployed may have actually worsened since the mid-1990s, the situation of organised labour has also become unexpectedly vulnerable."

2.2.2.2 Employment

South African employment has grown more diversified and the simple Marxist categories of the "proletariat", the working class, as opposed to the "bourgeoisie", the middle class, do no longer suffice. Class and race categories, predominantly interacting in the South African sphere, have become increasingly diversified in regard to employment, particularly from the 1970s, "prompted by the apartheid state's gradual easing of racial discrimination and segregation, allowing significant numbers of blacks to move into more privileged social sectors." Contributing to this were the strong bargaining capacities of black unions, together with other factors which "promoted the growth of the black middle class, a development that has greatly accelerated in the period since the democratic transition in 1994" (Jeeves 2004:510). This acceleration took the form of an initiative by the government to promote "affirmative action and black economic empowerment as the principal means to transform society and to grow a black elite alongside the privileged white communities [delivering] on its promise to provide both political and economic empowerment" (Jeeves 2004:510, 511). Despite the "deracialisation of the apex", it would seem that the initiative remained "confined to the upper echelons and strata of South African society" (Habib 2003:20). With government policy favouring but a few, this would seem to have been at the peril of the majority in society, which the system had exposed and made vulnerable through GEAR.

Despite the intentions of the policy "to generate 1.35 million new jobs over five years ... an average employment growth rate of 2.9 percent up to the year 2000" (Adelzadeh 1996:86), its contradictory strategies of "budget cuts, trade liberalisation, deregulation of the labour market and privatisation" (Adelzadeh 1992:85) necessarily put the existing jobs in danger. Accordingly, budget cuts occurred in the social sector in the period 1997-1998, initially in the health and education departments, confirming the suspicion within labour circles that the government "is attempting to shed its social responsibility role as envisaged in the RDP" (Visser 2004:11). The government's commitment to trade liberalisation and deregulation of the labour market (Nattrass 2003:150) was to the detriment of the employment situation with, according to Visser (2004:10; *cf.* Nattrass 2003:146), "more than 1 million jobs [being] destroyed since 1996." This loss resulted from businesses introducing "labour-saving technologies, increased out-sourcing and a market turn towards using casual and contract labour" (Visser 2004:10; *cf.* Natrass 2003:150;

ANC 2007). The unions' opposition to privatisation of state owned assets also fell on deaf ears despite its concerns that the "socio-economic impact" would "lead to an enormous number of retrenchments and job losses, and therefore labour market insecurity" (Visser 2004:11).

According to Chisholm (2003:280), Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) has recorded an increase in employment in the period 1995-2000; however, they have also determined that an increase in unemployment occurred in the same period. Presently, South Africa is faced with an unemployment problem (Nattrass 2003:153) which impacts and perpetuates socioeconomic problems and crime with the country. Those who are employed are confronted with personal and social pressures such as having to support big families of which many members are unemployed (Nattrass 2003:153). The inability of men in South Africa to find jobs to secure their own and their family's livelihood, together with their cultural perceptions of ‚manhood', contribute to the increase of "domestic violence, rape, child abuse and generalised crime" (Chisholm 2003:280).[14] The proliferation of HIV/AIDS is also weighing heavily on South Africans with 5.5 million people being diagnosed with HIV infections in 2006 (MacFarlane 2007:20), making heavy demands on family resources, both financially and physically, in a country where approximately 150 rape cases are reported daily.[15] Nattrass (2003:151) also suggests that "AIDS ... has affected predominantly unskilled (especially migrant) labour [which] is already exercising a dampening impact on growth" (Nattrass 2003:151).[16]

One thing is clear: South Africa is faced with grave socioeconomic problems which can be traced to the policy decision made by the government. Several proposals have been made by economists, social scientists, activists, an array of academics and independent bodies to overcome the dilemma, but to no avail.[17] Instead, the GEAR policy has been defended by government. COSATU, one of the most charismatic opponents of the GEAR strategy (but

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[14] For a discussion of maleness and its contribution to domestic violence, see Owino (2009).

[15] Lebone (2007:10) recorded 54 926 reported rape cases in 2005/06. I have calculated the average number of rape cases per day during that year.

[16] MacFarlane (2007:23) estimates a higher proportion of HIV infections among pregnant women for the period 1992-2005. Generally, HIV/AIDS is affecting predominantly women and children (*cf.* Phiri & Nadar 2009:1). There might be an implicit correlation with migrant labour as suggested by Nattrass (2003:151) but, writing in 2003, the period of estimation is necessarily different. Whatever the case, one thing is certain, HIV/AIDS's destructive force is prevalent among the poor (Maré 2003:44).

[17] See Adelzadeh (1996); Habib *et al* (2003), drawing together the diverse spectrum of disciplines; and ANC's Alliance partners (Visser 2004).

unfortunately only on a rhetorical level), suggests that it was "blindingly obvious that it is not possible to have a developmental budget within an anti-developmental economic framework" (Marias cited in Visser 2004:11; *cf.* Nattrass 2003:152).

2.2.2.3 Redistribution

Redistribution, so prominent on the developmental agenda of the RDP as a means to alleviate poverty and curb the racial inequality gap, took a precarious back seat in GEAR (Jeeves 2004:509). The government's proposition was that, without attaining the required growth targets that were their main priority, "there would be little to redistribute" (Jeeves 2004:509). According to Terreblanche and others (cited in Visser 2004:11), GEAR did not set any concrete redistributive targets. The little that was distributed by the government was not sufficient for those condemned to poverty and unemployment who suffered daily exposure to crime, or for those affected and dejected by contagious diseases (Visser 2004:11).

2.2.3   Ruminations on GEAR Policy

In defence of GEAR, the government argued that "the specific measures in the GEAR plan were merely refinements of positions established in the RDP" (Visser 2004:11). Accordingly, Bond (cited in Visser 2004:11) "described the ANC's strategy as a „tendency to talk left' but to „act right'." However, Adelzadeh (1996) whose perceptive analysis of GEAR's analytical frameworks, policy orientations, and the models which were employed to formulate these, commented that it was "unduly negligent of RDP-type objectives and concerns." Visser (2004:10) asserts that the economic policy of the ANC government "had acquired an overt class character." Therefore, the question as to "whose interests it served" is pertinent. In Visser's (2004:10) words, current macroeconomic policy is "geared to service the respective prerogatives of domestic and international capital and the aspirations of the black bourgeoisie at the expense of the impoverished majority's hopes of a less iniquitous social and economic order" (Visser 2004:10). It is therefore safe to say that "the dream" of the majority of South Africans has been "deferred" by the policy orientations of the ANC government and, according to Van der Walt (cited in Visser 2004:10), the GEAR policy "violates the promise of „A Better Life for All'." Already in 2003, ten years into GEAR, Bond (cited in Visser 2004:12) rightly asserted that the

"the worsening of poverty and the lack of social delivery" in South Africa is "a socio-economic time bomb."

2.3   RDP OF THE SOUL

Appealing to people's spiritual consciousness is always an effective tool to soothe tensions. But such an appeal, coming from a political party, in the form of The RDP of the Soul[18], should be a wakeup call to any prophetic consciousness which endeavours to provide God's perspective in the world in order to enact the reign of God on earth. This document is, to my mind, not only a political witness to the latency of the church in South Africa, but it should also cause trepidation within church circles because of its stipulation that "[a] gap has been formed between a world needing a new spirit of transformation and the failure of religions to provide it ... Earth does not like a vacuum, and others have rushed in to take the gap" (ANC 2007). Therefore, the ANC, being one of the contenders to fill this gap, advocates "a new spirit – an RDP of the soul" (ANC 2007).

The notion of an RDP of the soul was coined by former president Nelson Mandela and it was, according to the president and the ANC, the major element that could change the country's economic system (ANC 2007). The document opens with a quotation from President Thabo Mbeki, who states that "[t]his document reviews the problems we found in Liberation, analyses them, and sets out the way of Transformation through the reconstruction and development of the nation's spirit. For it is the spirit of South Africans that drives our political, economic and social processes" (ANC 2007). The problems identified are laid out in two sections: the first deals, broadly speaking, with capitalism, locating it historically in the West;[19] and the second with "conservative religion" (ANC 2007) which will be expounded in the last section of this chapter.

The first part starts off with a mythical appeal to the RDP, which for Mbeki implies a "spiritual dimension" (West 2007b:15), and lists its basic principles which are "an integrated and sustainable programme; a people-driven process; peace and security for all; nation-building;

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[18] This is a word play on the RDP document, which surmises that it is not only the material conditions of a nation which needs attention, as espoused by the RDP, but also the spiritual dimension which is in need of an RDP.
[19] This is comparable to West's (2007b:15) notion of "racial capitalism" in his analysis of Mbeki's speech. See West (2007b) and Maluleke (2010) for an analysis of Mbeki's speech at the Nelson Mandela Lecture in 2006 which shows some interesting correlations with the document under discussion.

linking reconstruction and development; and the democratisation of South Africa" (ANC 2007). It continues with listing the material needs implied in these principles, presenting as "[the] first priority ... basic need of jobs, land, housing, water, electricity, communications, transport, a clean and healthy environment, nutrition, health care, and social welfare" (ANC 2007). With these elements in mind, the document further states that "major developments have taken place since then" (ANC 2007).

Changing the cadence, the section continues with a barrage of "problems" encountered during the ANC's term in office. But in a very crafty way it juxtaposes the party's inexperience at running the country, which was in a "serious financial crisis" so that the government had been thrown in at the deep end, with the "population explosion." It continues stating that "the need for food, shelter, work, health care, education and social services is *half as much again as the estimates for 1994* [my emphasis], and, again, this "is a major problem" (ANC 2007). This seems to set the tone for legitimising the abandonment of the RDP, locating South Africa "in a world dominated by a group of dictators who owned the capital resources of the globe" (ANC 2007). The document continues by mentioning the dichotomies between the different value systems of capitalists, necessarily emanating from the West which is corrupting "not only business, civil society and government, but [surprisingly] some ANC personnel themselves" (ANC 2007). What is important for our purposes here is the praxes in business which is strongly condemned by this document and a thematic discussion of which, in relation to GEAR principles, would be of value.

Growth, predicated in economic terms on the accumulation of capital derived from profits which in turn will continue the cycle of both foreign and domestic investment, was the first priority of GEAR. The RDP of the Soul however is very critical of capital, stating: "Capital is manipulated outside democratic control, and admits no responsibility for the majority who do not have enough to live on". But the document also acknowledges the current limited possibilities of the government to control capital. It admits that: "Government action to refocus the wealth of capitalists is limited: they will simply press a few buttons on their computers and move their money to other countries" (ANC 2007). It subsequently critiques the economic system stating: "An economic system which allows dictators to administer capital without responsibility to anyone is wrong in principle for those who believe in the spirit of democracy. To maintain that it

is a legitimate human right to accumulate wealth through a system condemning the majority of our citizens to poverty is totally illegitimate" (ANC 2007). Ironically, the very "economic system" that is being condemned here, has been legitimately crafted through White Papers, policies, and pacts to create an "accumulation-[of]-wealth"-friendly environment by the ANC government. Adelzadeh (1996:91), an economic analyst already writing in 1996, observed that:

> According to various reports, government intends eventually to do away with exchange controls altogether. Therefore it will be extremely hard to hold business to any social agreement – after all, unlike government and labour (which are tied to South Africa) capital will be mobile and able to withdraw easily. The lessening of exchange controls therefore deprives South Africa of scare investment capital, but also strengthens the already strong hand of business in any social agreement.

The monster which the document decries has been raised in the ANC government quarters. If the document wants to pretend that the ANC government had no alternative but to make a pact with these "liars and deceivers", Adelzadeh (1996:67) already found government's partnership with the IMF and WB "remarkable in view of ... the lack of any leverage that the international financial institutions ... have over South African policy makers." Making a pact with the devil does not mean that he will automatically do what is "morally right" according to "the liberating values of ubuntu thinking" (ANC 2007).

According to the document, the current economic system allows that the only means to distribute wealth to the masses is "through employment and wages", but it argues that "the dictators of capital accept no responsibility for providing such employment" (ANC 2007). The document furthermore clearly articulates the types of employment identified in the job market, stating: "Through the use of machines, exploitation, and subsidies dis-employment, non-employment, and un-employment are ruling factors" (ANC 2007). This can justly be said to be a parody of the employment situation, facing millions of employees and young entrants on the job market and resulting from the government's commitment to "budget cuts, trade liberalisation, deregulation of the labour market and privatisation" (Adelzadeh 1992:85; *cf.* Nattrass 2003:150).

The final comment is related to the poor masses and their relationship to those in economic power of which the document states: "The assertion that wealth trickles down from rich to poor is demonstrably false ... nothing trickles down, for the rich get richer and the poor get poorer"

(ANC 2007). To evade the established fact that wealth does not trickle down, the ANC drew up yet another document, the "Strategy and Tactics Document for 2007" (STD), which requires that the state "place the needs of the poor at the top of the national agenda" (ANC 2007). Paradoxically, the ANC government is not committed to change the structures which have proven to produce poverty and inequality and Mbeki (cited in West 2007b:18) has unambiguously stated that, "we must look beyond the undoubtedly correct economic objectives our nation has set itself." The strategy which the government is proposing is not a change of gears, although the document speciously states that "[the] economic problem of the poor is the spiritual problem of the rich. To move from the greed of the rich to the need of the poor we must change the system" (ANC 2007). What is rather proposed here is the need to devise a strategy within the same economic system because:

> "The relationship between national democratic state and private capital is one of unity and struggle. On the one hand, the democratic state has to create an environment conducive for private investments from which investors can make reasonable returns, and through which employment and technological progress can be derived. On the other hand, through effective regulation, taxation and other means, the state seeks to ensure redistribution of income, to direct investments into areas which will help national development, and broadly to ensure social responsibility.' „State and private capital, as well as resources and capacities in the hands of communities, will be mobilised for this purpose." (STD cited in ANC 2007)

These elements echo those contained in GEAR, but are couched in a different attire. The document proposes that the only thing missing in this business equation is "a new spirit – an RDP of the soul" (ANC 2007). Mbeki in his speech at the annual Nelson Mandela Lecture in 2006 asserted that, "it is the government's responsibility to „play its role' in giving „new content to our Age of Hope'" (Mbeki cited in West 2007b:13). This "new content" is a reference to the spiritual dimension of every human being and by implication of the "society's soul", and to bring about social cohesion means that we should "infuse the values of Ubuntu into our very being as a people" (Mbeki cited in West 2007b:14). However, this infusion of the values of ubuntu would necessarily have to emanate from government in its policies, pacts, White Papers and Bills which are forged behind closed doors and which have "demonstrably" created a perpetuation of the dire situation that the majority of South Africa's citizens suffered under the apartheid state. In fact, the RDP of the Soul document is a mutation of the same spiritual tactics used by the apartheid

government to justify poverty and inequality. Ironically the document rightly quotes the Constitution which states that:

> [Everyone] has the right to life. In hard fact the economic structure of South Africa condemns half our population to very limited life. An economy which ensures that most people lack the means to provide enough food, housing, clothing and health care to sustain life, is clearly unconstitutional ... Whilst we recognise our social and personal responsibility to afford everyone the right to life, many turn to crime from need. (ANC 2007)

The document does contain some prophetic elements, but it is very ambivalent with regard to the neo-liberal economic framework which it advocates. On the one hand, the macroeconomic policy which the ANC government advocates should be maintained for the sake of the fruits it provides, not to the majority, but to those from which it has to trickle down. On the other hand, although its negative impact on socioeconomic issues has been demonstrated, it should be harnessed by the government to "show some common decency" (ANC 2007) to the majority of people. However, the government's reliance on the moral responsibility of investors towards those they employ and towards the majority of citizens has proven unjustified within the anti-developmental economic framework which they advocate (*cf.* Marias cited in Visser 2004:11; Nattrass 2003:152). Therefore, devising spiritual tactics, aimed at investors which the government, through its economic policies, has placed in a favourable financial position, will not change the fact that the same economic system gives employees diminished protection and allows the majority of people to go hungry, creating an environment conducive for a vicious cycle of violent crime and the proliferation of contagious diseases, to name but a few of the consequences.

Infusing the macroeconomic environment with the spirit of ubuntu will not change the fact that markets fluctuate and that capitalism derives from individualism which advocates cheap labour. Nor will ubuntu change the fact that the rich simply do not care about the poor. And not to mention that some of the rich are part of the strategic wing of government.

2.4   THE CHURCH IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

It is clear from these analyses that the policy orientations of the central government in South Africa are devised to produce poverty and inequality. Despite the fact that RDP of the Soul is

concerned with eradicating poverty and creating an egalitarian society, the preceding analyses demonstrate that the document in itself is inadequate as an unequivocal critique of the government's policy orientations that affect socioeconomic issues. Maré (2003:44) perceptively notes that, if conditions such as poverty and inequality persist as shown above, it "indicates a failure of effective priorities to address the situation." This comment is applicable as well to the churches in South Africa, a viewpoint that is confirmed by RDP of the Soul (in its content and through its existence), and by de Gruchy and de Gruchy (2005:223-260).

The current position of the church in post-apartheid South Africa is one of marginalisation and "denominational myopia" (de Gruchy and de Gruchy 2005:223). This is due to an array of issues, ranging from internal pressures within the country (e.g. religious-neutral state, etc.), to "global and international concerns" (de Gruchy and de Gruchy 2005:223). The convergence of the different churches in the apartheid era "forced" the various denominations to provide a prophetic witness, due to its predominantly black constituency (de Gruchy and de Gruchy 2005:223). Shortly after the toppling of the apartheid regime, this ecumenical prophetic witness, provided mostly by the South African Council of Churches (SACC), conceded its well carved-out position in the public sphere to "liberation movements and political parties" (West 2007b:3). But a gap, left on the prophetic front, has been usurped by "new forms of „Church Theology'" (West 2007b:5). West (2007b:4), employing Brueggemann, suggests that "Church Theology is best characterised ... as a theology of „consolidation which is situated among the established and secure and which articulates its theological vision in terms of a God who faithfully abides and sustains on behalf of the present ordering'." This notion is, to my mind, also well articulated in the RDP of the Soul which surmises that the spiritual should be firmly set in the secular world (ANC 2007), as if the spiritual were an object or a tool to sustain the secular. It is in this regard that the document urges religion, and consequently the church, to focus attention and resources, among others the Bible, on "crime, corruption, and condoms [but] not macroeconomic policy" (West 2007b:5).

The legitimate role players of macroeconomic policy are politicians, together with the tools of their trade, from different orientations, ranging from former liberation fighters to once prophetic church ministers. Together they have shaped a meta-narrative for the problem of the socioeconomic dilemmas which "is a crisis of *ubuntu* – our vision of what it means to be human"

(Maluleke 2010). But the president of the SACC, the ecumenical church body which has played such a formidable prophetic role in the apartheid era as alluded to above, has identified in his speech in 2010 deep connections between the macro-economic policy and people's dire situation, stating:

> There is a connection between the violence of the world – in all its manifestation – and what has now come to be known as an economic crisis. There is a connection between the dominant ethical and moral paradigms of our times and the economic recession we find ourselves in. There is a connection between the high lives of our political elite and the poverty of ordinary South Africans ... There is a connection between certain uncritical paths of development and the ecological crisis we find ourselves in. We have to lay bare these connections if we are to find meaningful and lasting solutions. (Maluleke 2010)

Neither government nor Church Theology is willing to lay bare these foundations which contribute to the suffering of the poor. Instead, both have organised themselves around a common goal to silence the "memory of suffering" (West cited in Akper 2005:8). But West perceptively notes that "there is no hope where the memory of suffering is silenced, leaving traces of suppressed dialogue, festering in the bloodstreams of the social whole" (cited in Akper 2005:8). It is in this regard that South African society is in need of a prophetic vision - one which, in the words of West (cited in Akper 2005:8), "goes beyond protest and which is prepared to be selective." This prophetic vision (West, cited in Akper 2005:8), "[arises] from and is constituted by the historical consciousness of the poor and oppressed." However, the churches, particularly those which have systemic origins, have so far not been able to act creatively and to speak with one voice on socioeconomic dilemmas in the country. The stance of the Church therefore, on issues affecting the livelihoods of the poor, has often been slow to become apparent, consisting of little more than sporadic statements.

2.5   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to provide a systematic account of the socioeconomic conditions characterizing the contemporary South African context by laying bare fundamental factors that contribute to the suffering and need of the poor majority.   The chapter endeavoured to comprehensively describe the issues which need to be investigated. In this regard the chapter has established that the macroeconomic policy orientations of the government as contained in the

GEAR policy document, have contributed to the poverty and inequality which affect the livelihoods of the poor. It also argues that spiritual proposals put forward in the public sphere, are an inadequate political critique as regards the emancipation of the poor. It has demonstrated this in particular through analysing the ANC's policy document The RDP of the Soul.

The chapter has also laid a foundation for the argument that a prophetic vision is needed from the church, a vision that arises from people at the grassroots and that is informed by their memory of suffering. It is from the suffering of the majority, as analyzed above, that this thesis seeks to create a biblical resource leading to a new prophetic vision for the church in post-apartheid South Africa. In view of this aim, the next chapter will analyse the context of Hosea's message in order to establish lines of connections between the socioeconomic context of South Africa fifteen years after democracy, and that of the eighth century BCE environment in which the message of Hosea was delivered. These contexts will be juxtaposed so that the contemporary context can be linked to the ancient text.

CHAPTER 3

THE HARLOTRY METAPHOR AND ITS RELATION TO THE SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXT

Poetry is ... partly due to repression and social repression. These are ways that you speak through symbols to be indirect – Laura Secor

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The foregoing chapter has analysed the first of the two contexts which is located in the second phase of our framework. Chapter three will focus on the second context in an endeavour to set the stage for our hermeneutical mediation, contained in the third phase of Vital Theology. But before we can undertake the third phase in chapter four, we need to analyse the context of Hosea's message which marks also the beginning of our engagement with the biblical text.

This chapter will proceed in three stages. Firstly, some methodological considerations are discussed upon which the analyses in this chapter are based. Secondly, I will situate the study by discussing Hosean scholarship, looking at traditional forms of engagement as well as recent works that have employed socioscientific research methodologies[20] and, consequently, I will set out the trajectory that will be followed by this study. And finally, I will analyse the marriage metaphor by using both social scientific and literary methodologies[21] to reconstruct the

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[20] Biblical studies, in recent years, has become a fully fledged inter-disciplinary discourse that utilizes an array of methods from other disciplines. In addition, these innovative reading strategies have opened new frontiers providing perceptive insights into texts that had reached an interpretive impasse or resisted easy interpretation by the traditional historical critical method. Weems (1989:93) categorizes Hosea together with Jeremiah as texts which "[resist] easy literary interpretation." Chaney (2004:107) has stipulated the ineffectiveness of redaction-criticism in Hosea scholarship, and this includes form criticism's ineffectiveness in dealing with anomalous style in Hosea (*cf.* Fisch 1988:138). Carroll (1992:22-48) provides a useful discussion of the different approaches, especially those from social science. His literary approach to Hosea 4-7 opens a whole spectrum of ideas by "appealing to the theoretical perspectives of the social sciences" (Carroll 1993:22). The result of this study is a whole network of "interconnected facets of Israel's life and cannot be limited to any one realm" (Carroll: 1993:37). The incorporation of social scientific methods into biblical criticism dates back to the pioneering efforts of W. Robertson Smith (Simskins & Cook 1999:1) who is characterized as belonging to the "first wave" of social scientific researchers. For an outline and application of social scientific research in biblical criticism, spanning the twenty five years previous to its publication, see Simskins and Cook (1999).

[21] The socio-scientific methodology which will be employed is the political economic model in biblical studies which has been successfully applied by Chaney (1989, 2004, and 2006) to analyses of the latter prophets. West (2010) has followed suit in applying it to the New Testament context via the Old Testament. The literary methodology will predominantly follow the metaphorical model as promoted by Soskice (1989) which will be used to analyze the various metaphors related to this research, but more specifically the marriage imagery.

socioeconomic context of Hosea's message. This chapter proposes the employment of the marriage-harlotry metaphor of Hosea as a hermeneutical key to unlock a proposed socio-historical context for the rhetorical milieu of the book.

3.2   THEORY OF METAPHOR

The book of Hosea is classed among the Minor Prophets, a term coined by Augustine, because of the brevity of the Twelve compared to the Major Prophets (Macintosh 1997:liii). However, Hosea's text, amounting to a brief fourteen chapters, elicits artistry which suggests that it was written by a "major writer" (Fisch 1988:139; *cf.* Macintosh 1997:lxi). The work has perplexed many interpreters and the book's ending itself (Hos 14:10) heeds interpreters to approach it with special care. And no wonder one of the greatest Latin theologians, Jerome, invoked the Holy Spirit to give him special aid when engaging the book (cited in Rowley 1956:200; Macintosh 1997:liii).

One of the main reasons the book of Hosea has bewildered so many, and still does today, is its pervasive usage of literary devices throughout the text, which, according to Watson (1984:242), add up to more than fifty. Among these literary devices at least fourteen describe the relationship of Yahweh and Israel (Weems 1989:87). However, among all the literary enigmas, no literary image in the book has captured the imagination and produced such diverse interpretations as the imperative of God to Hosea to take an אֵשֶׁת זְנוּנִים (a wife of promiscuity) and to have יַלְדֵי זְנוּנִים (children of promiscuity) because the land is זָנֹה תִזְנֶה (utterly promiscuous).[22] It is this command, taken as a metaphor, that, in this chapter, will be demonstrated to function as a commentary on the socio-historical context. Interested, therefore, in the context of Hosea's message I will follow the theory of metaphor as espoused by Soskice who advocates a "cautious realism." This is similar to the "negotiated realism" proposed by Bal (1993), who exploits a metaphor's "mediating capacity" to bridge the gap between realism and relativism.

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[22] These terms will be discussed below.

3.2.1   The Eye of Resemblance

The pervasive use of metaphor in our daily discourses has been affirmed by a plethora of theorists on the subject of metaphor. Richards (cited in McFague 1982:37), rephrasing Aristotle who thought that metaphor is only reserved for those endowed with special gifts, suggests that "we all live, and speak, only through an eye of resemblance." This fact is as true for us as it was for the prophets who increasingly came to rely on special means to make sense of the realities facing the Israelites, particularly in instances where traditional theology and everyday language were inadequate. The pervasive use of metaphor in the book of Hosea already suggests the importance of analysing these metaphors and I propose that in prophetic moments, specifically in the book of Hosea, in situations where social repression is rife, ordinary language is inadequate in efforts to silence the memory of suffering. However, like Hosea, the prophets were far from ordinary speakers as the literature which bears their names evinces. What is sure though is that the things they had at their disposal came from their environment as construed within their languages (*cf.* Bal 1993:186), but they used them in new and innovative ways. These are the things that metaphors are made of so that they "[become] equipment for specific social behaviour" (Bal 1993:187). The above arguments concur with Weems (1989:101) who argues that the biblical metaphors are "not bankrupt as some tend to suppose."

Defining a metaphor, Soskice (1989:15) suggests that it is that "figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another." As a figure of speech Soskice locates it in the realm of linguistics, suggesting that speaking presupposes a "speaker using words who refer ... in the sense of *constructing a symbolic representation of that environment*" (her emphasis). The reference therefore, made by the speaker, "facilitates a realism ... [which] ... has a significant social aspect." However, it is important to presuppose from the outset that no theory exists which can construct a "privileged account of the world as it is" (Soskice 1985:131). Therefore, the socio-historical context, constructed with this methodology, will only be a proposed context. But presently an analysis of the theory of metaphor by Soskice will suffice.

3.2.2   The Centre of Figural Space

In religious language "figures of speech are the vessels of insight and the vehicles of cognition" (Soskice 1985:54). They allow us to speak about abstract realities. An important aspect of figures of speech, particularly metaphor, is that they have been downplayed in notions of the superiority of "words proper" over metaphorical language, a position advocated by Hobbes (cited in Soskice 1985:49) amongst others. This notion is similar to the comparison of truth value in metaphorical language as opposed to that of literal language. And while these weighty questions will be discussed below, an important concern occupying us presently is to do with terminology. There has often been a "terminological imprecision" (Soskice 1985:x), particularly within religious discourses. This is evidenced in critiques where metaphor is confused with metonymy (Bal 1993:195) or the "faulty premise that the [metaphor] is an allegory" (Keefe cited in Chaney 2004:109; *cf.* Keefe 1995:96). Therefore, a discussion of the different literary devices employed in language, particularly tropes or figures of speech, and more specifically those which are, like a metaphor, characterized as an "anomalous combination of terms" (Soskice 1985:50), will be useful.

Some distant literary devices like allegory, myth, model, and, to a lesser extent, satire have often been confused with metaphor. With regard to allegory and satire Soskice (1985:55) suggests that, like metaphor, they are "fully linguistic but differ from metaphor in both scope and intention." Both of these linguistic devices move beyond a phrase or sentence, into a text and are not strictly speaking figurative language but rather characterised as "forms of prose" (Soskice 1985:55). Regarding intention, she argues that "both speak of one thing in the guise of another. This guise is chosen for its ability to render the statement oblique, especially in the case of satire, whereas metaphor intends only to speak about its primary subject and to do so in a direct way with no dissembling" (Soskice 1985:55). Although Jenkins (1989:219) suggests that metaphor is not "straightforward", Soskice (1985:85) maintains that audiences will understand the speaker's "(single) meaning" within a metaphor. What is sure though, is that metaphors can be used in both allegories and satire, and the former is especially thought of as an extended metaphor (Soskice 1985:55).

Another genre, often confused with metaphor, is myth and "[like] allegory and satire, myth has its locus in textual or narrative analysis, and not in discussion of figures of speech" (Soskice

1985:56). According to Bal (1993:187) "[myth] is to history what metaphor is to plain language." But the changing of history into myth is according to Bal (1993:187) a metaphorical process. What metaphor and myth have in common is that both are material for specific social behaviour (Bal 1993:187). Another important, strictly speaking not literary, trope which is relevant for our discussion of metaphor, is a model. Like metaphor an "object or state of affairs is said to be a *model* when it is viewed in terms of some other object or state of affairs" (Soskice 1985:55; her emphasis). But unlike the metaphor, a model is not limited to the sphere of linguistics because it can be thought of as something physical, as in Soskice's example of a "model train". A model, however, is a useful element in the theory which Soskice (1985:49) espouses, stating that a "metaphor is a form of language use with a unity of subject-matter and which yet draws upon two (or more) sets of associations, and does so, characteristically, by involving the consideration of a model or models."[23]

At the "centre of figural space" however, are metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and simile (Soskice 1985:56). The distinction between them lies in their cognitive functioning (Soskice 1985:54). Both metaphor and simile compel "new possibilities of vision", while metonymy and synecdoche are seen to be more straightforward in reference and are characterised by an "ornamental way of naming" (Soskice 1985:57). Soskice (1985:57) argues that synecdoche uses a "more comprehensive term for a less and vice versa" (Soskice 1985:57) and metonymy is considered to function in a similar way, "except that here one uses an adjunct to stand for the whole" (Soskice 1985:57). These tropes are, together with metaphor, characterized as anomalous juxtapositions of terms, but the difference between metaphor, metonym and synecdoche, is that the latter two are "functionally" or "semantically" different from metaphor because they function "as oblique reference" for the whole (Soskice 1985:57). However, the "greatest rival of metaphor", and which shares more similarities with it than any of the other tropes mentioned so far, is the simile (Soskice 1985:58). The only distinctive feature of both is their grammatical structure which has consequences on a more pragmatic level.

A simile occurs when two things are being compared, and the distinctive terms employed are "like", "as" or at times "not unlike" (Soskice 1985:58; Pierini 2007:23). Both simile and

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[23] See below for a more detailed treatment of models.

metaphor make use of familiar subjects within a society to make sense of more abstract realities (Soskice 1985:60; Pierini 2007:23), and both present us "with a significantly new interpretative web which may affect further analyses" (Soskice 1985:62). With metaphor there is some leeway in that, according to Pierini (2007), it can be "literal or non-literal" whereas a simile is "only non-literal." But Soskice clearly rejects such dichotomies as "literal or non-literal" for metaphor. In her account she replaces the "either/or" option by indicating the possibility of a "both ... and" option (Jenkins 1989:228). What Soskice (1985:17) and Pierini (2007:23) agree on is that there is "a difference in impact: a simile usually has less power, suggestiveness and effectiveness than a (good) metaphor." On a more pragmatic level, the metaphor, unlike all the other tropes, has the distinctive function of extending our language. Following the rhetorical tradition, Soskice (1985:60) calls this "catachresis", or more simply "filling lexical gaps." However, a metaphor is not the only way in which our language can be extended "although it is", continues Soskice (1985:60), "perhaps the most interesting".

When the function of "filling lexical gaps" occurs, a metaphorical usage of a term may become standardised and "it broadens out the accepted dictionary definition" (Soskice 1985:72). Soskice (1985:72) suggests that "at this stage, the originally metaphorical usage is a literal and polysemic one", in the sense of becoming lexicalised. When "a metaphorical usage becomes an accustomed or literal usage", it suggests that the once lively metaphor which invited insights and prompted new interpretive possibilities has become a dead metaphor. The transition occurs when "its initial web of implications becomes, if not entirely lost, then difficult to recall" (Soskice 1985:73). This is an important feature of metaphor to keep in mind, particularly when dealing with religious language where metaphors have the ability "to inspire, mobilize, convict, instruct, challenge, and transform" (Weems 1989:101; *cf.* West 1996a:209).

3.2.3   The Unique Product of the Whole

Many theorists are in concert with the assumption implicit in Richards' definition that metaphor belongs to the field of semantics and not to the syntax of language (McFague 1982:38; Kittay 1987:10). Hence, it "should not be classed amongst such grammatical categories as noun, verb, or adjective. Nor should one think that metaphor always displays a particular syntactic form" (Soskice 1985:18). Therefore, how combinations of words converge to form a metaphor will be our next consideration.

The anomalous combination of terms which is one of the characteristics of a metaphor is by Richards (cited in Soskice 1985:45; McFague 1982:38) referred to as the "tenor, or underlying subject of the metaphor, and the vehicle that presents it." Among some traditional accounts of metaphor[24], Soskice is particularly interested in the theory of Richards (cited in Soskice 1985:45, 85) who regards "metaphor as the consequences of the interanimation of words in the complete utterance" and not simply some words which are used metaphorically.[25] How this interanimation is affected presupposes two accounts of meaning. The more conventional of these accounts posits that a term has a definition and determines meaning; the second or "causal account" states that "reference determines meaning [derived] from the speaker and hearer belonging to a particular community where the term has its use" (Jenkins 1989:226). Purposefully, Soskice does not choose between these two accounts because "it is *not strictly words which refer but speakers using words*, which makes metaphor possible" (Soskice 1985:136; *cf.* Jenkins 1989:226; my emphasis). According to this view, it is "communities of speakers whose language provides access to the states and relations that are of interest to them" (Soskice 1985:132; *cf.* Jenkins 1989:228). A further discussion of how reference or meaning are affected will be delayed for the moment and instead we consider the importance of a metaphor within its particular context of utterance.

Bearing in mind that a metaphor has to do with semantics, as agreed by an array of scholars, Soskice (1985:21) states that "in many cases ... we would [not] be able to construe unambiguously the meaning of a metaphor apart from some wider context" and she suggests that, at times, more than a sentence is needed in order to establish a metaphor. This "highlights the importance of metaphor in a context of ‚shared beliefs'" (Soskice 1985:22). In this regard, Soskice (1985:22) asserts that a "metaphor is established ... as soon as the reader is able to detect that one thing is being spoken of in terms suggestive of another [which] may be as little as a phrase or may require several phrases or sentences conjointly." Richards (cited in Soskice 1985:45) surmises that "meanings are things determined by complete utterances and surrounding

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[24] Soskice (1985:24-53) distinguishes between three kinds of theories on metaphor; the first one which regards a metaphor as a "simple substitution for literal speech" and, secondly, the "strictly emotive" theory on metaphor, but she finally settles for the "incremental theories which allow metaphor a cognitive status, but only as a result of the interaction of literal meanings" (Jenkins 1989:220).
[25] In this regard, Soskice (1985:46) is alluding to Black and Ricoeur who seem to "misunderstand Richards' distinction" between tenor and vehicle. See her account for a full discussion.

contexts, and not by individual words in isolation." Therefore, with metaphor as a context related device, "all kinds of factors, including stereotypes, causal relations, and so on, are the determinants of reference" (Soskice 1985:130; *cf.* Weems 1995:16, 23).

Returning to the reference or meaning produced in this account of metaphor, these come about "only through the interplay of the interpretive possibilities of the whole utterance" (Soskice 1985:45; *cf.* Jenkins 1989:221). There is therefore a movement from "words and what they refer to (things), to ideas and their interaction, so to the [utterance] and its context" (Jenkins 1989:221). But, seemingly paradoxically, as is characteristic of Soskice's account of her attempt to "dissolve dichotomies", "[the] „reference' of a metaphor goes beyond what we know to be the case, and this is because there is an imbalance between reference and definition: you can refer before you can define, and speak before you know what you are speaking about" (Jenkins 1989:233). Jenkins (1989:233) nevertheless notes that this "seems to be the characteristic of metaphor, for by using metaphor you are always saying more than you mean (in the sense of define), or meaning (in the sense of refer) more that you say". It is in this sense that this "metaphor is cognitively unique" (Soskice 1985:53) and, Soskice continues (1985:62; *cf.* Jenkins 1989:233), "[the] strong metaphor does not prompt the routine renaming of aspects otherwise identifiable, but suggests new categories of interpretation and hypothesizes new entities, state of affairs, and causal relations."

Finally, a very important element of this account of metaphor is its notion of "subsidiary vehicles" in which the vehicle within a metaphor is modified by yet another metaphor to give added depth and insight into the "primary vehicle" being used (Richards cited in Soskice 1985:46). In this regard Richards (cited in Soskice 1985:46) stresses that the "tenor and the vehicle are not necessarily two terms of the utterance at all" thereby making room for (a) subsidiary vehicle(s). This notion will prove vital for our analysis of the context of Hosea's marriage imagery which is discussed below. But first we will briefly consider how reference is produced through this account of metaphor.

3.2.4 Networks of Associative Common Places

Recapping Soskice's (1985:17; *cf.* Pierini 2007:24) consideration of the cognitive unique state of a metaphor, she suggests that if a metaphor is a good one, it "goes well beyond the bare formulation of the utterance". And, when this happens, "the metaphor goes beyond the linguistic into the realm of the psychological and perceptual" (Soskice 1985:18). She cautions however, that it is still a linguistic phenomenon and cannot be located outside this sphere. In this sense there is, what Soskice calls, "an external structure to a metaphor" in which "two terms are contrasted and compared" (Soskice 1985:20). Therefore, as this linguistic entity is affecting the cognitive realm, it is "capable of saying that which may be said in no other way" (Soskice 1985:44), giving us "two ideas for one, yet do so without lapsing into a comparison theory." This cognitive activity brings to mind a network of "associated common places", but the "opinion as to how metaphor achieves its unique cognitive task" varies (Soskice 1985:31; *cf.* Bal 2006:149). Soskice (1985:50) makes a helpful contribution, suggesting that "at a secondary level metaphorical construal is characterized by its reliance on an underlying model, or even a number of such models, and that metaphor and model are indeed, as Black has suggested, closely linked." Therefore a metaphor would not only bring to mind actions implied by, or characteristics of a word in relation to its meaning within a phrase or sentence, but also other models within a given social sphere which elicit the same characteristics. According to Soskice (1985:50) "[these] models form part of what we shall call the associative network of the [vehicle]".

The implication of the vehicle and tenor's interaction is that both "are influenced or changed by being brought into relationship with the other" (McFague 1982:38). However, the change affected, which is attractive in Soskice's account of metaphor and perceptively captured by Jenkins (1989:234), lies in the fact that the utterance "suggests a particular view of what is real; the typical being is better described, not in terms of resemblance but in terms of the taking on of attributes, of ‚becoming' something in terms of growth, of developments and decay." Therefore, continues Jenkins (1989:234), "a distinction [is] implied between things and ‚underlying structures.' Things may act upon each other and be acted upon, but the structure or, better, event is ‚incorporeal'; it is not a physical property but an attribute of things". The utterance therefore, "designates things and expresses events: hence the twofold task of denotation and reference",

and in this way the utterance "may afford the investigating community access to important causal features of the world" (Jenkins 1989:234; *cf.* Soskice 1985:131).[26]

It is in this sense that "the relational irreducibility of the metaphor lies in the potentially limitless suggestions that are evoked by considering" a metaphor on a model or underlying models (Soskice 1985:95). These models bring to mind an array of possibilities which gives richness to the spoken word. This irreducibility of a metaphor is not a liability, says Soskice (1985:134), because "metaphors are allowable, their vagueness valuable, and their relational structures useful to theoretical accounts" and this contributes to scientific enquiry. It also brings Soskice's critical realism into play: we can speak of the abstract, not in terms of an "is or is not" as if a metaphor has two meanings, but rather in terms of incorporeal structures or events.

Soskice (1985:134) emphasises the importance of an utterance in its context in order that the community of speakers might identify an extension of terms and the difference it creates. In this regard Soskice (1985:134) suggests that our scientific endeavour becomes integral in exploring what a given metaphor might refer to. Soskice (1985:134) suggests that "we have the two levels at work in the referential process: the initial one in which sense does circumscribe the denotation of a term in a language, and the secondary one at which a term with a specifiable sense can be used by speakers or a community of speakers to refer to states and relations we only partially understand." It is at this point that Jenkins (1989:233) notices an "increasingly indistinct and mysterious" quality of reference within Soskice's account. The reason for this quality, according to Jenkins (1989:233), is that the "'reference' of a metaphor goes beyond what we know to be the case, and this is because there is an imbalance between reference and definition: you can refer before you can define, and speak before you know what you are speaking about." Nevertheless, he states that: "It is this imbalance that gives metaphor its movement and permits its creativity, its ability to generate new insights, to map and to accommodate" (Jenkins 1989:233).

Accordingly, Soskice (1985:57, 58) states: "A good metaphor may not simply be an oblique reference to a predetermined subject but a new vision, the birth of a new understanding, a new

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[26] This incorporeality is a vital consideration for metaphors in religious language because a "risky metaphor" has often produced a "risky deduction" (Weems 1989:100; *cf.* Owino 2009).

referential access. A strong metaphor compels new possibilities of vision." Soskice (1985:89) asserts that the "interesting thing about metaphor, or at least about some metaphors, is that they are used not to describe but to disclose for the first time", and that the "metaphor has to be used because something new is being talked about." Metaphors therefore are a way in which we interpret our world and our experiences, but McFague (1982:36) cautions that the implications of the one metaphor are very different from those of another. This consideration is corroborated by Weems (1989:90 *cf.* West 1996a:203) who asserts that "as a literary device the metaphor provides *particular* insights ... in ways that other [literary devices] cannot." At this level of utterance a „degree' of metaphor emerges, as is evident in Soskice's (1985:17) and Pierini's (2007:23) studies among many others.

3.2.5   A Master of Metaphor

"The creative act, whether it be a solution to a mathematical puzzle, the writing of a poem, or a new and fruitful way to view the dynamics of world economics, is a selection, combination, and synthesis of the already familiar into new wholes" (Coleridge cited in McFague 1982:35). Employing metaphors is an essential part of everyday life, as alluded to, but it is only a "master of metaphor" (Aristotle cited in McFague 1982:32) that is able to make metaphor work and that therefore is reserved only for the most "constructive thinkers" (Coleridge cited in McFague 1982:35). At this level it is creatively employed by orators, poets, and scientists as a rhetorical tool. Metaphor is "genuinely creative and says something that can be said adequately in no other way, not as an ornament to what we already know but as an embodiment of a new insight" (Soskice 1985:4, 48; *cf.* West 1996a:204). But as figures of speech, metaphors are not "straightforward" (Jenkins 1989:219), and "by virtue of [a metaphor's] relational nature [it is not] completely reducible to a literal equivalent without consequent loss of content, not even those metaphors for which one can specify an ostensive referent" (Soskice 1985:94). This consideration is according to Soskice (1985:95) "one of the marks of the particular conceptual utility of metaphor."

In relation to the critical realism that Soskice advances in her theory she suggests that two points are particular important when speaking of realism. Firstly, Soskice cites Boyd (cited in Soskice 1985:131) who suggests "that some general terms „afford epistemic access to kinds which are „natural' in the sense of corresponding to important causal features of the world'", and secondly,

the "important feature of realism [is] that it has a social and context-relative nature. The divisions we make, and even the 'kinds' we isolate, will themselves be relative to the context of the enquiry" (Soskice 1985:131). Therefore, the "meaning of terms in a language, or as we prefer, their sense, does have a part to play at one level of reference, but at another, reference is determined by speakers in contexts of use, and not simply by individual speakers but by communities of speakers whose language provides access to the states and relations which are of interest to them" (Soskice 1985:132; *cf.* 44, 135). "It is because senses are important but now fully definitive that metaphor becomes extremely useful in the project of reality depiction, which is ... a realist project" (Soskice 1985:132).

Regarding the reference produced in this project, Soskice (1985:90) observes that the "thesis that each metaphor has two meanings rests on a confusion between what the speaker says (the words and sentences he or she uses) and what the speaker intends by uttering them within a particular context." According to Soskice (1985:85, *cf.* 90), the speaker usually has only one intended meaning for a given "utterance – otherwise speech would be impossibly ambiguous." She continues, that "[by] the time the hearer has recognized an utterance as metaphorical, he [or she] has normally grasped the speaker's intention and his [or her] (single) meaning" (Soskice 1985:85).[27] Therefore the metaphorical vehicle is selected "to describe the referent picked out by the whole of the utterance or ... by the speaker making the utterance" (Soskice 1985:53). Bal (1993:206) posits that the theory of metaphor is "a perverse, messy epistemology that allows scholars to engage with literature and learn from it as much as about it, metaphor becomes, after all, equipment for life." It is on this note that I will engage the literature of Hosea, particularly, his marriage-harlotry metaphor, employing the theory of metaphor as expounded above. First however, I will provide a short overview, a glimpse as it were, of the development of the interpretation of the first three chapters of Hosea, beginning with the traditional interpretation and ending with current views of the marriage imagery, and in doing so, I will locate the argument of the thesis.

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[27] Soskice (1985:85) employs an example of a metaphor in which the alternative to understanding it as a metaphor is to fail to understand it at all. This is not the characteristic type metaphors of A and B, but she calls these the "most interesting ones". This also serves to criticise the ‚two subject matters' of the metaphor as espoused by Black, who suggests that a metaphor has a primary subject and a secondary subject.

3.3   DELINEATING THE SCOPE OF ENGAGEMENT

Traditional interpretations of the first three chapters of Hosea coalesce around the Canaanite fertility cult where "sexual" or "cultic prostitution" figured largely. This Canaanite religion is the canvas against which Israel's faith is sketched (*cf.* Keefe 1995:72, 76) amidst the apostate and syncretistic tendencies of the Israelites in the land of Canaan[28] and which the prophets in general and Hosea in particular condemn. However, recent work in Hosean studies has revealed that political economy lies at the heart of Hosea's prophecy and, consequently, exposes to doubt the bold sacred, cultic prostitution hypothesis which forms the basis of traditional interpretations. Interdisciplinary research has rendered a particular service to recent engagement with the first three chapters of Hosea, especially the marriage-harlotry image. Innovative reading strategies have provided new and intriguing ways in which to approach the marriage imagery in the book of Hosea.[29] It is within this trajectory that I locate this study, and I will employ these resources in a dialogue with the conventional reading strategies. I will therefore trace the development of the interpretation of marriage-harlotry imagery in the book of Hosea, starting with its traditional interpretation and ending with recent work.

3.3.1   The Elusive Cultic Prostitute

A closer look at traditional interpretations reveals that the locus for Israel's sin is Hosea's hyperbolic denouncements of the many rites of Israel associated with the Canaanite fertility cult (Mays 1969:25). But what Hosea does not abrogate, according to Mays (1969:9), he recycles and

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[28] An array of literature has been written around the notion that Israel's faith represented an evolution from the Canaanite religion. More specifically relevant to our consideration here is the use of terms like ‚idolatry' and ‚syncretism' which Greenspahn (2004) refutes. He states that even the notion of calling God Baal was an acceptable "epithet for YHWH" (492).

[29] Innovative reading strategies are done by persons that MacFague, following anthropologist Turner (cited in MacFague 1982: 154), calls "liminal" thinkers, "those persons or communities who became conscious of an anomaly in a religious paradigm, something in their experience that does not fit into the conventions of a tradition." Feminist reading strategies particularly fall under this paradigm, and those who have chosen to read against the biased assumptions of the Hebrew Bible, as some would suggest "reading against the grain", have employed women's and minor societies' experiences as an epistemological tool to critique patriarchal assumptions and literature. These critiques have also incorporated other disciplines, i.e. socio-scientific methodologies, etc., to provide a richer interpretation of the biblical text. These liminal thinkers are particularly evident in recent work done on the marriage metaphor of Hosea. They have consciously chosen not to subscribe to the conventional patriarchal and ideological readings of this text. Work done in this field includes that of Setel (1989); Weems (1989, 1995); Bird (1989); Carroll (1993); Keefe (1995, 2001); Fontaine (1995); Landy (1995a, 1995b); Sherwood (1995); West (1996); Yee (2003); Chaney (2004); and Kelle (2005).

one "prime example of his appropriation of themes is from the fertility cult", particularly his "use of marriage as a model of Yahweh's relation to Israel and of sexual promiscuity as the leit-motif of his portrayal of Israel's sin" (Mays 1969:25). Mays (1969:25) further provides a more detailed description of the activities associated with this cult, asserting that the "cult of Baal involved both men and women in sexual rites; the men lay with sacred prostitutes, and the women as devotees of Baal possibly made themselves available to male worshippers to receive fertility through the cult." Although these activities are understood by Mays (1969:25) to be a metaphor, he nevertheless suggests that it is at this point that "metaphor and reality are almost synonymous. It is this cultic environment which furnishes the key to the most likely interpretation of the two expressions „a woman/wife of harlotry' and „children of harlotry'." Andersen and Freedman (1980:166, 125; *cf.* Keefe 1995:77 note 1) demonstrate the same confusion with regard to metaphor as Mays (1969:125, 166): "[since] Gomer's misconduct is not just *like* the sin of Israel that infuriates God and breaks his heart; it *is* that sin; everything points to her promiscuity as participation in the ritual sex acts of the Baal cult" (his emphasis). Nevertheless, they do see "the life experiences of the prophet ... as a source and model for his message" (Andersen & Freedman 1980:46, 284), but this message he "generally cloaks within a metaphor." Despite the assertion that Hosea's message is cloaked within a metaphor, they posit that "Yahweh's judgment of her as a sinner is indistinguishable from his condemnation of the whole nation's societal sin" (Andersen & Freedman 1980:125).

The analyses of these scholars would better suit a model and at times a simile. But a metaphor is not something which functions as a comparison, and cannot be located in the physical realm like a model. These terminological imprecisions have consequences on a more critical level. The fertility hypothesis is also evident in Macintosh's (1997:79) commentary who, on a more affectionate level, suggests that "Hosea portrays the love of Yahweh for Israel in terms of the love of a husband for his wife[30] ... For a central theme of the Canaanite religion was that the sexual principle was reflected in nature and personified in the licentious fertility god Baal."[31]

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[30] In employing the model of marriage from an ancient society for reflecting on the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, it is important to note that love had nothing to do with such a marriage. In fact, marriage was rather seen as securing the next generation and as an economic institution.

[31] Bringing love into the equation seems to build up to a plethora of readings which suggest that "the Hosean marriage metaphor should be read as a parable of divine grace and forgiveness" (Van Dijk-Hemmes 1995:244).

These scholars seem to have privileged access to the details of the sacred fertility cult which are taken from only a few references in the confines of the Bible and later sources, but these interpretations have rightly attracted the suspicion of some liminal thinkers.

This consensus of a Canaanite fertility cult where "cultic or sacred prostitution" figured prominently has recently been refuted by an array of scholars. These scholars have searched beyond the bounds of the Bible and a speculative consensus among some biblical scholars, by using social scientific, archaeological, and contemporary literary methodologies to refute this "longstanding scholarly consensus" (*cf.* Bird 1989:76; Leith 1989:98-99; Keefe 1995:77-89; Yee: 2003:86; Chaney 2004:97; Kelle 2005:14-15; 128-132).

The refutation started with Bird (1989), who is concerned with the translation and interpretation of the Hebrew root זנה for which Hosea shows such a predilection. Bird asserts that the root has two meanings in Hosea. The first meaning is the connotative meaning which does not involve any cultic activity, namely "to engage in illicit/extramarital sexual activity, to fornicate" (Bird 1989:88, 76; West 1996a:202). Alongside this basic meaning there is an innovative metaphorical meaning "created by Hosea to characterize and indict Israel's worship" (Bird 1989:88, 93; West 1996a:202). A further example of Hosea's polemical usage, according to Bird, is found in the sphere of Hosea 4:11-14, characterized by Chaney (2004:99) as the "long considered bedrock for the „cultic prostitution' model", in which זֹנוֹת (prostitutes) and קְדֵשׁוֹת (female cult functionaries) are mentioned together in the cultic context. But, according to Bird (1989:76), "the terms used in the indigenous languages to describe these two classes never connect the sacred sphere with prostitution or prostitution with the cult." She further argues that this verse allows for an interpretation where prostitutes were active around the cultic sphere, but did not function within the ritual sphere. She states that "[it] is only through association that the interpretation arises, and it is only in the Hebrew Bible that the association is made in a deliberate manner" (Bird 1989:76).

Leith (1989:98, 99; *cf.* Yee 1995:356) cites Oden who argues that the use of sacred prostitutes might be a rhetorical device against which Israelites defined themselves. "When the Israelites

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Many scholars, including Van Dijk-Hemmes, have challenged such a reading, especially since notions of power and honor coalesce around such an imagery as will be highlighted presently.

accused their traditional enemies – indeed, their cultural opposites – the Canaanites, of sexual improprieties in the practice of the Ba„al cult, the Israelites were saying more about their perception of themselves and their own Yahwistic cult than about the Canaanites" (Leith 1989:99; *cf.* Keefe 1995:77). Oden (cited in Keefe 1995:79) argues that sexual debauchery is employed by some cultures to affirm their superiority over and above other cultures. According to Leith (1989:99), sexual impropriety as a boundary marker is manipulated by Hosea in order "that *Israel* becomes a participant in the detestable sexual rituals ascribed by the Israelites to their Canaanite neighbours" (Leith 1989:99). However, Keefe (1995:83) states that "the traditional model of cultural contestation upon which the fertility cult thesis rests must … be seen as highly suspect in that it naively relies upon an antiquated paradigm of Israel as an invading force which conquered Canaan and then succumbed to its „foreign' influence."[32] Keefe (1995:83) further draws our attention to socio-scientific research done on the emergence of Israel as a nation, stating that "we must revise our approach to ancient Israelite religion, such that continuity with the Canaanite religion rather than discontinuity becomes our basic presupposition."

Another critical study of the marriage-harlotry metaphor suggests that Israel has been understood in the Hebrew Bible as Yahweh's bride, which also finds a resounding voice in the fertility cult hypothesis. But this representation of the covenant by Hosea in terms of a marriage is unmatched in any ancient Near Eastern literature (Cohen cited in Graetz 1995:127).[33] Many scholars agree that Hosea is in fact the first to use this image of Yahweh as husband and Israel as wife (Setel 1985:86, 90, 93-94; Bird 1989:80; Weems 1989:89; van Dijk-Hemmes 1995:244; West 1996a:201).[34] Hence this section reveals, that Hosea's innovative usage of the term זנה and the fact of Hosea being the first to portray the covenant in terms of a marriage, suggest that Hosea employed the marriage-harlotry image as a rhetorical device in his context. Keefe (1995:72; *cf.* Setel 1985:92; Kelle 2004:20), through an inter-textual study, posits that this rhetorical device

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[32] Trenchant attention has been given to the emergence of ancient Israel as a nation in modern scholarship. See Lemche (1988), Davies (1992), MacNutt (1999), and Grosby (2002).

[33] Graetz (1995:127), citing Cohen, states that "such a marriage metaphor is not found in the literature of any other ancient religion besides Israel's." Yee (2001:355), providing an extensive bibliography, argues that "Ugaritic, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian texts offer no explicit information about sacred prostitution, and testimonies used by some to support such an institution, such as Herodotus and Strabo, are quite unreliable, because they were written at a far later date and are rather biased."

[34] For other literature specifying that Hosea is the first text to use this metaphor, see West (1996).

functioned "as a commentary upon the pressing socio-political conflicts of Hosea's time", rather than as evidence of a fertility cult in which sacred prostitution figured largely.

3.3.2   The Different Faces of Gomer the Licentious Woman

The dominant theological interpretations of Hosea's marriage-harlotry metaphor have also drawn the attention of feminist biblical scholars from a wide range of orientations. Particularly, as this metaphor has inspired Hosea's next generation of prophets and has been characterised by Mays (1969:9; *cf.* Andersen & Freedman 1980:48) as "the most effective and influential in later thought." According to Brenner (1995), Jeremiah intensifies Hosea's imagery for his audience, likening it to an animal who is always sexually on heat; but this reading is refuted by Carroll (1995:287) who states: "there is no woman in the text only a metaphor!"

That this is an ignorant statement by Carroll is evident from the theory of metaphor we have discussed above, where metaphor is defined as constituted by the most basic elements which are agreed upon within a particular culture and elevated in order to "say more than you mean and meaning more than you say." This statement by Carroll also seems to be ignored in interpretations that see in this metaphor a woman who functions as a model for Israel (Andersen & Freedman 1980:58, 125 and 284), in whom the whole nation's sin is captured and in whose face the faces of all other women, active in cultic prostitution or promiscuous behaviour, are seen (Hos 4:14). It would be safe to surmise that this woman represents all the women in Hosea's time that would, according to Chaney (2004:113), receive "some combination of beating, confinement, public stripping, humiliation, divorce, exile, injury, deprivation of food and water, induced illness, and death" if they were confronted with the guilt of prostitution. And also in our contemporary society she represents women of whose lives the cycle of abuse, evident within the discourse of Hosea, is an integral part (Weems 1989:101; *cf.* Keefe 1995:71; Owino 2009). What is sure is that Gomer, seen through the focalisation of her husband who gives evidence against her, is given, in classical Deuteronomic style, no chance to speak but is only allowed to receive her fate as decided by the patriarchal judiciary of her day.[35]

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[35] The gender injustices based on the marriage-harlotry metaphor are evident throughout the book, but will only be dealt with as far as they are relevant to the socioeconomic issues addressed by Hosea.

However, in our context she is given a voice by the liminal thinkers in biblical studies. Through her presence within the biblical text she provides evidence of "objectified female sexuality as a symbol of evil" (Setel 1985:86), the "sexual abuse of a woman" (Weems 1989:90), and betrays many other cultural mores through the research done in our discipline. The woman within this metaphor is dynamic, because she not only speaks from beyond her culture, betraying its gender injustices, but she also provides us with an epistemological tool which we can use to critique the dominant patriarchal interpretations of her person, that attempt to subjugate and silence her. Although the literature in the field is well established, this study's engagement with it will only probe this dynamic metaphor in as far as it influences the socioeconomic dimensions of Israelite society, to which I now turn.

3.3.3   The Classical Prophetic Corpus

Hosea's predominant considerations regarding the official religion in Israel are destabilised by his contemporaries Amos and Isaiah who seem to be more in touch with the socioeconomic realities which they condemn using "normative terms" (Mays 1969:98). Terms such as "righteousness and justice" figure prominently in the books which carry their names, as opposed to the book of Hosea who "bypasses [these terms] in favour of *knowledge of God, devotion, and faithfulness*"[36] (Mays 1969:12; his emphasis) as if these terms are not part of people's engagement with each other in everyday life. Hosea's sphere of contention, through this interpretation, seems to be the political and cultic settings of Israel, distinct from the socio-economic setting of his time which is "emphasized by Amos and Isaiah" (Mays 1969:12), Hosea's contemporaries. Petersen (cited in Chaney 2004:98) offers a similar argument regarding Hosea's concern with the religious sphere by stating that "Amos inveighs against social and economic practices in the northern kingdom, whereas Hosea focuses on religious and political misdeeds." These citations emphatically serve as examples which highlight Hosea's preoccupation with religious issues because his choice of terms does not include "righteousness and justice." These terms, according to these interpretations, clearly belong to a more socioeconomic agenda rather than a religious one.

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[36] *Cf.* Hosea 4:1; 6:4, 6; 12:6 respectively. Mays does mention that Hosea uses justice, but only once in Hos 12:6.

These types of readings partition the world and distinguishes between, on the one hand, the sacred (religion and cult) and, on the other hand, socioeconomic issues which belong to the secular, are therefore non-religious and seemingly not part of Hosea's agenda. But history has taught us that "religion is neither autonomous from, nor merely derivative of, social processes and material conditions ... it is about the constitution of worlds of meaning out of the raw stuff of the material, geographical and historical givens and processes that press upon human life in any particular time and place" (Keefe 1995:74). Therefore if Hosea's contemporaries, Amos, Isaiah, and Micah are criticising the socioeconomic conditions of their time, one might, logically, wish to assess in what way Hosea may have focused on these same issues, albeit through a different form of expression (Chaney 2004:105). The flipside is also true. Keefe (1995:78) states: "Neither Amos, Micah nor Isaiah appeared to be troubled by Israelite worship of Baal or the [Baalim], nor do they seem to be aware of any widespread moral degeneration, which is assumed to be a consequence of Israel's engagement with the sex cult." Consequently, a critical issue to investigate would be the absence of sexual fertility cult rhetoric within Hosea's contemporaries (Chaney 2004:105). To be sure, the sexual fertility cult in biblical and extra-biblical evidence, as I have argued above, seems to be strangely elusive.

3.3.4   The Influence of Being Partially Constituted

That the book of Hosea seeks a fundamental religious solution and speaks in the cultic sphere is not the contentious issue at stake in the foregoing interpretations. Rather, what seems to be the contention is the uncritical acceptance by traditional interpreters of the putative sacred prostitution and fertility cult of the ancient Near East, despite lack of textual and extra-textual evidence (Keefe 1995:72; Chaney 2004:100). According to Keefe (1995:72), the fertility cult hypothesis "may be traced to the biases of a theological agenda within which Canaanite religion is gendered as the seductive and degenerate „other' against which biblical religion defines itself." Keefe (1995:80) further argues that "[the] predilection of the male scholarly guild to imagine any and all Canaanite goddesses as fertility goddesses serves to support an imagination of Canaan's fertility cult as essentially a goddess cult." Keefe citing Koch (1995:81) states: "In opposition to this „voluptuous and dissolute' fertility cult, which is gendered in such feminine terms, stands faith in Yahweh, the god of history and ethics, whose masculinity in Hosea's metaphor is by no means arbitrary." The androcentric construction of what is essentially a goddess cult within the

Canaanite fertility religion is advanced by scholarly literature, despite evidence from "the Ras Shamra texts [which] clearly show Baal and El to be the Canaanite deities who are most immediately concerned with agricultural and human fertility respectively" (Hackett cited in Keefe 1995:80 note 1).

Taking the cue from the foregoing discussion it is safe to posit that traditional readings reflect interpretations which are, to employ West's (2000) term, being "partially constituted." West (2000) suggests that a reading of any text can be framed and to some extent influenced by ideas and authors. Chaney (2004:100) suggests that "[critics] of the older set of assumptions in Hosea studies have offered a compelling sociology-of-knowledge analysis of how the model arose, why it persisted for so long unchallenged, and why challenges surfaced." Keefe who is among the strongest critics of the cultic prostitution paradigm, argues that "[the] dominance of the fertility cult thesis does not ... rest upon any pervasive evidence but upon the projection of the gender polarities of Western culture unto the interpretation of Hosea's female sexual imagery." Oden (cited in Keefe 2001:57) states: "In its uncritical promotion of the sacred prostitution accusation, biblical scholarship betrays the extent to which it continues to serve the theological interest of the Christian church." The traditional readings are therefore partially constituted by the Christian church and androcentric Western culture.

The traditions by which an interpreter is partially formed influence the direction of his or her interpretation and can at times be detrimental to the critical work undertaken, as evinced above. It is therefore important that interpreters are overt about influences with which they are partially constituted. This is a practice that has become normative among socially engaged biblical scholars, as opposed to the traditionalists' claims of objectivity. Accordingly, Keefe (1995:83) suggests that "it is perhaps better to reject these androcentric formulations altogether, and work to rethink the religious situation in eighth-century Syria-Palestine anew." Heeding Keefe's suggestion, this study will be informed, rather than by the traditional interpretations of a pervasive fertility cult, by scholars who have chosen to read against the "androcentric" and "Western" formulations of traditional Hosean scholarship (Keefe 1995:72, 83; 2001:11-13, 32, 56, etc).

3.3.5   Situating the Argument

The longstanding scholarly consensus of a pervasive Canaanite fertility cult in which the "sexual cultic prostitution" paradigm predominated, has been demonstrated above not to rest on any firm textual or extra-textual grounds. This conclusion resulted from interdisciplinary research in biblical scholarship, particularly as applied to the text of Hosea. The locus of this thesis will be within those readings, as previously stated, which have concentrated on the marriage imagery of the first three chapters. Thus, concurring with Weems (1989:101) that the marriage metaphors in Hosea are "not simply examples of grandiloquence [and] not just instances of literary embellishment." Such use of metaphor is rather "a form of memory and an opportunity for the possibility of continuity, [it also has] the power to change our world" (West 1996a:209). In my engagement with the metaphor as a form of memory and as a power to change our world, particularly from the perspective of making a contribution to the South African context, I will heed the advice of Chaney (2004:97): "Reading the text of Hosea ... demands of its interpreter both a sharp eye and a light hand – not to mention a healthy dose of humility." These qualities are certainly needed for any interpretation of the text of Hosea because it represents the memory of an ancient culture which, as I will argue, is a memory of suffering.

The marriage-harlotry in the book of Hosea has a particular "female orientation" and, according to Bird (1989:89), it "does not single out women for condemnation; it is used rather as a rhetorical device to expose men's sin." The metaphor's particular female orientation has been the springboard for biblical scholars such as Weems (1989) and West (1996a) to investigate why the vehicle of this metaphor is a female and not a male. Weems (1989), employing a literary approach, asserts the "versatility of the metaphor as a model for shedding light on the capriciousness of the divine-human relationship" and goes on to state that it captures "the vicissitudes of that relationship" (Weems 1989:99). However, despite the metaphor's "poetic versatility", she takes issue with any metaphor that associates "God with sexual violence" (Weems 1989:100) and contends that "as a dominant theological model the marriage metaphor is limited, if not risky" (Weems 1989:90, *cf.* 100). Weems' preoccupation is, like that of Graetz and many other biblical scholars, with liberation and with the fact that the appearance of Hosea 2 in sacred literature is problematic in that it "plays a role in perpetuating biblical patriarchalism into our own day" (Graetz 1995:139). In this context Graetz (1995:139) postulates that "the message

of the prophets can be understood as permitting husbands to abuse their wives psychologically and physically."[37] Discounting many interpretations which suggest that the imageries employed by the prophets are "just metaphors", Weems (1989:101) asserts, drawing on McFague's (1982) work on metaphor theory, that "religious language and metaphors are not bankrupt as some tend to suppose, that at least in some settings they continue to inspire, mobilize, convict, instruct, challenge, and transform." Weems (1989:101) suggests that, because metaphors have such influences in many contexts, theologians, particularly those devoted to liberation, need to probe metaphors and draw from the insights they provide, but, simultaneously, they must consider and expose the limitations of many biblical metaphors.

West (1996a) follows suit in appropriating the insights provided by the marriage-harlotry metaphor, drawing on feminist biblical scholars and on a wide range of metaphor theorists in order to examine the relation between Hosea's language and the social context of women in ancient Israel. He asks "why a metaphor with a negative view of woman emerges in Hosea", a metaphor "that relies upon the physical and sexual abuse of a woman in order to develop a theological insight" (West 1996a:208 *cf.* Weems 1989:90 note 10; 100). His endeavour to answer this question leads him to consider the consensus reached by an array of biblical scholars, that Hosea is the first text to employ the marriage-harlotry metaphor. Drawing on a range of metaphor theories that suggest that Hosea is presenting us with "an embodiment of a new insight"[38] (West 1996a:204), West sets out to explore what this new insight meant to women's experiences in their historical context. In this regard, he invokes Setel (1985) in order to discover "what discourse context generates this *new way of speaking about women (and God)* in Hosea" (West 1996a:204; his emphasis). Setel (1985:92; West 1996a:204-208) asserts that within this discourse context, the metaphor of Hosea "has both theological and social meaning" and that it is not a "random representation but a reflection and reinforcement of cultural perception" or, rather, as Brenner (1995:268) prefers, of "betraying cultural mores."

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[37] This point is particularly poignant since "women with strong religious backgrounds have the most difficulty in accepting that the violence against them is wrong" (Thistlethwaite 1985:99 *cf.* Weems 1989; 1995; West 1996:208-209; Owino 2009).
[38] West draws particularly on the work of Soskice (1985) at this point; for a comparison of the other sources on metaphor theories employed by him, see West (1996).

Both West's and Setel's discussions lead them to an analysis of the sociological location of women in the political and psychological state of Hosea's Israel (West 1996a:208). And this turbulent context is consequently the locus for Keefe (1995), Yee (2001), Chaney (2004), and Kelle (2005).

The latter four scholars all employ socio-scientific analyses to critique the traditional fertility cult hypothesis. Keefe (1995:70, 71) in her innovative study, is particularly interested in the "dualistic and gendered religious vision" that seems to be expressed by the metaphor. Keefe (1995:71) argues that "the conclusion that Hosea's female sexual imagery inscribes a dualistic worldview demands critical reexamination given the manner in which this conclusion has been conditioned by a set of androcentric and theological assumptions." She continues by stating that these assumptions "are themselves already predicated upon dualist ways of thinking about gender imagery and religious meanings" (Keefe 1995:71). Revisioning the approach to Hosea, she critiques the traditional approach of a "syncretistic fertility cult" (Keefe 1995:72) and proposes that "Hosea's use of female sexual imagery carries socioeconomic and political connotations" (Keefe 1995:100, 72-76). With these assumptions in mind, she considers the economic transition from the more traditional economic system whereby the bet-ab played[39] such a central role in the social and religious fabric of ancient Israel, to "a market economy, within which produce and people had been commodified" (Keefe 1995:100; 2001:191, 221).

This market economy is also the sphere of analysis for Chaney (2004) and Yee (2001). Chaney (2004:101) proposes "that ‚promiscuity' in the book of Hosea is primarily a figure for the dynamics in the political economy of Israel, most particularly for the dynamics of agricultural intensification." Chaney (2004:101) further states "that ‚religious' institution and practices come within the purview of that figure [and] involve the sacral legitimation of agricultural intensification, its architects and short-term beneficiaries." In concert, Yee (cited in Kelle 2005:16; *cf.* Yee 2001; Sharp 2008:63 note 6) suggests that "the marriage and sexual metaphors in Hos 1-2 are condemnations of the ruling elite that address the interrelated areas of socioeconomics, politics, and cult." In addition to these interpretations, Kelle's (2005) most

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[39] Keefe (1995:76) suggests that "Hosea's trope is not really a marriage metaphor at all, but a family metaphor, which draws upon the centrality of the family in traditional Israelite life as a way of addressing the disintegration and impending destruction of that way of life, brought about by the self-aggrandizing practices of Israel's elite establishment."

recent study offers the benefit of understanding the marriage imagery of Hosea through an investigation of extra-biblical sources in order to reconstruct the rhetorical situation of Hosea's metaphor. His proposal, which I am especially interested in, is, that the discourse context of "Hosea 2 can fruitfully be understood as the prophet Hosea's metaphorical and theological commentary on the political affairs of Samaria and their implications for both Israel and Judah around the time of the close of the Syro-Ephraimitic war (731-730 B.C.E)" (Kelle 2004:20). These respective analyses by different scholars will be integrated in the discussions that follow.

3.4   LITERARY AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF HOSEA'S CONTEXT

3.4.1   Prominence, Date and Literary Character of Hosea

The book of Hosea has a predilection for northern place names and calls the northern province of Israel more often than not Ephraim (Davies 1993:13). The book's preoccupation with the north allows us a unique northern perspective and many scholars surmise that Hosea might have been a northerner himself (Macintosh 1997:liii). The book's style is also unlike the literature of the south, Judah, to which biblical scholars are more accustomed (Macintosh 1997:lvii-lxi). Its style is perceptively captured by Chaney (2004:97), who suggests that "[one] image tumbles into the next, often with little or no boundary or transition. Trope is layered upon trope, leaving to the reader's discernment the many complexities of preunderstanding and interdependence." Commenting on this style, Fisch (1988:149; *cf.* Landy 1995:12; Macintosh 1997:lxi) suggests that it "belongs to the greatest poetry." Indeed, this poetry is said to display a remarkable covenantal texture (Fisch 1988:138), especially since its central point is, in the words of Fisch (1988:138), "the image of a marriage bond that holds in spite of betrayal (3:1), of a covenant transgressed (8:1) and reforged (2:20-22 [2:18-20]), one that binds Israel to God and both to the world of natural things."

Despite the fact that some scholars have discerned two or more hands at work in the book which developed at different times (Kaufmann and Ginsberg cited in Andersen & Freedman 1980:68), the text displays "a high level of coherence in the composition, [and] … is the deliberate result of an artistry far more sophisticated than anything previously suspected" (Andersen & Freedman 1980:70; *cf.* Fisch 1988:138; Landy 1995:12). The view that two or more hands can be discerned is not striking in a book which displays "[seemingly] disconnected sentences, cryptic

expressions, words that stand out jaggedly from their context [which] have placed enormous difficulties in the path of form-critics looking for homogeneous literary units" (Fisch 1988:138). In addition, Hosea's pervasive use of metaphors has often (by scholars such as Garrett, Melugin and Weems (cited in Kelle 2004:6; *cf.* Weems 1989:88)) been taken as an obstacle for the deduction of any historical setting, particularly "because of its metaphorical character." However, probing the crucible which has borne such a work will reveal that historical details can be discerned exactly in places where they seem most unlikely. Many studies of biblical scholarship have demonstrated that employing metaphor as an epistemological tool provides access to historical situations. This has particularly been the case in recent engagements with the book of Hosea, as alluded to above. In this regard Kelle's (2005) study especially benefits this investigation as, by employing extra-biblical texts, it sheds light on the language used in the book. As a result, terms used by Hosea provide an "epistemic access point" to understanding the experiences reflected in the marriage metaphor.

In the context of this chapter, analysis will be restricted to chapters 1-3 where the marriage imagery functions as the main literary device. These three chapters have commonly been appropriated, giving rise to much divergent criticism, as evidence for the prophet's biographical and historical details, including those of his family life (Rowley 1956; *cf.* Leith 1989:97) with particular reference to the narrative sections in chapters 1 and 3. The view of this study is that Hosea 1-3, albeit different in genre and showing marked stages of redaction, was written by the prophet personally, because of its clear movement.[40] The first two chapters are located, following Kelle's (2005:182-200) proposal, in "the historical events in Israel and Judah at the close of the Syro-Ephraimitic war [731-730 B.C.E.]", while chapter three reflects an eschatological hope of restoration in the last days (Hos 3:4-5), placing it in the time preceding the destruction of Samaria in ca. 722 B.C.E.

3.4.2 Marriage-Harlotry Metaphor in the Book of Hosea

The period in which this study situates the prophecy of Hosea was one of turbulence and a sure vision of imminent destruction. The proposal by Macintosh (1997:lxxxviii), namely that the time

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[40] For discussions on the development of the first three chapters, see Kelle (2005:2-17; 181-200) and Andersen and Freedman (1980:31-76, 115-309).

frame of thirty years for Hosea's interpretation of the situation at hand indicates a "largely retrospective" account, is however refuted. If this was the case, then Hosea could have left us an easier text to deal with, albeit in a different dialect, while still maintaining its literary artistry. But turbulent situations in which existing political power is threatened often reveal evidence of violent repression of dissenting voices of which Hosea is an example (Hos 9:7-8; *cf.* 6:5). It is in such situations that one way of speaking to the masses is through excoriating their leaders "by metaphoric allusion rather than by direct description" (Chaney (2004:97). And it is such a situation that gave meaning to God's unprecedented imperative to Hosea which states: יְהוָה לֵךְ קַח־לְךָ אֵשֶׁת זְנוּנִים וְיַלְדֵי זְנוּנִים כִּי־זָנֹה תִזְנֶה הָאָרֶץ מֵאַחֲרֵי.[41] Bird (1989:80) suggests two ways in which this verse is indicative of a metaphorical intention. Firstly, "[the] use of [זנה] in the interpretive [כִּי] ("for, because") clause is clearly figurative, with the land (grammatically feminine) replacing the usual female subject."[42] Bird (1989:80) posits that the use of the root [זנה], instead of the more customary term in a broken marriage bond, [נאף] adultery, is meant to "emphasise promiscuity rather than infidelity, ‚wantonness' rather than violation of marriage contract or covenant"; secondly, "the pairing of ‚woman of promiscuity' with ‚children of promiscuity'" indicates that the statement has a metaphorical usage "since ... fornication normally describes a woman's activity". Within this context she asks, "[what] sense can it make applied to the children?" Concurring with Bird (1989:80), Chaney (2004:109) suggests that this is indeed a complex metaphor, which invites many themes,[43] but the theme which is of particular interest to this study is that of promiscuity, in concert with Bird (1989:80), Keefe (1995:90), and Chaney's (2004:101) engagement with the term in their studies. Hosea is therefore commanded to communicate with a nation under the present configuration, a nation that has abandoned her God (Hos 1:2). Following Chaney (2004:101) therefore, I would agree that the theme of this metaphor relates particularly to dynamics in the political economy of Israel's social configuration and serves in Hosea 4-14, in Keefe's words (1995:90), "as a leitmotif in the

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[41] "Go, take for yourself a wife of promiscuity and children of promiscuity, because the land is utterly promiscuous by turning away from Yahweh" (Hos 1:2) c*f.* Bird (1989:80). My own translations will be employed unless otherwise stated.

[42] See above for Bird's analysis of the metaphorical usage of *znh* created by Hosea.

[43] There are many themes which have been drawn from this metaphor; see the bibliographical details of "liminal thinkers" above for trenchant investigations of the metaphor and its different themes.

context of an extended critique of Israel's royal administration and supporting cultic institutions."

3.4.3 Metaphorical Images

In order for us to understand the figure of the woman within the metaphor, we need to start with the children. The reason for this is a proposal, predicated on the theory of metaphor above, that the children stand in as subsidiary vehicles which modify the primary vehicle, their mother, and consequently represent "the different aspects of the people of Israel" (Van Dijk-Hemmes 1989:83; *cf.* Keefe 1995:96). This view is in concert with Chaney's (2004:111) proposal of "class divisions and their importance in Hosea's world and the oracles of his prophetic contemporaries." The Israel that Hosea is addressing is therefore not as homogenous as was once thought and this would apply to both the ruling elite class and the nation as a whole.

3.4.3.1 יַלְדֵי זְנוּנִים

Taking the class stratification within the Israelite configuration into account, it is important to note that the essential matrix of the Israelite family was the paternity and therefore the legitimacy of children, particularly in a patriarchal society where "property inheritance is reckoned patrilineally" (Mayes cited in West 1996a:206; *cf.* Setel 1985:89; Yee 2001:347; Chaney 2004:110). A distinct difference will therefore exist between legitimate and illegitimate children. These factors come into play when the book employs the term זנה, which means promiscuity, to describe both mother and children. According to Bird (1989:80) "connotations of repeated, habitual, or characteristic behaviour are reinforced by the emphatic verbal augment [זנה] and by repetition of the noun [זְנוּנִים] ("promiscuity, fornication") to characterize both the wife and children." This characterisation would therefore call the children's legitimacy and paternity into question (Van Dijk-Hemmes 1985:83; Keefe 1995:97; Chaney 2004:106, 110). [44] Hosea's children, though their behaviour elicits no sign of promiscuity, are nevertheless classed with the mother's actions and are consequently also deserving a form of punishment (Hos 2:6-7 [4-5]).

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[44] At this stage this study is not concerned with any biographical or historical details of Hosea's family. Stating therefore that the children are illegitimate would only apply to the metaphorical children and in no respect serve as a commentary on the status of the historical children of Hosea.

Although the children are collectively described as promiscuous, not all of them are classed by this description.

The name Jezreel, the first born son of Hosea and Gomer, is by Keefe (1995:97) described as the "most evocative and perplexing" name of all the children. Jezreel is viewed by Keefe and others (Keefe 2005:9; *cf.* Yee 2001:372-375; Chaney 2004:114) as a "polyvalent trope" and according to Yee (2001:372) "[themes] of land, ownership, marriage and procreation converge in the birth of ... Jezreel." Amongst the three metaphorical children it would appear that Jezreel held a key position. In Hosea (2:3 [2:1]) he is told to affirm "your [second person plural] brothers and sisters." He is also commanded, in Hosea 2:4 [2:2],[45] to "plead with your (second person plural) mother." Two points emanate from these verses. Firstly, in both these verses Hosea employs a plural pronoun to refer to Jezreel. Jezreel is therefore used as a collective referring to a group of people, but which particular group it is that Hosea refers to becomes evident only in the second place. Secondly then, I would concur with Andersen and Freedman that Jezreel is a legitimate child. His legitimacy, however, is not located in blood ties (*cf.* Hos 1:4). The text does unequivocally state the paternity of Jezreel (*cf.* Hos 1:3), but it does not deny the paternity of the other children. Rather, I posit that his legitimacy is to be located in his position of influence, or authority. He represents the only group that is directly spoken to, and he is the only one who can speak to both the mother and the other children. I would therefore suggest that Jezreel represents those in authoritative positions and those who have power. The leadership corpus is thus reflected in the first born and legitimate son of Hosea and Gomer.

The text clearly portrays Jezreel differently from the other children. Consequently, a hierarchical structure is evident among the children of Hosea. Within the Israelite configuration the leadership corpus forms the top of the hierarchy, followed by the ordinary people which will be discussed below. The leadership corpus would include the king, princes, priests, business elites and the military wing, together with their families. But even this group, we need to note, is not homogenous. In the northern kingdom kings were often disposed by violent military coups. This

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[45] According to Andersen and Freedman (1980:212), with respect to the plural imperative in v. 2:3 [2:1], the subject is not explicitly "identified, but the immediate antecedent is Jezreel, who alone is qualified by blood ties to call the other children brother and sister. The use of the plural form for the verb seems odd, especially if the subject is the oldest child Jezreel." In this regard these scholars state that this grammar is "consistent with the use of plural pronominal suffixes with the nouns, and the plural forms of the nouns themselves: „Your brothers' and „your sisters'" (Andersen & Freedman 1980:212).

means that strong opposing groups existed within the leadership corpus. Another group which "had significant responsibilities"[46] within the monarchy (Yee 2001:360; *cf.* Deut. 12:17; 14:23; 18:4; 2 Chron. 31:5; Neh. 10:39; 13:5, 12) was the priestly class. The people of Israel had to pay taxes and tithes to the royal house. The essential matrix securing this payment was the cult through its sacrificial system, feasts, and the collection of tribute (Yee 2001:359-360). The priestly institution had therefore become a political agency of the monarchy, collecting tribute for the royal treasury and providing it with its sacral legitimation. However, not all of them benefitted from this relationship. The Bible reflects a category of priests that has been systematically made landless (Josh 14:3 *cf.* Josh 21:1). These priests were dependent on the royal house for their livelihoods and therefore a strategic arm that the king could manipulate.

Another aspect of the name Jezreel is its Hebrew meaning "God sows", but in the context of Hos 1:4 it is equated with the destruction that Yahweh will bring about "upon the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel" (*cf.* 2 Kings 9:14-10:17). The verse foresees an end to the sovereignty of the royal establishment of Israel which was predicated on violent military coups (*cf.* Keefe 1995:99), reflected in "the house of Israel" which stands in as a metonymy. This will happen by striking the heart of the state which is its military might, that Yahweh will bring to naught by breaking its bow in no other place then the valley of Jezreel (Hos 1:4-5). The punishment that would be enacted upon Jezreel appears to have still another dimension. The blood of Naboth and his sons (2 Kings 9:26) is also referred to within the violent military coup of Jehu which happened "in the field of Jezreel" (2 Kings 9:21). Jezreel happens to be one of the most fertile agricultural regions in Israel. According to Yee (2001:373), the region was "most likely, an important source of the royal cash crops: grain, wine, and oil" which formed the preferred produce of the royal house. Yee (2001:373) further argues that the valley of Jezreel played "a critical economic, political, and military role in Israel's tributary mode of production" in addition to the fact that it was "an important trade route and strategic military highway, connecting Israel with its foreign treaty partners." The area was therefore coveted by the royal house and it went to extreme measures to obtain it. The blood of Naboth at Jezreel (1 Kgs 21:17-19, 23 *cf.* Yee

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[46] Keefe (cited in Wittenberg 2009:496) "points to the central and critical role of the priests in the establishment and maintenance of the social order and the symbiotic relationship between the king and the priestly class. The priesthood controlled power not only at the major state sanctuaries but they also controlled the numerous shrines, the ‚high places' at the traditional worship sites." These sites therefore constitute a major organ to maintaining royal power.

2001:373; Keefe 1995:98) is a classic example of the land grabbing taking place in the plains, particularly as related to Jezreel, and that were aimed at the establishment of large estates (*cf.* Chaney 1989; Keefe 2001:191). These considerations might be important and broiling in the background of Hosea's thought. However, Chaney (2001:103) notes that during the time of Hosea's prophecy "the plains and the Shephelah ... had long since been garnered into the large estates of the wealthiest and most powerful landlords." Hosea's immediate purview, therefore, is strictly speaking the political economy in the highlands where the same policies are being applied by the ruling urban elite. But Keefe (2001:191) notes that Naboth's example is not only a matter of the rich exploiting the poor, but integrally linked to "a conflict in Israel between two competing systems of land tenure which were the material bases for two fundamentally different understandings of society and its proper values" (Chaney cited in Keefe 2001:191). This notion adds another dimension to the social stratification within Israel's social configuration. Therefore, Israel's land tenure policies by the royal urban elite are also implied in the judgment to be enacted in the name Jezreel.

Accumulation of property in Israel meant that fathers had to ensure that wives produced legitimate offspring. As a result "strict sanctions were laid against female promiscuity, thereby creating a double standard between the sexes for sexual behaviour" (Chaney 2004:110). Therefore, hierarchy in general, and its relation to gender in particular, would be inevitable in this society (*cf.* West 1996a). According to Yee (2001:346) "political instability within the Israelite royal court, coupled with the external threat of Assyrian invasion" forms one of the reasons for Hosea's message. Political instability, both at home and on the frontiers, affected gender relationships in Israel. "Protracted warfare", according to Chaney (2004:106) "[exacerbated] gender inequities" and confirms a metaphor in which a male is told to "go and take" a wife.[47] And because the male warriors were unable to be at home because of these battles, they had to ensure that their possessions were passed on to their legitimate heirs. One way of ensuring this was to control the sexuality of both wives and daughters.

Jezreel is therefore a polyvalent trope in a patriarchal society. It condemns practices of the royal court, military wing, and the institutions which legitimate these. This prophecy is consequently a

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[47] This is tautological in a patriarchal society, but part and parcel of the rhetorical impact which needs to be affected.

noticeable contestation of a prophecy by Elisha which spurred the house of Jehu on to the bloodbath of Jezreel (2 Kgs 9:1-10-27). It is therefore not only the unjust policies of the royal house and its allies that come under judgment, but also the prophecies which incite these unjust policies.

Regarding the remaining children, Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi,[48] they are, as stated above, the children who are illegitimate in this metaphorical marriage (Hos 1:4, 5). And because of their illegitimacy they have no access to the benefits of the land, except through the mercy of the father and brother(s) (*cf.* Hos 2:3 [2:1]) who seem to be the only legitimate parties in this family, together with the prophecies of renewal and restoration (*cf.* Hos 2: 1-2 [1:10-11]). The names of both children negate the characteristics of God essential for Israel. Lo-Ruhamah negates the attributes of God that was identified by the Israelites with these sentiments: "But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger" (Neh 9:17; Ps 103:8). Macintosch (1997:23) suggests that a withdrawal of God's "compassion implies that hitherto he had shown it." And Lo-Ammi "sets forth the reversal of the terms of the covenant by which Yahweh adopted Israel as his people" (Macintosh 1997:23; *cf.* Exod 3:7, 6:7)[49] and in which he revealed himself to Moses as "I AM." But on the social stratification level, these illegitimate children are experiencing the indifference of not being part of the covenant from the legitimate children who we identified as the ruling urban elite. It is also imperative to note that at this level of the metaphor these prophecies do not apply to the Israelites as a whole and that, whenever these names are invoked within the context of chapters 1-3, they refer to the classes just sketched which will be discussed more fully below.

The people that these illegitimate children represent are a very diverse group. They not only include Israelites, but also people from Syria and Phoenicia, indentured workers from the time of the building projects of the Solomonic and Omride dynasties (Holladay 1995, 1998:382; *cf.* 1 Kgs 15:30-31). This diverse group of people, exploited by royal policies, included, among others, farmers, workers, women, foreigners, and their families. We have pointed out above that these people were not all initially poor and landless farmers, but among them were people who had systematically been made landless by the land tenure policies advanced by the ruling elite. It

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[48] Several proposals have been made as to whom these children might refer. See Kelle 2005:225.
[49] The covenant will be discussed in more detail below.

is these people who found a representative voice in Hosea's prophecy. This prophecy is directed at the royal house which dated back to the rise of the monarchy and which changed the agricultural, economic, and by implication, religious landscape considerably. Studies by Yee (2001:346-359), Chaney (2004:101-105) and Holladay (1995, 1998:389-390) reflect the increase in international trade which resulted in an intensification in agriculture that benefitted a small group of ruling elite, but that had dire socio-economic consequences for the majority of people. These were effected, according to Chaney (2004:103), through "[urban] elites, whose priorities ... pressed for a regional specialization of agriculture." As a result "[villagers'] traditional priorities for the long-term sufficiency of mixed subsistence agriculture and its penchant for risk spreading were overwhelmed by these pressures, and land consolidation proceeded apace" (Chaney 2004:103). The financial burden resulting from taxation and survival loans charged at exorbitant interest rates, was for the ruling elite a tool which they employed to consolidate land into latifundia. The courts which had to adjudicate land matters "came increasingly under the control of the urban elites who had initiated the agricultural intensification" (Chaney 2004:103; *cf.* Holladay 1995, 1998:389). Because of the corruption of these courts, families systematically lost their lands (*cf.* Hos 5:10)[50] and their traditional agricultural methods of subsistence. This was enacted by a demanding economy, oppressive politics, and unjust business practices directed at maintaining the status quo and creating an even greater gulf between rich and poor.

The socioeconomic dilemmas facing the majority were stark facts of the eighth century BCE (*cf.* Keefe 1995; Yee 2001; Chaney 2004). It would appear that at the time of Hosea's ministry the situation had reached extreme levels. This is reflected in the urgency with which he delivered his message of which the content deserved the appeal of Yahweh's court. The exploitation of the people had been going on since the prosperous periods of Uzziah and Jeroboam II, the names associated with the subscript (Hos 1:1). Kelle (2005) proposes that there were two competing factions[51] that might be a reflection of more general internal strife among people who not only had to choose sides between Pekah and Hoshea, the "anti-Assyrian and pro-Assyrian" groups

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[50] Hosea 5:10 can refer to both the physical removal of boundaries and also the laws of the Torah which have been "removed." See Good (1966b) and the Damascus Document as interpreted by Davies (1982).

[51] Kelle (2005) argues that Hosea, as a political analyst, is wielding support for the opposition of Pekah, the pro-Assyrian party. To be sure, the wife of promiscuity is a site of struggle, and, by implication, so is the city of Samaria (which will be discussed below) - a struggle between competing groups as to which political economy would best suit the country.

respectively, but who also had to formulate survival strategies in the extreme conditions imposed on the nation as a whole.

One needs not be a genius to imagine the socioeconomic landscape in a country of which the leaders are defending the frontiers and political factions fighting each other, and the financial burden that this imposes on ordinary people, especially women and children who have already for protracted periods of time been deprived from the necessary means of survival. These considerations called the "prophetic imagination" of Hosea into existence. The message that he delivered is one suggesting that punishment is imminent because of a covenant broken. But the covenant would be reforged, this time however, on Yahweh's terms, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Here, we need to consider that it is these illegitimate children who were in need of restoration (Hos 2:1[1:10]) from the conditions that prevailed in the politically turbulent eighth century and to which their leaders had exposed them. The restoration of these Israelites will come about in the Valley of Jezreel (Kelle 2005:214), the same place where their status as God's children had been negated. But it is interesting to note in this pericope (Hos 2:1-3 [1:10-2:1]), that in the new order the diverse group of Israelites will be enfranchised together with the sister state of Judah in which a new head will be chosen.

3.4.3.2 אֵשֶׁת זְנוּנִים

After sketching the contours of the different groups relevant to the concept of the wife of promiscuity, it is appropriate to turn to Gomer who is the object of the obedience demonstrated by Hosea in following the "unparalleled command" of God (Weems 1989:90; *cf.* Andersen and Freedman 1980:46; Leith 1989:97) to marry a wife of promiscuity, representative of the land's estrangement from Yahweh (Weems 1989:90). Keefe (1995:89) suggests that, to understand the sexual imagery in the book of Hosea, it would be "necessary to ... consider how sexual imagery, and particularly female sexual imagery, functions within the symbolic order of ancient Israelite society and literature." Shedding some light on this, she argues that "[in] a society that defines itself through a „proper' (here specifically a patriarchal) order of sexual relations, textual images of sexual transgression of women (including both rape and adultery) figure the disintegration of societal bonds" (Keefe 1995:89). This argument is in concert with Kelle (2004:180) who directs us to "the tendency of prophetic texts to personify capital cities as women primarily in contexts of imminent, threatened, or present destruction [which] combines with the metaphorical

language of stripping and exposure in Hos 2 to expand the focus on the political leaders (e.g., 2:5, 11-25 [2:3, 9-23])." The political leaders within Hosea's oracles are, according to Keefe's (1995:88), Yee's (2001:268) and Chaney's (2004:109-113) analyses, primarily the ruling male urban elite as suggested above. Keefe (1995:90) also suggests that Hosea's sexual language serves as "an extended critique of Israel's royal administration and supporting cultic institutions."

Applied therefore to Hosea's setting, it seems likely that Gomer represents the capital city Samaria, home to the current royal establishment of the Northern Kingdom under the leadership of Pekah which ended with the Syro-Ephraimite war and was subsequently taken over by Hoshea until the fall of Samaria. It is important to observe that, although Gomer is in the Hosea metaphor representative of the leadership, by implication Israel as a whole is included, because political decisions have a direct bearing on the country at large. Gomer plays a very recalcitrant character within this metaphor, whose licentious behaviour is, according to Hosea, in need of some serious coercive education (*cf.* Hos 2:5, 8 & 14 [3, 6 & 12]). Her character fits the term that describes her as אֵשֶׁת זְנוּנִים[52] quite well. She is accused by her husband of being promiscuous and adulterous because of her outward appearance (Hos 2:4 [2:2]), decking herself for other lovers while forgetting Yahweh (Hos 2:15 [2:13] *cf.* Hos 2:8, 9 & 12 [6, 7 &10]). In Hosea's focalisation[53] Gomer acknowledges that her "lovers" (2:7 [2:5]) are the providers of gifts indicative, not of "erotic pleasures" (Van Selm cited in van Dijk-Hemmes 1985:82), but of "the necessary means of subsistence" (van Dijk-Hemmes 1985:82; *cf.* Yee 2001:376; Hos 2:5).

Kelle (2005:68-70), probing ancient Near Eastern texts, especially the Jewish texts from Elephantine, sheds some light on the financial implications of laws governing marriage and divorce and suggests, that the wife was supported economically by her husband and, if wronged, the husband was entitled to some form of compensation which included things that he provided her with on marrying her. In this regard Kelle (2005:70) states:

> A misbehaving wife loses her status and must symbolize this by leaving the house naked. Due to the wife's indiscriminate behaviour, the divorcing husband is entitled to keep for himself all

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[52] See above for the explanation of the term זְנוּנִים.
[53] For an explanation and application of focalization see Bal (1981) and van Dijk-Hemmes (1989:4, 8).

economic and property assets, including the dowry, provisions, gifts, etc., so that he dismisses the wife without giving her anything.

The important considerations in this discussion are the political and economic overtures that are evident in the metaphor's imagery and reflected in the threats of the husband. If a husband decided to distance himself from his wife he was, according to patriarchal laws possibly operative in Hosea's days, entitled to strip her naked and expose her private parts in front of her lovers (Hos 2:12 [2:10] *cf.* Weems 1989:92). In an apparent parallel with notions of land this would make her into a wilderness, a dry land, and, like the land, she would die from thirst (Hos 2:5 [2:3]). The association of wife and land is confirmed by Keefe (1995:99) who suggests that the identity of wife and land become intertwined "when the husband's threat to strip his wife naked fades into images of drought and desolation upon the land" (Keefe 1995:99). The threats come about because "the land itself has committed fornication and become guilty of betrayal, accepting seeds sown in it to yield an adulterous bounty that is not of Israel and for Israel, but is to be given to others" (Keefe 1995:99). The gifts, or the adulterous bounty, mentioned in the text, are needed for living and reflective of "commodities of trade" (Yee 2001:376), which she is attributing to her lovers.

These commodities allude to products which were in demand during the eighth century, particularly three products that were produced in great quantities, wine, oil, and grain (Yee 2001:377; Chaney 2004:103-105; Keefe 1995:93-94). These preferred goods presuppose a demand and Chaney (2004:103) states:

> Eighth-century Israel and Judah saw an increase in international trade, in which their leaders imported luxury goods, military *matériel*, and the wherewithal of monumental architecture. To pay for these imports, foodstuffs – particularly the triad of wheat, olive oil, and wine – were exported.

The gifts that Gomer's lovers are decking her with are therefore identified as commodities of trade. We need to consider now who might be the lovers to which she is attributing these gifts. Hosea accuses Gomer of fornicating with her "lovers" the Baals. According to Kelle (2005:180), analyses of the terms "fornication and adultery ... rest on a tradition that often uses them to refer to improper political actions." This is confirmed in the analysis of "lovers" by Yee (2001:376; *cf.* Keefe 1995:90-91; Kelle 2005:180-181, 200 and others) who identifies "lovers" with Israel's

trading partners, the nations called "covenant partners" with whom Israel had formed, what were essentially political alliances (*cf.* political relationship with King Rezin of Syria ca. 742-732 B.C.E). This notion furthermore finds inter-textual confirmation (*cf.* 1 Kgs 5:1; Jer 4:11, 22:20, 22; 30:14; Ez 16 & 26). Therefore, the terms, continues Kelle (2005:180), "imply an act of disobedience with regard to Yahweh's will in the political realm ... [which] are the very things that have precipitated the imminent destruction envisaged." The terms thus refer to wrong political decisions, based on self-indulgent fantasies, by the ruling urban male elite and the cultic institutions which give such decisions their religious stamp of approval. Gomer's children are not pitied because they are paying for decisions, made by leaders and imposed on them (Hos 2:6 [2:4]). But a time will come when Yahweh will restore the people to their full splendour as the people of God.

3.4.3 Concluding Reflections

The above arguments identify the wife of promiscuity with the city of Samaria, following Kelle's proposal (2005), and by implication with the people as a whole who were affected by corrupt governance. The children of promiscuity represent the different classes in Israel, the despised and exploited who have systematically been deprived from their land. Despite the vision of punishment, Hosea still foresees a time of peace which will reflect the joyful days of wandering in the wilderness (Hos 2:16-17 [2:14-15]). He speaks to his estranged wife in "hyperbole to assert that the new relationship with the personified Samaria will include peaceful relations for all of creation" (Kelle 2005:276), an important consideration which will be taken up in the next chapter. Kelle (2004:276) "associates these actions with the envisioned day of remarriage and not with the eschatological event", foreseen in Hosea 3. Regarding Hosea 3, its eschatological vision and the wife now belonging to another, call to mind the destruction of Samaria and the subsequent exile, so Hosea 3 might well have been written by Hosea at the end of his ministry.

3.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In an endeavour to analyse the second and final context in our socio-analytical mediation, located in the second phase of the theoretical framework, this chapter has provided a systematic account of the socioeconomic conditions relevant to Hosea's message. The purpose of the second phase in this study's theoretical framework is twofold. Firstly, relating to both contexts, it has

attempted to juxtapose them in order to establish lines of connection between the contemporary context and the ancient text. Although we can already see connections on a superficial level, these will be discussed in more detail in chapter five in order to facilitate a dialogue between the two. Secondly, I have provided a backdrop for the message of Hosea that has brought the prophetic moment of the book to life. This was done by investigating the underlying structures which impinged on the socioeconomic conditions that surround the "risky" marriage-harlotry metaphor of Hosea (Setel 1989:92). This study has revealed that gender representations in ancient Israel "are not a random representation but a reflection and reinforcement of cultural perceptions" (Setel 1989:90; *cf.* van Dijk-Hemmes 1989:85) and experiences within a given historical context. This was demonstrated by employing the theory of metaphor as an epistemological tool to probe the conditions which gave the marriage-harlotry image meaning. It was also shown that by employing "these dangerous and subjugated metaphors" (West 1996a:201) one can lay bare mini-narratives of situations that reflect oppression and social suppression. On the basis of this material we will deal with our third phase, the hermeneutical mediation. In this phase the prophetic tradition will be followed with its themes of egalitarianism and the eradication of poverty, vital for a conversation with the contemporary South African socioeconomic dilemmas. But before we start this conversation, an analysis of the message of Hosea is needed.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROPHETIC IMAGINATION OF HOSEA WITHIN ITS SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The essence of religion which is immutable, eternal, and sacred can be separated from religious knowledge which is mutable, relative, and historical – Abdolkarim Soroush

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters have brought together what dealt with the socio-analytical mediation located in the second phase of Vital Theology. But, while, as announced in chapter one, a dialogue between the two can properly start in the fifth chapter, chapter four will continue with the biblical analysis by constructing the tradition in which our hermeneutical mediation, the third phase of our theoretical framework, will be located. This chapter will therefore be in dialogue with the proposed historical analysis in the previous chapter.

Chapter three reflected on the context of Hosea and posited that it was a time of uncertainty, turmoil, and the sure vision of destruction. These same characteristics are exhibited by Hosea's literary style and so the text is rife with contradictions, ironies, incoherencies, inversions, paradoxes, antitheses, riddles, ambiguities, and discontinuities (Fisch 1988). The style reflects, according to Fisch (1988:139), elements which contribute to a "great and concentrated power." Therefore, Fisch (1988:139) advises, if we want to appreciate the power at work in the book of Hosea, we need to understand the book's "fractured style."

One of the most noticeable features of this fractured style is its purposeful oscillating between past and present. Steeped in the traditions of Israel, it occupies an influential position in the classical prophetic corpus, particularly because of the recognition by modern Pentateuchal criticism[54] that it presents us with the earliest written traditions of Israel (Holt 1995:18; *cf.* Good 1966:150). Hosea recalls these past traditions to make his appeal to "faith in the present moment ... more compelling" (Brueggemann 1968:26). Discussing Hosea's use of these traditions will demonstrate that paradoxically, instead of being lauded for establishing Yahwism, the Israelites

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[54] This criticism is referred to by Holt (1995:18, note 22) with respect to the last "20-25 years", including especially scholars such as Rendtorff and Schmid. For this discussion see Holt (1995).

are being condemned, both in Hosea's message and in history, for its distortion throughout the ages. The belief system on which they based their lives and institutions, was found wanting in Hosea's theology, which advocates a liberated God who chooses people freely with no partiality and who is concerned with the harmony of all life, a hermeneutical key with which I read the book of Hosea. This chapter will discuss these features of Hosea's message, building on the work in the previous chapter.

4.2   LET US STRIVE TO KNOW YAHWEH

Carroll (1993:15) posits that religion is central to any understanding of the message of Hosea. And while appeal to the social sciences, amongst others, in the third chapter proved helpful in assessing the socioeconomic conditions associated with the text of Hosea, using the sociology of knowledge in order to obtain an understanding of how religion functions in society will prove to be as vital.[55] The sociology of knowledge postulates that any society consists of interlocking systems of networks working together to provide it with its distinctive identity. Religion, forming an essential part of these systems, functions as an important element in propagating and legitimating the institutions and ideas of the systems concerned. This is illuminated by Carroll (1993:22) in the following way:

> [Religion] is understood as a system of beliefs, traditions, symbols, and rituals that work together to explain to a people how nature, life, and death function and why things are the way they are. This religious system provides an intelligible order for individual and social relationships, helps locate social identity, and gives transcendental reasons for disasters and success in every human sphere. Religion, in other words, helps to establish and to maintain what people would consider to be the "natural order" of things ... Moreover, the religious establishment of temple and priesthood are a constant visible reminder of the supposed correctness and divine approval of this society and its worldview.

These ideas accord well with the way in which religion functioned in the settled community of Israel in which king, cult, and priesthood functioned as symbols for the presence of Yahweh among the people. But these institutions had become corrupted, according to Hosea, already since the time of the patriarch Jacob (Hos 12). In this chapter I will expound on Hosea's

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[55] *Cf.* also Keefe (1995:74) above.

condemnation of the Israelites' institutions and their traditions. I will also elaborate on some of the traditions employed by Hosea which the book uses as a springboard to indict the Israelites for distorting their Yahweh belief. Finally, I will include a section on the redemptive images which can be discerned within the book and which provide life to those faced with despair.

4.2.1 You Who Have Justice in Your Care

Hosea presents us with two constructions of the Yahwistic faith (*cf.* Carroll 1993:24). In the first instance, the Yahwistic faith which Israel abandoned (Hos 1:2) and which consequently was defended by the prophets; and secondly, the Israelites' construction of Yahwism to which they at the time adhered. The book of Hosea oscillates between these two constructions of Yahwism, and while the latter has a definitive content within the traditions of Israel, the former, I would suggest, is open ended, with a sure element of unconditional love. The present "social construction of reality", as sociologists would refer to it, of the Israelites, was by Hosea found to be corrupted. The contention of Hosea, and of the prophets in general, was that, although the religion was referred to as Yahwism, the content had changed its essential characteristics. The brunt of criticism of the distortion is laid at the doorstep of the leaders of the society. These leaders, in Yee's (2001:357) understanding of the marriage metaphor, were involved in a "complex social, political and economic [set of] relations, among the king, cult, priest and prophet, both at home and abroad." Yee (2001:357) further suggests that the "[cult] and domestic and foreign affairs are not mutually exclusive, but converge in very real ways in the book of Hosea", a point which was demonstrated above. The leaders are indicted for their promiscuous spirit which "defiles the nation and it „does not know YHWH' (5:4)" (Yee 2001:358). This knowledge of God is thought by Wittenberg (2009:493; *cf.* Fisch 1988:140) to be the "key" to understanding the book of Hosea. Although the leaders are indicted for the lack of knowledge of God, as the marriage-harlotry metaphor indicates, the whole nation will suffer without distinction. With these considerations in mind, we take a look at some units which lead up to the unit that is especially representative of Hosea's particular literary style whereby he oscillates between the collective history of the nation and the context within which the prophecy is uttered.

4.2.1.1 Hosea 4:1-3

The opening of the second section of the book (Hos 4:1-3) reflects a network of interrelationships which negatively affect the community and environment. Many scholars view the first three verses of this chapter as an introduction to what follows in the remainder of the book (Wittenberg 2009:492; Carroll 1993:19). The passage lists three main elements which form an integral part of the covenant relationship within the prophetic corpus, and in this pericope they are linked to relationships within the community sphere. In Hos 4:1 the three elements are reflected in, and indictment directed to the inhabitants of the land because of, the absence of חֶסֶד (covenant faithfulness), אֱמֶת (moral integrity), and דַּעַת (knowledge of God).[56] The theological framework therefore is the covenant which points to the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, a relationship in which God would reveal himself to his people who, thus, would come to know God. Therefore, it is posited that this relationship presupposes a bond from which all life on earth, including nature, should have benefited. Instead of life, however, this section foresees the destruction of all life on earth because the covenant was broken and is devoid of its essential elements.

Regarding the three main elements of the covenant, many commentators suggest that the last term, דַּעַת is the basis of the two preceding terms (Carroll 1993:20, note 16; Wittenberg 2009:493). This is confirmed by the next רִיב statement, directed at the priest(s) who are indicted for the lack of knowledge of God in the society. Instead of the knowledge of God which the priests were endowed to teach, Hos 4:2 lists five charges which "offer an application of the three sins of omission in 4:1 within human relationships" (Carroll 1993:20), and these sins recur in the main sections of the book. The exposition of the marriage-harlotry metaphor has demonstrated that these sins were prevalent in a society that was confronted with corrupt systems with desperation as a concomitant. In addition, these sins "will be evident in cultic deviation and in the degrading activities of the people's worship (4:4-5:7), and then both in the refusal to trust [God] in national political affairs and in the struggles for power and influence (5:8-7:16)" (Carroll 1993:20).

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[56] For an exposition on these terms see Carroll (1993:19-20), Macintosh (1997:127), and Wittenberg (2009) together with their bibliographical details.

The indictment in this section is so strong that it predicts the negation of creation itself (Hos 4:3; Carroll 1993:21, note 21; Wittenberg 2009:503-504) and "its citizens pining away" is suggestive of the total destruction of Israel. Although the language employed to convey this coming destruction is regarded as hyperbolic to some extent (Macintosh 1997:132-133), the idea that suffering will be pervasive is unmistakable. This destruction also threatens the existence of Yahweh himself (*cf.* Lo-Ammi). The punishment Hosea has in mind will take the form of "a severe drought [תֶאֱבַל]⁵⁷ in which the land will dry up with the consequence that its inhabitants will not find the food and support on which they depend" (Macintosh 1997:133; Hos 4:3; *cf.* 2:5 [2:3]). For an agrarian society which is dependent on the land for its subsistence this implies economic and social disintegration. Although Hosea is strongly aware of the overarching presence of God in the punishment of the Israelites (*cf.* Hos 4:9b), in this verse the book's "strong sense of cause and effect in the sphere of ethics and nature" (Macintosh 1997:133) is evident.

Macintosh (1997:131-133) interprets the drought in this section as a future event, given the עַל־כֵּן (for this reason) construction. Its consummation might well lie in the future, but I tend to think that evidence for this drought might already have been present during the time in which this study sets the message of Hosea. Although the depiction of a severe drought in Hosea's language is "surely too strong" (Macintosh 1997:132), this could possibly be explained by the book's penchant for hyperbole. The wickedness of the people had run its course and nature around them was already suffering the consequences of their actions. These actions were, as I have argued, located in the macro-economic policies of the country. The main source of revenue for the small desert country was the export of agricultural produce in "ever-greater quantities." Being a desert country, "exporting water"⁵⁸ meant that this crucial resource would become scarce and expensive. This would impinge on people's livelihoods and the scarcity of food and other

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⁵⁷ Most English translation render this verb "to mourn", but there is a distinctive rendering of the verb, identified by Macintosh (1997:131-133; *cf.* Carroll 1993:22), which is "to dry up". This would suit the context in which the verb occurs, and this study will therefore follow this translation.
⁵⁸ The conclusion about the ‚exportation of water' was reached by an Israeli guest speaker at the St. George College in Jerusalem in 2008 with reference to the current exportation of crops in Israel. The ‚exportation of water' summarizes well the exportation of crops in any desert region and therefore applies to the exportation policies of the context under analysis.

essentials might have led the leaders (*cf.* Hos 6:9; 12:2) and the people (4:2, 14[59]; 6:7-8; 7:1-4, 7) to develop all sorts of survival strategies to overcome the devastation facing them. This section of the text shows that human existence and life in general were threatened because of the absence of knowledge of God on earth. In the next section the blame for the lack of this knowledge is put squarely at the doorstep of the priests.

4.2.1.2 Hosea 4:4-6

The next discernable pericope (Hos 4:4-6) presents a "logical progression" from the prophecy that the whole nation will suffer for the absence of the knowledge of God, to an indictment of those who are seen as the guardians of this knowledge of God, the priests (Macintosh 1997:136; Hos 4:4; *cf.* Wittenberg 2009:493).[60] According to Macintosh (1997:135-136), the "priest" in v. 4 should be understood as a vocative (*cf.* NRSV) which points to the priesthood as a collective.[61] Some commentators have suggested that a particular priest, a contemporary of Hosea, is referred to, especially because of the presence of "your mother." But Macintosh (199:136) considers these arguments unconvincing. According to Macintosh, the singular form of "priest" should rather be understood as "a rhetorical device by which the priesthood as a class is addressed generically" (Macintosh 1997:136). The verse also demonstrates that the "moral anarchy of the people prevailed unchallenged and protests of conscience within society where wholly absent" (Macintosh 1997:135). Surely this points to the fact that the whole nation would suffer the consequences of a corrupt leadership, more especially since its actions had remained uncontested.[62]

The mother in this verse is taken by Macintosh (1997:140) to be a question of Judean gloss, used to elucidate the word "is destroyed", referring back to Hos 2:4 [2:2]. However, the reference to the mother here, accords well with the mother of the opening chapters, who was identified as the ruling class, or the elite, specifically the monarchy. In conclusion, instead of

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[59] Bird (1989) has alluded to the prostitutes as being at the sanctuary most probably for economic reasons and to find a means of survival. Hosea's inclusion of the entire female population of Israel in this verse, even when taking his hyperbolic tendencies into account, would emphasise the destitution with which the Israelites were faced.

[60] This idea is contrary to Carroll (1993:24-25) who sees Hosea as indicting the people as a whole. See references for other commentators who take on a similar position.

[61] This would accord well with Hosea's literary style that often oscillates between plural and singular forms (*cf.* Hos 1-3).

[62] This point will be picked up again in chapter 5.

being seen as an institution of Yahweh, propagating the knowledge of God, the priesthood and false prophets are presented as agents of the monarchy and, especially, as an economic institution integral for the collection of taxes, amongst other forms of extraction, from the population. The result is therefore that "your mother" is suggestive of the monarchic system that has borne these priests and prophets into the cultic sphere, and that would be destroyed.

Consequently, also the priests in office will suffer rejection by Yahweh, along with the next generations. But, whereas Hosea does not see in the priestly office in the Northern Kingdom as illegitimate, he does mention a discontinuity with regard to corrupt priests and prophets who are uncritical of corruption and exploitation suffered at the hands of corrupt leaders. This discontinuity in the priesthood is, in Hosea's thought, an important element in the demystification of a priesthood that was seen as hereditary. Therefore, if Hosea sees no illegitimacy within the priestly office, this verse might well be suggestive of the replacement of a whole generation of priests with more competent religious office bearers.[63]

4.2.1.3 Hosea 5:1-7

The section (Hos 5:1-7), in which Hosea's particular style, oscillating between present and past is very apparent, has reference in the foregoing discussion. It is a kerygmatic unit with God speaking in the first person (Fisch 1988:139). The passage addresses the three leadership figures in the Northern Kingdom and accords with the book of Micah (3:1), that leaders are "regarded as having the responsibility for just and good order in society" (Macintosh 1997:175, 176). In this section cultic abuses are referred to and the term "fowlers snare", which also occurs in Psalm 119:110, is used to describe the deeds "of the wicked in their persecution of the righteous" (Macintosh 1997:176). These actions according to v. 1 were carried out on Mizpah and Tabor, the latter of which might be suggestive of an idolatrous cult (Fisch 1988:139). Historically Mizpah is associated with the election of the first Israelite king, Saul (1 Sam 10:20f; Macintosh 1997:177). This reference also alludes to the political economy at the time of Saul, with people becoming increasingly dissatisfied. But the emerging shift in the political economy, which was favoured by the people, would, according to West (2010:2), lead to a system on a "He will take" basis: "Samuel outlines, literally, the cost of the city-state; there can be no city-state without

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[63] *Cf.* the competency of Moses rather than being destined for his office.

mechanisms of economic extraction. So, the king will take some of the sons and daughters of the peasant farmers (11-13), he will take some of their land (14), he will take some of their slaves and livestock (16)" (West 2010:2). It is within this political economy that a significant phenomenon emerges, namely "its religious legitimation" (West 2010:5). Mention of Tabor in this section, though precise historical details (Macintosh 1997:177) elude us, might refer to a high place in the Jezreel Valley, or it might allude to an idolatrous cult (*cf.* Fisch 1988:139) mostly practiced on high places. Its location in the Jezreel Valley might also relate to the economic potential of the area. However, one way or another, these references date back to an important shift in Israel's political economic history, especially Mizpah, and therefore refer to a past event in the makeup of the Israelites.

Hosea 5:2 elicits the same method as v. 1 and the literal rendering of v. 2a, "the apostates are deep in slaughter", is a wonderful metaphor for the corruption experienced within the cult and illuminated in a recurring alliteration in the phrase of Hos 9:9, "„they are deeply corrupted' as at the time of Gibeah" (Fisch 1988:139; Macintosh 1997:179-180; *cf.* Brueggemann 1968:32). This reference is an allusion to the "sexual transgression" in Gibeah (Jdg 19) which led to "social violence" (Keefe 1995). The phrase which occurs in Hos 5:2 is, like some of his cryptic language, elucidated in other verses as this example shows. An assumption can be made that v. 2 again is referring to a past situation for which punishment is meted out in the present. Instead of justice and integrity being present in the leadership corpus of the nation, corruption has prevailed as in the days of Gibeah, though exactly what the corruption entailed is a matter of debate. The behaviour however is by the prophet labelled "defiled" (v. 3), which is cultic language referring to persons who are not ritually clean and not allowed to enter the presence of God (*cf.* Macintosh 1997:182). Such an improper ritual state will later in this section be met by the absence of God in the cultic sphere.

The divine speech in vv. 1-3 gives way to prophetic speeches in the remaining section of the passage (Fisch 1988:140; *cf.* Macintosh 1997:182) which, however, form a fundamental part of the unit. The wicked deeds of the leaders, and consequently of the nation, again find their antithesis in the absence of the knowledge of Yahweh (v. 4) which approaches the point of no return: "their deeds do not allow them to return to their God: for the spirit of harlotry is within

them" (v. 4).[64] Hos 5:5-7 "summarise the nation's mistaken attitude and announce the judgement alluded to but not defined in vv. 3f" (Macintosh 1997:186). In v. 5 Israel's pride weighs against them. But a particular difficulty has been experienced in determining what exactly גְּאוֹן־יִשְׂרָאֵל (the pride of Israel) might mean (*cf.* Macintosh 1997:186-187). According to Macintosh (1997:187; Hos 7:10) it means "incriminated by its own attitude and behaviour", which has no positive connotations, and the next verse links it to the cultic sphere, more particularly, to their worship of God. An inter-textual reference reveals that ‚pride' generally refers to those who exalt themselves to a godlike status, a term that is also used to express Yahweh's majesty (Ex 15:7; Ps 93; Is 2:17; 12:5). In Leviticus it is contrasted with the agricultural pride of the Israelites, and the response they get from God is the refusal of nature to cooperate in the agricultural sphere (Lev 26:19-20; *cf.* Hos 2:5 [2:3]; 4:3; Is 14:11; 25:11). Generally, human accomplishment is prone to exaltation which, at the social level, results in the poor being oppressed and which, at the religious level, is manifest in the forgetting of God (Ps 10:2, 4; Jer 9:10; Ez 7:24; 16:49). Pride is an attitude implying self-sufficiency and is specifically linked to the elite who are honoured at the city gates. It is therefore not the worship of Baal which is the issue here, but the exalted attitudes of the elite, who will however meet their own fall.

There is no separation between this attitude and its concomitant punishment. The exaltation is also seen in other nations before their pride got deeply wounded, such as the once great Babylon that was reduced to weakness (Is 14:1-22). Therefore, in true Proverbial style, "pride goes before a fall" (Prov 16:18; 11:2; 29:23; Is 13:11). The fate that is awaiting Israel because of its arrogance that has led the nation astray, will be met by anyone else, exhibiting the same attitude. The Israelites' behaviour will be met by the absence of Yahweh which takes place in the cultic sphere in v. 6, suggestive of an allusion again to a past event. This event is related to Moses' response to Pharaoh to let the people go into the desert with "their flocks and with their herds" (v. 6; *cf.* Ex 10:9) to worship Yahweh. However, in the present situation Yahweh will be absent because he has "withdrawn himself from them" (v. 6). The implication is that the pride of Israel cannot coexist with the presence of Yahweh. Though the past is not condemned as in our previous examples, certain is that Yahweh will in the present behave differently from the past.

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[64] At this stage reference to Bird's (1989) meaning of the plural abstract noun, "promiscuities" which denotes "repeated, habitual, or characteristic behaviour", would be applicable.

Yahweh will not be found in the cultic sphere which in the past was seen as Yahweh's dwelling place.

Yahweh's absence is due to his betrayal by the Israelites and their leadership which is suggestive of the wife's behaviour in the marriage-harlotry metaphor (Macintosh 1997:191). This betrayal is due to the fathering of "bastards" (v. 7), again reminiscent of the illegitimate children discussed in chapter three, which fits the proposition of the class stratification model perfectly well. The text stating that their "new moon" (v. 7) will devour them is again an allusion to the harlotry metaphor in which the dereliction of the fields (*cf.* Hos 2:14 [2:12]) points to an end of the "new moon" festivals (*cf.* Hos 2:13 [2:11]). The judgment pronounced here, is in effect the destruction of the economy which relied on agricultural produce to fund the state. Hence, the state will not be able to sustain its allied support bases or to access the artillery needed for the protection of its boundaries.

4.2.1.4 Concluding Reflections

Judgment is therefore called upon those who have justice in their care, because they showed contempt for those to whom justice should be administered in the name of Yahweh. Their knowledge of Yahweh, construed on the manipulation of religion to serve their political ambitions, is found wanting in Hosea's theology. According to this theology, Yahweh does not accept an elitist theology that seeks God's presence only in the cultic sphere or, in other words, God does not want love that has no substance (*cf.* Hos 6:4). Hosea's theology requires nothing less than faithful love that goes beyond the cultic sphere to embrace society at large. It is outside the cultic sphere that God's presence is affirmed (*cf.* Hos 6:6). Hosea advocates the freedom of God to act contrary to an elitist theology and unequivocally calls the treacherous behaviour of the ruling elite to God's justice. According to Hosea, the treacherous behaviour of the ruling class is not limited to the present, but has parallels in the past within the traditions of the patriarchs, most especially Jacob who, unlike Abraham, manipulates situations to fit his ambition (Ska 2009:35-36). This attitude is condemned by Hosea in his allusion to the Jacob cycle.

4.2.2   The Jacob Tradition

In this section two passages will be dealt with that recount the Jacob tradition but, as with many of the traditions, Hosea only makes allusions and it is up to the interpreter to decide which traditions he might be referring to. The traditions are contained in chapter 12, but in this context I will only deal with those in vv. 3-5 [2-4].[65] My reading of this passage will be partially constituted on Good's (1966a) approach of the Jacob tradition. However, I will differ in some respects from his conclusions, due to contemporary work done in this area as well as the hermeneutical considerations of my methodology which will be demonstrated accordingly. After this exposition I will discuss the very intriguing account of the Jacob cycle contained in Genesis 28-35 by van Wolde (2003), followed by concluding reflections.

4.2.2.1 Hosea 12:3-5 [2-4]

We may assume that Hosea's audience was well acquainted with the traditions that the text alludes to without going into any particular detail (*cf.* Holt 1995:34). What is significant about this passage, however, is the mention of Bethel by its proper name. Hosea certainly has no affectionate feelings toward Bethel, because "in every other passage where Bethel is mentioned ... (Hos 4.14; 5.8; 10.5) it appears under the slanderous name בית און „house-of-evil'" (Holt 1995:38). I would suggest that Hosea deliberately does this, so that his audience may know exactly what tradition he is alluding to while, at the same time, he stimulates memories of a time when the name had a favourable connotation (*cf.* Macintosh 1997:487). Bethel is indeed a key aspect in the life of Jacob (Holt's 1995:39). The traditions of Jacob, as recounted in Genesis, will be considered to shed some light on the patriarch's traditions as alluded to in Hosea. However, a caveat by Holt (1995:32) is worth noting, who suggests "that there is only limited agreement between the Jacob traditions of Genesis and those that Hosea refers to [which] has created a number of problems for research."[66]

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[65] Again different sets of numbering for Hoses 12 occur between the HB text and the English translation. Again the English numbering will be maintained as discussed above. The second reference to the Jacob cycle, Hos 12, is treated in both Good's (1966:148-151) and Holt's (1995:47-51) studies. See their works for reference.

[66] This suggestion is closely bound up with her preposition that Hosea is the first written text which recounts the Jacob tradition. But since a source-critical analysis is immaterial to the research undertaken here, I will refer to the work of Holt (1995), Good (1966) and their bibliographical details.

Adhering therefore to her advice would render a word for word comparison futile. Instead the general sense, which the Genesis account will provide us with, will prove sufficiently helpful. Hosea 12, which recounts the Jacob traditions, opens in vv. 1 [11:12] and 2 [1] with a summary of the present dealings of Israel in the international sphere. These amount, according to Hosea 12:1 [11:12], to lying and, the catch word for the chapter, מִרְמָה or deceit, which word will appear again in v. 8. The unit combines vv. 1 [11:12] and 2 [1] in a copula connecting traders, and by implication Israel, with corrupt economic practices. The text however does not tell us who the object of Israel's corrupt practices is. However, it appears that Hosea can only account for these corrupt practices by recalling the tradition of Jacob, again an example of his literary style which we have identified. This tradition properly starts off in an oracle in v. 3 [2] with a רִיב clause, linking the Jacob cycle with the present situation in Israel[67]. Good (1966a:140) posits that this tradition "serves the prophet as the pattern of the present Jacob, the nation itself." Accordingly, Good argues that "[we] must keep this double sense in mind in considering the rest of the passage" (Good 1966a:140; Holt 2003:39).

Hosea 12:4a [3a] recounts in the first line the birth story of Jacob in which he deceived[68] his brother. The verbal root used (עקב) is a word play on Jacob's name. Holt (1995:33) proposes that "the same etymological traditions surrounding the name of Jacob ... in Gen 25:21-34; 27:35-36" might be reflected in v. 4a. In view of the double meaning that Good (1966a:140) detected in this passage, he suggests that "the „brother' nation, Judah" might be alluded to here, especially considering the conflict that led up to the Syro-Ephraimite war. While this may be plausible, one has to wonder when reading v. 4 [3], whether Hosea did not mean Jacob's, and therefore Israel's,

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[67] The Masoretic Text reads „Judah', but both Holt (1995:31, note 3) and Good (1966a:139) translate it as „Israel' and present convincing arguments for this rendition. See their respective discussion and redactional considerations (Holt 1995:31, note 2; Good 1966a:139). Accordingly, Good's delineation of the pericope will be followed.

[68] De Boer (cited in Holt 1995:33) suggests that the verb should be translated "he held on to the heel of his brother", which is according to Holt "not so unambiguously negative as „deceived'." This is consequently also the route that Holt is taking, translating it as "supplant", although she suggests that "the two traditions [Gen 25:26 and 27:36] have been elliptically worked together. In the elliptical version of Hos. 12.4a, therefore, the figure of Jacob does not appear unequivocally as a deceiver, but rather as a figure in whom two possibilities are found: he can appear as a warning and as an example." This decision of Holt is predicated on demonstrating that Jacob is an example of determination and humility. However, this is not the sense of Hos 12 which starts off, as recounted above, with an unequivocal characterization of the nation as "lying and deceitful." Hosea therefore makes allusions, Good (1966a:140) suggests, "by inference to the entire conflict between Jacob and Esau." But this conflict is not only about the two brothers, which is the the same sentiments of Good (1966:140-141), "but the destiny of the two peoples" (Ska 2009:32; *cf.* Gen 25:11-12), with reference to Isaac and Ishmael and their descendants.

penchant for strife, not only in relation to his brother, but in relation to all around him (*cf.* Shechem Gen 33:18-34) and not limited to the human level. It is also reflected in the second line, v. 4b [3b], and the first line of v. 5a [4a], which forms a copula in which the verbal root (שׂרה) again plays on the patriarch's name Israel. These allude to the traditions in which Jacob contends with God, and "the pun", according to Good (1966a:141), portends the incident at the Jabbok in Gen 32:23-33. In Hosea, however, we only have "a virtual quotation of the key line of the story, the explanation of the new name bestowed on the patriarch" (Good 1966a:142).

Holt (1995:35-36; *cf.* Good 1966:149-151) suggests that two traditions seem to underlie the Jacob traditions in vv. 4b [3b] and 5a [4a] and only Hosea knows what they are. This suggestion though has a bearing on her decision concerning the object of the weeping in v. 5b [4b]. Although these elusive traditions of which, according to Holt, Hosea alone knows are immaterial for our discussion, what is important for us at this stage is a consideration of the object of the weeping in v. 5b [4b]. If Jacob is the subject, it means that the angel is weeping and, by implication, the deity. Holt (1995:) sees a problem with a weeping God and this problem she resolves by invoking Bentzen's (cited in Holt 1995:35) "parallel between Jacob's weeping and praying and Moses' intercessory prayer" (Deut 9:9-10:11) in which Jacob, like Moses, "uses all the usual ways of imploring God for a blessing and conquers." Paradoxically this conqueror is left crying which is rather an odd reaction seeing he had won the struggle.[69] Holt (1995:39) also chooses to read with Francisco (cited in Holt 1995:39) who suggests "that Jacob should serve as an example of a conversion that is to be imitated by Israel: Jacob deceived his brother, fought with God and won, but afterwards begged for mercy and was found and spoken to at Bethel." However, the Jacob tradition receives no romantic treatment in the book of Hosea and was, it would seem, rather approached with some hostility, for lack of a better term (*cf.* Good 1966:151). This will be demonstrated in the discussions which follow. Nevertheless, Holt's interpretation of the Jacob story stands or falls, depending on the scholars she chooses to constitute her argument with.

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[69] Macintosh (1997:483-487) suggests that "God gained the ascendancy." Accordingly, "Hosea, having recalled the traditional interpretation of the name Israel … now spells out another interpretation of it and one more likely to be in accord with what we now suppose to be its meaning" (Macintosh 1997:485). Macintosh suggests that it is God who prevailed and not Jacob. For an interesting and different discussion see his account (Macintosh 1997:483-487).

The conclusions of Good are significantly similar to the narrative analysis of these traditions in Genesis by van Wolde (2003) whose ideas I will discuss below. Good (1966a:143) presents us with a sounder interpretation, based on the text's suggestion that Jacob, being the subject of the previous verses, seems more likely to be the subject also of the following verses. But, for the moment, we will limit ourselves to an interpretation for "Bethel" in v. 5c [4c]. As mentioned above, in Hosea Bethel is predominantly referred to by its pejorative name. Good (1966a:144) suggests that Hosea might be alluding to the "two meetings between Jacob and God at Bethel, which might ... be related to the complex of incidents in Gen [35]:1-15." But this line also presents us with certain difficulties since the Bethel on its own and with the prepositional suffix, can be translated, according to Good (1966a:144), in eight different ways, and this number, if we want to complicate matters, can be increased to sixteen. The important consideration concerning Bethel, as observed by Good (1966a:145), is the double meaning attached to it, the same method already considered in v. 3 [2] with the double meaning attached to Jacob'. This ambiguity of the name Bethel lies in the fact that it can indicate both a place and the name of a god (Good 1966a:145; *cf.* Jer 48:13; Gen 35:7), not identified with Yahweh. The pronominal suffixes in Hos 12:5 [4] on both verb (יִמְצָאֶנּוּ) and preposition (עִמָּנוּ) also have a "double referent", both "him" and "us" (Good 1966a:146). Good (1966a:146), preserving the nuances of the verse, renders it as follows: "At Beth-el, he (that imposter deity) finds him/us, and there he speaks with him/us." Good (1966a:146) proposes that Hosea is alluding to the Genesis account where Jacob built an altar at Bethel which he named "El Bethel" (Gen 35:7). Good's (1966a:148) structural analysis of the passage in Hosea posits that "[the] indictment of Jacob/Israel, therefore, rests on his deeds, as mirrored in his names and the places he frequents (‚his ways', v. 3 [2])." These deeds are immediately connected to vv. 8-10 [7-9], in which the "theme of ambitious ruthlessness, particularly in relation to the acquisition of wealth, links the piece with the prophet's review of the vicissitudes of Jacob" (Macintosh 1997:494). The deeds in both present and past situations are therefore linked with the noun מִרְמָה (deception, fraudulent, treachery). Therefore, the feasibility of Good's interpretation of v. 5 will be considered by diverting momentarily from the Jacob traditions in Hosea to a consideration of the Genesis passages on Jacob on their own merits. This was done in a trenchant narrative analysis by van Wolde (2003), to which I now turn.

4.2.2.2 Genesis 28-35

In an endeavour to answer the question, "what function the rape story of Dinah, the only daughter mentioned of Jacob, serves within the framework of the Jacob cycle?", van Wolde (2003:453), in a thought provoking essay that questions the special privileges both ancient Israelites and contemporary Jews claim for their groups, provides us with some strands in Jacob's history that may illuminate the meaning of the Jacob story in the book of Hosea. His argument is in particular related to the word מִרְמָה (deception), which is proposed to form a focal point in the pericope of Hosea in which allusions to the Jacob traditions are made. Van Wolde (2003:435) proposes that the so called "rape" story of Dinah in Genesis 34 should be read within the context of Jacob's traditions in Genesis 28-35.

The act of Shechem, which has traditionally been understood as "rape", is described in Gen 34:2, and is demonstrated by van Wolde (2003:435-437, 441-442) not to be an act of rape at all. Instead, the verbal root employed, עִנה is shown to refer to the "social-judicial perspective, often in relation to the social debasement of the men related to her" (van Wolde 2003:437).[70] The meeting between the two representatives of the family is preceded by Shechem urging his father to start negotiations with Dinah's family, prompted by his love for her (Gen 34:3). Jacob's sons' reply, recorded in Gen 34:14-15, provides the conditions by which the families are to become "one." But already in Gen 34:13, the narrator anticipates the truth value of their response, saying that the sons gave both fathers a בְּמִרְמָה (deceitful) answer. After this deception the sons of Jacob "Simeon and Levi, took their swords, came upon the city unopposed and killed every male" (Gen 34:25-26; van Wolde 2003:439). The Hebrew text provides us with "one of the shortest descriptions of genocide in history, ויהרגו כל-זכר [and they killed every male] ... The other sons of Jacob plunder the town, seize the flocks and herds, loot the city and take the wives and children as captives" (van Wolde 2003:440). In this narrative reading van Wolde (2003:443, 445) demonstrates that the "narrator defends Jacob's sons' mono-ethnic position and reinforces it by grounding it in an Israelite socio-religious framework." Through her reading she also reveals that Bethel occupied a central place in the context of Gen 28-35 (van Wolde 2003:444-445; *cf.* Good 1966a); it "represents the ideal of one place, one people and one God. It is opposed to the

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[70] According to van Wolde (2003:436-437) this rendering is also confirmed by the Septuagint.

other place, Shechem, with alien people and alien gods, who have to be buried" (Gen 35:2-4). But, as this will be vital for our discussion below, it is important to note that Bethel only acquires these characteristics in Gen 35.

Perceptively related to this point is van Wolde's comparison of the theophany report of Jacob (Gen 28:13-14) at the then Luz with the words of the deity (Gen 35:11-12) at Bethel, to which he is commanded to return. This comparison yields some interesting results, in line with my interpretation of the Jacob tradition in Hosea. At this stage it will be worthwhile to quote van Wolde (2003:446-447) to some extent:

> The transformation from Genesis 28 and Genesis 35 is brought about by many features. Jacob has become more powerful in the meantime: from a fugitive he has turned into a patriarch. From being powerless, he has become powerful. His God has changed accordingly: from YHWH, the God of Abraham and Isaac, he has transformed into El Shaddai, a name which defines God's power. The seed described in Genesis 28 as spreading throughout the earth is defined in Genesis 35 in national and powerful terms: nations and kings stemming from your loins. The land described in Genesis 28 as the place on which you lie is now defined as the land previously given to Abraham and Isaac. Last but not least: the blessing of other clans of the earth is missing in Genesis 35. Other clans are not blessed any more through Jacob, nor through his seed.

Therefore, answering the question, "What position does the rape narrative of Dinah defend in the Jacob cycle?", van Wolde (2003:447) asserts that, "The context of peace and mutual understanding with the Canaanites is transformed into a mono-ethnic position embedded in a mono-religious position. In the context of the Jacob cycle, the story of Dinah is one building block in the defence of this position."[71]

4.2.2.3 Concluding Reflections

This analysis by van Wolde brings out some fascinating nuances in relation to the translation and interpretive considerations of Good in the suggestion of Jacob's imposter deity. Both Good

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[71] A consideration of the economic conditions surrounding this tradition of the Shechemites would be interesting. Jacob's first interaction with the Shechemites was due to an economic transaction in which he buys the land from the same people that the Israelites would later slay, pillaging their town, seizing "their flocks, cattle, donkeys, everything else in the town and in the countryside and all their possession. They took all their children and wives captive and looted everything to be found in the houses" (Gen 34:27-29). The text is clear that all the possessions of the Shechemites were taken, which would conveniently include the money which Jacob paid for the land.

(1966:147) and van Wolde (2003:446-447) elicit a hermeneutic of suspicion towards Gen 35, which brings out markedly different aspects, as shown above, of the first incident contained in Gen 28. Accordingly, a suggestion is made that Hosea is referring to Genesis 35, "with its peculiarly significant reference to the deity Beth-el." Hosea remarkably reworks the traditions of "a man" in Gen 32:25 and the El Bethel in Gen 35:7 combining them into the angelic being of Hos 12:5 who is the object of Jacob's wrestling and who subsequently wept and pleaded with Jacob. Both incidences have political purposes (*cf.* Esau Gen 32:4-33 and the Canaanites and the Perizzites Gen 34:30) to the extent that Jacob's theology acquires powerful attributes for the defence of his people, regardless of their behaviour.

However, Bethel also finds a favourable treatment by Hosea in this particular verse (Hos 12:5); taking this together with the foregoing discussions we notice a clear ambiguity in the latter half of v. 5. The ambiguity arises from the Genesis text where both the "imposter deity" (Gen 32:25; Gen 35:7) and Yahweh (Gen 28:13) speak at Bethel. But as Good (1966:147) rightly cautions, we can only make inferences from these scant allusions to which Hosea refers. As Good (1966:147) argues, "these allusions, further, point up the emphatic doxology of [Hos 12:6], with its fervent praise of Yahweh, God of hosts." Maintaining the ambiguity that both deities speak at Bethel (*cf.* Good 1966:144-145), serves in Hosea's rhetoric to urge the Israelites to return with God's help from this imposter deity to Yahweh, God Sabbaoth (Hos 12:6, 7). The return signals that faithful love and loyalty should be maintained in both cultic and societal spheres. It also means that the Israelites should not trust in their own ambitions and machinations, but rather in God (Hos 12:7). But, if reconsidering these traditions in the make-up of Israel was not enough to yield the desired results, Hosea certainly had more up his sleeve, and this time it was a reconsideration of the heart of Israel's relation to Yahweh, namely the covenantal tradition(s).

4.2.3 The Covenantal Tradition

Bright (1977:83) observes that Hosea, like any other prophet, was "deeply rooted in the traditions of Israel's beginnings" and identifies these as "the ,canonical' events – of exodus, wilderness wandering, and entry into the land – and the stipulations of Yahweh's covenant" (Bright 1977:87). And like Hosea's balancing acts, these beginnings had a bearing on "a nation that was dying" (Bright 1977:87). While the "canonical events" are an important factor in Hosea's prophecies, I will only deal with the covenantal traditions since many exegetes follow

the same line of argument as Bright, namely that Hosea is fundamentally a covenantal text (Holt 1995:53; Fisch 1988:138). This viewpoint is prompted by Hosea's use of the marriage imagery, in addition to the fact that he is the only classical prophet to use the word בְּרִית (covenant). However, Perlitt (cited in Holt 1995:53) suggests "that the covenant simply did not exist as a theological concept prior to the Deuteronomic movement." That, as Perlitt (cited in Holt 1995:53-54) suggests, Hosea in his marriage-harlotry metaphor inspired even the Deuteronomistic school into forming the concept of a covenantal theology, comes as no surprise with regard to a prophetic book which elicits such original thinking. This proposition provides us with a very significant proposal to work with. It offers us a vantage point for seeing the covenant through Hosea's eyes. The covenant had during the eighth century and from a prophetic point of view, not as much ideological content as in the Deuteronomistic configuration. This is particularly so because of its significant role in the establishment and re-establishment of Israel as a nation.

4.2.3.1 The formation of Israel as a Nation

Taking the cue from anthropologists on the formation of any nation, a nation does not jump out of the woodwork. Certain principles and systems underline the establishment of any nation. Grosby (2002:55-59; *cf.* Num 35:34), in his exceptional study of both modern and ancient nations, suggests that the idea of a nation, particularly in the case of ancient Israel, was constituted on three factors, "bounded territory," kinship ties, and "the ascendancy of the ‚god of the land' at the expense of other deities." In this regard, Grosby (2002:25) writes that "the emergence of ancient Israel as a nation was facilitated by the monolatrous development ... of the worship of Yahweh, in particular the specific expression of that development: the theology of the covenant, the [ברית]."[72]

But, while Perlitt posits that the theology of the covenant was a late Deuteronomic configuration, I would suggest that the idea existed at the "entry of the land" as a way of solidifying land possession with the concept of a covenant, instituted by Yahweh their God and especially electing Israel among the nations (*cf.* Brueggemann 1997:414). This proposal, together with

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[72] In this regard he cites many scholars as evidence for this notion. See Grosby (2002:25) and his bibliography for these citations. For reference to the covenant see Deuteronomy, Joshua 24, and 2 Kings 23.

Grosby's notion of the three elements giving rise to the Israelite nation, is an important approach for a landless people, particularly since the land is "in no single instance ... referred to as „Yahweh's land'" (Von Rad cited in Wright 1990:10) but, among others, as the "home of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites" (Ex 3:7). That land was a necessary possession is especially true for ancient Israel, where "wealth was ... directly linked to the land and to land ownership" (Wright 1990:3; *cf.* Bright 1977:47). The conception is even more pertinent for "a nation of arable and pastoral farming like Israel [for which] land was the only permanent possession" (Wright 1990:3) and it is especially applicable to the two main patriarchs who insisted on buying land from the Canaanites with the notion that this would assure them of having a rightful place among the strangers (Gen 23:3-20; 33:18-19). The argument would seem to point ahead towards the formation of Israel as a nation,[73] when we consider Bright's (1977:24-27) suggestion "that a belief in God's election of the patriarchs, and his promises to them, was present in Israel from the beginning."

In addition to the covenant tradition, an earlier literary tradition existed which seems to figure prominently in the book of Hosea. This tradition, I propose, facilitates the tremendous struggle within the pathos and justice of the theology of Hosea. The earlier literary tradition traces Israel's creation as Yahweh's firstborn son (Wright 1990: 15-22; *cf.* Ex 4:22; Deut 32:5, 6, 18, 19; Hos 11:1),[74] giving rise to Israel's existence as a nation (Wright 1990:16, 18). This father-son relationship entailed obedience, faithfulness, and threats of judgment (Wright 1990:13, 21). There are many more significant aspects to the father-son relationship between Yahweh and Israel. It transcends Israel's sins and ensures its existence in perpetuity. "[Even] after judgment", according to Wright (1990:21), "it remained to be invoked ... as the basis for a fresh redemption and a restored relationship." This is evident in our marriage-harlotry metaphor and it forms an important facet of the prophecy of Hosea. But the aspect that will be taken forward from this tradition and that, in my opinion, is essential for understanding the ambivalence of God towards Israel's destruction in the book is that, as a firstborn son, Israel represents a type, a significant first type. This will be discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter, but first I will focus on the two texts in the book in which the word ברית (covenant) occurs.

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[73] See above for literature on the emergence of Israel as a city-state in its Canaanite context.
[74] For other biblical references to Israel's sonship with Yahweh as the father, see Deut 8:5; 14:1; Isa 1:2; 30:1-9; 43:6; 63:16; 64:8; Jer 3:14, 19, 22; 31:9, 20; Mal 1:6; 2:10.

4.2.3.2 Hosea 6:7 and 8:1 on ברית

The contentious issue concerning these two verses is the question of whether a covenant between Yahweh and Israel was known to Hosea and, secondly, what such a covenant entailed. The passages under consideration are by Nicholson (1986:179) seen as presenting an important contribution to the idea of an eighth century witness to the covenant, and possibly its originator. The issue under consideration is the question of a covenant before the Deuteronomic period which does not have the Deuteronomist(s) ideological content. Accordingly, Nicholson proposes that some texts in the Hexateuch[75] elaborating the covenant might be late additions and others are without any clear pre-Deuteronomic date. This proposal takes him back to Wellhausen's view of the origin of the covenant who suggests that it might be dating back to the eighth century prophet. An exposition on the two verses in the book containing the word ברית follows.

Hosea 6:7

Disputes abound as to which unit Hos 6:7 belongs within chapter 6. Macintosh (1997:237) suggests that it forms a new section (Hos 6:7-11) which is devoted to an indictment of the Northern Kingdom for its sins, therefore taking Judah (*cf.* Hos 6:4) quite comfortably out of the picture. Nicholson (1986:180) considers Hos 6:1-3 as an independent unit, leaving Hos 6:4-9 to form a unit which includes our verse but also Judah in verse 9. I am inclined to follow Nicholson (Hos 6:4-9), because of the presence of חֶסֶד and דַעַת אֱלֹהִים which are marks of a covenantal notion. A textual emendation is however suggested in this verse, so as to read "in Adam" (בְּאָדָם) rather than "like Adam" (כְּאָדָם). This textual adjustment is affirmed by the presence of a locative adverb שָׁם (Nicholson 1986:181), which might be linked to the place Adam in the Jordan valley (Josh 3:16).

While considering the phrase which contains "covenant", Nicholson (1986:182-183) presents some biblical parallels that assert that the combination of עָבְרוּ בְרִית is particularly linked to the

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[75] The texts to which Nicholson refers are Ex 19:3b-8; 34:10-28; Jos 24 which has been analyzed by him as not testifying to the antiquity of the covenant, can therefore not be regarded as pre-Deuteronomic. Exodus 24:9-11, which is also thought by some scholars to refer to the covenant, is viewed by him as not concerned with making a covenant. Accordingly, Nicholson (1986:179) posits that "[only] Exodus 24:3-8 may plausibly be regarded as pre-Deuteronomic, but its contents do not enable us to say how long before the Deuteronomic period it came into existence." See Nicholson (1986) for an in-depth analysis of these texts.

idea of a covenant idea which is broken between Yahweh and Israel (Deut 17:2; Josh 7:11, 15; 23:16; Jud 2:20; 2 Kgs 18:12; Jer 34:18; Hos 8:1). The combination of these two words constitutes "offences which threaten the continuation of the covenant", according to Nicholson (1986:184), "and which, if not purged, will result in its termination ... but not to the nullification of the covenant as such." This understanding would be in line with the marriage-harlotry image in Hos 1-3, which does not foresee its "nullification", but rather suggests ways and means to "reforge" the broken relationship. The transgression referred to here, according to Nicholson, following Lindblom (cited in Nicholson 1986:185), suggests that, since Adam lay close to the entry point "where the Israelites under Joshua crossed the Jordan to take possession of the land (Josh 3:16), the prophet is here accusing Israel of having transgressed the covenant from the moment it entered the land long ago." Therefore, as in other passages, Hosea again oscillates between past and present as reference points for an indictment of the Israelites, since vv. 8-10 refer to current political instability in the land. We can therefore surmise that Hosea is referring to a covenantal tradition between Yahweh and the Israelites, containing the terms of faithful love and knowledge of God, but which was broken at the entry point into the land of Canaan.

Hosea 8:1

The next verse, scrutinized for a hint of the idea of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel, is Hosea 8:1. In this verse the same combination of words appears (עָבְרוּ בְרִיתִי) as in Hos 6:7, with the exception of a suffix at the end of the noun. A parallelism occurs equating בְּרִיתִי (my covenant) with תּוֹרָתִי (my torah). This particular form of the noun has led some scholars to believe that it is a Deuteronomic addition, but this has been disputed convincingly by Nicholson (1986:186-187) who suggests that there is no concrete reason for thinking that Hosea could not have formulated the noun in this way. Following Wolff (cited in Nicholson 1986:187), he proposes that Hos 8:4-14 relates to the terms of the indictment contained in Hos 8:1-3.

The opening line announces in metaphorical terms the imminent destruction of the House of Yahweh, alluding to Hos 5:8 (Macintosh 1997:292). Within the same verse reason is given for the destruction which is the transgression of the covenant and the covenant is equated by synonymous parallelism with the Torah. I concur with Macintosh (1997:293) that Hosea might here be alluding to "the ten commandments and other similar material (cf. 4:2)." Macintosh (1997:293) further suggests "that Hosea here refers to (at least an early or emerging form of) the

„Mosaic' covenant and thus to Israel's fundamental constitution as Yahweh's people." I postulate that this is the knowledge of Yahweh which is referred to by Hosea, but which has become diluted due the treacherous and immoral behaviour of the leaders which have led the people astray (*cf.* Wittenberg 2009:506). The allusion to Hos 5:8 is part of the section concerning the removal of boundary stones and this can be understood as the physical removal of the neighbours' boundary, in addition to the removal of the boundary of the Torah.[76] Hence, the knowledge of God has been forgotten and as a result the covenant has been broken in favour of a politically orientated covenant, devoid of concern for the well-being of the people of God at large. These two sections can therefore be considered as an eighth century witness to the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, which contains elements that are, similarly to the Ten Commandments, orientated towards the wellbeing of the whole society.

4.2.4   Bonding יהוה in a Covenant

The indebtedness to ancient Near Eastern cultures in Israel's social construction of reality is unmistakable (Nicholson 1986:198; *cf.* Carroll 1993:22-23, 37). As noted above, this finds its expression in the Israelite milieu of governance, amongst others. Its request for a king "like other nations" was accompanied by institutions which maintained the "right order" as construed by the king. Its most important system, the cult, which was seen as the servant of the divinity of Yahweh, provides it with its sacral legimitation and, as such, it was viewed as permanent (Nicholson 1986:204).[77] This is evident in an ideology of kingship, very similar to that in surrounding cultures, which emerges in the time of David when the king was seen as "Yahweh's 'son' on whose behalf Yahweh defeats the enemies (e.g. Pss 2; 89; 110)" (Nicholson 1986:199). Another notable feature was the wisdom tradition, which "was believed to be grounded in, and a reflection of, the divinely created „right order' of things; wisdom and righteousness were closely related to one another" (Nicholson 1986:200; *cf.* Carroll 1993:22; and Solomon's preoccupation with wisdom). When this right order had been disturbed, due to defeat in battles or natural disasters, it was interpreted as the result of offences committed against Yahweh, and it was dealt with in the cultic sphere in order to regain mythical access to the favour of Yahweh. This favour was considered to be naturally associated and reserved for the Israelites (*cf.* Hosea 6:1-3; 5:6;

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[76] See above.
[77] Refer to discussions above.

8:2; Nicholson 1986:204). Consequently, this theology became the state theology, in service of the state. The knowledge of Yahweh, as viewed from this ideological perspective, was therefore constructed, or boxed, to maintain the right order.

The state theology is negated in unambiguous terms in the book of Hosea. The interaction between this theology and the one which Hosea advocates shows the once passive God, object of the manipulation of leaders and consequently the people of Israel, revolting violently in Hosea's prophecies. Yahweh's reaction is such that scholars labelled him "the violent God" (Sharp 2008) or "an angry God – and he is never angrier than in Hosea's prophecies" (Fisch 1988:140). When the state theology declares that Yahweh fights Israel's battles, Hosea proclaims, "in a little while I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel ... On that day I will break the bow of Israel" (Hos 1:4-5). When the "right order" was disturbed, Israel suggested that Israelites must "return to the Lord; for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us ... Let us know, let us strive to know the Lord" (Hos 6:1, 3). In this context, Yahweh the punisher will naturally be Yahweh the healer because "his going forth is sure as the morning" (v. 3; *cf.* Job 8:5-7; Fisch 1988:152). However, Hosea proclaimed, "I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel or forgive them" (Hos 1:6). In fact the place where they were certain to find Yahweh, as if he was an idol waiting for their veneration, is devoid of his presence, when Hosea (5:6) declares, "he has withdrawn himself from them." Israel's certitude and its confession as being the special chosen people of Yahweh was met by Hosea's prophecy, "you are not my people and I am not אֶהְיֶה to you"[78] (Hos 1:9).

4.3   REDEMPTIVE IMAGES WITHIN THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Despite the fact that Hosea foresees a violent end to all corrupt practices in his milieu, affecting the whole cosmic order, the book in itself provides many redemptive images. Of these this study will list only four. Thereafter, and in conclusion of our analysis of Hosea, I will discuss the last of these images. The first redemptive image that Hosea presents us with affirms the humanity, and therefore the equality, of all people within the society. Mindful that makes use of a risky

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[78] This translation is by Andersen and Freedman. Ehrlich (1985:18) provides a very helpful discussion of the different ways in which this verse can be translated, although I would follow the translation by Andersen and Freedman, which Ehrlich would rather emend to "restore the absolute strict parallelism" of the previous line. He is inclined to read this as "an exact negation of the ancient covenant formula."

metaphor based on violence against a woman, we cannot ignore the fact that it is predominantly concerned with the suffering of the marginal voices in society and that Hosea brings these concerns to the public sphere. This is done, firstly, by affirming the position of women alongside their male counterparts within patriarchal societies, employing its central motif of marriage (Hos 1-3; *cf.* 4:14). However, contrary to the view that the marriage-harlotry image "legitimated male oppression of women in Israel" (West 1996a:209), the book rather inverts the accusations which a woman would endure from her husband for unfaithful behaviour. Accordingly, the book announces the same treatment for unfaithful behaviour in general, and to the male leadership in particularly, within the spheres of religion, society, and family life (*cf.* Hos 4:14).[79] In addition, the position of women is also heightened in divine imagery in Hos 11:1-4, allusive of the mother figure for God. Therefore, the position of women with regard to their male counterparts is socially affirmed, as it is, religiously, in Hosea's female imagery relating to God. Secondly, the book affirms the equality of all people (*cf.* Hos 2:2 [1:11]) and foresees a collective responsibility for the well-being of the community and nature (*cf.* Hos 4:1-3).

The second redemptive image is provided within the interconnected web of relations in the world which affects all life on earth and is integrally linked to the moral behaviour of all human beings (Hos 4:1-3). In this regard Wittenberg (2009:505) proposes that "[fundamental] to the knowledge of God in Hosea is the distinction between the God of Power and uninhibited human self-interest, for Hosea identical with the God Baal, and Yahweh the God not only of salvation history but also of creation." What is also concomitant with this web of interconnections, peculiar and prevalent among the prophets, is the abolition of war, which suggests peaceful coexistence of all human beings on earth, contrary to an ethnocentric appellation or interpretation of this imagery (Hos 2:20 [18]; *cf* Mi 4:3-4).

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[79] Leith (1989:104) argues that: "The „wife of harlotry' belonged to the semantic word field of the covenant curse. By the time the woman has undergone her punishment, there is an entirely new context in which to view the woman, centered on ideals of social legitimacy and moral rectitude. It is now acceptable for Israel, if only metaphorically, to be a woman." Although this might be the case, one can legitimately consider the possibility that Hosea might also be alluding to the social legitimacy of woman in general, especially since this reference of Leith is in the context of a pericope recounting the virgin, and consequently ideal time in the desert where hierarchy and gender differentiation were nonexistent (Hos 2:16-25 [14-23]). It is also in this context where Yahweh will be a husband rather than a Lord (Hos 2:18 [2:16]).

The third redemptive aspect in the prophecy of Hosea is the acknowledgement of the good of other peoples' religion, or the legitimacy of their God-talk, predicated on the monolatry presupposed within the text. In this way, what is good for Baal, is also allowed to Yahweh who comfortably takes on the characteristics of Baal. The most important reference to this claim is contained in Hos 9:1 which, by way of inference, suggests that other nations are entitled to rejoicing because they have been faithful to their gods, therefore presupposing a well being for their societies in some form or another (*cf.* Macintosh 1997:337-338). And finally, Hosea provides a redemptive image for Yahweh, which will take up the final part of this chapter and where I will propose that Yahweh is a metaphor for the divine image of God, taking my cue from metaphor theory that no theory exists that can construct a privileged account of reality, let alone have privileged access to the divinity of God.

Arguing that Yahweh is a metaphor for the divinity of God, requires us to invoke the theory on metaphor which suggests that, within religious language and by means of metaphor, we are allowed access to abstract realities. This is evident throughout the book of Hosea. The proposed redemptive image for Yahweh finds its expression in an inversion of the name of the third child, Lo-Ammi (Hos 1:8; see above) which parallels Lo-Ehyeh (Hos 1:9; *cf.* Macintosh 1997:27-28), allusive to the divine name revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Macintosh (1997:27) reads the divine name in Exodus 3:14 as "offering an interpretation of the tetragrammaton" YHWH, linking it therefore to Israel's national god Yahweh[80]. But I would suggest that it is just the other way around. Lo-Ehyeh, linked to Lo-Ammi, has the nuance of including all peoples of the earth, especially since Israel was chosen to serve the purposes of God through which all nations were to receive a blessing (Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14 *cf.* Hos 2:18-25 [16-23]; 14:9 [8]). This interpretation is also pertinent in the book of Hosea which suggests that the whole cosmic order will bear the punishment for one nation's treacherous behaviour (Hos 4:1-3), albeit in hyperbolic terms. Lo-Ehyeh therefore serves to negate the relationship of God and people in general, and I propose the

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[80] At this moment I would divert from the custom of designating in a capital letter a nationalistic god who serves as a creator for the whole world, but is partial to one nation. This is a custom which should be avoided at all cost. For far too long nationalistic purposes have been served in this way, to the detriment of other peoples created in the image of God. Among these people we can include the Shechemites, who were confronted by Jacob and his sons' ethnocentric and monotheistic ambitions, as well as African and many other colonized people who have lost their land because of this god and his people's nationalistic aspirations. Among these we can certainly include the Palestinians today, suffering and oppressed because of this nationalistic guise in the name of God. In this regard, God, Ehyeh, takes sides with those suffering and with people systematically made landless.

sole reason why there is such an internal strife within Yahweh to destroy the Israelites. That Yahweh revolts against the oppressive and nationalistic ambitions of the Israelites has been discussed above. He does so by taking on characteristics not attributed to him before. The reason for this is that Yahweh is not Israel's idol, but serves as a metaphor for God. The notion that he serves as a metaphor is captured in the burning bush encounter of Moses, particularly as relating to the self-designation of God in Exodus 3:14.

Exodus 3:14 is considered a very significant theological statement and has been the subject of crucial theological discussions (Den Hertog 2002:213). It opens with an introduction, followed by the enigmatic divine statement אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה.[81] The introduction however does not stand on its own in this section, but is followed by two more introductions. Den Hertog (2002:214) suggests that these repetitions could be seen as a rhetorical device.[82] The answer given by Moses to the request for a name has its background in the unprecedented mission given to Moses by God (Den Hertog 2002:226). Moses needs to convince his people of the authenticity of the divine mission. God gives him his first answer in the first person (Den Hertog 2002:226). According to Den Hertog (2002:220), "God does indeed mention a new divine name in his second answer in Exod 3:14: "*Ehyeh ('ehyeh)* has send me to you." The construction of this sentence confirms that the first word is a name and closely linked to Moses' request for a name (Ex 3:14), unlike God's earlier enigmatic statement (Den Hertog 2002:220). The name is also typically related to prophetic utterances characteristic of revelation which, according to Den Hertog (2002:221), "the first-person form signifies." However, the first-person form of *Ehyeh* is not used in the third answer given to Moses, „Yahweh'. According to Den Hertog (2002:220-221; *cf.* Ska 1998:84[83]) it seems that only God and Moses are allowed to use this name of which Yahweh in v. 15 is only a derivative. I would therefore concur with Den Hertog (2002:221) that "Yhwh is the name that people use and also should use (v. 15b), but it is presented as the mere human counterpart of the real divine name, Ehyeh." According to the context, however, it is not

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[81] Many discussions have been conducted about the interpretation of this statement. See Den Hertog (2002) and Sonnet (2010) for some valuable considerations.

[82] Discussions around the source-critical and redactional approach to the answer (Ex 3:14-15) to the request by Moses in Exodus 3:13 have been covered by an array of scholars. See Ska (1998), Den Hertog (2002), and Sonnet (2010) and their bibliographies.

[83] Interesting to note is that Ska (1998:83-85) records proposals from many exegetes who consider Exodus 3:15 as a later addition, stating that the "adverb „again' clearly indicates that v. 15 is to be understood as a „supplement' given by God." See bibliographical details for further discussions on the question.

humans in general, but Israel in particular that may identify with this name. This is also evident in the discussion by Sonnet (2010) who takes a narrative approach to Exodus 3:14.

Sonnet endeavours to elucidate the narrative identity of God in Exodus 3:14, by discussing the "three universals of narrative – suspense, curiosity, and surprise", as espoused by Sternberg (cited in Sonnet 2010:334). What is of interest in his discussion is his reflection on the "surprise", provided by the divine statement to readers who were "expecting another name [for up] to that point in Exodus, the narrator has thrice used God's name the – YHWH tetragrammaton – impressing it on the reader's mind (Exod 3:2.4.7)" (Sonnet 2010:340). This surprise was also experienced by Moses, who is stunned into "silence." Sonnet (2010:340) suggests that the "tetragrammaton is thus, we surmise, the only token or the shibboleth expected by the sons of Israel, the only name that could legitimize Moses' mission." In reaction to Moses' silent "God ... adjusts his presentation and does so in two steps" (Sonnet 2010:341). In concert with Den Hertog (2002), Sonnet asserts that the first adjustment "[picks] up Moses' projected scenario" in Ex 3:13. "The adjustment, however, is met once again by Moses' silence, which leads God to a third statement, in which he reverts to the familiar third-person name (the token of intra-Israelite recognition)" (Sonnet 2010:341).[84]

These discussions certainly point to a new interpretive framework for „Yahweh', and not predominantly for Moses' unprecedented mission, as both Den Hertog (2002) and Sonnet (2010) concede. Moses, serving as the first prophet being allowed the revelation of God's first-person name and being sent to represent this name, is the only one privy, with the readers, to the enigmatic divine first statement of God. Many translations and interpretative traditions are devoted to this statement, but what is characteristic about it is its common personhood as opposed to Yahweh, a god of a patriarchal world who functions not only in its syntax, but also in its interpretative milieu, as masculine. Unpacking this abstract selfpresentation by God, which ends with the introduction of the name Yahweh, brings Moses some relief. This characterizes also God's next command to Moses. Yahweh, giving the vehicle through which Moses and the Israelites should view the divine name, clearly provides a "mini-narrative [yielding] insight, not into what the speaker „means', but into what the cultural community considers acceptable

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[84] On the etymology of the name (Ex 3:14) and its wordplay on the third person name of Yahweh, see Sonnet (2010:342, note 32) and bibliographical references.

interpretations; so acceptable that they are not considered metaphorical at all" (*cf.* Bal 2006:154). The dynamic divine statement therefore becomes relativised, stripped of all its dynamism and it becomes culturally associated with only one people, for it is the third-person name which is acclaimed at the end of the pericope (Ex 3:13-15) as "my name for all time, and thus I am to be invoked for all generations."

The name „Yahweh', to be invoked for all generations, comes in a package, as shown above, and functioned already as a tool for realizing ambitious and oppressive self-serving desires. The book of Hosea clearly notices this in its prophetic utterance and provides us with significant elements to reclaim the dynamism of Yahweh, attached to the dynamic selfrepresentation of God. The book does this with great artistry by keeping the metaphors attached to Yahweh dynamic, fluid, and unpredictable, thus reclaiming the freedom of God, known to the Israelites as Yahweh, and remaining in the sphere of human beings who are struggling to understand these abstract realities. The book of Hosea therefore not only provides life to people who are destitute and faced with oppressive death dealing situations advanced by leaders and religions, but it also breaths fresh life into dead metaphors.

4.4   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The book of Hosea that speaks, as we have shown, about issues of life within the context of the time, serves as an adequate tradition for our hermeneutical mediation. This was demonstrated especially through the use of the theory of metaphor which has been described by Bal (1993:206) as a "messy epistemology." But the theory has proven itself to privilege the text, allowing it freedom to speak in order that we might "learn from it as much as about it." Applying this theory to the text of Hosea, has revealed aspects of Yahweh not known or acknowledged before by the Israelites and, true to metaphor, theory has created new realities and interpretive possibilities. Hosea maintains a diverse spectrum of metaphors to generate the new understanding of Yahweh. This understanding is intimately tied up with the vision of certain destruction, facing the Israelites with the Assyrian invasion which, according to Hosea, has reference in Israel's past traditions. The book of Hosea permits us to make sense of these abstract realities in creative ways, demonstrating that each generation's endeavour is but a partial and parochial account of experiences, subject to the signs of its times. But what has been revealed to us and set forth through the discernment of resemblance is indeed, as Bal (1993:206) would confirm, "equipment

for life." Therefore, the prophetic tradition shaped in this chapter will, in our next chapter, serve as equipment to speak life in the South African context by bringing this tradition into dialogue with the issues identified in our socio-analytical mediation, in an endeavour to formulate a biblical resource for the church.

CHAPTER 5

A NEW PROPHETIC VISION FOR POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The socio-analytical mediation, which brought together the contemporary South African context and the context of the biblical book of Hosea, has revealed significant similarities and dissimilarities. Consequently, the interface provided by the similarities facilitates a dialogue between the two contexts and opens the possibility of drawing some wisdom from the message of Hosea. Such a process may lead to a new prophetic vision for the church, helping it to address the dire socioeconomic conditions in the South African context. Concurrently, the South African context will be in a position to speak back to the biblical context, albeit separated from it by a significant amount of time, in concert with phases two and three of our theoretical framework, and in a dialectical rather than a linear movement.

Therefore, the lines of connection between the two contexts will be enumerated in conjunction with the redeeming images which have been identified in the previous chapter, aiming at the construction of a biblical resource which can assist the church to create the prophetic vision, needed to help and break the cycle of poverty and inequality in the South African context.

5.2   CREATING AN EGALITARIAN SOCIETY

Grave inequalities have been identified within both contexts under discussion. The reason for the inequalities lies in the perpetuation of systems that contribute to widening the gulf separating rich and poor. In the South African context these systems have been identified as the policies that have been implemented to pursue the government's macro-economic policy as espoused in the GEAR document. These policies have created a black middle class, embracing in particular those who are able to influence government policies, alongside white South Africans. The problem with this black middle class is its indifference to the plight of the poor. Although the latter group represents the majority of the constituency that has voted the ANC government into power, government policies, nevertheless, favour the middle class to the majority's detriment. The analysis of the context of the biblical book of Hosea has revealed similar phenomena. Within the Hosean context, an elite class has been identified that robbed the poor of their land and

resources. This was done through systems and institutions, put in place to systematically cheat the majority out of their livelihoods. The systems identified in both contexts have created vast inequalities, poverty, and desperation.

The message of Hosea demonstrates undoubtedly a concern for an egalitarian society, for example in what was identified above as the first redemptive image. It is concerned with establishing gender equality in the patriarchal society where the message was delivered. This was done by unprecedented imagery (*cf.* Hos 1-3), purposely formulated to reveal and address the gender inequalities in society. Secondly, it addresses the inequalities in the society at large. The book delineates the existing class structures and identifies those who have been deprived from the country's benefits. It has, creatively, instilled a vision of hope for an equalitarian society in the public sphere to which the dispossessed could cling (*cf.* Hos 2:2 [1:11]). In relation to these issues, the South African context has structurally affirmed the equality of all its citizens through its Constitution which is considered one of the best in the world in terms of the protection of human rights. However, on a more pragmatic level, it has failed to establish an egalitarian society in which people equally enjoy the benefits of the country. The foregoing discussions on the South African context indicate that the inequalities which exist within society have been structurally perpetuated.

Many resources can be drawn from Hosea's pronouncement to support the church in its concern for the creation of an egalitarian society. It also provides the church with a unique access point to voice these concerns within the public sphere, especially since "*human rights* [form] a legitimate locus for Christian witness" (de Gruchy, J & de Gruchy, S 2005:256; their emphasis). The book of Hosea has perceptively identified the elements which impinged on the creation of an egalitarian society. In the same way, the framework on which this research is based has emphasised the importance of a social analytical mediation to identify elements which deny people life. Similarly, the church has to employ the necessary mediums that will allow it to read the signs of the times and lay bare the fundamental structures contributing to poverty and lead to injustice. Secondly, addressing these situations requires a creative prophetic imagination, appropriate to our time. This directly leads on to the type of theological education, needed and appropriate to our times (*cf.* de Gruchy, J & de Gruchy, S 2004:259). However, contrary to the book of Hosea which affirms gender equality but does so, using imagery (like the marriage-

harlotry text), risky to the point where it potentially destabilizes the very point it wishes to address, we should at all cost avoid using such imagery. In this instance, our South-African context can speak back to the context of Hosea and affirm the limits of god-talk that is potentially abusive and might deny people life.

5.3   SUSTAINING LIFE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Both contexts affirm the interconnection of people's moral behaviour and the well-being of society. While it is not the focus of this thesis to establish a connection between people's behaviour and their environment, there is evidence that moral behaviour does effect the environment in the South African context. These networks of interrelationships have been identified in the South African context by establishing the elements which contribute to the despair and dire socioeconomic situation of the poor and marginalised. It has been pointed out that a bottleneck has occurred between those who receive the fruits of democracy and the equal distribution of those fruits in the society. It was demonstrated that this bottleneck situation is threatening the livelihoods of the majority, in turn leading to circumstances where anarchy is rife. Similarly, in the context of Hosea different elements have been identified that threaten the livelihoods of the poor who, in both contexts, face dire social circumstances. In the eighth century BCE context, we have established, the nation was on the verge of collapsing, dissenting voices were suppressed, and there was pervasive suffering of the majority, stripped off their livelihoods, leading to lawlessness.

The message of Hosea endeavours to identify the essential elements which assist social cohesion, not only in the immediate society, but in the region as a whole. In this regard, the book aims to convince its contemporaries that an alternative world is possible (*cf.* Brueggemann 2001:x), through its proclamation of hope and the restoration of the rule of God. The message identifies the reign of God as implied in the elements of covenant: faithfulness, love, and the knowledge of God, made evident in actions by and among the people in the community sphere. Such actions will bring about a peaceful era within the community and the region as well as in regard to other nations, which will have a positive impact on the environment in its entirety (*cf.* Hos 2:20 [2:18]). This message therefore demonstrates the importance of a healthy co-operation of all the elements within life's networks, and the need to call to account those responsible for the lack of

co-operation. It has also been demonstrated that the whole society should be held accountable for addressing issues of injustice.

The resources that can be drawn from this excursion are, as indicated, multiple. Firstly, the book shows that a prolonged absence of moral values aiming to benefit all, has as its concomitant the rise of an elite class that secures the fruits of the country for its own enjoyment. The elite class who usually controls the political arena tends to calls dissenting voices to task through political suppression (*cf.* Brueggemann 2001:8). Consequently, a mythical affirmation accompanies such leadership within the public arena, through appealing to the people's collective history and struggles. In this regard, the church, as an independent organ within society, should take a leading role and collaborate with all other socially representative organisations to articulate clearly which moral values should accompany behaviour within the public sphere, without exception. The church could do so, using its ecumenical links with other religious bodies. Secondly, the church should emphasize that the world is indeed the "Great economy" (de Gruchy, S 2007:334)[85] and that all who live in it must take responsibility for its sustenance. In this regard the church should encourage people to accept collective responsibility for taking to task those who digress from the path of creating a clean and healthy environment, conducive to life, for generations to come. Finally, the church should emphasize the need for regional stability and address issues in other regions which might negatively affect this stability (*cf.* political turmoil in Zimbabwe). All these issues play a vital role in securing an environment from which the next generation can benefit. Failure to advance and address such issues will perpetuate the dire circumstances into which our children are born, thereby leaving the bulk of the work for them to address instead of bequeathing them a healthy nation.

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[85] Conversing with Rasmussen and Berry, de Gruchy points out the necessity for an integrated economic and ecological programme for sustaining the earth. In this regard he cites Rasmussen (cited in de Gruchy, S 2007:334), who states: "Economic production and consumption, as well as human reproduction, are unsustainable when they no longer fall within the borders of nature's regeneration. So the Bottom Line below the Bottom Line is that if we don't recognize that the laws of economics and the laws of ecology are finally the same laws, we are in deep doo-doo." It is in this regard that a prophetic vision to eradicate poverty should take into consideration the interconnectedness of life on earth addressing therefore humans' responsibility toward society as well as the environment in order to sustain both spheres for the next generation.

5.4 CROSS CULTURAL INTERACTION

The demographic configurations in South Africa display a multi-cultural population with a wide variety of religious orientations in a religion-neutral state. Within this context the diverse religions often practice religious myopia in order to protect their faith from becoming diluted, a critique often directed at Christianity (ANC 2007). In contrast to ancient societies, in today's world religion and culture are interchangeable terms. Therefore the religious influence of 'the nations', evident in the mono-ethnic Israelite milieu, has been a component of both critique and appropriation in the prophecy of Hosea. Within the context of Hosea's prophecies, such influence was manifest in the worship of the Israelites, particularly the predominant influence of the fertility religion of the Canaanites, as well as in the wider political economic spheres.

The Hosea book appropriates many of the positive characteristics, associated with these religious and economic influences, into its theology but discards the negative features. It does away, in particular, with the concept of a god manifested in images, religious festivals, and sacrifices, elements which have been demonstrated to affect people's livelihoods negatively. In this regard, traditions seen as denying life and perpetuating people's suffering are condemned by Hosea. However, characteristics of other religious orientations which contribute to the book's message have been are appropriated and the Israelites are encouraged to emulate certain elements from the religious observance of neighbouring nations (*cf.* Hos 9:1). In addition, the book infuses all the positive characteristics associated with Baal (*cf.* Hos 1-2), the fertility god, into the attributes of Yahweh to advance the book's theology.

The appropriation of the inevitable cultural influence of other nations in Hosea is an example worthy of emulation by the multi-religious society that the church finds itself in. This issue is directly associated with the third main resource which we can distil from the book. It is important to note is that the essential principles of Hosea's theology are maintained, but enhanced by the selective appropriation of the dominant forces within its milieu. The book clearly demonstrates the phenomenon that culture and religion are fluid terms, an element which is often been ignored in the changing environment of South Africans, leading to the perpetuation

of injustice, especially as regards gender (*cf.* Phiri & Nadar 2010:6-10).[86] On the other hand, intolerance and misunderstanding of other people's cultures cause ignorance of the good elements contained therein, to the detriment of growth and social cohesion. Hosea clearly demonstrates that cultural interaction can function as a prophetic tool in the service of life. This is a resource which the church can employ creatively appropriate new and „other' cultural and religious elements which can contribute to its prophetic collaborative task within society.

5.5   BREATHING LIFE INTO DEAD METAPHORS

A final resource offered by Hosea and useful for the church, concerns the sphere of its god-talk. Although the South African state is a religiously neutral state, it clearly has a certain view pertaining to the task of religion, specifically the Christian religion, in the public sphere (*cf.* ANC 2007; West 2007b:5). This view is further advanced by relegating Christianity to a "Church-type theology" (West 2007b:5), with an uncritical appropriation of the Bible in the public sphere (*cf.* Brueggemann 2001:8; West 2007b). Church-type theology is a passive tool in the hands of an oppressor, reminding people of their ethical responsibilities towards those in leadership positions. However, this approach clearly numbs people to their oppression and therefore serves to perpetuate injustices within society. This approach was clearly identified by Hosea who associates it with the dominant religion as practiced, especially, at the cultic centres. These centres produced a theology which contributed to people's suffering without them being conscious of it.

Hosea unambiguously takes issue with any theology that has become institutionally embedded and contributes to people's suffering. Hosea does this by keeping the metaphors for Yahweh fluid and unpredictable. These metaphors, however, are appropriate in his milieu and relative to the issue to be addressed and to the dominant images which need to be revisited. Thus, through Hosea's prophecy the dominant images of Yahweh are found wanting, together with the auxiliary institutions which occupy a dominant place under its auspices, especially notions of kings, priests, and prophets. In this regard, Hosea demonstrates that no theology or institution is too sacrosanct to be scrutinized and critiqued.

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[86] Phiri and Nadar (2009) have demonstrated that, contrary to the static view of culture espoused by those who control its codes, there is a marginal view which has often critiqued those cultural codes that perpetuate gender injustices.

The church, in the South-African context, could draw, for its prophetic witness, on this aspect of Hosea and constantly scrutinize the dominant images in society (*cf.* West 1996a:209), in both the religious and cultural spheres, in order to determine whether they contribute to numbing people to suffering, allowing them to forget injustices done against them and society at large. This has a particular bearing on post liberation societies where images of one person or party take on the dimensions of liberation icons. Although such icons may have played prominent roles in the struggle for freedom, often others were also involved. This is especially true for the post-apartheid society where liberation is linked mainly to one person and one party and employed as a chastising tool the moment they lose support due to bad service delivery or corruption. Therefore, the dominant images should be identified and revived to locate their essence, instead of allowing ruling parties to exploit them, so that rulers are kept in power, despite the fact that they are not delivering on the promises which brought them to power in the first place, and leading to a perpetuation of people's suffering. It is in this instance that the church could play a vital role and constantly "relate the truth of the gospel to the realities of power and injustices" (de Gruchy & de Gruchy 2004:255) as contained in this imagery. A prophetic vision, informed by the suffering of the people, is needed to lay bare theologies and institutions which contribute to prolonged desperation in society.

5.6   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter culminated in the final stage of our theoretical framework which has brought together all the foregoing research and provided a prescriptive account for creating resources for a new prophetic vision to assist the church in its prophetic task. This was done by bringing our socio-analytical mediation together, identifying areas of conjunction and disjunction between the contexts of the biblical book of Hosea and South Africa fifteen years after a democracy. The chapter endeavoured to find lines of connection between these two contexts in order to facilitate dialogue. The lines of connection, once drawn, legitimated an interface between the contemporary context and the ancient text. Methodologically, the issues were delineated from which a properly hermeneutical mediation was derived in order to bring about change. Therefore, the prophetic resource from the book of Hosea was shaped in accordance with the issues which we investigated.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The foregoing research has endeavoured to answer the question: "To what extent can a socio-historical and literary understanding of Hosea's prophetic utterances in his context provide the church in twenty-first century South Africa with a new prophetic vision, assisting it in addressing the socioeconomic forces which impinge on the lives of the majority of citizens." This was done by using a research design, based on the theological framework of Vital Theology, which drew on an array of analytical tools from the disciplines of theology, social sciences, and linguistics. This facilitated an interdisciplinary approach, necessary and appropriate to the church in our times. In response to the main research question, three objectives were set from which four sub-questions emerged. In my conclusion I will integrate these with the research that has been done in order to gauge to what extent the questions have been answered.

The first two sub-questions were related to the respective contexts of the biblical book of Hosea and contemporary South African with the aim of establishing lines of connection between the two. The first question posed was: "What are the conditions which indicate socioeconomic problems in the South African context and the biblical context of the book of Hosea?" This question was answered in chapters two and three. In chapter two the South African context was analysed to lay bare the fundamental causes of increasing poverty and inequality levels. It was demonstrated that structural mechanisms, implemented by state policy, have contributed to the dire socioeconomic situation with which the majority of the population is faced. In chapter three the context of Hosea was analysed, drawing predominantly on the theory of metaphor as an analytical tool. In this regard I have indicated that the text employs the marriage-harlotry images to recount structural dimensions of the socioeconomic position of the ancient Israelite nation. The first question was therefore successfully answered in these two chapters.

The second sub-question related to the context was: "What are the areas of conjunction and disjunction between the contexts of Hosea's message and South Africa?" This question was answered in an integrated approach in chapter five, whereby the lines of connection were identified in order to facilitate dialogue between the two. Significant similarities emerged between the two contexts, but dissimilarities were also identified. The similarities demonstrated

that, in both contexts, there are structural dimensions which contribute to people's suffering. Accordingly, the dissimilarities also facilitated a circular dialogical movement between the two contexts, appropriate to the theological framework.

The third sub-question related to the issue of interpretation by asking: "What is the meaning of the text of Hosea in its socio-historical context?" The question was dealt with by positioning this research within the current trend of scholarship which approaches the text of Hosea, using the literary criticism contained in chapter four. Discussing the traditions in Israel's milieu, it was demonstrated that, instead of being lauded for establishing Yahwism, the Israelites were in Hosea's prophecies condemned for its distortion.

Finally, the fourth sub-question that emerged from the research was: "How can we re-use the message of Hosea as a resource for the South African setting?" The integrated approach of chapter five made clear that the message of Hosea presents the church with significant resources to construct a new prophetic vision appropriate to the South African context and for addressing the dire socioeconomic situation in the country. This new prophetic vision has also revealed continuities with the prophetic vision of contemporary theologians and biblical scholars, therefore advancing the implicit objective of this research.

The four sub-questions have therefore demonstrated that the main question of the research has been answered. It has been established that the biblical book of Hosea offers considerable resources to the church on which it can draw for reviving its declining prophetic voice, particularly in the sphere of macroeconomic policies which impinge on the socioeconomic wellbeing of society. Employing the book of Hosea is particularly pertinent as it has been demonstrated that understanding past situations is of importance for the development of a contemporary prophetic vision, a notion captured in a speech by former president Mbeki, where he stated that "it is perfectly clear that no solution to many current problems can be found unless we understand their historical origins" (Mbeki cited in Habib et al 2003:20). However, Hosea, unlike Mbeki, perceptively noted that historical origins of current dilemmas have a tendency to mutate in contemporary society, further exacerbating the dilemmas.

While it is beyond the scope of this research to implement a prophetic vision, this research has identified resources available to clergy and other significant role players within society. Similar

work done within biblical studies has thus far not yielded the desired effect in the public sphere, so we must focus on ways to employ these resources and advance public action.

The book of Hosea only presents us with one strand within the liberative tapestry of the Bible, and, while this research has focused only on some traditions alluded to in the book, further research should be undertaken to analyse other traditions and dimensions. Research also needs to be done to determine how other books in the Bible can facilitate a prophetic vision. In addition it is suggested that the various research done within the field of biblical studies should be identified, both as a lobbying tool to stimulate critical consciousness among the masses and to present the church with an anthology of biblical resources to assist it with its prophetic vision. This endeavour should also aim to facilitate dialogue between theology and other disciplines in order to advance collaboration within the academy of South Africa.

The church in South Africa is presented with a unique opportunity in the *Kairos* in which we find ourselves. Hosea provides the church with a resource to reclaim the critical position of the Bible, the silo of the masses, within the public sphere. This is an urgent call, which contemporary theologians and biblical scholars will ignore at their own, and the community's, peril. The volatile situation faced by South Africa at this moment in time is incisively captured by Mbeki's favourite citation in relation to the dream of "A Better Life for All". Quoting the African-American poet, Langston Hughes, Mbeki asks, "What happens to a dream deferred?" And, with Hughes, Mbeki concludes that "it explodes" (Mbeki 1998). In view of the socioeconomic situation in South Africa right now, Hughes' metaphor, appropriated by Mbeki, is not as bankrupt as some tend to suppose.

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