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**TOPIC: *CAN THE CHURCH OF MOZAMBIQUE BE
MISSIONARY IN HER OWN COUNTRY?***

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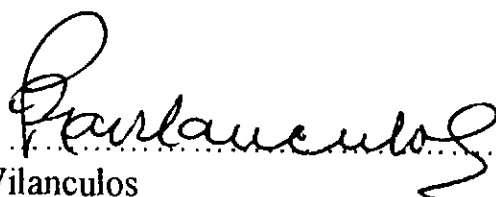
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is originally mine and has never been presented by anybody for academic purposes. All the sources have been carefully quoted.

The candidate,

Signed

Paulo Rafael Vilanculos

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paulo Rafael Vilanculos", written over a dotted line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'P'.

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all the people who helped and supported me to write this work and to shape it the way it is. It has not been an easy enterprise due to difficulties of many kinds such as, lack of means where to write the materials researched, shortage of language and scarcity of relevant materials, especially for the composition of my first chapter.

Among all who encouraged me to go ahead and helped me to compose the materials, I want, firstly and especially, to thank Sister Mary Kerber, SSND and her community, who dedicated most of their precious time to me, and patiently listened to my repeated requests. They also availed all their facilities so that I could materialise this project. Secondly, I wish to say many thanks to Fr. Leonard Paul, who began with me this project, directing and advising me, but, unfortunately, due to untimely factors had to leave for the States, and to Fr. Lacomara, who took me after Fr. Paul had left. I thank him for taking the pain of reading this work patiently and correcting my broken English.

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Finally, I thank God who gave me health and energies to undertake this strenuous trouble of flipping through uncountable volumes of books. And I thank you all who, though I did not particularly mention your names, have contributed, in one way or another, to the composition of this work.

To you all,
God Bless!

D E D I C A T I O N

I dedicate this work to my parents who brought me to this world, and despite their old age still encourage me and sheer me up to struggle against all difficulties of life. A special dedication goes to my nephew, Eladio Paulo Filipe, who has entered school the other day and, I hope to see him excel and reach where I cannot reach myself.

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0. INTRODUCTION

CAN THE CHURCH OF MOZAMBIQUE BE MISSIONARY IN ITS OWN COUNTRY?

Mozambique is a nation that has been involved in a long civil war that brought the country to a total destruction of its economy. This created a perpetual problem of poverty and an unbalanced distribution of wealth among its population as well as creating a disturbing social disorder. During the times of civil war, blame and accusations were always thrown only to one side of the war makers: 'poverty and destruction is caused by the RENAMO fighters'. But today, after the treaty of peace of Rome signed on 4th October 1992, peace has come to the country and democracy was inaugurated in 1994 with the general multiparty elections. Nonetheless, even with peace and stability reigning in Mozambique, a fair distribution of wealth cannot be seen and felt by its citizens. In fact, there are talks of growing figures in Mozambique's economic achievements in the last five years, but this growth does not guarantee a balanced distribution of wealth. The rich are increasingly growing rich and the poor are more impoverished every day. The government has not managed to create chances of employment for most of its population, thus opening channels to criminality and illicit ways of gaining wealth and survival. Corruption has become the order of the day and there is no way the government can guarantee that justice be always administered to the citizens given that even the judiciary has been caught up in similar corrupt behavior like that seen in government offices.

It is in this context of sympathy and anguish for my people's pain and desire to see justice administered to them that I decided to write this paper, urging the Church to reflect on her mission and identity and speak for the helpless, the poor and those suffering unjustly in cells for crimes that they did not commit. Therefore, when trying to answer the above stated question I intend to address the following interconnected issues: the social injustice and the worsening levels of poverty in the country due to corruption and lack of solidarity, pleading the missionary-Church to make pronouncements in regard to these burning issues and demand that she get more involved in social matters to the extent of

imitating some classical prophets such as Amos, Hosea and Isaiah, who spoke out when they saw injustices being inflicted on their fellow countrymen. These prophets should be taken as models to follow if the Church wants to bring justice to the country so as to stop corruption and eradicate poverty. In this way she will alleviate the pain, the anguish and the suffering of the people of Mozambique.

There are many reasons why I address the Church to take up this task:

First of all, the Church is the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt 5:13-14 and Vat. II, *Ad Gentes*, no.1 ss.2). She represents Christ on earth, and Christ her founder came to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to the oppressed and proclaim a good year of prosperity to all humanity (cf. Lk 4:18-19; Is 61:1-2). Therefore, the Church has the task of bringing about that justice and freedom from oppressive powers to her people because this was the command of Christ, that she should continue to do what he had begun.

Secondly, the Church has, as one of her missions, to be prophetic in her life and proclamation. To be a prophetic Church does not only mean to announce messages about the future, but rather it means to denounce strongly what is wrong in the society today. This is the sign of commitment and care to her members who live here and now. Furthermore, she must bring liberation not only to Christians but to all humanity because the Christ-event was a cosmic event which aimed at redeeming all the universe.

In the third place, the Church is usually held by many societies as a moral person whose life portrays what she is and lives in accord with the model desired by her founder, a model of love and service to one another. Indeed she is a moral person. The Church also must be free from any allegiances and partisanship so much so that she talks impartially and objectively on matters that hurt the people and the state. For this reason, even though she holds principally and primarily spiritual powers, she must, however, show concern and look after the well being of her flock who live in the state. The Church and the state should co-operate in bringing about justice and social well-being of the citizens of the country (cf. *LG*, 76).

Another reason that makes me think that the Church should address these issues of social justice (and the government should not feel offended), is that I have observed that

many governors of nations, presidents and ministers alike, when sworn in to their posts, claim/evoke the authority of the Bible and the constitutions of their countries as their guiding principles of leadership, and utter words like these: ‘I will be committed to serve the people according to the constitutions of the country and with the help of God, [symbolized by the Bible].’¹¹ Therefore, the Church being Christ’s representative and holding power and authority to interpret God’s will to her people, a will that is contained in the Bible, she is obliged to speak out in the name of God and remind the earthly rulers of the meaning of their public oath taken on the day of their commitment to serve the nation. Earthly rulers need to be told what real justice and well-ordered social life is.

To accomplish my task of creating a guideline document which must bring awareness and provoke reactions and actions of the reader to the cause of the poor and disadvantaged, I will begin by describing the recent social, political and economic situation of Mozambique. In this opening chapter, I will focus on the problem, the fact that poverty and social injustice exist in Mozambique. I will describe the factors causing this poverty especially corruption. The purpose of this chapter is to raise the problem and state it clearly through a clear and thorough description of facts and events.

In the second chapter I will focus on the biblical figures, the prophets, who dealt with a similar need for social justice in Israel. The Bible will be the main guiding principle and source from where answers will be fetched after a careful study and critique of the texts and materials using commentaries and other biblical study books. This chapter is the core section of the whole work and, it will determine my conclusions, suggestions and recommendations. Therefore, I will give it a special, objective but critical treatment so as to make my conclusions and recommendations practical, viable and strong, and provoking to the readers.

The third chapter contains the lines of action, suggestions, new approaches, new strategies to be implemented in the field by all Church agents both in their preaching and dealing with the government, people and all institutions directly responsible in promoting the common good and fair distribution of wealth. The conclusions will flow naturally from the Bible’s teaching as it challenges the present situation within the country and the practical specific needs in the country.

Chapter one: A Brief Political, Social and Economic Analysis of Mozambique.

1.0 GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION

1.1 THE COUNTRY

Mozambique is situated in the southern part of Africa. It is just slightly bigger than Kenya with an area of about 799,380 square kilometers. It has a long coast of about 2500 kilometers, extending from Ponta do Ouro in the southern most province of Maputo to Mocimboa da Praia in the northern province of Cabo-Delgado. Its bordering countries are in the South, the Republic of South Africa; in the North, Tanzania; in the West, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi; and, in the East, there is the golden Indian Ocean. The country is divided into ten big provinces, and its population was estimated at about 17 million inhabitants, with a population growth rate of 4.9 percent in 1995. Its most powerful economic activity is agriculture. People grow sugar cane, tea, coconut, tropical fruits and other produce for local consumption and exportation.

1.2 POLITICAL SITUATION

1.2.0 IMPORTANT HISTORICAL EVENTS

1.2.1 COLONIAL PRESENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE

When the Portuguese explorer Vasco Da Gama arrived on the coast of the Indian Ocean in the late fifteenth century, he found in the area that it is now Mozambique a dynamic society which had trade relations with the African hinterland, the Middle East and China. In 1752 Portugal proclaimed Mozambique its colony, and in the same century established the slave trade. Following the partition of Africa by European powers at the end of the nineteenth century, the Portuguese colonial army undertook a series of military campaigns which finally enabled Portugal to subjugate Mozambique as one of its five 'overseas Provinces' together with Angola, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome e Principe and Cape Verde. Nevertheless the last pockets of armed resistance were only eliminated in the early twentieth century. Despite all the colonial pressure on the indigenous, Mozambicans never

abandoned the ideal of independence from colonial rule. The road to independence had been a long and bloody one.

1.2.2 FRELIMO IS FOUNDED

FRELIMO was founded in 1962 as a result of the union of three independent political parties namely, UNAMO, UDENAMO and MANO, which groups were secretly working for the independence of part of the country. The struggle for independence began on 25th September 1964 under FRELIMO (Frente de Libertacao de Mocambique). FRELIMO's leader was Dr. Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane, who at the time was working for the United Nations. He was also FRELIMO's first president, but in the midst of an internal conflict over two opposing political perspectives, he was assassinated in a bookbomb parcel explosion on 3rd February 1969. Samora Moises Machel, a member of FRELIMO's central committee by then, succeeded Mondlane. Machel was to lead FRELIMO until independence, which was achieved on 25th June 1975. He became the first president of the independent Mozambique until he died on 19th October 1986 in a plane crash in Mbuzine, a South African territory. He was coming back from a very important meeting for the countries of the Front Line held in Zambia.

1.2.3 FROM INDEPENDENCE TO CIVIL WAR

When independence was granted in 1975 the new government managed to drive away in a brutal manner all who had been implicated in the colonial government. This brought the weakly established colonial government to its total collapse. Nonetheless, the cold war that was going on in the countries surrounding Mozambique rendered the country a vulnerable and insecure place. In South Africa there was the Apartheid regime, Rhodesia needed Mozambique's support to achieve its independence. Both the ANC (the African National Congress) that fought for the liberation of black people in South Africa, and the Rhodesia military forces that combated the Ian Smith regime, benefited from Mozambique's ready help. It was in this context that RENAMO

(Mozambican National Resistance) was founded by Southern Rhodesian's security forces so as to attack the ZANLA guerrilla fighters' bases inside Mozambique. ZANLA fought for an independent Zimbabwe and Mozambique supported this movement militarily even allowing them to have their bases in the interior of the country. After Zimbabwe got its independence in 1980, RENAMO was backed by the South African Apartheid regime with the only objective of terrorizing people and perpetrating actions of vandalism and destruction. It was during this period that RENAMO did the worst destruction: "roads, railways, power plants, and other economic installations in Mozambique were prime targets, but so were all social symbols of FRELIMO. State-run schools, health centers, and local administrations, and the people that ran them were targeted, assaulted, tortured and killed"².

The civil war lasted for 17 years, but it finally came to an end in October 4, 1992 with the signing of the Rome peace accord. Multiparty elections followed after two years between the 27th and the 28th of October 1994. Afonso Dhlakama, the leader of RENAMO party, tried to boycott the elections but he ended up being the loser, as his performance became poor even in places where he could have gotten fairly good results. "On 26th October night at about 11 o'clock p.m. he (Afonso) announced his withdrawal from elections, claiming that FRELIMO had prepared to win by fraud... Most RENAMO supporters did not get the message on time and went to the polls anyway... All this ripped (*sic*) him a big loss as he came out a poor runner up, with 34 per cent of the vote against Chissano's winning 53 per cent"³. Dhlakama's party, however, did a lot better, acquiring 112 seats in the parliament out of 250 in total, of which FRELIMO holds 129. The remaining 9 seats were filled by U.D (Democratic Union) party which benefited from a confusion of placement of names on the ballot papers, for people mistook it for FRELIMO.

² Rachel Waterhouse, Mozambique, Rising from the Ashes, 1996, p.12

³ Rachel Waterhouse, Opus Cit., p.24

1.2.4 MOZAMBIQUE TODAY: A DEMOCRATIC NATION

The multiparty elections that had taken place between 27th and 28th October 1994 brought peace and political stability in the country. However, loopholes are still existing in the political domain. Things such as the powers of the president, the role of local authorities, etc., have not yet been resolved. The constitution of the country gives the president a lot of power to the extent of being able to dissolve the parliament should it reject the government's program. "Its (Mozambique's) constitution attributes over-riding powers to the president, leaving parliament with a relatively weak role. Should parliament reject the government's program, the president may dissolve it and call for fresh elections. The 250 deputies of Mozambique's first post-war parliament approved the FRELIMO executive's Five Years Plan of government, and its program without discussion, and with only two votes against"⁴.

2.0 SOCIAL SITUATION

2.1 EDUCATION: MANY HUNGRY MINDS IN MOZAMBIQUE

The situation of poor education and illiteracy can be traced back to the colonial times. "Unlike British colonials, who saw some advantage in educating a cheap African labor force, the poorer Portuguese took no such pains. The colonial state in Mozambique preferred a policy of exclusion, implemented through a two-tier system. While the state provided a superior education for the children of the settlers and the tiny minority of *assimilados*, African education was entrusted to rural missionaries, principally those of the Catholic Church. Few Mozambicans graduated beyond primary education. All teaching was in Portuguese; fees were high and so were failure rates"⁵.

This discriminatory mentality directed toward Mozambican citizens simmered in the minds of Mozambican common folks especially in rural areas. Today, even during the time of my primary and secondary education in 70s and 80s, very few parents ever considered education a thing of value. The logic of their thought is 'even though we are not educated, yet we live. Therefore, there is no need of educating our offspring'.

⁴ Rachel Waterhouse, Mozambique, Rising from the Ashes, 1996 , p.25

⁵ Rachel Waterhouse, Op Cit., p.49

Most parents would forbid their children to go to school, especially to the levels beyond primary education, not only because they could not afford to pay the fees, but also because children are seen in terms of family food production. Therefore they would rather have their kids toil the land than let them go to school. If one insisted to attend school, he would be punished by not giving him food; ‘Go, eat your books!’ would be the parent’s command.

For many parents, education is just a useless privilege, a stupid squandering of precious money. Up to today, some parents still cannot let their children undergo formal education for fear of losing them. The people of Palma, for example, the last district in the northern province of Cabo-Delgado, still hold onto the thinking that formal education is a waste of time and resources. “Reaching Mozambique’s northernmost district of Palma... feels like reaching the end of Africa or the end of the last century Africa. While thousands of children elsewhere in Mozambique are out of school because there are no places, in Palma the position is reversed. Every year, the teachers set out to persuade local parents to send their children to school. At the mere sight of a teacher, local children run away”⁶.

The figures below suggest how poor education has been in Mozambique: “When the Portuguese fled in 1975, over 90 per cent of Mozambicans they left behind were unable to read or write. The country had barely a handful of university graduates”⁷. When FRELIMO took over the power, it targeted education as the first priority in its government plan. In fact education has always been FRELIMO’s primary concern beginning from its Liberated Zones during the struggle for independence, where children, who could read and write, were recruited to help teach those who could not. FRELIMO, however, committed one unfortunate mistake in its handling of education. In its desire to expand education to all and control it itself, the government nationalized mission schools; colonial teachers (those holding proper training and wide experience in teaching) were expelled, substituting for them young Mozambican revolutionary stars, who had no experience at all. This brought about a breakdown in the quality of

⁶ Rachel Waterhouse, **Mozambique, Rising from the ashes**, p.51

⁷ Rachel Waterhouse, *op. Cit.*, p.50.

education offered to pupils. Furthermore, the government could not afford to run all these schools well and offer them good standards and equipment. Although there was a slight success as literacy was raised by 25 per cent plus within five years, a gap was permanently present. Students lacked a profound scientific orientation with deep roots. The teaching system was one sided, favoring socialist ideals at the expense of capitalism. This resulted in unbalanced knowledge, and crooked scientific preparation. The worsening of civil war in 80s, with RENAMO targeting schools, totally broke down the education network. "RENAMO guerrillas deliberately targeted schools and teachers, many times in horrific manner, burning classrooms, hacking teachers to death, and carrying school children into captivity. During the war, over 3,000 schools were destroyed or abandoned"⁸.

Today education is still the government's first priority. Children are hungry for school. Some schools "operate in 3-shift system and classrooms burst at seams, with 50 to 80 children crammed together, trying to learn from a single teacher"⁹. There is still a long way to go in the Mozambican system of education to come to terms with the whole problem. And since education is the guarantee of future development, every effort should be made, not only by the government, but also by other credible institutions to help overcome this problem. Out of a population of 17 million according to 1995's census, only 45 per cent of males and 24 per cent of females were educated in 1990. Today things are not much better than that. The number of doctors was about 381 in 1993, i.e., one doctor had to attend to 40,900 people, and the nurses were 3,690, 1 per 4,223 inhabitants. These figures illustrate how far behind the country is as far as education is concerned. This should call for a real commitment of development powers in the country to co-operate in eradicating illiteracy. The Mozambique Prime Minister, Pascoal Mucumbi, described two types of illiteracy found in the country namely, 'classical illiteracy' (the inability to read and write), and the 'modern illiteracy' (the inability to use modern technology)¹⁰.

⁸ Rachel Waterhouse, Mozambique, Rising from the Ashes, p.50

⁹ Rachel Waterhouse, Opus Cit., p.50

¹⁰ Cf. Mozambique News Agency, e-mail: Mozambique News, Geo-2. Poptel. Org. UK, no.142, 8th September 1998 under the title " **Schools Get Internet Link**"

2.2 HEALTH: A CHALLENGE TO THE POPULACE

The Mozambican population never enjoyed full and good modern health-care. “Under Portuguese rule, modern health care did not extend far beyond the city hospitals, where doctors attended the colonial class”¹¹. Many common people had been undergoing treatment from the *curandeiros*¹². This practice was banned by FRELIMO during the independence period, as it was categorized as obscurantism just like religion. After many years of neglect of this practice, in 1991-92, it was finally restored but with new color and vision. Now donors fund it so as to investigate the rich African natural medicine. Many rural people, however, still prefer this to modern medicine even today. “In 1991, health workers in Zambezia province were pelted with stones when they arrived to vaccinate a terrified community against common diseases. Unused to modern health care, the people believed that health workers had come to suck out their blood”¹³.

Although the colonial rule did not make health-care available for many, the FRELIMO government tried to correct the situation by extending the health network to many parts of the country. In fact this was one of its jewels in its plan of government. “From the time FRELIMO took over power, the number of health-care staff doubled to 4,000 by 1985. FRELIMO nationalized the health-care system, making it virtually free, built hundreds of rural health-care posts, and launched a new policy for rural populations based on preventive care. FRELIMO’s health-care achievements won enthusiastic praise from the World Health Organization”¹⁴.

The diseases that kill Mozambican people are very simple to treat and are usually the common ones, which in many countries have been already eradicated. They are diseases like cholera, tuberculosis, diarrhea, malnutrition, etc. The country is classified as having the least healthy population in the world. “From a population of approximately 17 million, every year some 200,000 children die before the age of five. Some 20 per cent of babies are born under weight, and life expectancy at birth is only

¹¹ Rachel Waterhouse, Mozambique, Rising from the Ashes, 1996, p.54

¹² A Portuguese general term used to refer to local medicine doctors. It applies to both herbalists and traditional healers.

¹³ Rachel Waterhouse, Opus Cit., p.53.

45.5 years. The reaper's chief agents are malnutrition and diseases that can be prevented and treated when resources exist; they include malaria, diarrhea, tuberculosis, and other acute respiratory diseases"¹⁵.

Nowadays cholera has also become a threatening disease that reaps people's lives in the country's big cities. This has become so due to lack of good sanitation, especially in big towns, which is partly due to the negligence of the local governments as well as ignorance from some lower class people. In an Article entitled "**Cholera and Maputo Council: No Money or No Will**", the writer accuses the mayor of laxity and lack of interest in serving the nation. "The mounting cholera death toll is the starkest tribute to the moral and political bankruptcy of Maputo city council under Mayor Joao Baptista Cosme. For cholera is a disease caused by poor sanitation, and anyone who, in months prior to the outbreak, cast a glance at the festering heaps of rubbish in the street, or nauseating state of city drainage channels, converted into open sewers, would have had no difficulty in predicting a public health disaster. When one is asked why rubbish is not removed, why streets are not repaired, why drainage system is not properly maintained, Cosme and the city council have one basic answer: there is not enough money. There are no resources. The council is starved of funds.

One might have some sympathy for this argument, if there was the slightest attempt by the council to tax the small minority of very rich people who live in Maputo. There is, however, no sign of such an attempt". The piercing point of this argument comes when the journalist asks the following questions: "Is it really lack of resources that stops the city council from preventing the unlicensed traders from selling raw fish on pieces of dirty matting a few inches from a drain? Is it lacking of funds that leads to officials tolerating the sale of alcohol by unlicensed bars in front of the largest secondary school in the country? After all, there is a municipal police force: why is it not used?"¹⁶.

In the same token the journalist puts the possibility of corrupted officials, who prefer to close their eyes to the reality, provided that they get a bribe. This could be one

¹⁴ Rachel Waterhouse, *Ibid.*, p.54

¹⁵ Rachel Waterhouse, *Opus Cit.*, p.54

¹⁶ Mozambique File, AIM, Mozambique News Agency Monthly publication, no. 255, October 1997, p.3

of the reasons why they allow unlicensed traders to sell anywhere they wish. *“Could it possibly be that those being behind the illegal bars, those who profit from the informal markets that pay no tax, have purchased the complicity of key municipal officials?”*¹⁷.

There had been many victims of cholera. Only in Maputo City over 100 people had been registered diseased. The disease had been spreading all over the country since its outbreak in 1997. Many lives had been lost just because of lack of effective rapid health attendance and basic hygienic measures taken. Health-care had been always a big challenge in the country. Civil war broke down all the health-care achievements FRELIMO had developed. Most of the health network was destroyed and by the time of the Rome peace accord only a few people could have access to hospital treatment. *“During the war, some 85 per cent of health facilities, were destroyed or abandoned or could not be maintained. By 1993, only 30 per cent of rural people had access to the health service. There were 435 doctors for the whole country and only one nurse for every 4,500 people”*¹⁸

The challenge of making health-care reach the rural areas is very big and will take a long time to come to its accomplishment. *“Post-war rehabilitation of the health system will not only be about the buildings. It is just as much about supply and distribution of staff, equipment, and medicines. It is about making resources stretch as far as possible”*¹⁹. Rehabilitation cannot be expected to be effected by the government alone. It requires the contribution of local communities to come up with solutions that fit themselves. The government and other organizations can only fund these initiatives if local communities are to get a health system to reach their places. In some parts of the country local populations have opted to send their people for training. Local communities support them both economically and morally.

¹⁷ Mozambique File, Opus Cit., p.3

¹⁸ Rachel Waterhouse, Mozambique, Rising from the Ashes, 1996. P.54

¹⁹ Rachel Waterhouse, Opus Cit., p.55

3.0 ECONOMIC SITUATION

3.1 THE ECONOMY: PAINFUL CHALLENGES AND CHOICES

The Mozambique economy has suffered crucial changes from the time of independence in 1975 up to today. These changes were intimately dependent on the political ideological changes and options, and the need to uplift the standard of living of the poor Mozambican people. The mistakes committed by the FRELIMO government both in its governing policies and its administration have made the country pay a big price, the grief of its chronically impoverished nation. "Since independence in 1975, national economic policy has taken Mozambique from a heavy-handed, Soviet-style, planned economy, through liberalization to what some economists have described as a savage form of "raw capitalism"²⁰.

In 1985, the government realized that there was no other solution to correct the mistakes committed other than liberalizing the economy. The first step it took was to abolish fixed prices for consumer goods. Till then every price was determined by the government. The step taken here showed the will of the government to follow the prescription of the world's most powerful finance doctors, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The next step was the introduction of its liberal Economic Reform Program (PRE), in 1987, which later became PRES when a social element was added, offering minimum assistance to the 'vulnerable poor'. "The key objectives of PRE were to balance Mozambique's budget and make it credit-worthy in the eyes of Western financiers. This meant cutting back the state's role in planning and production, leaving the former to 'market forces' and the later to private enterprise"²¹.

Many changes came about as a consequence of the implementation of PRE. The government had to remove fixed prices and government subsidies on food, to impose tight restrictions on state spending and credit; to liberalize exchange rates (the value of the national currency against US Dollar plummeted from 40 meticaïs in 1986 to approximately 10,000 mt in 1996, now 11,700 in 1998); to privatize state owned enterprises; to end the

²⁰ Rachel Waterhouse, Mozambique, Rising from the ashes, p.42

²¹ Rachel Waterhouse, Op. Cit , p.42

government monopolies in education, health-care, and other services, and to introduce charges for such services as education and health care that used to be free.

Initially PRE brought some improvement of the national economy but external factors such as civil war, drought, and worsening terms of trade for key Mozambican exports on the international market brought such improvement to nil. The post-war growth rate of the economy is encouraging, but until 1994 it had not gone very far beyond that of 1986.

“The local national manufacturers produce such things as processed foods and drinks, batteries, tyres, electrical goods, cloth, metal products, and construction materials”²². Local industries, however, cannot compete with the foreign imported products due to heavy taxes they have to pay. Liberalization, contrary to the prior economic system, which brought almost no one to own anything, concentrates the wealth in the hands of a few. “According to popular wisdom, the most remarkable change brought about by liberalization is that once, no one had much; now, most people have nothing – while a few have it all”²³.

This unbalanced distribution of wealth, this big gap between those who have and those who have not; the sinfully rich and the shamefully poor ought to be addressed. The minimum wage for a civil servant does not suffice to survive for one month because it is too little. “Minimum monthly wages in 1995 were just 105,000 mt (about US \$ 10) for agricultural workers. Most people rely for survival on their own food production and petty trade. Only a handful of people (usually with good political connections) is acquiring wealth, either earned by legal means, or obtained from misused aid funds and smuggling rackets. Maputo City is resplendent with luxury houses, Mercedes cars, and haute-cuisine restaurants frequented by the newly ostentatious elite of politicians and business people”²⁴.

3.2 ACTUAL LEVELS OF POVERTY IN THE COUNTRY

As it has been described above, Mozambique is in fact a very poor country, figuring among the poorest countries in the world. Many analysts say, however, that the country has a huge potential to raise its economy but this is not an easy task. The more economic

²² Rachel Waterhouse, *Ibid.*, p.43

²³ Rachel Waterhouse, , **Mozambique, Rising from Ashes**, 1996., p. 43

²⁴ Rachel Waterhouse, *Opus Cit.*, p.43

growth is registered in terms of figures, the worse the gap between the poor and the rich is.

A United Nations report on human development says, "The latest UN report on the state of the world development shows improvements in the standard of living of the Mozambican people. However, it points out that Mozambique is the tenth poorest country in the world. The United Nations development program's (UNDP) annual human development report, published on 12 June, places Mozambique in 166th position out of 175 countries in terms of its 'human development index'. This index is constructed out of four variables: life expectancy, real GDP per capita, adult literacy, and the percentage of children attending school.

Mozambique's human development index is gradually improving. In 1960, under Portuguese rule, it was only 0,169. Ten years later, in the final days of colonialism, it was 0,248. This dipped slightly to 0,247, in 1980, five years after independence, but rose to 0,252 in 1992"²⁵.

Though the statistics suggest that the economy of the country is improving, the real situation in the field shows the contrary. Because more than 50 per cent of the state's budget has been coming from donors, this makes its autonomy and sovereignty questionable since it implies that the country is almost totally living on aid. "Mozambique is one of the most indebted countries in the world. In 1992 some 80 per cent of its State budget was financed by foreign aid, not to mention the numerous donor-funded projects not covered by government plans; the figure in 1995 was still 60 per cent of the state budget (90 per cent of the investment budget). The overall amount of foreign debt (US \$ 5,4 billion in 1994) may seem small in international terms, but is huge when set against national earnings. Every Mozambican carries a debt of some US \$300; the annual average income per head was US \$80 in 1994. This extreme dependence puts Mozambique in hock to its donors and financiers. The extent of its national sovereignty remains in question"²⁶.

²⁵ **MOZAMBIQUE NEWS AGENCY**, E-Mail: Mozambique- News, Geo2 Poptel. Org. UK, No. 123, 4th December 1997

²⁶ Rachel Waterhouse, **Mozambique, Rising from the Ashes**, 1996, p.44

3.3 WORSENING POVERTY

Poverty has been the way Mozambique's history profile has been characterized. For not even a single moment in the history of the country can we say that Mozambicans have enjoyed times of complete prosperity. Even since the Rome accord of peace, the situation of poverty has not changed much. In fact now that peace is reigning in the country, social injustice and untold social differences, especially between the rich and the poor, are more clear, disgusting and lamentable.

As Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, Filipe Mandlate, describes the situation, "as the market economy continues to proclaim its triumphant march through Mozambique, so poverty is deepening"²⁷. The Minister told his audience as a warning, in a meeting in Maputo, to introduce the government's 'Integrated Social Welfare, Employment and Youth Plan'. The audience was constituted by Mozambicans and foreign NGOs, and he pointed out that 'economic growth is not the same as balanced development for all'. In Mozambique, he said, the data currently available shows that, as the production of wealth increases, and the market economy in general takes root, the scale and intensity of poverty and social exclusion are reaching intolerable and unacceptable levels. Mandlate added that this could endanger both peace and democracy. 'The gains can only be preserved through the guarantee of a basic social peace. This presupposes the reduction or elimination of the most extreme forms of poverty in our country'.

The government Integrated Program, he explained, 'should directly benefit in the first four years of implementation more than 160,000 young people who are living in absolute poverty'. The target group include women heads of households, single mothers, disabled people, abandoned, abused and traumatized children, the elderly, the chronically ill, drug addicts, and prisoners.

The government is proposing that the program be implemented not only by the three Ministries most directly involved (the Ministry of Social Welfare, of Labor, and of Culture, Youth and Sports); but also by NGOs and para-statal organizations. It required intersectoral co-ordination to solve the old problem of duplicating and dispersing efforts

²⁷ Mozambique File, AIM A Mozambique News Agency Monthly Publication, no. 260, March 1998, p.20

and resources'. The minister invited NGOs and civil society in general 'to contribute to the success of this program to alleviate poverty'.

Background for the meeting show that the target figure of assisting 160,000 'absolutely poor' people is merely scratching the surface of the problem. For between 60 to 70 per cent of the all-rural households and 40 per cent of Maputo households are said to be living bellow the poverty line. Unemployment, and particularly under-employment, is at critical levels, affecting about 60 percent of the 8.5 million of Mozambicans in working age.

The population, estimated by the 1997 census at 15.7 million, is growing at a rate of 2.9 per cent per annum. So this year the population should increase by 455,000, yet the economy, both formal and informal, is not creating more than 40-50.000 new jobs per year. The program hopes to provide its beneficiaries with income generating activities so that they can attain financial autonomy. The background paper speaks of creating 33,000 'income generating opportunities; spread over four years. That amounts to just 8,250 a year.

Other components of the program include providing food subsidies and social support for 18,000 women and 45,000 malnourished children. 5,000 disabled people should be looked after through community-based care schemes, while 1,200 drug addicts are to be put through rehabilitation programs. Implementing this rather modest program is budgeted at US \$ 30 million"²⁸.

As can be observed, this article provides a clear analysis of how much poverty is torturing many people in Mozambique, and how so far it is a chronic case in the country. Eradicating it cannot be a government's task alone; it requires a lot of co-operation and joint activities with other organizations. The Church of Mozambique is called here to play its role as a sign of light in the world, and the religious congregations, the missionaries are also expected to give a heavy helping hand in solving this problem, because despite having a lot of experience in dealing with such situations of relief to people in need, they also have a possibility of getting funding from outside as well as, providing the government with ethically reliable people to handle these sensitive projects. In Mozambique we need credible administrators of aid, because what usually happens is that when aid reaches the

²⁸ Mozambique File, AJM A Mozambique News Agency Monthly publication, no.260, March 1998, p.21

hands of local administrators the temptation is to subtract as much as one can for his own pocket. In other words, corruption and misusing of funds has also become part of the citizens' culture.

The Church should show in concrete acts the meaning of her preaching on social justice, love of the neighbor, and concern for social welfare. The deep levels of poverty that have been described above are worsened more by illiteracy which is widely present and common in the country. Education has been a big struggle in the country and only few have benefited from it. The Church, in this post-civil war period, has got the doors open for her to educate people, and rebuild the moral consciences of many corrupted minds.

3.4 CORRUPTION: A WORRYING FACT IN MOZAMBIQUE

3.4.1 CORRUPTION AND ABUSE OF POWER IN THE JUDICIARY

There have been many registered cases of corruption both in civil sectors and government organs in Mozambique. The most worrying fact is that corruption has even affected the institutions, which are entitled to enact and enforce laws. In an article entitled, "**Corruption in Judiciary**", Mario Mangaze, President of the Supreme Court, admits that corruption and abuse of power constitute a major offense in the institution he heads.

"Corruption and abuse of power were among the key items on the agenda of a meeting of the judicial council, held in Maputo from 9th to 13th September 1997. The President of the Supreme Court, Mario Mangaze, who chairs the council, told its opening session that the need to improve material circumstances of judges and other court personnel should under no circumstances be used to justify 'perverse acts directed against the rights of citizens'.

He admitted that the state was still not providing judges with status appropriate to their functions, but warned that this could not be used as an excuse for judges abusing their power. 'Above all else, a judge serves justice; he has the mandate of the state to exercise the social function of justice, and it is this justice that gives content and legitimacy to the rule of law'. In order to administer justice correctly, a judge must be concerned principally with 'ethical content' of his acts and conduct.

He also attacked corruption in the state and judicial apparatuses. 'When illicit mechanisms are used, sometimes through a resort to red tape, wearing down the citizens' resistance, and obliging them to yield to the intention of the corrupt official, this is acting with violence against citizens, albeit in a disguised way', Mangaze said. In such situations, there is not the smallest concern for the ethical content of the actions taken; It never crosses the mind of the official that he ought to be acting in the name of the state, and that citizens have the right to demand of him an attitude in line with their legitimate expectations. Injustice, abuse of power, extortion are all forms of violence against the citizen"²⁹, Mangaze added.

Even if corruption involved a small number of people, it still should be worthy to address it, because today there are only few involved and tomorrow the crowd will be bigger. "*Corruption became rooted among us as part of our culture! If we do not take strong line against acts which assault the rights of the citizens, if we are not determined to denounce the noxious elements among us, then we will be associated with such people and such acts, even though we may feel repugnance at them*"³⁰, he warned.

Sources revealing cases of corruption and abuse of power put them at a low rate and the major cause is attributed to low government salary payment to advocates. "...For according to a source in the Higher Council of the Judicial Magistrate (CSMJ), cited by the independent news sheet, *Metical*, out of a total of around 130 qualified Mozambican judges, 13 were disciplined for corruption between 1994 and 1997.

The real figure for corruption in the judiciary could be considered higher, *Metical's* source noted, since there are cases in which judges are suspected of serious irregularities, but where shortage of funds has made it impossible to carry out investigations. The offenses for which judges have been punished include abuse of power, illicit charges (a euphemism for demanding bribes), illegal release of prisoners, and deliberately delaying cases.

²⁹ **Mozambique File**, AIM A Mozambique News Agency Monthly publication, no. 255, October 1997, p.4

³⁰ **Mozambique File**, Opus Cit., p.4

Over the same period (1994-1997), 25 lower ranking legal officers were also disciplined. Currently two investigations of judges are under way”³¹.

In another article entitled “**Five years of peace, but no peace dividend**”; the writer describes what he calls laxity of the government and of the parliamentarians. “The parliament is overpaid and underworked. The legal system groans under chronic shortage of judges, while the handful of lawyers the country possesses think it more important to debate the reintroduction of a medieval gown for their court appearances, then ensure that mass of the population have access to justice. Corruption stretches out its slimy tentacles, and the police have almost no success when it comes to prosecuting drug traffickers”³².

3.4.2 CORRUPTION IN THE POLICE FORCE

Another report about the police force shows that they also accept bribes, thus deterring justice to be done. A police officer was charged guilty, for having helped a highly dangerous criminal to escape from the top security prison. “Fernando Magaia, a policeman working at Machava top security prison, on the outskirts of Maputo, has been arrested on charges of taking bribes to allow prisoners escape, the daily *Noticias* reported on 2nd July.

Magaia would forge release documents as though they had been officially issued by the police or by the courts. Joao Machava, head of the Maputo police public relations department, said that Magaia was caught red-handed organizing the escape of Gaspar Macalane, the man who has confessed the murder of Swiss Anthropologist Nicole Besenczon in outer Maputo suburb of Tsalala in 1996... Macalane told the police that he had bribed Magaia with 3,000 SA Rands (about US \$ 670)”³³.

Some other policemen were expelled from police force due to various social offences and lack of professional ethics. “The Mozambican police force expelled 102 policemen from its ranks in 1996 for disciplinary offenses, including the sale and hire of

³¹ Mozambique File, *Ibid.*, p.4

³² Mozambique File, AIM A Mozambique News Agency Monthly publication, no.254, September 1997, p.3

firearms to gang of criminals. Among the disciplinary offenses and crimes committed, Augusto listed ‘drunkenness while on duty, sale of guns, complicity with criminals, theft of confiscated goods, and abuse of power’³⁴.

3.4.3 CORRUPTION HITS SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS

Corruption and the degrading of professional ethics are spreading crimes in the country. In another report, it is revealed that public services throughout the country are being handled with lack of transparency, revealing absolute corruption. “A leading official of the Ministry of State Administration in May accused top civil servants of a behavior that ‘ lacks transparency’ and was sometimes ‘absolutely corrupt’.

‘In general, we are still very far from what would be desirable in terms of government ethics. Some state leaders are so heavily compromised in unethical behavior that they find it difficult to take measures against their subordinates. ‘In most of the provinces visited, districts and municipal councils, the legal norms for administrative acts are violated, mainly in questions of day-to-day management of human, financial and material resources’. Lwanga says that in most districts he had found that a great part of the administrative income was spent on fuel, food, and other personal expenses for the home of the district administrator. But there are cases where the administration does not have basic office supplies – but there is always money for the administrator’s fuel and extra-expenses’³⁵, he accused. This reveals that most of the income is spent on personal businesses without accounting for it properly.

If this is the behavior of our public officers what credibility can people give to such administrators? How can they administer a foreign funded project?

These issues call for the awakening of Church leaders, to look, probe and analyze critically the situation of the country and denounce these weaknesses in the government.

³³ **Mozambique File**, AIM A Mozambique News Agency Monthly publication, no. 253, August 1997, p.22

³⁴ **Mozambique File**, AIM A Mozambique News Agency Monthly publication, no.249, April 1997, p.19

³⁵ **Mozambique File**, AIM A Mozambique News Agency Monthly publication, no.251, June 1997, p.22

CHAPTER TWO

In the first chapter of this work I have made a thorough description of the social, political and economic situation of Mozambique. I concluded that there is severe poverty in the country and an unbalanced distribution of wealth as a result of political struggles for power, corruption and sometimes mismanagement of funds donated by foreign financiers. Both poverty and corruption, can be put under the issue of “social injustice”. Social injustice is now a problem that causes alarm to many people and it needs to be addressed by prophetic voices of a Church committed to her people and the good of the society. Poverty and corruption are the result of some individuals’ greed who want to “feel their stomachs” and eliminate the disadvantaged despite being also citizens of the country. In the present situation, the Church of Mozambique needs the help and the guidance of the Bible. It is in the Bible where she must search for models of prophetic pronouncements in occasions of a similar situation within the Israelite community. These models will enable her to bring about justice in Mozambique, thus building a credible government and an authentic moral society, where fundamental rights are enjoyed by all, and love and service to one another, according to divine wish, are practiced. The second chapter of this work will put us through the Bible’s teaching and analysis of situations of social injustices where prophetic figures stood out with strong voices to denounce such barbarities and greedy attitudes.

1.0 PROPHETS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: MODELS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT IN ISRAEL [*THE VOICES OF THE VOICELESS*]

1.1 The Origins of the Israelite Prophecy

Israelite prophecy was not an invention that came up with the people of Israel themselves, but was a continuation and assimilation of a practice that existed before. Other ancient people, who lived before Israel became a nation independent from other groups of wandering people, had prophetic traditions. Before we could talk of a distinct prophecy in Israel there existed already the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) prophecy. This was the label that has been applied to various texts and roles known from the ANE. This type of

prophetic activity “involved predictions or apparent predictions, eschatology or apocalyptic, social or religious criticism, and commissioned messages from deities...”³⁶.

The roles of the prophets included those of ordinary priests [Egypt], technical diviners [Westerns Asia], and those who spoke directly under orders from a deity. The function of a prophet, however, seems to have varied according to different understandings; “for some the prophet is the critic of the society; for others, the prophet is the announcer of the future; for yet others, the prophet is the charismatic authorized messenger”³⁷. In the present work I want to take up the understanding of a prophet as the critic of the society at large, and the government in particular.

1.1.1 The idea and description of Prophets

“There seems to have been no standard prerequisite for a person to become a prophet in Israel. Divine inspiration was what made a person a prophet, and what caused the prophet to speak out, and what made others listen to the prophet as a legitimate spokesperson for the divine”³⁸. Therefore, it was commonly held in Israel that a prophet is the one who speaks in the name of God and spoke the message of God. Thus his message has divine authority and power that compelled the people to either obey and be saved or reject it and be sanctioned.

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2.0 PROPHETS IN THE BIBLICAL BOOKS

2.1 The Language of the Prophets

The prophets of Israel developed with time their own language according to their circles and the type of message they conveyed such that there is no one common term to describe even the same type of a form of a situation. “One finds many other terms to describe the two parts of the form: “invective”, “reason”, “accusation” for the “reproach”, and “judgment”, “sentence”, “verdict” for “threat”. This factual analysis brings us to conclude that “regardless of the way in which the prophet receives the word of God, the

³⁶ ABD, The Anchor Bible Dictionary, H. B. HUFFMON, “Prophecy”, by David Noel Freedman, ed. In Chief and Grany A. Herion, David F. Graf, John David Oleins, Vol.5, 1992, p.477

³⁷ ABD, Op. Cit., p.477

³⁸ ABD, op. Cit., article by John J. SCHMITT, “Prophecy Pre-exilic Hebrew”, vol.5, p.482

prophet does contribute personal reflections and reasoning, which the prophet speaks before giving the divine decision of judgment”³⁹.

2.2 Themes of the pre-exilic Prophets

Among the many themes the pre-exilic prophets developed, one most important theme they speculated so much about is the love of God and God’s justice. This theme occupied a central place in Israel. Because Israel was a nation that believed in a God who was always just, for even if Israel would run away from the Sinaitic covenant, thus moving away from God’s sight, God’s action toward his people would always be seen as just, be it either patience and pardon of their faults, or anger and punishment. The predominant biblical studies many times show a facile contrast between God’s love and divine justice (often restricting the former to the NT and the latter to the OT). But it is better to say, however, that “God’s justice is responsive, i.e., that God’s justice is an act of love rather than of revenge. When things begin to get out of hand, people’s negligence goes so far that there is no expectation that things will improve, then God must step in to take action”⁴⁰.

2.3 The Prophetic activity in Israel: The Cause of its Emergence

When Israel wandered in the desert there were no social classes and all Israelites were equal. They were all brothers to one another and suffered the same difficulties of life: they felt thirsty together, lacked water and starved for bread together in the wilderness. God alone was their protector and center of attention under Moses’ leadership. Nonetheless, this situation changed when they became settled and started gaining wealth and owning land. Wealth and land benefits came to rest in the hands of a few who would not share them with the rest. The people asked for a King to protect them and their wealth. God was no more enough for them, and he was no longer the center of their life. Soon they became involved in regional politics and made alliances with other surrounding nations through mixed marriages and cult interaction. In this context they fell into idolatry.

³⁹ ABD, Opus cit., p.484.

It was primarily the introduction of a monarchy that brought about social classes. With the new system of government two groups emerged: a group of those who had a lot and a group of those who had nothing. It was within this context that the need of a prophetic voice that could speak on behalf of the voiceless became an imperative. Prophetic voices emerged and called back the people to Yahweh and to observe the covenant of Sinai. Prophecy took from now on an important place and role in Israel. "It was the monarchy that allowed, perhaps encouraged, the so-called Canaanization of Israelite culture, both socially and religiously. The development of social ranks or classes in Israel led to the oppression of the poor and the needy. The rich grew wealthier, profiting from the labors and losses of the lower classes. The prophets decry this deterioration of Israel's soul"⁴¹.

The pre-exilic prophets saw a deterioration of the relationship between God and Israel. Israel did not keep faithful to the original covenant in which Yahweh was their only King and God. Due to this situation of a spoiled relationship between God and his people, God could no more put up with the carelessness and faithless attitude of his people. God must set in and act in love for them.

2.4 The Prophets' Relation to the Institutions of Israel

i) MONARCHY: In the beginning, prophecy was linked with kingship. In Israel, prophets were sometimes advisors of kings (e.g., Isaiah and Jeremiah; Is.7:1-17; Jer. 21:10; 37:16-21), other times, very much against monarchy (e.g., Hosea, Amos and Micah). Isaiah alone seems to have had a positive idea of kingship, and views it with a very bright future (Is. 9:5-6; 9:6-7; 11:1-9). This, however, does not mean he always approved of all the court practices. In fact, he also criticized their religious and social abuses in the course of his ministry (Is. 1:17; 23; 6:9-11).

ii) CULT. The Prophets' view of the cult was sometimes negative. Many times prophets advocated a worship without attachment to ritual sacrificial practices. The reason for this is that they looked down at sacrifices as influenced by Canaanite religion. The prophets' conviction about true worship was this, that it has to influence one's relationship

⁴⁰⁾ ABD, Opus Cit., p.484

⁴¹ ABD, Opus Cit., p.485.

with Yahweh, the true God, and the neighbor, the fellow Israelite. Priests and the ruling elite of Israel tended to ignore the last part of the cult's demands.

iii) WISDOM. Prophets and wisdom teachers shared the same vocabulary. There was one difference between them, though. The prophets spoke the word of God, and the wise men passed on the word they had received from their predecessors. The difference between these two groups of people enriched life in the society of ancient Israel and our way of reading biblical books.

2.5 Reception of the Prophets

Prophets in Israel were received with a lot of mixed reactions. Factual records indicate that none of the classical prophets seems to have been a popular success in the sense of having a large following. All the pre-exilic prophets had harsh things to say, and it is not surprising that they did not immediately win the hearts of all. In our days this still happens the same way. A critical prophet/preacher is always regarded with mistrust and fear because what he has to say hurts the guilty listener. Even worse is when the message is directed to the "big people of governments". Here the chances are that the person will be either shut up forcibly or smoothly, or gently (by luring him/her with goods and offerings such as, luxury cars and mansion houses); or the person will simply be killed by the government secret force.

This should be a warning to the Church of Mozambique. Not always will top government people give heed to her, sometimes she will suffer the consequences of her denunciations. The prophets, however, were always ready to suffer for their words (see the example of Jeremiah). The Church, too, must be ready to suffer because the endeavor is worth it: that the good of the majority be safeguarded. Two main reasons moved the prophets of Israel to insistently and stubbornly denounce the injustices in Israel: the love of God and the love of the neighbor. This is also what Jesus tells us, in the Gospel, that it is the great commandment. As a missionary-Church we must show that we love God and our fellow countrymen by denouncing all dehumanizing actions inflicted on the poor people of our nations.

3.0 DEFINITION OF CLASSICAL PROPHETS

When analyzing the origins of prophecy we came across the fact that one important element in prophecy is God's inspiration of the prophet to speak his word. Prophets are God's messengers, God's spokesmen, and they do not choose to become prophets but God alone chooses and commissions them to speak his word. Our preliminary definition of a prophet was this: "a prophet is the one who speaks in the name of God"⁴². This definition, however, does not sufficiently cover whatever else we have said about prophecy. We need a definition which can include, for instance, a dumb person who through his attitude critically denounces a certain kind of injustice. As I was looking around for one definition upon which I would start to build up my study of what I mean by urging the Church of Mozambique to be prophetic, I came across this following definition of a classical prophet, and I believe it is more comprehensive and encompassing.

Classical prophets are those persons, (a) so consistently and fully a member of their community and in touch with their traditions and (b) so perceptive and articulate (c) that as a result they can bring the internal challenge of the community's conscience, its divinely inspired hopes and ideals, to bear upon the external form of the community's life style and work"⁴³.

3.1 TWO CLASSICAL PROPHETS TO TAKE AS MODELS: PROPHET AMOS AND PROPHET ISAIAH

3.1.1 The Man, Amos

Very little is known about the man, Amos. What we know about him is provided in the book named after him. The book says that he had lived at Tekoa, a small town in Judah near Bethlehem (cf. Amos 1:1; 7:12); had worked as a shepherd (1:1) or a herdsman (7:14). He grew fruits, he was a dresser of Sycamore trees. A big part of his life was spent in the countryside until he received the call from God to be a prophet in the northern

⁴² ABD, Opus Cit., p.482.

⁴³ Senior Donald (CP) and Stuhlmueller Carol (CP), The Biblical Foundations for Mission, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 10545, 1983, p.62. The definition is originally from Stuhlmueller's book entitled "*Thirsting for the Lord*", (Staten Island, N.Y., Alba House, 1977), pp.19-20; 2nd ed. (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1979), p.36.

kingdom of Israel. His ministry is placed in the eighth century when Jeroboam II was the king in Israel.

Although Amos had been called to prophecy, he was not a member of a prophetic dynasty not even a court prophet, but his prophecy came as a result of his personal experience of the call of God in his humble place of work. As a preacher, Amos was a powerful and strong speaker who did not shy off even when threatened to be thrown out of the town. He, however, used all the power of his countryside images to express his experience of God and his concern for his people. With these images he illustrated and taught his message (cf.3:4-5). His language was sharp, sometimes even aggressive (4:1) and certainly unpleasant to his addressees.

3.2 The Social Situation of Israel During Amos' Time

The northern kingdom, at the time of Amos, is described as being rich with a clear distinction of two main social classes; the rich, usually identified with the ruling elite, and the poor, representing the majority of the population, the peasantry. The capital city of the northern kingdom was Samaria. There many people lived, some in quite good housing, enjoying all the comforts that life could offer; and others, living a life like the one lived in slums today. This class of people represented the crowd and usually suffered a great deal to earn their living.

When Amos arrived in Samaria, he was disgusted by the horrendous difference of life style taking place there. He was a man used to earning his bread through his sweat; the situation in town was totally different. Some people lived in idleness, profiting from other people's work yet paying them very low wages, and sometimes nothing. The wealth which many among the ruling elite accumulated was acquired easily and unjustly.

3.3 The message of his preaching

Two basic themes compose the prophet's preaching: (1) the injustice to one another in Israel, and (2) the worship of idols. The chief belief of the Israelites during Amos' time was that they were the chosen people of Yahweh and, therefore, they had special rights over any other nation no matter what their behaviour was. Amos' reading of this

assertion, though he himself also believed that Israel was a special nation due to the covenant they had made with Yahweh in Sinai (cf. Ex 34), was that the peoples' behaviour would lead them to a disaster (Amos 2:4) because they had pulled away from the obligations of the covenant laws. They had rejected Yahweh and had entered into the worship of the idols.

3.4 Why is Amos' Message Still Important to us Today?

There are four chief reasons that render Amos' teaching important in present societies, namely, (1) "The God whom Amos proclaimed is the same God whom we worship today through Jesus Christ; (2) Christian people are bound in the New covenant made by Jesus Christ and therefore have special responsibilities, just as the Israelites had special responsibilities under the Old Covenant; (3) we too need to examine ourselves, and our Churches and societies and nations, and guard against social injustice and idolatrous worship (the cult of money and wealth); (4) Even more than in Amos' time, there is a danger that great nations will destroy their smaller neighbors"⁴⁴, so as to gain wealth, fame and prestige in front of the whole world. Within the nations, governors can oppress the citizens and block ways for the poor to rise from their status of life.

The message Amos' prophecies conveyed gave a big challenge to its hearers and it still challenges us today. It pushes us to respond and choose whom to side with, whether God and the poor, or the earthly rulers and the wealthy. This challenge extends from individual leaders up to the whole Church of Mozambique because she is the guardian of the welfare and peaceful coexistence of God's children's.

3.5 Amos and Social Justice

Amos' primary concern in his prophetic pronouncements is the question of injustice that the elite and the ruling class inflicted upon the peasantry and the poor people of Israel. His oracles of denouncement are directed chiefly to a specific class of people, i. e., to those who hold power and take advantage of the weak and the needy and exploit them. Among

⁴⁴ THOROGOOD, Bernard, A Guide to Amos, p.12

nine distinctive features of the A-stage oracles of Amos⁴⁵ that Coote describes in his Theological Investigation Essay "*Amos Among the Prophets*", one is of a particular importance to illustrate the point I made above. "The addressees of the A-stage are the secure, the strong, the well-to-do, the well-housed and well-fed, the authorities, the holders of power and privilege, in short, the ruling elite of Israel's agrarian society... The elite live in towns throughout the northern kingdom of Israel, but they concentrate in Samaria, the capital and primary centre of urban power"⁴⁶.

Amos' denouncement of injustice is only due to his love for his fellow poor Israelites. Amos saw in the disadvantaged the real face of God who had asked all Israelites to be brothers to one another. The prophet desires that fair social order and equal distribution of wealth and means of living be established in Israel according to God's wish. By doing this the Israelites will be honoring the covenantal agreement they had made with God on Sinai. So, in all his oracles, Amos communicates one basic message, that the ruling elite is oppressing the poor. "All these oracles of the A-stage contribute to one single basic message. The powerful have oppressed the powerless; the ruling elite, the poor. In the midst of this oppression, in fact on the very foundation of it, the powerful enjoy a luxury whose most offensive manifestation is an extravagant festivity. God rejects this state of affairs and will reverse it"⁴⁷. The sentence on this type of behaviour, says Amos, is that God will act violently against the ruling people of Israel and will destroy them, kill some and deport others to a foreign country: "God will answer their festive revelry by turning it, through war, into lamentation and wailing. For oppression, war. For revelry, wailing. These four terms sum up the whole basic message of the prophet Amos"⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ According to Coote, Robert B., the composition and editing of the book of Amos can be divided into three stages or periods. The A-stage oracles, composed by what he presumes to be the words of the prophet himself; the B-stage, composed by the reinterpretation, addition and application of the prophecies in a later period, probably in late eight century and the C-stage, the period of editing and final recording of the book itself to the time it was finally accepted as part of the canonical books in the Hebrew list of inspired books.

⁴⁶ COOTE, Robert B., *Amos among the Prophets*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1981, p.16.

⁴⁷ COOTE, Robert B., *op. cit.*, p.16.

⁴⁸ COOTE, Robert B., *op. cit.*, p.16.

3.6 Amos' Announcement

Amos' disgust at this situation is expressed in his oracles directed against the ruling elite. The oracles announced that God was determined to make war against them and bring them to annihilation because they had not cared for his people (the poor). *On the theme of oppression*. Amos is very much concerned with the way the ruling elite exercises power. And he says **“They sell the righteous for money, the needy for a pair of sandals..., stretch out on garments taken in pledge, and drink the wine of those they mulct...; treasure up violence and plunder...; extort from the poor, crunch the needy...; levy excessive rents upon the poor, and take exaction of the wheat from them”**. With these words the prophet expresses his disgust and anger, and condemns the state of affairs in Israel. He shows how bad the situation is: the poor and needy are being mistreated, oppressed and exploited by the rich class.

About the feasting of the ruling class. Amos accuses the ruling elite of subverting justice and the old custom of peasantry solidarity with one another. The ruling elite influence the judges (the elders) who sit at the gates to judge the cases involving the power holders and the poor. In this way the judges who are supposed to bring justice are corrupted with bribes. All judicial machinery is owned and influenced by the ruling class. **“They shuffle upon the dust of the earth, and shunt the custom of the indigent... attack the righteous and take bribes, and so shunt the needy in the gate”**.

About the ruling class' promotion of corruption in the market places where they sell and buy products and manipulate the economy to suit their gain. Amos says that the market forces do not serve the interests of the peasantry. The fruit of their produce comes to them only to be sold at a very high prices and their lives rest hanging in the balance. These all happen because of an intentional manipulation of the economy by the ruling elite. **“The elite use too small a dry measure, too heavy a counterweight balance”**.

About revelry. Amos accuses the ruling elite of feasting at the expense of the peasantry. The more resources are channeled into commodities out of the reach of the peasantry, the worse the pain falls onto the poor and needy. The prophet sees this as a direct offense to God since it subverts the proper social order and brotherly solidarity. The ruling elite, he says, have grabbed the land in which the peasantry produced grains (the products of their

own consumption) and gave it to farmers who plant vineyards and olive trees, both demanding a long lasting care. With these products they produce wine and oil to use in their luxurious banquets and pompous way of living. All these extravagances are condemned by Yahweh and he will end them together with their promoters, the ruling elite.

3.7 God and Justice

Why should God be concerned with justice to the poor and the needy? Amos' basic concern in his announcements is the social and economic injustices committed in Israel. He describes in his oracles just what is obvious to his contemporaries. Why is Amos calling upon God's authority to denounce these injustices? Wouldn't it be sufficient to denounce it by himself without claiming that God is speaking through him? The answer to this question is simple and can be put under four premises: (1) Amos believes that Yahweh is active in the world. Although we do not see him, he directs this world. He speaks and it happens, his word is effective because he is both the speaker and the agent; (2) Yahweh, the agent, acts according to justice. Justice means saving the hurt and powerless. This justice is the type of justice Israel had experienced in the covenant of Sinai. Israel had been saved from a condition of slavery and powerlessness, and the covenant she had made with Yahweh rested on these grounds: that God will defend and protect Israel from their strong opponents and oppressors. But she had to keep faithful to his commands which include a brotherly love and solidarity with one another. The ruling elite of Israel was forgetting the need of love and solidarity with the poor and the needy. They held onto the principle that material prosperity and wealth were signs of God's blessings as given to the righteous. This principle favoured them and they did not want to abandon it. The prophet's higher reflection on God's will told him that Yahweh is a God of justice not of oppression and exploitation; (3) Yahweh chooses justice ahead of life, i.e., he places his salvation of the powerless before his choice of the ruling elite as his people, life for the powerless before life for the powerful. In his announcements, Amos makes a conclusive and definite statement: those who take life from the powerless will lose their own lives. This is his condemnation of the elite. They deserve the death sentence; (4) Yahweh tilts the balance

of power by giving power to human beings to make his justice known. The world is ruled by a principle of justice. This principle is not a natural law, but it is a principle of faith. Only when we discover and accept God as the ultimate ruler of the world and acknowledge that he never forgets justice, then we can faithfully challenge all forms of injustice and oppression, and always choose justice over all forms of unjust laws even if they favour us. Justice is a theological principle that calls upon faith in order to understand it and act through it⁴⁹.

4.0 PROPHET ISAIAH

4.1 The Man

Isaiah was a married man, a counselor of kings and an ardent defender of God's rights. He was a court prophet but he was never trapped into pleasing the kings during his prophecy but saw the truth and judged the reality with faith in the one God. His prophetic call is recorded in chapter six of his book. It is described with a lot of symbolic images. The prophet's response to that call was very generous, unlike other prophets who presented a lot of excuses to God (cf. Jeremiah). His recognition of his unworthiness before God explains his great concern for sanctity and his defense of God as being truly and incomparably holy. Isaiah's ministry took place at the same time Amos and Osee prophesied in the northern kingdom, and Micheas, in Judah.

Isaiah was born during the prosperous but immoral reign of king Uzziah (784-742). His prophetic mission happened during the reigns of kings Joatham, Achaz, and Ezechias (Is 1:1). He worked as a counselor to kings Achaz (7:3-17) and Ezechias (39:1-8) because he was very knowledgeable in political affairs. His preaching and poetry express a high degree of literacy⁵⁰. From his marriage Isaiah had two sons who bore prophetic names, Shear-yashub (7:3) and Maher-shallal-hash-baz (8:3-4). His prophetic ministry happened mainly in the city of Jerusalem. A Hebrew legend teaches that he died as a martyr for the

⁴⁹ cf. COOTE, Robert B., *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

⁵⁰ cf. PETER, Ellis F., The men and the message of the Old Testament, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, p.279.

faith around the year 687 B.C.E., by being placed in hollow tree and cut in half following the orders of king Manasseh ⁵¹

4.2 The Call of Isaiah

Isaiah was struck, among many other things, by the holiness of God and he resounds this holiness in his book in the words he heard chanted “ Holy, Holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory”. It is the holiness of God that makes the prophet to prophecy his message so as to denounce the corruption of his countrymen who had terribly failed to encounter the call to holiness by God (cf. Leviticus) (Is. 6:9-13; 1:4-24; 28:31; 2:12-17; 3:16-26; 7:17-20).

4.3 Isaiah, the Model of a Prophetic Challenge to Politics

Just as Amos offers us a model of a prophetic challenge to social justice in Israel, Isaiah offers us a prophetic challenge to politics through a perspective of faith. Reading Isaiah’s prophecies, especially Isaiah ben Amoz, the prophet responsible for the first major part of the Isaiah scroll (chaps. 1-39), we are able to “(a) investigate the way by which a major religious leader on his or her own religious terms can swivel in and out of the complicated circle of politics; (b) observe a role of a lay religious leader in seeking to reform temple and palace from common sense laws of right and wrong; and to conclude that a religious leader’s base for correcting political or social abuses consists in an insight of faith”⁵².

4.3.1 The Political Circle

“Isaiah remained independent enough of political parties and religious institutions to question any of their programs or plans, yet he was close enough to be on target with his evaluation”⁵³. The prophet appears strong in the conviction that if God calls a lay person like himself, such a person must obediently speak God’s word against priests and temple, against king and royal court (Isa.6:8-13). His power to prophesy rested upon this

⁵¹ cf. PETER, Ellis F., *op. cit.*, p.279.

⁵² SENIOR, Donald, and STUHLMUELLER, Carroll, *op. cit.*, p.69.

⁵³ SENIOR, Donald, and STUHLMUELLER, Carroll, *op. cit.*, p.69.

conviction and the faith in a God who is present now, Immanuel. He believed that Yahweh is always present in areas of life, secular as well as religious.

Contrary to Amos, Hosea and Micah, who had been much against the monarchy and royal court, Isaiah moved around the royal court freely and confidently whenever he had something to tell the king (cf. the incidents in chap.7). He entered the royal court, confronted the king in clear, direct and sharp language. In this conversation Isaiah portrayed his literary brightness: “skillful contrasts, intriguing depths of insight, economy of words, the clarity of being on target, the non-negotiable elements of religious faith, and the good common sense of a wise man”⁵⁴. Isaiah was a man of free conscience as far as politics were concerned. He never belonged to any political party and he did not defend a single political program. He shifted his advice whenever he judged it necessary. In this matter “He seemed to be anti-Assyrian when he urged Ahaz not to form an alliance with the super-power, pro-Assyrian when he urged against revolt at Hezekiah’s court and once again anti-Assyrian if he was martyred during the reign of the next king, Manasseh [687-642 B.C.E.]”⁵⁵

In his career Isaiah pursued justice and faith in politics. His long prophetic journey began in the year king Uzziah died [740- B.C.E]. He was scandalized by the luxurious way the rich people of Jerusalem lived, contrasted with their crude insensitivity toward the poor. To address and correct this situation he used two basic convictions: “(1) he firmly believed in God’s presence in secular everyday life, and from this faith he was able to bring a strong, practical response to abuses in religion and politics; (2) he acted on the conviction that God was directing, mysteriously yet firmly, the future of the holy city of Jerusalem and of the royal house of David”⁵⁶

4.3.2 Isaiah and the Religious and Social Abuses

Chapter 6 of Isaiah provides us with the prophet’s critique and condemnation of the religious institutions in Israel. Reading through the chapter, one notices that Isaiah had

⁵⁴ SENIOR, Donald, and STUHLMUELER, Carroll, *op. cit.*, p.70.

⁵⁵ SENIOR, Donald, and STUHLMUELLER, Carroll, *op. cit.*, p.71.

⁵⁶ SENIOR, Donald, and STUHLMUELLER, Carroll, *op. cit.*, p.72.

strong ties with Israel's sacred traditions. The prophet's attack against the religious and social abuses is manifested by the contrasts the chapter portrays:

6:1 In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord seated on a high lofty throne. Uzziah's reign had been blessed with wealth and prosperity. The king was regarded as having done what was right in the eyes of God. Despite his material achievements, Uzziah ended his career secluded in his room unable to perform any royal functions because he had a virulent skin-disease (cf. Kings 15:3,5). Prophet Isaiah quickly dismissed him and realized that only Yahweh is the true king, not any human king (6:5). His kingship was not confined to Israel alone but it extended through all the earth (v.3)⁵⁷.

I saw the Lord in the Temple. Isaiah, a lay person, looked into the holy of holies. This was a place reserved only for the priests who occasionally entered to burn incense. Not even anointed kings or persons were allowed to enter the place. This feature suggests that he was very acquainted with the temple ritual liturgies.

v.3 Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth. His glory fills the whole earth. This chant reflects the liturgy of the Jerusalem Temple. Isaiah employs this chant to express Yahweh's dazzling holiness which is his predominant attribute to Him. "Isaiah sees this glory to extend from the holy of holies across 'the whole earth' so that the world is transformed into a divine throne room"⁵⁸.

v.5 Woe is me! I am lost... my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh Sabaoth. These words echo a long tradition. They were repeated by Jacob (Gen. 32:30), Moses (Exod. 33:20), Gideon (Judg. 6:22-23), Manoah and his wife (Judg. 13:22), and Micaiah ben Imlah (1Kings 22:17). Isaiah's call places him outside the official worship or cult. However, he has been directly called by God, just like Jacob and Moses, and others who antedate Israel's religion. By having seen God, he is now uniquely qualified to speak of God, and the cleansing of his lips (vv.6-7) prepared him for the commission to do so⁵⁹. With this narrative of his call Isaiah, the lay person, claimed his right to challenge Israel's

⁵⁷ cf. NEW JEROME BIBLICAL COMMENTARY, "*Isaiah 1-39, 'commentary'*", by Joseph Jensen, O.S.B., p.234.

⁵⁸ SENIOR, Donald, and STUHLMUELLER, Carroll, *op. cit.*, p.72.

⁵⁹ Cf. NJBC, *op. cit.*, p.234.

sacred institutions and ultimately condemn them, despite their long list of divine credentials and promises.

The major sin for which Israel must be punished, according to Isaiah, is the sin of pride. The people of Israel, especially their leaders, are stubborn of heart, they don't want to hear the word of God proclaimed through his prophets and see what the Lord is about (cf. 5:11-12, 19). The condemnation, judgment and the sentence of destruction of Jerusalem is expressed by the prophet in his chapter 6:9-11. *"Go, and say to this people: hear and hear, but never understand! Look and look, but never perceive!..." I then asked: "Until when Lord?". "Until towns are in ruins, the houses untenanted and a great desolation reigns in the Land..."*

Isaiah's denunciation of social injustices fits into his faith that Yahweh is "the holy one of Israel". From this controlling principle he perceived that the one whose holiness extends throughout the earth wants his people also to be holy. And this holiness does not consist in correctness of liturgical rituals, but in natural social order and right social relationships with one another. This included and demanded protection of the orphan and the widow who are economically poor, and the Sinaitic law protected them (cf. Ex 22:21-22; Dt 10:18; 14:29; 27:19; Jer. 22:3, etc.). "The oppression of weaker members of the society offended Yahweh's holiness, and so Isaiah speaks vehemently concerning social justice (1:10-17, 21-26; 3:13-15; 5:1-10; 10:1-4) and of the punishment incurred for rejecting Yahweh's instruction (5:24)"⁶⁰.

The theme of social justice occurs in Isaiah in the following key passages: *"Defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" [1:17]; "...Zion, once full of fair judgment, where saving justice used to dwell but now assassins" [1:21]; "Your princes are rebels, companions of brigands. All of them greedy for presents and eager for bribes. They show no justice orphan, and widow's cause never reaches them" [1:23]*. With these statements Isaiah expresses his disgust at the failure of living up to the high ideals of the wisdom tradition in which the royal advisors, the kings and their judges had been trained.

⁶⁰ NJBC, *"Isaiah 1-39 'Introduction'"* by Joseph Jensen, p.230.

4.3.3 Isaiah and the Insight of Faith in a God Immanuel

Isaiah's strong belief in a God who is present and active in the midst of his people, Israel, drove him to acknowledge that Yahweh can also use foreign nations to bring a change of behavior in his people. Thus in 7:14 he spoke his prophecy which tells of a sign to be given to Judah. The sign consisted of a young woman who would have a child whose name would be Immanuel, God-is-with-us.

The interpretation of this passage changed from one stage of Israel's history to the next. Initially it was taken to mean the wife of Ahaz, the reigning king, who would have such a child. The child would guarantee the Davidic dynasty (cf. v.2, 13). In fact, the following king of Judah was Hezekiah, Ahaz's son. Contrary to his father, who was famous for his faithless conduct, he restored the true cult to Yahweh and proceeded on with religious reformation both in the Temple and outside it. In the N.T, the text was applied to the birth of Jesus. Here the text finds its final fulfillment because Jesus is considered the fulfillment of the long-told prophecy. He came to reveal the real face of God.

All in all, Isaiah's faith was so strong that he believed that in the middle of complicated politics, of disbelief in Yahweh and confusion of human wisdom, Yahweh was always present and directing Israel. The proof of that is the prophecy of the remnant, symbolized by the name given to one of his sons, *Shear-Jashub*, meaning "a remnant will return".

This insight of faith was the driving force of the prophet's swiveling in and out of politics without fear, and confidence that he was serving God and his people. Human wisdom is strong and creative when it is aided by faith. Faith is the principle that gives guarantee that a religious leader cannot be wrong in his interpretation of God's will. It is the ultimate proof of an authentic service to the cause of the poor, the disadvantaged and the powerless.

CHAPTER THREE

As we have seen in the second chapter, the prophets were common men who, being inspired by God and using their own imagination, reasoning and understanding of the situations; their judgment and commitment to their own people, helped, without distorting the message God wanted them to convey, to bring justice and a deeper understanding of who God is. They went beyond the traditional understanding of God and even uttered their own language in order to convey what they believed was God's wish for his people. Amos' and Isaiah's areas of commitment were the social justice and political and religious abuses, respectively. They both looked at these components of social life with the insight of faith, a faith in a God who is not only a passive creator, but someone who moves together with his creation and his people. They announced that God is concerned with us, that is the reason why he has taken the trouble of raising up men (the prophets) who, using their wisdom and faith, warned the Israelites about their social behaviour. The prophets demanded a change of their life style if the people wanted to be the true children of God, the chosen race. They also assured the Israelites that God is active and is among them in all moments and situations. In short, they announced that God cares for his people.

These biblical figures must be the models to the Church of Mozambique. By analyzing their way of acting and denouncing in the midst of a faithless, stone-hearted and deaf audience and in choosing and committing their lives to the disadvantaged, the Church agents in Mozambique, both hierarchy and laity, must draw their lines of action in order to help bring justice and a better social and political order in the country. In fact, unlike the prophets, who preached to a deaf audience, the Church of Mozambique has an advantage. She has a more open audience to hear and follow her recommendations. Mozambican people hold the Church in high respect and esteem.

In the following chapter I am going to suggest ways in which the Church should act in view of accomplishing the above mentioned task.

1. The Church and politics

Like Isaiah the Church must be independent enough from any political allegiance and partisanship, yet informed enough, to be able to talk and to denounce impartially any

injustice and evils of any political ideology and alliances. To accomplish this task, the Church should be informed about politics of the country, i.e., to know the constitutions and the plan of the government for the country and criticize them as well as insist on their review, change or amendment where they do not suit the needs and the reality of the country. The actual constitutions of the country offer the president a lot of powers over the parliament. This should be corrected to see which powers he ought to have so that the parliament can be an effective institution in the country which serves the interests of the majority.

Like Isaiah, the Church should be ready to intervene, using proper diplomatic means, and advise the government when she foresees a danger in its plan of government. Church interventions should be aimed at defending the rights and the interests of the people of Mozambique and stopping the struggles for power that are driven by mere greed for authority and wealth. That is, the Church should educate the people to a political consciousness: to study the politics of the country, be critical and challenge the government to bring about changes that guarantee peace and stability.

2. The Church and corruption

The Church should ally with national and international forces which fight against corruption. Such forces are, for example, the press and the judiciary. These forces should ensure that people accused of the crime of corruption are brought to book. It does not suffice that the Church makes a general condemnation of corruption in the pulpits, but she must insist that the government takes action to stop it.

Since corruption is becoming a part of the culture in the country, the Church, using her printing press, must educate and inform all citizens about the injustice behind it and its implications for the national economy. Christians should be told about its sinfulness. Like Amos, the Church must preach justice, teach honesty and live charity. Like Amos, also, the Church might encounter a lot of opposition on the part of the corrupt people, especially in cases where the government is involved. Amos did not give up, he continued to speak his prophecy even after he had been told to shut up (cf. Amos 7:12). But he claimed God's authority who had called him to do so. More so, the Church cannot keep

quiet but must denounce corruption and insist that the government must take action because she is God's messenger for the people.

3. *The Church And Economics*

The role of the Church here is to guarantee that the government, in its plan of ruling the country, gives priority to activities and areas that will quickly help the country to come out of its severe poverty. It is her role also to ensure that the government respects the land laws it has laid down. Every citizen has a right to land. The land is God's gift for the people. Therefore, every Mozambican has a right to it.

The actual land law in Mozambique states that "all property in land vests in the state. Land rights can be acquired, not only by individuals and companies, but also by 'local communities', and that individual Mozambicans who have occupied the land 'in good faith' for at least ten years should also have their tenure rights automatically recognized". The bill goes on to say that "other citizens or companies (Mozambicans or foreign) should apply for a land title to relevant authorities. Before they acquire a definite title, they will be given a provisional authorization to use the land concerned, and they must show (within five years for Mozambicans and two years for foreigners) that they are implementing the land use plan agreed upon when their application was accepted". For the peasant farmers the bill makes a special provision that "it accepts as proof of land tenure rights, not only formal documents such as land titles, but also the verbal testimony of members of local communities"⁶¹. The law itself seems to be good the way it reads. However, there is a danger similar to the one which caused Amos' denunciation in Israel: the change from patrimonial domain to a prebendal domain⁶². Prebendal domain is a situation in which the state owns the land and can allocate it to any one it likes or thinks will bring income to the country. This situation was the cause of worsening poverty in

⁶¹ MOZAMBIQUE FILE, AIM A News Agency Monthly Publication, August 1997, No.253, article "Assembly passes new land law", p.4

⁶² COOTE, Robert argues that what worsened the poverty in Israel is the change of domain, and identifies two kinds of domains, the patrimonial domain, which is exercised by persons who inherited ownership or control over the land as members of kinship usually passed on from father to son, and, the prebendal domain, exercised by officials of a state by virtue of grants from a sovereign who holds the ultimate ownership of the land. The officials, therefore, control not the land, which is owned by the sovereign, but the income from the land.

Israel. The peasant farmers' land was given to big farmers who could bring a gross production and wealth to the nation. As a consequence the farmers could no longer produce their food, became dependent on the food sold in the market. Thus, they were exposed to exploitation.

The Church must ensure that this does not happen in Mozambique. She must educate the people about their land rights and defend them when the government fails to honor the laws it laid down. It is also the mission of the Church to urge the government to pay the workers fair wages. The cost of living is increasing every day but the wages remain the same. If the state increases the price of a product in the market it should also increase the salaries so that workers do not suffer trying to pay their bills from meager wages.

4. The Church and the Poor: The Demand to Practice Charity

The Church of Mozambique should side with the poor. This demands that she practice charity. Charity should be the Church's guiding principle in her activities, because this will prove her to be living her proclamation and belief in a God who is a close companion of the powerless and the disadvantaged.

The Church of Mozambique must be prophetic and pragmatic in her life, i.e., she must denounce corruption and injustices and act in charity. In order to be effective in this mission, she should utilize the resources, both human and material, available to her. She must urge the rich and the educated Christians to help their fellow Mozambican who are suffering because of poverty or illiteracy.

I am aware that there is in Mozambique a League for Human Rights, an association of Mozambican lawyers overseeing and controlling the abuse against human rights in the country. The Church should join hands with this organization and witness to the Christian commitment to the poor and marginalized. This will show the outside people that Christians believe in a God who is present and active among his people now. This was the faith of the prophets, and the Church should follow their example.

There are three reasons that should compel the Church to be charitable and to support the poor, namely, (a) God's choice in history has been always the poor, the powerless (Read the history of the choice of the people of Israel in the Bible, especially in Exodus);

(b) the Church was born from a situation of total poverty and her founder was poor himself till his death (cf. *LG*, 8, ss. 3); and, finally, (c) because the founder of the Church (Jesus Christ) preached love for one another and gave special care to the poor, the sick, the abandoned, the ostracized, the neglected, in short, the disadvantaged and powerless (cf. Jn 13: 12ff, 34; Mt25:31ff; Lk 14:12-14).

5. The Church and the Health

My suggestion in regard to health is that the Church should collaborate with the Ministry of Health in order to build clinics especially in the bush where the government does not provide modern medical care, yet people are dying everyday. The clinics should be run by Christian-oriented staff. The aim is to help people to recover both their physical health and their right moral behaviour that was lost during the time of civil war when moral conscience in regard to prostitution and illicit ways of making one's way through was lost. At the clinic centers the sick should be also educated about the basic hygiene, transmission of diseases like STDs and HIV/AIDs virus, which is becoming a major pastoral question, and the consequences of premarital sex, which is the cause of many abortions and family problems.

Like Jesus who not only taught the people but also cured their sicknesses and recovered lost lives (cf. Lk 4:38-39; Mt 8:1-4; Mk1:40-45; Jn 9:1ff; Lk 7:11-17; Jn 11), the Church should also aim at defending the physical welfare of the people and use all the means at her disposal to heal and promote human health and dignity. Jesus' concern for human life was so great that he emphasized that he had come to give life, and that he himself is that life. Therefore, the Church of Mozambique must follow the steps of her founder. To give the people not only the spiritual life but also try to recover their physical life.

6. The Church and Education

One of the missions of the Church is to teach and educate the people of God so as to change their way of thinking, thus change their behaviour. In this area my suggestion is that the Church should urge the government to make education available to all and help to build schools, especially in rural areas, to educate the young illiterate Mozambicans.

The government of Mozambique has a plan to raise the education system, extending it over five years (1995-1999). Its ambition is to have a “gross school admission rate in the first grade of primary education of 86 percent in the year 2000, rising to 95 percent in 2006, and reaching a 100 percent in 2010”⁶³. This plan, however, is just a dream. The government alone cannot achieve such an ambition without the co-operation of the Church and other NGOs.

Even if the government could manage to implement such a plan alone, still the hand of the Church is necessary to ensure that students are formed and educated integrally. Government schools are famous for corruption. In the schools run by the Church, the staff should be integrally and morally formed and have a good professional preparation. This will ensure that the new generation of intellectuals will be well prepared to work for the end of corruption. This requires that the Church concentrate on the formation of teachers, and make sure that their education is proper and scientifically oriented in order to correct the mistakes of the past where education was controlled and influenced by the political party in power. The Church should also educate parents to be involved in the education of their children, i.e., to check and make sure that their children go to school and attend classes properly and stop giving bribes to teachers to facilitate the transition of their children from one class to the next. Christian parents should be reminded of the sinfulness of corruption, and urged, in God’s name, to stop the practice because it is a sin, dishonest and unjust.

Most suggestions I have given in this chapter are well known by the Church of Mozambique. In fact, she is trying to address them in a variety of forms. The Episcopal Conference of Mozambique (CEM= Conferencia Episcopal de Mocambique), represented by four of its members, had an audience with the president of the country, on 23rd February, 1998, in which they presented their concerns on matters such as the program of urbanization and sanitation of towns, health care, education, social promotion of the poor, severe poverty contrasted by too much wealth in the hands of a few, and corruption. They asked the president to address these issues and expressed their availability to help

⁶³ MOZAMBIQUE FILE, AIM A Mozambique News Agency Monthly Publication, October 1997, no.255, article “*Strategic Plan for Education*”, p.17.

especially in areas such as education, health care and social promotion. However they did not specify what they meant by social promotion⁶⁴.

The CIRM and CONFEREMO, two sister-religious organizations of sisters and male religious respectively, also held a meeting from 4th to 9th July, 1997. They discussed various issues of their concern including their vocation, identity and missionary activities. And they acknowledged that they should renew themselves internally as individual congregations, be more united with other pastoral agents and serve the interests of the Church, of the nation and of the people in general, especially the poor⁶⁵.

These initiatives by both the Bishops and the religious are encouraging and need to be fostered. This is the purpose of this paper, to offer them a challenge to act more actively and energetically. The people of Mozambique are tired of speeches and documents which are not acted upon. They need actions. The Church should insist with the government where she sees no action, and she, herself, should double her effort and show by means of concrete activities that she is involved and wants to bring justice to the people. This is the way she will make her presence felt in social matters. And this will make a difference.

Finally, in all her activities, the Church should involve the local communities, the laity and other people of the locality. The laity should be given a special chance to become prophets in their own environment, for that is the example that prophet Isaiah inspires in us. He, being a lay person, could make it to reform both the authority and the religious institutions in Israel due to his strong conviction God's presence in all spheres of life and in every person's daily life. The Church, also, should utilize local resources to materialize her projects. A project that involves a local people will be more successful than one that depends exclusively on foreign donors. The country is rich in local materials for building that can be used to set up schools and clinics. The people are generous and ready to help if they are asked. Therefore, the Church has in her hands human resources and material-environmental resources to accomplish any enterprise she would decide to take.

⁶⁴ **RUMO NOVO**, "*A Voz dos Bispos Para Uma Cooperacao*", Mocambique, Ano VIII, No.20, Abril 1998, pp.5-6.

⁶⁵ **RUMO NOVO**, "*Carta as Comunidades Religiosas*", Mocambique, Ano VIII, No.20, Abril 1998, pp.44-50.

CONCLUSION

In the course of this paper I have been struggling with the question of social justice and the issue of poverty in Mozambique. I have tried to show, by describing the facts, that poverty, indeed, severe poverty, has been a calamity that Mozambican society has been living with. That poverty was, at times, made more severe by imperialist colonial politics that divided Mozambicans in classes. During this period, colonial personnel occupied the high rank in the society., Just below them came the *assimilados*^{*}, and, at the bottom of the hierarchy were the uneducated indigenous people.

During the time of independence distinctive social classes ended, but poverty was maintained due to the socialist ideology which advocated that all goods belonged to the state and no one had right to own private property. This was condemned by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*, 5, 7-8. Despite the struggle to try to build a solid national economy in this type of political policy, poverty still was sustained, now by the civil war, a war of destabilization and destruction of all social and economic infrastructures. At the end of the civil war almost all Mozambican economy had collapsed. Many people were displaced, others were forced to emigrate to neighboring countries. No school could function, no health center could treat the sick, except for a few that existed in towns.

In all these moments of Mozambique's history justice has not been practiced thoroughly in the country. Employers never gave their employees a just wage; salaries of January could be paid in March, especially in the state owned institution such as education, public transport, hospitals, etc. As is common when there is political instability in a country, everyone tries to get the best of the situation without caring for the rights of the others. This was the situation in Mozambique. During the period of civil war, a few people became very rich as they took advantage of the situation, exploiting their fellow countrymen.

* *Assimilados* is a Portuguese word referring to the indigenous people who had undergone formal school education and had given up all their customary and traditional-cultural ways of behaving, eating and dressing. These people received, at the end of the initiation, a Portuguese honorary citizenship and were treated like the Portuguese settlers.

Still in the course of the discussion, we have studied and analyzed the biblical figures. They have shown a glimpse of light about the mission of the Church to people, and how she can counteract this situation and change the way things are in the country today. Because at this junction only the Church, in co-ordination with NGOs and through advising and criticizing the program of the government and watching its activities, can help to bring justice, alleviate the suffering of the people, and, eventually, eradicate poverty in Mozambique. The Church must act on these issues using her insight of faith. In her activities and preaching she must show this insight which is distinctive to her.

I have made some suggestions to the Church about the way in which she should bring about justice in the country and help the poor to regain their esteem, raise their dignity as human beings and God's children. Some of these suggestions bring a challenge to the internal life of the Church and her members. The Church is forced to get out of her self-understanding as consisting principally of the hierarchy to also include and commission the laity to do some prophetic activities. She is also challenged to come closer to the poor and the disadvantaged and become the Church of the people not of the Bishop or the priest or the Pope. Suggestions of that kind are meant to renew her and her members, their way of thinking and behaving toward the poor, the needy, the disadvantaged. Renewal becomes necessary when the agent that should bring justice has some bias toward the subject who is to be helped. Also it is a necessity if the Church wants to be the real sign and sacrament of Christ's presence in the world.

Justice becomes an obligation in the context of liberating the suffering and the poor, for justice is the governor of social relationships. "And as a governor of social relationships, justice has its particular place in all sorts of societies- family, business, profession, national economy, state, international community"⁶⁶.

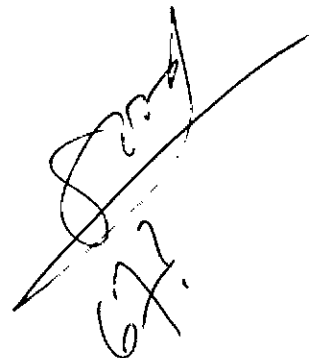
The popes have taught a lot about how social justice should be practiced in social relationships. Leo XIII said that justice should always preside over the dominion of power⁶⁷. This means that if a state does not practice justice and promote the common

⁶⁶ CALVEZ, Jean-Yves, S.J, and PERRIN, Jacques, S.J., The church and Social Justice, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1961, p.133.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Diuturnum*, by Pope Leo XIII, 29th June 1881; *ASS 14*, P.8. The quotation is from the book by CALVEZ, Jean-Yves, S.J., and PERRIN, Jacques, S. J., *op. cit.*, p.134.

good, that state is being unjust to its citizens, and the Church, like the prophets of the Old Testament, must denounce that evil and force it to be just to the people. The Church must make sure that the government creates enough jobs, that the people own private property, that the working person benefits from the produce of his/her work and that the government pays its workers duly and fairly. This is the type of prophetic presence that the Church should show in Mozambique, and the type of justice she ought to bring to the people.

My last observation about social justice is to repeat the words of Pope Leo XIII . “Justice should be held sacred and no one should hinder another from it with impunity”(*Rerum Novarum*, 29). The Church must be the guardian of this statement and the supervisor. She makes sure that justice is practiced by the Mozambique government and brings those who hinder justice and the rights of others to book and, above all, sees that charity and solidarity with the poor are also held sacred, as Jesus always did.

A handwritten signature and initials, possibly 'G. J.', written in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and is crossed out by a diagonal line.

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