

## **CHAPTER 5: THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The church, as a social group that composes a part of the Mozambican community, is affected with poverty in diversified forms. Although, the essence of the church is sited on invisible and spiritual communion of the saints (Berkhof, 1985:251), it is in the hearth (Acts 11:26; 1 Cor 11:18; 12:27; Eph 1:22). It can be the way in which the church “deal(s) with the reality of HIV/AIDS, corruption, abuse of power and with poverty” (Hendriks, 2004:15). These realities drive the church to think and rethink community problems to discover solutions.

The church’s actions are influenced by “bearing the scars and tokens of their respective cultural, religious, socio-economical and political contexts” (Vorster, 2003:5). The consequences of that are that the actions differentiate from one denomination to another and from a Christian association to another.

The contributions of the church in poverty alleviation in Mozambique can be helpful if it follows the proper principles of the church functioning as it is given by Christ to the Apostles and to the current church. To reach this aim, some questions of the effect of poverty on the Christian ethical perspective, the contribution of the church in the alleviation of poverty and its biblical perspective will be analysed.

### **5.1 THE CHURCH AND SOME ETHICAL QUESTIONS REGARDING POVERTY**

The Christian ethics is a multidimensional discipline that deals with many issues of human life. Because, the church is on the earth (Sproul, 2001:1403) where it is seen, the “Christian families, faith communities and congregations as the first manifestations of the church” (Hendriks, 2004:15), is faced with diversified ethical issues related to the nature and to its own context. In this way, the judgments of these issues are connected with the “worldview that depends on ideology, religion or belief” (Vorster, 2007:3).

The intertwining of these issues forces the church to differentiate in its approaches, as is the case with poverty. The question to be asked here is how can the church face poverty in Mozambique? To answer this question, issues such as the essence of the church, the position and actions of the church on the poverty in Mozambique will be discussed. The relationship between faith and politics will also be discussed.

### **5.1.1 The Essence of the Church**

The ethical questions regarding the essence of the church depend on the affinities of the judge before the community/history that it is analysing. These affinities can be the reasons for the differences between Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel according to John on the presentation of the ministry of Jesus (Carson *et al.*, 1999:19).

There are many denominations in the world that self-proclaim that they are the true church and they are unique in following the true Christian doctrine. Adeyemo (2006:1371) mentions “particularly in the mainline denominations the Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Orthodoxy and Roman Catholic”. To this list, Hendriks (2004:37) adds the Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist and Congregational, besides the Pentecostal Churches, Seventh Day Adventists and the African Independent Churches.

Based on some biblical texts, the appearance of the different denominations can be questioned in various perspectives. The Bible says that the proposal of the Church is to glorify God (1 Cor 10:31). In Ephesians 4:6 it is said that “there is one God and Father of all, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all”.

The differences between denominations must be meaningful if they are seen from a cultural perspective. In this regard, one can suggest that “denominations can be distinguished by their faith traditions, which have shaped their liturgy, polity and membership” (Hendriks, 2004:37). Independently of the differences, everything must be based on the Word of God seeing the essence of the church in the invisible and spiritual communion of the saints (Berkhof, 1985:251). To harmonize this disparity of thought, Vorster (2003:9) supposes that “the focus in this regard (to be) is on the reign of Christ and his rule of the church by way of the Word and the Spirit”.

Even so, these differences cannot be despised. The importance of these divisions is to reveal the diversity of the creation, indicating the marvel of God's creation to his own glory. Horton supports this idea (2006:11) when saying the vocation is a gift of the creation where believer and unbeliever are called to develop their job with excellence. He justifies it, firstly, by the recognition of God as the author and object of excellence; and secondly, by serving God with one's abilities, but there is a refusal of the recognition of God as donor and aim of everything.

Thus, the Mozambican church should learn that every Christian should glorify God. Furthermore, biblical recommendations should be the foundation of the promotion of a stable government, justice, peace, integrity and every virtue desired to be present in a society (Blanchard, 2006:5). The church can reach this aim through unity, sanctity, catholicity and apostolicity (Berkhof, 1985:251), which are the traditional attributes of the true church.

### **5.1.2 The Position of the Church towards the Poverty in Mozambique**

The position of the church depends greatly on the ideologies of the community and the interpretation of the Scriptures by certain Christian communities. Although there are similarities, the Mozambican interpretation can differ from one group to another.

#### **5.1.2.1 *Ideologies on Poverty in the Church***

The church in Mozambique is affected by the contemporary ideologies that tend to drive all human life. These ideologies develop not only from the secular character of the universities, but also from "the anthropocentric character, centred in the human person as an autonomous person" (Fowler, 1991:167). Following this line of thought the first article from 12 in the Constitution (2004) declares that the Republic of Mozambique's state is laic. The religious neutrality mentioned could be the result of attempts to avoid the new forms of religious persecution in the world, that are "islamophobia, anti-Semitism and christianophobia" according to Vorster (2004:213).

This freedom can cause the work of public institutions to be concerned with “the secular area of life where Christian, Muslim, Jew, Hindu, atheist and agnostic, together with the followers of every other possible faith meet on common ground in pursuit of a common goal” (Fowler, 1991:166). This relates to the argument that “one only can support religious freedom if one accepts the idea of the equality of all religions” (Van der Walt, 2003:386). But is it possible to reconcile the different faiths? How can the differences be solved?

The attempts to reconcile the different faiths sometimes result in a struggle for power that can deprave (Horton, 1998:22). This inflicts the addiction to Christ through mystic experiences like ecstasy, mystic visions, signals, marvels, miracles, a second blessing, tongues and other similar things (MacArthur, 2001:143) to justify their spirituality. Acting in many ways, every denomination “regard(s) its own form of worship as the only true and salvation and not to acknowledge other religions” (Van der Walt, 2003:386).

Although it is currently thought that “studying in a Christian institution is (a) guarantee of complete protection from secularist influences” (Fowler, 1991:167) the interdenominational antagonism, characterized by theological disagreements that started in the colonial period, continues (Gonçalves, 1960:134). Taking this into account, it can be said that denominationalism is a characteristic of the church in Mozambique.

The reaction of the protestant churches to the attacks from the Roman Catholic Church (Gonçalves, 1960:127) created an anti-intellectualist spirit in the midst of the Mozambican churches. They support this with the words of the apostle Paul, indicating that the letter kills and the spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:6; Col 2:8). Horton (2006:49) argues that the requirement for all that are truly pious and philosophers must honour and love truth above all.

Another influence on the ideology of the Mozambicans is the Communist ideology advocated by those embodied with this philosophy in the socialist countries during the flirtation with Marxism (Johnstone & Mandruk, 2001:458), as well as the so called pluralist democracy and consequent implantation of the market economy (Wilson *et*

*al.*, 2001:269), that can be seen as the source of the materialistic perspective of some Christians in Mozambique. Therefore, according to Rocha (2006:82) the people in this country are heterogeneous, making the country multifaceted constituted.

From abovementioned arguments, it can be said that the church is faced with ideologies like Marxism, materialism, denominationalism, intellectualism and anti-intellectualism, contributing towards the division of the religious in fragmented groups. This fragmentation complicates the fulfilment of the goal to alleviate poverty in Mozambique.

Therefore one can say that “the worldview depends on ideology, religion or belief” (Vorster, 2007) thus these ideologies contribute towards the formation of the worldview of the church.

#### *5.1.1.2 Theologies on the Poverty*

Christian theology is currently undergoing changes that contribute towards the diversification of Christian judgments on ethical issues. Olson (2001:608) indicates that Christian theology has gone through many changes since the Second World War. He adds that a large number of the liberal theologians expected the ecumenical unification of all churches, transforming the twentieth century into a Christian century (Olson, 2001:608).

In fact, “the eschatological urgency of evangelising the world before the return of Christ” (Mashau, 2006:154) contributed towards the improvement of ecumenical relationships. According to Lane (2003:199) a great number of the colonized countries experienced underdevelopment and the oppressive structures of that time between the 1950s and 1960s. The “two conferences of the Latin American Roman Catholic bishops ‘Medelin-1968 and Puebla- 1979’ played an important role in disseminating (of) Liberation Theology” (Mashau, 2006:166).

The people saw the liberation that created the theology of Liberation as a solution to their problem. Lane (2003:197) mentions that John Mbiti struggled to liberate the

African Christians from European Christianity. According to Olson (2001:620), the liberation theologians reflected on economic and structural injustice, structural poverty, unjust political orders, racism and sexual prejudice among other issues. The abovementioned list indicated that there was interest in all the issues that affected the people.

These social problems gave rise to a division into three main groups, namely Black Theology, African Christian Theology and Theology of Feminism (Olson, 2001; Lane, 2003; Mashau, 2006). The aim of black theology in Mozambique is fulfilled by obtaining independence. But there are several questions about the justness of the current political order, because there is corrupt behaviour on different levels in the government (USAID, 2005:5); and the so-called struggle against poverty is enriching the rich people and impoverishing the poor (Sitoe, 2008:6; USAID, 2005:5).

The aim of the African Christian Theology is to validate the African culture. According to Lane (2003:197), what Africa needs is not imported Christianity. This line of thought made the Mozambicans refuse some missionary aids, including those intentioned to evangelise the non-reached groups. The impact of this theology caused an emergency for ecumenical movements, such as the Network for African Congregational (Hendriks, 2004:11).

The reactions to the Theology of Feminism show a greater impact than the other two. They had priority groups that were directional regarding actions towards poverty reduction headed by women, especially widows, divorcees and single women (MPF, 2000:17). The priorities for women are also evident in education, health and juridical sectors.

In this regard Rocha (2006:89) mentions MULEIDE and AMODEFA as organizations that are contributing towards improvements for women obtained through the movement towards the equality of gender in detriment to the masculine gender. Although, in some denominations women are not premised to the priesthood (Armani, 2000:81), it is common to identify women in all these organizations with diversified aims, blaming previous rights.

The binding of the liberation theologies can be helpful if it functions to glorify God without an emphasis on the social problems such as poverty. According to Olson (2001:609), a theology that alleges to be Christian must have something in common with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with the apostolic witness of the NT accompanied by the tradition of the history of the Christian church. Being so, the church must act on the causes of poverty by struggling against it, rather than by creating ideologies to confuse the true purpose of the church.

### **5.1.3 The Role of the Church in the Struggle against the Causes of Poverty**

In the struggle against anything it is necessary to recognize the causation of that problem. As previously mentioned (see 5.1.), the perceptions of certain issues depend on the worldview of the people (Vorster, 2007:3). Thus, the church in Mozambique also has different perspectives on the causes of poverty in this country.

The perceptions of the causes of poverty in Mozambique can encourage the church to make ethical judgments on it and contribute with proposals for the alleviation thereof. The following questions can be raised in this regard: (1) In what way do the Christians understand poverty in Mozambique? (2) What is told about the different causes of poverty in Mozambique? To answer these questions the ideologies and the natural and human causes of poverty will be discussed from a Christian ethical perspective.

#### 5.1.2.1 *Presuppositions in the Church about the Causes of Poverty*

The differentiation in the ethical judgments between people supporting ideologies like Marxism, materialism, denominationalism, intellectualism and anti-intellectualism (see 5.1.2.1.) enlarge the gap among Christians on the causes of poverty in Mozambique. Although these ideologies can be found in every denomination, it is true that the main lines of thought of them dominate the actions of their believers. Therefore, three main Christian groups can be distinguished: Roman Catholics, Protestants and Pentecostals.

Due to the colonial laws of restrictions for protestant missions, the Roman Catholic Church benefited so that the adherents of this denomination could study easily (Gonsalves, 1960:118). The idea of the Roman Catholic Church of the Priesthood, as an exclusive privilege for a special group of men (Armani, 2000:81) captivated people to study.

This can be a reason why Roman Catholicism can be seen as a religious system formed by the mixing of trusts and mistakes, reality and legends, faith and dogmas (Armani, 2000:15). The result of this is the search for something additional to the divine idols and philosophy of Roman Catholicism as the means to reach God (MacArthur, 2001:143).

The Protestants are connected to the Pentecostals in their doctrines and beliefs. Therefore they are all known as evangelicals, based on the Gospel (Olson, 2001:609). Historically speaking, in Mozambique, they suffered the same rejections by the Portuguese colonists and the Roman Catholic Church, when they entered this country (Gonçalves, 1960:118). According to this author, the protestant missions were preaching ideas that created disagreements with the Portuguese administration (Gonçalves, 1960:125). Examples of the Protestant missions were the Swiss Mission from South Africa, Independent Baptist Scandinavian Union, Anglican Missions, Methodist Missions, Adventist Missions and International Holiness Missions (Gonçalves, 1960:140-142).

The difference between them is that the Protestants base their theology on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with its apostolic witness in the New Testament and added to it the tradition of the Christian Church in the history (Olson, 2001:609). Therefore their theology was built on two cornerstones, the Bible and the context. Vorster (2003:6) explains that it defines firstly “the biblical principles and secondly they applied these principles in the practical life and functioning of the church in that particular historical context”.

Besides this, the Pentecostals searched for more spiritual gifts. MacArthur (2001:143), probably refers to the Pentecostals when he says that some Christians have the false notion that they need something to help Christ, like an experience of ecstasy, mystical visions, signs, marvels, miracles, a second blessing, tongues, higher spiritual levels or more profound spirituality. This kind of thinking can contribute to interpret natural phenomena as well as the people suffering differently, as is the case with the poverty in Mozambique. How does the church understand these natural disasters?

#### *5.1.2.2 Deteriorating of Environment*

When the church deals with poverty, it needs to define the origin of it. Among the causes of poverty identified in Mozambique by Van der Walt (2006:29-30, see 3.1.2), the deteriorating of the environment plays a significant role and places pressure on the Mozambican government. Van der Walt (2003:44) identifies the following factors that contributed towards the deteriorating of the environment:

- Rampant exploitation by industrialized countries of the minerals, lands and forests of Africa;
- Introducing of monoculture crop farming for markets in the West;
- Overpopulation;
- Unjust land distribution;
- Neglecting traditional environmental conservation practices, and
- The adoption of locally untested products like chemical fertilizers, new seed varieties and pesticides.

Although most environmental problems are called natural disasters, they are mostly provoked by men. This is evidence of what Van der Walt (2003:44) considers to be the contributors to environmental damage. The 'Green Revolution for the XXI century Africa' aimed at enriching the ground with nutrients and connected technologies (Sachs, 2005:49), was put into place to alleviate these problems. What then is the role of the church in environmental conservation?

The conservation of the ecocide is God's will. According to Geisler (2000:213) the material world is not a manifestation of evil, but it reflects God's glory, as His creation. According to Vorster (2004:253) "God has created everything and still maintains his creation". This can be the reason why "churches can contribute to a general awareness of destructive effects of ecocide" (Vorster, 2004:263). Thus, the church of Mozambique could prevent the government from damaging the environment. With this contribution, the church is alleviating poverty in Mozambique through the reduction of the effects of the natural disasters caused by the damaging of the environment.

#### *5.1.2.3 The Church and the Causes of Poverty in Mozambique*

The causes of poverty in Mozambique had been discussed (see 3.1.2). As it can be seen, these causes are mainly linked to a shortage of morality, that causes all values to be regarded as suspect or openly rejected (Kretzschmar & Hulley, 2005:14). However, the contribution of the church to alleviate their effects is of special importance from a Christian ethical perspective.

The Inefficient government, the international economic system, bad management, lack of education, population growth, incompetent leadership, corruption, tribalism, the AIDS pandemic, religious intolerance and the wrong kind of Christianity (Van der Walt, 2003:44) causes the decline of morality. How should the church act to change the modern immoral society? It is a challenge for the church.

Contrary to the instructions in the Bible to preach the Word and not to be ashamed by the Gospel (Rom 1:16; 2 Tim 1:8, 13), the Christians are ashamed of the biblical

message that they are ordered to proclaim (MacArthur, 1997:29). This is happening because the para-ecclesiastic tactics dominate Christian activity in its struggle against the post-Christian culture, and protest and politics sound more like the proclamation in the church (Horton *et al.*, 1998:39). According to this writer, the public protest creates the impression that the Christians are more interested in their power and with their position in society and in the political order, making it difficult to captivate their attention for obedience to Jesus Christ. This thought contributes to the prevalence of behaviour that spurs people on to act wrongly in their institutions, contributing to the stalling of the causes of poverty in Mozambique.

The history of humanity it is no different than the history of suffering (Blanchard, 2006:6), when reflecting on the catastrophes, diseases, evils, pain, sufferings and death characterizing the modern world. But, it is important for the church to understand these things from a biblical perspective. God is still controlling everything (Acts 7:17; 2Cor 7:1; 2Pet 1:4), even when evil and corrupt governments are in power (Gen 6:11; Deut 32:5; Prov 29:18; Hos 9:9).

To change the negative influences that confuse Christians through the heresy that reject the sufficiency of Christ (MacArthur, 2001:143), the church must preach trust in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as opposed to search for political power. The church should not see the political issues as its responsibility, but should know how to attend to these issues in accordance to the scriptures.

#### **5.1.4 The Church, Faith and Politics**

In a broad approach, it can be considered that every Christian community is purely linked to Christian Faith. This happens because a large number of people are confused about the essence of the Kingdom of God. Adeyemo (2006:1373) commenting on Rom 14:21, says that “what is important for the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness, peace, harmony and joy in Holy Spirit”.

Contradictions can be encountered between the true concept of the church in relation to the Christian Faith and the relationship between the church and the state. These

aspects can contribute towards understanding the commitment of the church to the commandment of the King, Jesus Christ.

#### *5.1.4.1 The Church and the Christian Faith*

According to Berkhof (1985:253), a church is a community of elected people that are called by the Holy Spirit. Their spirituality is based on their epistemology, 'theory of knowledge', that advocates that these theories should be selected in accordance with their consistence to the Scriptures (Byl, 2003:23). Blanchard (2006:43) says that the Bible is the Word of God and it was given to transform minds and hearts to create a new lifestyle and a world vision centred in God.

The emphasis on the Scriptures is the answer to Christ's request for obedience to "the Great Commission" (Mat 28:16-20) that was given by the highest authority in the universe, and is binding for all disciples forever (Adeyemo, 2006:1170). The words in the Great Commission can also be seen as the engagement of Christians on sanctity and trust (Horton, 1998:33). This can result in things said by the apostle Paul, namely that "the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control" (Gal 5: 22-23; Rom 14:21; Col 3:12-15).

The church in Mozambique must recognize its spiritual calling as it was commissioned by Jesus Christ in the Great Commission. But, this spiritual calling is not "the reason for widespread neglect of economic, political and social affairs" (Van der Walt, 2003:54), but it is the influence of the structures that are not just and do not act faithfully. This influence can contribute towards the development of respect for human beings because "human rights cannot be realized in an unjust society" (Vorster, 2004:16).

Horton (1998:41) criticized the confidence of the people in the Christian leadership based on social, cultural and political positions without taking into account his theological knowledge. But, this criticism can be reasonable through the necessity to reinforce the objective interpretation of the text (Byl, 2003:29).

The quest for political positions by some Christian leaders contributes to disparage the image of the church, as the body of Christ (Rom 12:5; 1Cor 12:12, 27; Eph 1: 22-23, 4:16; Col 1:18). This cannot be seen as prohibitions to Christians to occupy higher political positions, but to encourage the church to present an image of Christ (1Cor 11:7; Col 1:15) in its acts and deeds.

The social challenges for the church must not be confused with the purpose of Christianity. Everything in the church must be theologically analysed to create results linked to the will of God, the basis of faith. If politics can be a way to influence people to change their mind, it is reasonable to discuss in what way it acts in the policy of this country. This can also be an indication of the way in which the State faces the church in a certain country.

#### *5.1.4.2 The Place of the Church in the Mozambican Society*

The Mozambican State acknowledges and respects religious activities since they are in accordance with the national law. Number 4 of article 12 of the Constitution (2004) says that the State recognize and valuate the activities of the religious confessions aimed at promoting agreement, tolerance, peace and efforts for national unity, spiritual and material welfare of the citizens and socio-economic development. Thus, it can be said that “the church must play a role in breaking the spiral of violence and creating conditions of peace wherever it can” (Mashau, 2006:225).

The inclusion of number 2 in the abovementioned article of the Constitution (2004) that sanctions the separation between the State and the religious confessions is of special importance for religious freedom in Mozambique. According to Vorster (2004:209) “the primary purpose of the free exercise clause is to permit adherents of different faiths to pursue their religious beliefs without being impeded from doing so by State coercion”.

Although the State is laic it recognized the “inescapable role that the religious heart plays in all human activity” (Fowler, 1991:19). It is important to recognize that the doctrinal differences can produce ideological fragmentation that can result in different

lines of thought like “the positivists, the pragmatists, the existentialists, the Marxists, the neo-Marxists and numerous other sects and factions” (Fowler, 1991:168).

These differences can be identified amongst the Christian community. Johnstone and Mandryk (2001:459) say that among the Christian denominations, they identified seven large groups namely Protestant, Independent, Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, Marginal and Unaffiliated. Besides the Christian groups, there are traditional ethnic religions, Muslim, non-Religion/other and Hindu (see table above).

*Table 3- Composition of the Mozambican population in religious groups Johnstone & Mandryk (2001:458)*

| <b>Religions</b>    | <b>Population %</b> | <b>Adherents</b> | <b>Ann. Gr.</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Christian           | 57.65               | 11,345,783       | +4.0%           |
| Traditional Ethnic  | 22.00               | 4,329,700        | -0,9%           |
| Muslim              | 18.10               | 3,562,163        | +3.0%           |
| Non-Religion/ other | 2.20                | 432,970          | -0,1%           |
| Hindu               | 0.05                | 9,840            | +2,5%           |

Although other religious groups exist, Christianity constitutes the majority of Mozambican people, as is demonstrated in the table above. This recognition can rise some ethical questions, for instance in what way does the Government lead with the different religions in mind, each with its own doctrine and perspective.

From the table it is evident that the highest annual growth index is found in the Christian group followed by Muslims. Contrary to this Traditional ethnic religions and non-religions registries decree annually. It can thus be seen that the identified religious groups like Christianity, Muslims and Hindu are increasing. Therefore in can be concluded that religious freedom is contributing towards the growth of the church in Mozambique.

### **5.1.5 The Church, Democracy and Globalisation**

The difficulty to adhere to the body's needs and the contemporary problems in Christian Faith greatly affects the actions of the church in Mozambique. Thus, the multi-party democracy and recent introduction of globalisation provide the church with new challenges. The involvement of the church in current socio-political transformations could also affect the actions of the church.

The main purpose here is to discuss the relationship between the church and the political parties. The effects of globalisation with regards to the church will also be discussed.

#### **5.1.4.1 *The Church and the Political Parties***

The church can play an important role in the political parties if it preaches a pure message from the Bible, as it was told to the apostles by Jesus Christ. Mashau (2006:225) says that "the church can engage both with its own theological tradition and with the many insights which have come from contemporary peace building efforts". It can do it independently to decrease the conflict caused by "financial, political, military and other resources (that) are unevenly distributed" (Mashau, 2006:225).

These conflicts originate from the fact that the "existing patterns will be in violation of the normative conditions" (Fowler, 1991:87). To avoid conflicts, these norms could be "derived from God's revelation in nature and history (and) may not conflict or be inconsistent to the norms revealed in Scripture" (Vorster, 2007:10).

The connection between acceptable ethical norms and their similarity to God's laws can be distinguished from unacceptable norms. For example, in the traditional African culture virtues are "any action or behaviour that is conducive to the promotion of the welfare of others" (Van der Walt, 2003:219). This is closely linked to the concept of the Commandment of love given by Jesus Christ (Mt 5:43; 22:38; Jn 13:34; 15:9, 12).

The church in Mozambique could act to prevent violence in the political parties that is not consistent with God's law or with the African traditional morality. Generally, the conflicts are more prevalent when the electoral processes are in process. In what way can the church act to rebuild peace among the political parties? This is the issue to be discussed on the church participating in the multiparty elections.

#### 5.1.4.2 *The Church and the Multiparty Elections*

Multiparty elections are seen as the way to obtain political transformations in a country from "an autocratic party-state system to pluralist democracy" (Wilson *et al.*, 2001:269). These changes mean "that new rules have been introduced, which demand higher standards of conduct than before and these are being resisted," (Neild, 2002:7). This resistance can be seen as the result of the corrupt behaviour of some government officers.

In Mozambique, there was testified resistance against the changes after the signing of general peace agreement. According to Rocha (2006:87), all organizations challenged themselves to conciliate their particular interests with the necessity to promote the catalyst and regulating function of social life, as an essential task of the state. But, many political, social and economic tension factors capable to compromise the democracy process remained.

One of the factors creating tension was the election controlling system or the officers and the security forces appointed for the elections. For the party in power, "officials were made liable to dismissal if they violated 'the duty of loyalty' or showed themselves guilty of 'hostile partisanship against the government'" (Neild, 2002:31). In this case they had to work in accordance with the will of the party in power

The oppositional parties, mainly represented by RENAMO, the major opposition party in Mozambique, have no trust in the electoral organs that accused them of fraud. What is the contribution of the church to overcome these problems with the electoral processes?

The repetition of previous mistakes e.g. that “the Church of Rome has been a highly political, territorial entity, a religious empire dominating kings, receiving money from over the world” (Neild, 2002:11) should not be repeated.

The evangelical theology is not a request for political power to assure a political and social space for its members (Horton *et al.*, 1998:38). Seven responsibilities or duties have been identified for the citizens to perform towards their government (Van der Walt, 2003:305), but the last four is especially reserved for the Christians:

- Prayer for those in authority;
- Being examples of love, and reconciliation, non-participation in violence;
- Assistance for the poor, oppressed, rejected, marginalized and exploited of society,
- Never forgetting his/her prophetic calling towards the government, addressing the authorities if they do not comply with God's central norm for the state, e.g. justice for all its citizens.

These could be summarized as “the Christian attitude of love, stewardship, self-denial, as well as the demanded obedience to God, (that) must also manifest in the treatment of those outside the circle of believers” (Vorster, 2007:154). This means that they cannot identify themselves with any political party, but in the first place with Christian love. The church must deal with the elections in transparency, and should not be influenced by the competition between the political parties.

#### 5.1.4.3 *The Ecclesiastical Globalisation*

The current political and economical developments are characterized by globalisation, a new magic word recently coined, substituting the development that was dominating before it. Van der Walt (2006:89) wrote that “development was the buzz word during the past fifty years of the previous century”. From this point of departure, it can be said that development was dominating the academic, political, social and theological debates of that epoch.

The so-called development was faced with constraints contradicting the hope of people. An example of this is that “in 1976 there was a famine in the eastern part of Mozambique and Pieter collected food in Malawi and distributed it in Mzewe and Mawi areas” (Labuschagne, 2002:119). Neglecting the paradox of the incomes from the expected development, the people continued to put their hope on technological development to reach a new era. Some scientists use “the term ‘post-development’ to indicate our present time” (Van der Walt, 2006:89). Currently, the most used term for the present era is globalisation (Hendriks, 2004:15; Van der Walt, 2006:89; Wilson & Lodge, 2006:117).

Two main influences were evident in Africa during this time. Consequently, it was observed that “on the one hand, modernism is escalating Africa and, on the other hand, post-modern tendencies are clearly discernible” (Hendriks, 2004:16). Thus, according to this writer, “being part of, and influenced by globalisation means that the era of continuous and chaotic change that characterizes the Western World today, also affects Africa” (Hendriks, 2004:16). The question to be asked then is: How can globalisation be defined? What are the influences of globalisation on the church’s calling in a certain geographical space?

In attempts to define globalisation, Hendriks (2002:15) says that it is “the extension of effects of modernity to the entire world when, at the same time, the compression of time and space is taking place”. Van der Walt, (2006:91) defines globalisation as “current shift from local and national markets to regional and global markets or the opening up of all national economies to the world economy”. There are correlated similarities between these definitions although they also depend on the worldview and perspective of the writer. But, in essence all of them are the same.

Tendencies of competition are special characteristics of globalisation. Commentating on the danger of globalisation, Van der Walt (2006:94) wrote that “competitiveness sounds better than war, but essentially it is nothing less than a furious, destructive war”. If there was hope that globalisation would improve the life of the poor, it is not the case: “Globalisation has not only failed to reduce poverty, it has also increased the gap between the world’s richest and poorest people” (Wilson, 2006:117).

In the church, the gap can be identified in relationship between missionaries and the local church. Currently, the Mozambican missionaries are suffering the effects of globalisation because “globalisation produces gains for few, marginalization of many, and polarization between poor and the rich” (Van der Walt, 2006:95).

Thus, it can be affirmed that the situation of the small denomination is deteriorating. Being so, it is influencing the state to listen to the denominations, without taking account the motivation of their pronouncement.

## **5.2 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CHURCH IN ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY**

Poverty in Mozambique affects the whole society. Therefore everyone should be involved in the struggle against this evil. The church is called to act according to its gifts to alleviate the different forms of suffering of the people. Thus, the aim of many Christian organizations is to contribute to the overcoming of poverty. The methods and forms to reach this aim vary from one to the other according to their internal organization.

### **5.2.1 The Christian Organizations on struggling against Poverty in Mozambique**

The Christian organizations in Mozambique can be divided in two major groups, independent of their specific work. According to Committee of Counsellors (2004:43), they are ecclesiastical organizations, that are affiliated to a specific denomination and they act in accordance to the orders of this church. In this group schools, kindergartens, societies and ecclesiastical charity groups can be identified.

On the educational front, churches are contributing by opening different schools, namely primary schools, secondary schools, professional schools and universities. These churches that are more committed to education are the Roman Catholic, the Anglican, the Presbyterian, the Reformed and Methodist churches. Examples of these schools are the Catholic University, Dom Bosco Professional School, Education for Adults and other schools of arts and crafts. The Pentecostals started to

adhere to these efforts much later because of their anti-intellectual thinking based on the words in the Colossians 2:8 (Horton, 2006:49).

The kindergartens and ecclesiastical charity groups are encountered in various denominations. Generally speaking, they are used as a way to demonstrate to the government that they are following the governmental orders and, in this way they gain in their reputation in the society (Horton, 1998:21). This writer says that the quest for power leads well-intentioned people to lose their proposal.

Another action that originated in the ecumenical environment is a partnership between churches. According to Mashau (2006:239), the “partnership expresses a relationship between churches, based on trust, mutual recognition and reciprocal exchange”.

Generally, they originate from missionaries’ initiatives or from some well-intentioned natives aimed at attending to a specific situation like teaching, translating the Bible, developing crusades, medical assistance where there is no hospital, to assist the affected by natural disasters, etc. In this group, World Vision, SIL-Sociedade Internacional de Linguística (*Linguistic International Society*), ACRIS-Ação Cristã Interdenominacional Para a Saude (*Interdenominational Christian Action for Health*), the Biblical Union, the Mozambique Theologians Organization, Conselho Cristão de Moçambique (*Mozambique Christian Council*) and Fraternal Meeting can be mentioned.

Being so, it can be said that these organizations are linked to the Christian church without specification of denomination. They are organizations that originated from a fellowship feeling. Then, it becomes crucial to discuss the preaching in the churches since churches differ in their doctrines and emphases.

### **5.2.2 Preaching and Poverty**

If preaching the word (2 Tim 4:1-5) is a principal mean to transform lives, it is also true that there are fundamental biblical laws of interpretation (Henrichsen, 1997:7). But these fundamental laws do not solve the differences between denominations and

biblical interpreters. Following these laws could bring up the essential characteristics of biblical preaching (Olyott, 2008:21). What is happening with the Mozambican preachers when they are on the pulpit? From this question the twofold understanding of poverty in preaching will be analysed.

#### *5.2.2.1 Preaching for the poor*

Paul's challenge to Timothy to preach the word (2 Tim 4:1-5) can infer the existence of other things contradicting with God's word that people were preaching. According to Horton (2006:52), Paul was advising Timothy against the Gnostic movement, a life philosophy with a world vision and a belief system diametrically opposed to the revealed trust of the Scriptures, based on materialism (Horton, 2006:53). Besides this group pragmatism/utilitarianism is also prominent in the Christian church and it attacks the sufficiency of the word of God in the evangelisation (MacArthur, 2001).

The utilitarianism is wrongly influencing judgments since it is used to formulate ethical standards based on the belief that the utility determines what is good and what is wrong (MacArthur, 1997:7). This drive Christians to abandon the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to inspire people to preach on self-esteem, political influence, social equality, security, prosperity, health, richness, happiness and other things boosting the 'ego' (MacArthur, 2001:130-131).

This kind of preachers produces Christians that "follow their own desires and will collect for themselves more and more teachers who will tell them what they are itching to hear" (2Tim 4:3b). If anyone has their own interpretation, it can be responsible for some people to include both religion and politics as aspects in which agreement is never reached (Henrichsen, 1997:7).

When it becomes necessary to preach about poverty, the same disparity is evident since it is influenced by politicians that are accusing each other as responsible for this evil (Alcock, 1997:5; see 3.1.1.). In this way the Gospel holds the political chances of particular movement's hostage (Horton, 1998:30).

Unfortunately, it is a growing desire for some pastors to see rapid growth of their churches, therefore they abandon true preaching of the Bible (Ascol, 2005:232). If there is a fear to trust, the preacher is serving egoist cultural targets of contemporary fashion and building a church deprived of faith (Horton, 1998:119). What is needed to overcome this situation in Mozambique? Surely, it is necessary for the preachers to follow the principles of the Biblical interpretation in a context and with good theological standards.

#### 5.2.2.2 *Preaching on Poverty*

When Paul challenged Timothy to “preach the message” (2 Tim 4:2), he was conscious of the problems Timothy were facing. But the preaching on poverty in Mozambique is a problematic issue because of some elements linked to the causes of poverty, like the lack of education, the wrong kind of Christianity, corruption, decline of morality and incompetent leadership (see 3.1.2). To overcome these effects, it is important to be “concerned about the judgment of God, which can infer only from his conscience and from the judgment of his fellow men” (Neil, 2002:10).

According to Olyott (2008:19), the cornerstones of true preaching must proclaim the message of the King ‘κερύσσω’ (Mat 10:27; Lk 8:39, 9:2,12:3; 1 Cor 9:27; 15:12; Gal 2:2; 5:11), announce the good news ‘εὐαγγελίζω’ (Lk 1:19, 4:43; Acts 13:32; Gal 1:11; 1 Pet 1:12), testify facts ‘μαρτυρέω’(Mat 23:31; Jn 3:11, 26; 2 Cor 8:3) and explain the implications of the message ‘διδάσκω’. Henrichsen (1997:8-9) agrees with these presuppositions although he uses the words observation, interpretation, correlation and application. Byl (2003:29) argues that if one is to listen to the Word of God with impartial ears, the text can be interpreted with objectivity, applying suitable and healthy hermeneutic principles.

MacArthur (1997:31) argues that moral power courage and proclamation are needed to not compromise the trust that can liberate people. The preachers have to focus on the depth of the divine attributes, on the human nature and Christian deeds, the application of the redemption by the Holy Spirit, the nature of the church and sacraments and the meaning of the history (Horton, 2006:51). Preaching like this can

embody the preachers by the trust of God; consequently the church will mature spiritually and in number of believers.

#### 5.2.2.3 *Trust in God*

In recent years the reliability of the Bible is discussed and compared to scientific findings in various areas. Secular philosophers are of the opinion that all tangible knowledge must be reached through scientific means, and what cannot be discovered by science, humans could not know (Blanchard, 2006:15). Regarding the Christian view, Vorster, (2004:69) says that “the revelation-historical view on Scriptural revelation and the testimony of the Spirit is to him just vitally important”.

This happens because the current world wants religion to provide answers to all practical questions about interpersonal relationships like marriage, politics, economy, democracy and so on (Horton, 1998:279). Because true wisdom is opposed to the wisdom according to this world (Horton, 1998:297), attempts are made to conciliate these lines of thought. In attempts to reconcile the scientific knowledge with the Scriptures, there are those who believe that God reveals His trust through the Scriptures and nature (Byl, 2003:26)

According to Douglas (2001:1649), trust is an attribute of the activity of God, and it is applied in absolute sense to indicate what is real and complete in opposition to the unreal and incomplete. The Bible says that the Christian faith is trust (Gal 2:5; Eph 1:13a). Jesus, being God, is the trust (Jn14:6; Eph 4:21). In this way, the trust is in accordance to the will of God, and was born and remains Son of God (Jas 1:18).

The will of God determines the prevalent relation between cause and effect that is why the natural laws are sequential orders and modifications of the natural, in consonance with the divine proposal (Dagg, 2003:97). In this regard, Warren (2003:17) says that anyone who needs to know the reason for his creation must start with God; because man was born in accordance to God’s proposals and to fulfil His proposals.

Christians should be prevalent in trust to reflect the image of God through words, deeds, testimony, harmony and mercy. In order to act together, adjusted efforts are needed to obtain a powerful influence on poverty alleviation.

#### 5.2.2.4 *Ecumenicist in Mozambique*

The tendency of churches to work together is improving, especially on issues of common interest. This connection between the churches is characterized by associations, organizations and in the missionary networks (see 5.2.1). The main aim of the church is to develop efforts to defeat certain obstacles, like Bible translation, evangelisation and financial supports, taking into account that human and financial resources are gifts of Christ to be shared by the church in fulfilling God's mission (Paula, 1997:169).

Because God had commissioned every Christian to act in order to save the lost souls (Paula, 1997:121), the church has a duty to work together where it is possible to fulfil the common objectives. According to Mashau (2006:239), partnership "is a term designed to show how different parts of the Church belong to one another and find their fulfilment through sharing a common life".

Because of the sharing of a common life, the church's partnerships become a community of churches in their essence, differently to organizations. Van der Walt (2006:147) says that "community is a unified organism, a living body, whose members are united by a common, shared life". This idea is advocated by Williams (1998:196) when he says that what "communalism does is to emphasize that the first responsibility of a Christian is to the church; (it) is only wrong if it stops at that point".

The church needs to solve its internal situation of poverty as a community. But, to demonstrate the prompting generosity in response to the grace of God, it could deal with poverty in a sense of salvation (Williams, 1998:196). If the church is challenged to contribute towards poverty alleviation in Mozambique, it should recognize the ethical implications of it. It means that the church is to deal with the inner problems of poverty, but the issues of the society in general should also not be neglected.

### 5.2.3 The Necessity of Changes in Mozambique

The Mozambican society is broadly affected by poverty. Although the emphasis is on absolute poverty, this affects the society in different ways. Thus, the church is challenged to face the needs of different groups of society like the aged, women, youth and the family, as the base of the formation of the different human kinds. Because it must deal with neglected people, the emphasis will focus on the abovementioned social stratum.

#### 5.2.3.1 *The Aged People in the Church*

Some scholars identify poverty with those experiencing an underclass status (Alcook, 1997:27). According to this writer, this status includes “the disabled, the chronically sick, and the long-term unemployed and lone parent family” (Alcook, 1997:27). Since they are weak, the elder people obtain underclass status and because of the disrespect and exclusion to this social group on the roads, in the lines for medical assistance and in their families (Reifler, 1992:96).

The disrespect and exclusion contribute towards the status of poverty. Worldwide it is confirmed that “poverty and deprivation affects a substantial proportion of elderly people” (Davidson & Erkine, 1992:86). The poverty can result from the acts of injustice and spoliation of their children or parents (Mealand, 1980:94). This is the reason why the Mozambican Government includes article 95 in the National Constitution (2004) that asseverates in the first place that every citizen has the right to assistance when he becomes incapable and older.

The church must respect this commandment since it was derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights early accepted by main ecclesiastical traditions (Vorster, 2004:15-24). The protection of the elder people is especially asseverated in article 22, where it is written that:

“Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and recourses of each state, of the

economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the redevelopment of his personality”.

Another reason for the church to respect the aged people is the biblical commandment ordering everybody to honour their father and mother (Ex 20:12; Lev 20:9; 27:7; Deut 5:16; Mal 1:6). According to Reifler (1992:99), the New Testament orders the children to honour and obey their parents and to sustain them in old age (Mt 15:4; 19:19; Mk 7:10; Eph 6:2; Col 3:20-22; 2 Tim 3:2). In this way it is clear that God orders the children to respect the personality of their parents, as a social, anthropological and theological responsibility of the young adults to guarantee a good continuity of the family, as community.

#### 5.2.3.2 *The Women in the Church*

Women have a special position in the Mozambican society. They take part in a variety of activities with the men aimed to overcome poverty in Mozambique. The recognition of the equality between women and men was included in the national Constitution (2004), article 122. The first point of the abovementioned article says that the State promote, protect and value women development and stimulate their crescent role in society, and in all scopes of political, economical, social and cultural activities of the country.

The paradox with this statement is evident when it is denounced that the existence of male people does not accept their wives working freely. For example, they prohibit women to work as a journalist, with the allegation that woman should stay at home to cook and to take care of the children (Pereira, 2008:11). Analysing the situation of women in Africa, Kretzschmar *et al.* (2005:179) noted that “women are usually responsible for the care of small infants”. This attitude contradicts with the proposed solution of Davidson and Erkin (1992:86) that “women combine motherhood and paid employment, and a significant growing proportion must do so without the support of a male partner”.

The exploitation of the woman becomes a serious challenge for Christian ethics in Mozambique when it is seen from diverse approaches of corruption that greatly

affects the females (see 3.1.2.1.). These problems can lead to the prevalence of this social group in poverty until they reach old age.

According to Yi (2002:15) “women tend to be over-represented among the poor and their experience of poverty is often acute”. Linked to this, Davidson & Erkin (1992:86) says that “the incidence of poverty among older women, particularly lone women, is significantly higher than among men”. In order to avoid the inequality in the incidence of poverty among women and men, it is necessary to develop an equalitarian policy in the access to education. This can be started at a young age.

### 5.2.3.3 *The Education of the Youth in the Church*

Being young is a very special time for the human because it is reserved for human formation. According to Du Preez *et al.* (1997:9), the youth is the age where growth ‘including the physical well being’ occurs, evolution occurs and they identify with values of the children of God. Wells (2002:18) supports this idea by saying that, everyone brings two types of luggage to the relationship: one with his old appurtenance (pain, rejection, perceptions and subjectivity), and the other his personality. As it is seen, the writer refers to the old appurtenances, those things acquired in his environment that can influence the attitude of a human being in his adult age.

If the old appurtenance can influence the future acts of the man, “a child who experiences poverty is exposed to the risk of impaired physical and mental development, as consequence can be disadvantaged for life (Yi, 2002:15). Then, measures are needed to avoid these evil influences in the young people’s life.

To avoid this evil among the youth, number 2 of article 123 of the Constitution (2004) says that the policy of the Mozambican government is aimed to promote the harmonious development of the youth’s personality, the sense of saving the community and the creation of conditions for their integration in the active life. The privileges of the youth insertion in the community are also relatively visible in education (article 113 and 114), health (article 116) and employment (article 84).

Churches must keep it in mind that to perform as good Christians, and to guarantee the continuity of the church in the future, it is necessary to take care of the children, as Jesus Christ did when He said “let the children come to me and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Mt 19:13; Luke 18:16). Also, Jesus Christ used children to teach humility and sanctity (Mt 18:2; Mk 9:36; Luke 9:47). The apostle Paul taught the Corinthians “as children in Christian faith” (1Cor 3:1) to facilitate their comprehension of the teachings.

By using children, Jesus and the Apostle Paul demonstrate the ability of children to assimilate teachings. Then, the biblical testimony should be taught to the young and foreseen. Number 2 of article 120 of the Constitution (2004) says that the family is responsible for the harmonious growth of the child, and it is also its task to educate the new generations in the moral, ethical and social values.

#### *5.2.3.4 Rebuilding the Families*

The Mozambican law protects marriage. In accordance to number 1 of article 119 of the Constitution (2004), the family is the fundamental element and the basis of the whole society. Number 4 of the same article says that the law establishes the forms in which traditional and religious marriages are valued, and it defines the requisites to be registered. What are the ethical implications of this law?

According to Reifler (1992:51), every law has its positive and negative aspects. It is here where churches should reflect on their responsibility to recognise religious marriages. This can be seen as acceptance by the State of Jesus and the apostle’s words about “the essence of the marriage and the responsibilities of husband and wife” (Vorster, 2007:170). This writer advocates family planning arguing that there “will be no sense in having children to subject them to a life of poverty and perennial despair” (Vorster, 2007:171).

These ideas conduces the constitutional democracies into “increasingly legalizing abortion on request” (Vorster, 2004:122). This matter was approved by the National Assembly of Mozambique and it was submitted to the President for ratification. The reasons for this are similar to the arguments identified by Vorster (2004:122-123).

According to this writer medical, psychological, eugenic, juridical, social and pragmatic arguments can be identified. Although, the arguments are apparently convincing, questions to be raised are: When does the life of a person start? Can poverty of a family provide permission to end a life?

The Scriptures testify that life starts when the woman gets pregnant (Ps 139:13; Jer 1:5). Christians must take care with the plans of God regarding human life, and not suppose that to stop the life before a baby is born is different to stopping it after the baby was born (Geisler, 2000:182). The life must be regarded since it is conceived. The responsibilities of the parents could not be limited to the born children only as it is asseverated in articles 119, 120 and 121 of the National Constitution (2004), but pregnancy must be seen as a life that request responsibility from parents.

The negligence of these ethical norms contributes to the immorality in Mozambique. It is important to take care when ethical judgments are made to avoid the valuation of the worthless and neglecting things that are worth a lot. The Christian Church is challenged to reflect on this in the attempt to overcome prostitution and sexual businesses that are increasing the number of the people affected and infected by HIV/AIDS.

#### 5.2.3.5 *Sexuality and HIV/AIDS*

The problem of HIV/AIDS is debated from different perspectives all over the world. Mozambique, as an African country, is dealing with it in accordance to the international approaches, especially concerning a poor country's approaches. The relationship between sexuality and this pandemic is found in the fact that "open and sexual relations provide a fertile ground for the rapid spread of the disease" (Vorster, 2004:237). For this writer, "it is not necessary to speak of HIV as a 'plague' or as a state of emergency, but as a new social problem" (Vorster, 2004:229).

The church as a part of the society is challenged to deal with this problem according to Christian ethical norms. If the church is the body of Christ, it should manifest the image of Christ in the hearth of her knowledge, rectitude and in true sanctity (Dagg, 2003:118). But what is happening is that Christians are not capable to marvel in what Christ brought to the people through the foundation of the church on Pentecost day (Acts 2:1-4).

The repetition of this blindness is reflected when the church is dealing with diversified social problems. In relation to HIV/AIDS as a social problem, Okaalet (2006:667) says that "the church in Africa, and globally, has failed to provide the resources in terms of personnel, leadership and materials required to deal with this pandemic". This writer divides the committed sins by the church in this regard in two:

"The church had been sins of commission, in that the church has often been responsible to communicating negative social and cultural attitudes, alienating and stigmatising those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS". There have also been sins of omission, in that the church has failed to talk about the sex and sexuality, and has sometimes considered unholy to discuss these topics on the church premises".

The dilemma is that in the schools where the young boys were studying, they were taught about HIV in secular ways. The church did not present anything as alternative. The result of that was the increase of HIV infections among this group. Has the

church then accomplished its duty? What does the Bible say about the mission of the church in society?

According to Sproul (2001:1267), the duty of the church can be divided into two parts. Firstly, it is the performance of testimony before the whole world, making disciples and planting churches (Mt 24:14; 28:19-20; Mk 13:10; Luke 14:47-48). The church proclaims the Lord Jesus Christ all over the earth as the Saviour, and announces the invitation to the sinners to get a new life through repentance (Mt 4:17; 22:1-10; Acts 2:38; 3:19).

Secondly, based on the commandment of love, the writer says that every Christian is called to realize how to perform with mercy and compassion. They should respond to every human necessity with generosity and compassion (Mt 25:34-40; Lk 10:25-37; Rom 12:20-21). This means that the Christians should be affectionate people that can bring a sweet experience to the communities, something that is the desire of God.

#### **5.2.4 The Will of God**

The will of God can be identified through the central message of His Word. Scholars differ in their approach regarding the central message of the Bible. One can say that the Old Testament is concerned with “how God has revealed himself to people in the past” (Hill & Walton, 2000:21). Besides this, the central message of Bible can be seen as the “many-faceted nature of God’s relationship with His creatures” (Dillard & Longman, 1994:36).

In the New Testament the principal message is also debated. Barclay (2000:193) says that the salvation is the ‘target of God’ and ‘the purpose of Jesus Christ’. God had chosen people for salvation (2 Thes 2:13) and God wants everyone to be saved (1 Tim 2:4). In this regard, Olyott (2008:44) says that the Bible is about Christ. Thus, it can be said that without the death of Christ, salvation is impossible (Dagg, 2003:209).

Thus the central message of the Bible is the salvation of the human kind through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 5:8; 11:6; Eph 1:7; 2:4-8; 2 Tim 1:9). The connection between salvation and grace and faith in the Son of God is based fundamentally on John 3:16 that clearly states the pain and death of Jesus Christ. The results of this are living in spirit that reflects the image of Christ in a man or woman.

To summarize these reflections, it can be said that the total will of God is that which “embody the reign of God and everything it represents such as love, hope, peace and joy” (Vorster, 2003:8). This corresponds with what Paul calls the spiritual products (Gal 5:22-23). Jesus also told humans that the accomplishment of God’s law comes through loving one another, as He did (John 13:34).

### **5.3 THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY**

The Christian attitude towards poverty differs according to the church doctrine. Adei (2006:762) says that “our attitude to money, wealth and poverty reveals our eternal values, as well as our character and relationship to both God and others”. It can also be said that “poverty may be established because a man is lazy, because a man is a sinner or because a man is sinned against” (Williams, 1998:15). What could be the guide for the church to face poverty? Do the Mozambicans follow the correct guidelines?

The guide for the actions of the church as people of God must be directed by the word of God. It is required to believe that the Bible is the only norm of guidance for a Christians’ life in order to make their decisions prudent and useful (Olyott, 2008:56). In the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament guidance for the poverty alleviation is reflected upon that could be followed by Christians when they deal with poverty.

### **5.3.1 The Alleviation of Poverty in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, God promised that the just would prosper (Ps 112:1-3). This promise could be seen as a promise in economy and industry, as a result of the obedience of the people and nation to the God's commandments (Gen 39:3, 23; Deut 28:1-14; Josh 1:8; Ps 1:1-3; Isa 3:10). Although God made these promises, through the history of Israel there were poverty caused by wars, natural disasters, invasion of its neighbours and enemies, and extortionist usury (Douglas, 2001:1295).

The perspective in which Moses, the Kings of Israel and the prophets dealt with poverty differed according to their social status. The Mosaic perspective was very far from the kings' perspective because they were in different social positions and they were called to different tasks. In this study briefly the main characteristics of the each exponent will be examined.

#### **5.3.1.1 *Alleviation of Poverty According to the Mosaic Law***

According to Douglas (2001:1067), Moses was a prophet and a legislator, he was called to declare and to teach the will of God, the commandments and the nature of God, and he is the model for the subsequent prophets (Deut 18:22; Acts 3:22, 23). Thus, the Pentateuch was seen as unalterable source of the law (Torah) that produced a new kind of spiritual leaders as scribes (Douglas, 2001:917), with Ezra as its prototype (Ezra 7:6; Neh 8:1-8).

Seen from the perspective of the covenant between God and His people, it can be said that obedience to the law "meant God's presence and blessing overshadowed Israel as they obeyed the covenant stipulations" (Hill & Walton, 2000:41). These stipulations "cover the basics of the divine-human relationship as well as human-human relationships" (Dillard & Longman, 1994:67).

The economical importance of the Torah was that in the time of obedience to the divine injunctions there was a material and spiritual prosperity, and when they neglected the Torah there was calamities against Israel (Douglas, 2001:917). Then,

there was an obligation to the rich people of a specific community to support their poor brothers (Deut 15:1-11).

The relationship between obedience to the divine law and economical prosperity returned in the time of the kings and the prophets and were used by God to criticize the malpractices of that time.

#### *5.3.1.2 Poverty and the Kings of Israel*

The kings of Israel differed from one another in their manner in which they related to God. There were some of them that “obeyed the law of the Lord, and had not turned away from their God” (2 Sam 22:22, 31; 1 Kings 2:3). When this group of kings exercised power over Israel there was prosperity in the country. An example is the kingship of Solomon that had been successful because “his intimate relationship with God enabled him to discern the will of God ‘the way wisdom’ as he governed the people” (Adeyemo, 2006:421).

Many of these kings are commonly identified by the precedence of the words “he did what was good and right in eyes of the Lord his God” (2 Chr 14:2). According to Hill and Walton (2000:237), “blessing of Yahweh’s favour in the form of peace, security, prosperity, and deliverance from foes rested upon the people of God when the king was obedient to the Law of Moses”.

Contrary to “Jeroboam before him, (he) aroused the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, by his sins and by leading the people into sin and idolatry” (1 Kings 16:26). These type of situations occurred when a king abandoned the precepts of God (2 Kings 28:1-2). Commenting on 1 Kings 17:1, Adeyemo (2006:437) says that the result of this disobedience was the prediction by Elijah of the judgment that “there would be no rain or dew for some years as a punishment for the sins mentioned in the previous verses”.

Although some kings of Israel feared God, there were some of them “who amassed too much wealth and power and it proclaimed the responsibility of the kings to obey the written commands of God” (Dillard & Longman, 1994:145). Thus Hill and Walton

(2000:220) conclude that “the function of the kings was to maintain justice, both in a domestic sense in society and in an international sense by means of an effective military force”.

#### 5.3.1.3 *Poverty and Prophets*

The prophets of the Old Testament were the people called by God to correct the malpractices of the God’s people or to confirm what God preferred. According to Yilpet (2006:807), “the prophets served as God’s spokespersons to the kings on the issues to do with justice and righteousness, while at the same time having a message for all people”.

It is recognized that without prophets, the people’s “behaviour reveals that turning away from the glory of the Lord to idolatry corrupts value systems, thought processes and regard for human life and result in a corrupt society” (Nwankpa, 2006:840).

An example of this corruption can be seen in the Micah 7:1-7 where “even the best and most honest of them are as worthless as weeds” (Mic 7:4). In this regard, Douglas (2001:1295) says that the people commonly suffered poverty was orphans, widows and foreigners and they were subjected to oppression (Jer 7:6; Amos 2:6, 7). What then is the task of the Christian church in Mozambique in this regard?

The problem with the Christian church in Mozambique is that there is confusion regarding its efforts, because the main aim of the church is similar to that of the current democratic government that is the interest to protect its private property (Guy, 1997:21). In this way, the church is neglecting believing according to the words of Jesus’ and the apostles that the “hope of the new age (which) would end the sickness and poverty, and bring back the lost and the rejected” (Mealand, 1980:87).

The abovementioned confusion fissured the church into the “communal charity that was preceded by his simpler and more spontaneous surrender of resources and possessions” (Mealand, 1980:87). Therefore the contradiction between power and mercy can be a paradoxical issue to be solved by the church in Mozambique.

If corruption is the major obstacle for Mozambican development (see 3.1.2.1), it can be said that the prophetic voice of the church was lost in this country. In what way can the church act to overcome this situation? It is a challenge for the church to truly glorify God (1 Cor 10:31). The situation becomes serious when Christians empower themselves rather than obtaining wisdom and heart's discernment, aimed to serve God's people with righteousness (Mensah, 2001:8).

### **5.3.2 The Alleviation of Poverty in the New Testament**

The current political systems claim that they are able to end poverty or reduce it to the minimum levels possible (MPF, 2005:21). Nowadays, some Christians are appearing claiming that "both capitalism and socialism have generated poverty" (Williams, 1998:192). Thus, many "theologians started looking for a theology that offers visible hope for people in social need" (Vorster, 2007:70). Now it can be asked what the guidelines from the New Testament for poverty alleviation are?

In the period of the New Testament there were poor and rich people. Although the people then were in the same line of thought, the treatment of the issue of poverty differed from one to the other, according to their position occupied in the society. Douglas (2001:1296) supposes that, because of the taxes applied to the Jewish, some were economically tightened, when others were enriching themselves through their collaboration with the Romans.

Jesus was son of the poor parents (Luke 2:24) and in the Gospels He saw poverty from a different perspective than Paul. Jesus also had a different perspective on poverty amongst the people than the Gospels writers. What marked the individual perspective on poverty?

### 5.3.2.1 *Poverty in the Gospels*

The attitude of Jesus and His followers can be useful to understand the Gospels' perspective on poverty. Many cases consider arrogance, pride and haughtiness the sins committed by rich people (Barclay, 2000:93). This writer says that Aristotle feared greed and arrogance because of the enmity that arises from them (Barclay, 2000:95). The Greek word for this behaviour is *ὑπερηφάνια* and it is encountered in Mark 7:22 (Gingrich & Danker, 2001:213).

To avoid the curse caused by haughtiness that can drive to destruction (Ps 4:28), Jesus and the apostles were "like the finder of unexpected treasure or a priceless pearl, they abandoned everything for Kingdom" (Mealand, 1980:87). To accomplish the will of God, they were not interested with goods, family, houses or their parents. To show how it was important to differentiate between material richness and spiritual richness, the evangelists demonstrated it through the writing of some miracles performed by Jesus and his apostles (John 20:30). The worthlessness of material richness is shown in Mark 12:41-44, when it is demonstrated that, the small offering of the poor can be of more value than a big one from a rich man. In Luke 14:12-14, it is told that the poor must exhibit hospitality.

It is important to better understand the attitude of Jesus towards property. Mealand (1980:83) says that "not all of those responded to Jesus (and) abandoned their property, though Jesus and his followers did so". This can also be helpful to understand that Jesus was not against possessions, but the attitude towards these possessions in relation to the kingdom of God was more important than anything else.

Some failures originated from this misunderstanding of the early church. Thus, Douglas (2001:1296) criticized the voluntary goods community of the Jerusalem church supposing that it had been responsible for its later economical collapse. But, at the beginning, that communalism had provoked poverty elimination in the first church (Acts 4:34, 35). Thus, the church could learn from the history how to act in various situations in this world.

Adei (2006:762) says that “wealth in the hands of the righteous is a powerful tool to serve God and others”. On the other hand Jesus had dealt with poverty. The church needs to follow the example of Jesus in his deeds and words, as supreme prophet and God.

#### 5.3.2.2 *Jesus and the Poor*

The judgment of the social position of Jesus could be helpful in this study, although it is only a shadow of an example compared to his teachings. However, there are no reasons to suppose that Jesus was living in profound poverty (Douglas, 2001:1296), although he was the son of poor parents (Luke 2:24). He had rich friends like Mary, who took half a litre of very expensive perfume made of pure nard, poured it on Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair (John 12:3).

Jesus’ teachings and the manner in which he faced poverty and richness are most important in this study. Douglas (2001:1296) says that Jesus taught that material possessions are not evil in themselves. But they can be dangerous because they can drive man to be separated from God. This can be one of the reasons why Jesus came to preach the Gospel to the poor (Mt 11:3-5; Luke 4:18; 7:22).

Thus, Jesus told to his disciples that “anyone who wants to come with me, must forget themselves, take their cross every day, and follow me. For whoever wants to save their own life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake will save it” (Luke 9:23-24). When Jesus was calling the rich man, he ordered him to “go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me” (Mk 10:21). Do these words mean that Jesus was against riches? And what is the meaning of the “good news to the poor” (Luke 4:18)?

The words of Jesus are that his mission was “to bring good news to the poor” (Luke 4:18), but it did not mean that only the poor could be blessed. He was just showing the importance of the Kingdom of God through these teachings. The emphasis is also on the cures, exorcisms and miracles (Mt 11:5) directed at the poor, that demonstrated his messianic activity that was saving people as an answer on his

preaching (Hayford, 2001:963). At the same time, He demonstrated the difficulty encountered when the same message was preached to the rich people (Mt 19:24).

That answer to Jesus' preaching is what is missing in Mozambique to change the paradigm of the corrupt behaviour. The Christian church needs to act as the primitive church acted (Acts 7:38, 19:39). This is possible if the church follows the example of the founders of the church, the apostles, who founded it through the preaching of Jesus in Jerusalem (Douglas, 2001:736). Modernism and post modernism is encouraging Christians to fail in their tradition mission. How did the apostles deal with poverty?

#### *5.3.2.3 Poverty according to the apostles*

Currently, it is recognized that capitalism cannot solve the problem of poverty because of its "excessive individualism and competition" (Williams, 1998:195). However, the Christians that are "aware of the shortcoming of secular socialism have sought to suggest alternative societal arrangements" (Williams, 1998:195). This shows that, there is no solution for the secular arrangements to fight poverty. How did the apostles act to overcome poverty in the primitive church?

The apostles used different terms to indicate the necessity of caring for the poor and they criticized the material riches that were removing people from the kingdom of God. Douglas (2001:1296) says that the ministry of Paul was requesting for funds in the more fortunate churches to assist the poor believers of Jerusalem (Acts 11:29-30; Rom 15:25-29; 1 Cor 16:1-2; 2Cor 8:2; 9:12; Gal 2:10). Paul believed that God called the poor and his salvation overflowed to the glory of God (1 Cor 1:26-31).

James vehemently criticized those that made a distinction based on riches in the Christian community (Jas 2:1-7). Some scholars currently support this by saying that "poverty is about exclusion and power, about relationships and loss of self-respect; it is lack of choice and limitation of freedom" (Williams, 1998:3).

The problem of exclusion can be seen as an evil that divided the Christian community. Paul warned against this evil when he challenged the Ephesians by

saying that “do your best to preserve the unity which the spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together. There is one body and one Spirit, as there is one hope in which God has called you” (Eph 4:3-4). Hayford (2001:1228) commenting on Ephesians 4:2-4, says that the unity is a responsibility of all believers and they must take it seriously.

The neglecting of the unity in the church results in the contradictorily concept of richness as it was noticed at Laodicea, when people were putting more emphasis on material richness than spiritual richness. This had targeted the criticism of the Apostle John who said that “but you do not know how miserable and pitiful you are! You are poor, naked and blind” (Rev 3:17). This blindness can be observed in Mozambican churches, because they think that material riches causes spiritual growth and the improvement of the number of members in a certain denomination, and this is confused with real spiritual growth.

### **5.3.3 Compassion with the poor**

The Mosaic Law and the prophets in the Old Testament and Jesus Christ, the writers of the Gospels and the apostles demonstrated the will of the God for the poor. According to Vorster (2007:71) “the year of jubilee was instated to prevent poverty”. This was established to avoid the exploitation of the poor (Is 7:6-7; 8:10; Am 8:5-6). Adams (2003:76) compares the pastoral activity with compassion with the poor when he says that the pastor must care for every necessity of each of his sheep.

The biblical condemnation of obtaining dishonest treasures through using false measures (Mic 6:10-12) testifies the will of God to implement social equality. The false measures referred to are smaller containers used by dishonest salesman that was not corresponding with the official measures (Hayford, 2001:896). Douglas (2001:1277) says that the prophets were against those sellers that enlarged or reduced the measures (Deut 25:13), using the deceitful weight (Mica 6:11) or false scales (Prov 11:1; 20:23).

In the New Testament, the lie continues to be seen as unchristian behaviour (1 John 2:22), and every liar loses eternal salvation (Rev 21:27). The exploitation of the poor

contradicts the fact that “God wants us to internalise that we are his apostles, people called, people sent to be an eschatological sign of a new Kingdom, a New Jerusalem” (Hendriks, 2004:25). He adds that “God’s mission and reign involve creation, care, redemption, and consummation” (Hendriks, 2004:25).

The church is called to intervene in various aspects of life. Therefore it can be concluded that the “Christian ethics should, above and beyond the diaconal calling of the churches and Christians, also busy itself with the role of the authorities and the broader community with regard to poverty” (Vorster, 2007:71).

To fulfil this, Romans 12:2 continually advise Christians to renew their minds and to be transformed to the image of Christ (Getz, 2002:281). The transformation can be obtained if Christians work for it. This leads to the idea of ‘ethic work’ that is visible through the example of Jesus and the apostles, as Williams (1998:153) states that “Paul also worked, being unwilling to rely on charity even if he felt that his service to Gospel justified his support”. Therefore the poor must not wait for charity alone to free them from their poverty. They must work for an improvement of their lives.