

God in Black Theology - Liberator and Reconciler



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THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN BLACK THEOLOGY:

AN APPRECIATION OF GOD AS

LIBERATOR AND RECONCILER.

Ishmael Noko

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Faculty of Religious Studies

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ABSTRACT

From the perspective of South African Black Theology, God is depicted as One who, through the historical event of Atonement, liberates fallen man from the state of alienation, that is, a state of being separated from God and from one's neighbour. Through the same event God reconciles man with Himself and with his neighbour. Within this theological stance, Christian discipleship is interpreted as implying man's active participation in Yahweh's liberation and reconciliation of man in history, that is, man must become a co-liberator and co-reconciler with God.

For the Black Christian Community in South Africa that groans under the heavy burden of apartheid system, belief in God as Liberator and as Reconciler entrusts Blacks with the responsibility of self-liberation and also with the liberation of others. This includes the rejection of the limits imposed upon them by the apartheid syndrome, thus defining their raison d'être on the basis of the Gospel of Divine liberation and reconciliation.

We argue that Black Theology's emphasis on God as Liberator and as Reconciler must be understood within the socio-historical realities of Blackness.

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RESUME

Selon la perspective de la Théologie Noire Sud-africaine, Dieu est Celui qui, à travers l'événement historique du rachat, libère l'homme tombé de son état d'aliénation, c'est-à-dire de son état de séparation de Dieu et de son prochain. A travers le même événement, Dieu réconcilie l'homme avec Lui-même et avec son prochain. Du point de vue de cette position théologique, être disciple du Christ implique la participation active de l'homme dans la libération et la réconciliation par Yahweh de l'homme dans son contexte historique, c'est-à-dire, l'homme doit devenir co-libérateur et co-réconciliateur de Dieu.

Pour la communauté chrétienne noire en Afrique du Sud, qui gémit sous le lourd fardeau du système de l'apartheid, la foi en un Dieu Libérateur et Réconciliateur signifie la responsabilité de leur propre libération, ainsi que de la libération des autres. Ceci inclut le rejet des limites qui leur sont imposées par le système de l'apartheid, fondant ainsi leur raison d'être sur l'Evangile de la libération et de la réconciliation divines.

Nous soutenons que l'accent mis par la Théologie Noire sur Dieu le Libérateur et le Réconciliateur doit être compris à l'intérieur des réalités socio-historiques des noirs.

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I must add that while these persons share the good parts of my work, I am alone accountable for its shortcomings.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this dissertation is to introduce and analyse the concept of God as Liberator and Reconciler in Black Theology in South Africa. The work is divided into four chapters.

The first chapter defines racism and discusses how this phenomenon has concretized itself in South Africa. We note in this chapter that Afrikaner racism in particular is a result of the interplay of several factors, including the theological factor. Thus, we contend that the Afrikaners' self-interpretation as a "New Israel of Africa", a chosen people of God, has contributed to Afrikaner racism. They claim that their presence in Africa is an act of God and point to their history as reflecting the validity of their theological claims. They have adopted a rather exclusive ethical conduct in order to preserve the "Volk" pure. The adoption and implementation of the practice of separate worship on racial lines by the Dutch Reformed Church is a continuation of the same old theological idea of keeping the "Volk" pure, a practice that was thought to be sanctioned by Yahweh.

We draw the conclusion that the Dutch Reformed Church theology is racist and that it espouses a racial deity contrary

to the Biblical and Christian teaching about the universality of Yahweh. The relevance of this chapter to the thesis is that the phenomenon of racism forms the social matrix within which the Black man's question about God is raised.

In Chapter Two, we define Black Theology and we demonstrate that, contrary to the negative allegations made by the Le Grange-Schlebusch Commission, it is a form of Christian theology. We attempt to do this by first showing that all theological statements are by nature contextual. That is, all human speech about Yahweh is by necessity "filtered through human experience, which is limited by social realities."¹ This means that the Black man's theological reflection is limited and conditioned by the Black experience. This limitation has a bearing on the Black man's theodicy question. It is within the socio-economic, political and religious context, permeated by racism and Black oppression, that Blacks have raised the question of who God is in relation to their plight. Their reflection on their condition of Blackness from the perspective of the Christian faith has confronted them with the Yahweh of the Exodus, whose message Moses conveyed to Pharaoh ("Let my people go"²) and who, through the Act of Atonement, liberates the sinner and reconciles him with Himself and with his neighbour. Black Theology, therefore,

interprets the Black community's unanimous cry for liberation from racism and its attempt to recreate out of the racially torn South Africa a country where "Black and White persons will continue to live together"³, as signifying the presence of God the Liberator and Reconciler.

Chapter Three discusses in detail the theological basis for Black Theology's claim that God is One who liberates, and the implications of this theological analysis for racist South Africa.

The liberation of man from sin and its consequences is grounded in the initiative of God. Through the Exodus and the Atonement, God discloses His nature as Liberator of man in his concrete situation, and brings new hope for the hopeless "nobodies" of the land.

In order, however, for man to experience this new hope and liberty he must accept, through faith, that Yahweh the Liberator is his Lord. It is only when man appropriates this fact and allows his life to be governed by it, that he becomes one with God. He then participates in his own liberation, and thus becomes a co-liberator with God. For Black South Africa, the appropriation of this faith has radical consequences; it enables the Black person to accept himself and to cease

defining himself in terms of "Whiteness". This self-acceptance, which is made possible by accepting the Gospel of liberation, is a liberating experience for a Black person who has always hated himself and believed in his inferiority.

Black liberation is, however, inseparable from the liberation of his neighbour - White South Africa. To be a co-liberator with God entrusts him with the task of mediating the Gospel of liberation to White South Africa. The Ekklesia, of which the Black man is a member, has a mandate to proclaim the liberation Gospel and denounce the "god" of racism, an idol made in the image of a particular race and therefore with no authority over man. The Ekklesia itself is an assembly where Black and White South Africans are enabled to transcend the superior-inferior categories of racism, and accept each other as equal.

In Chapter Four, we define the concept of God the Reconciler and we discuss its theological basis and its implications for South Africa.

Reconciliation, we maintain, presupposes liberation. Reconciliation and liberation are two moments of one and the same Act of Atonement. Thus reconciliation, like liberation, is grounded in the initiative of Yahweh. Through Christ, God

befriends fallen man. That is, man is provided, through the death of Christ, with the opportunity to end his rebellion against God and against his neighbour. This theological statement provides our frame of reference for what it means, in South Africa, to be reconciled with God and with one's neighbour. It means that White South Africa will have to repent genuinely for its sins of oppression and that Black South Africa will have to forgive Whites, in as much as God has forgiven man without revenge.

It might be questioned that this dissertation seems at times to be more of a work on history and/or sociology rather than on theology. However, this style should be understood in the light of our definition of 'theology'. Theology, we maintain, is a discourse about God and man which is articulated within, and is inseparable from, the context of socio-economic, political, historical and religious realities.

Difficulties encountered

While the writing of this dissertation has been challenging and rewarding, it did present some serious difficulties:

- a) Black Theology is a recent movement that began around 1970.⁴

For this reason, reflection is still in its infancy, particularly on the Theodicy question, and much more remains

to be done;

- b) Black theologians who have engaged in theological reflection have been banned.⁵ What they had written has become by law unfit for public consumption. Access to their works is impossible. Library authorities quickly remove books and other works by banned individuals. This made it difficult to obtain original documents and books for the purposes of this work.

These difficulties, however, were partly overcome when McGill University provided me with a travel scholarship to South Africa. I was able to meet with some of the Black theologians who are under house arrest and to discuss with them the theme of my dissertation. Their names will be withheld for the obvious reason of protecting them.

NOTES

- 1 James H. Cone, God of the Oppressed (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. 43.
- 2 Exodus 9:2.
- 3 See S.A.S.O.'s Credo in Black Review 1972, ed. B.A. Khoapa (Durban: Black Community Programs, 1973), p. 40.
- 4 Although discussion about Black Theology might have begun early in 1969, the publication in 1970 of James Cone's Black Theology of Liberation (J.B. Lippincott Company) stimulated South African Blacks to engage in formal discussion that resulted in the emergence of Black Theology.
- 5 That is, they have been detained; incommunicado, with very limited access to the public.

CHAPTER I

SOUTH AFRICA AND THE PROBLEM OF RACISM

CITY OF DURBAN

Under Section 37 of the Durban Beach By-Laws this bathing area is reserved for the sole use of members of the white race group.

STAD DURBAN

Hierdie gebied is ingevolge artikel 37 van die Durbanse Strandverordeninge uitgehou vir die uitsluitlike gebruik van lede van die blanke rassegroep.

A. INTRODUCTION

In order to appreciate the relevance of Black Theology's themes in South Africa today, one has to understand the prevailing racial problem. Black and White South Africans live and die under a governmental system that is permeated by racism. This phenomenon colours the entire social fabric, with every societal institution reflecting enforced discrimination, segregation, inequality and a general imbalance in the distribution of political power and economic wealth.

B. DEFINING RACISM

Ruth Benedict defines racism as:

The dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by nature to hereditary inferiority and another group is destined to hereditary superiority. It is the dogma that the hope of civilization depends upon dominating some races and keeping others pure. It is the dogma that one has carried progress throughout human history and can alone ensure future progress.¹

From the pen of the great Scottish philosopher David Hume we have what we regard as a classical example of a racist statement:

I am apt to suspect that negroes, and in general all the other species of man ... to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or in speculation. No indigenous manufacturers among them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient Germans, and the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, or of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are Negroe slaves dispersed all over Europe, of which none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; tho' low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and

distinguish themselves in every profession. In Jamaica indeed they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning, but it is likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly.²

What is central in this point of view is that it divides mankind into two categories, namely, superior and inferior. According to Hume, this division is rooted in the natural order. And because it is so designed by nature, there seems to be a chasm between the inferior and superior races.

In his book, The Politics of God, Joseph R. Washington Jr. makes a similar observation when he says that a distinction must be made between "racism" and "ethnocentrism". Racism, he argues, is the presupposition that a rigid and irreconcilable difference exists between the superior and inferior races. This dogma assumes a dual category system of "superior" and "inferior", "we" and "they". "Ethnocentrism"; on the other hand, presupposes that a particular group, tribe or race is superior in value, worth, goodness and rightness. Like racism, it assumes the same two-category system (superior and inferior), but in the case of ethnocentrism the differences are reconcilable. Social interaction between the "superior" and "inferior" groups modifies the dogmatic attempts to justify the superiority of the "we" group over and above the "they" group.³ Racism claims

that the differences are due to biological factors, while ethnocentrism insists that they are based on cultural differences.⁴

A racist upholds his own race as the norm by which he defines man as distinct from what he regards as "non-man". His race is the value-center to the extent that it informs all his social relationships. The problem with such a racial dogma is that it elevates one's racial identity to the level of the ultimate. On this point, George Kelsey writes:

As the value-center, the race is the source of value, and is at the same time the object of value. No questions can be raised about the rightness or wrongness of the race; it is the value center which throws light on all other values. Criminal degenerates and other enemies have worth and good if they are members of the in-race. They have the goodness and worth which is not found in the most noble character of members of out-races, for goodness and worth are only secondarily qualities of being ... If noble characteristics inhere in a racially defective being, that person of noble character is nonetheless deprived, for the nobility he has achieved inheres in his unalterably corrupt humanity.⁵

From the standpoint of this belief, other races are regarded as less human. Naturally, this constitutes a theological problem when the racist is a Christian and fails to transcend the racial superiority limitations. This attitude is a problem

because it is contrary to what Christianity teaches regarding the Fatherhood of God. George Kelsey has referred to this racial creed as a faith in the god of racism.⁶ The race is the "god". Thus he argues that racism is idolatry.⁷

Racism may therefore be defined as a belief in the natural superiority and the supremacy of one's race. We will now focus on how this belief has manifested itself in South Africa.

C. NATURE OF RACISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

We have said that racism assumes a division of society into "superior" and "inferior" components and that this difference is understood to be based on a biological hypothesis. This racial division of humanity has, in South Africa, resulted in enforced separation. The belief in the dogma of the natural superiority of the White race and the natural inferiority of Blacks is demonstrated by Professor C.W. Kiewiet, who writes:

According to their [the white settlers'] belief it was more than their arms that made them prevail over the natives and their superiority depended on more than their intelligence or their institutions. Their superiority was born of race and faith, a quality divinely given which could not be transmitted to other races or acquired by them. "The black stinking dogs" as van Riebeck called them, suffer from inferiority, predestined and irrep-

arable, which fixed their place in the society of white men. Economically they had their place in the field and kitchen, socially and politically they stood outside the circle of the rights and privileges of white man; even legally they existed in an ambiguous region between law and arbitrary will of their masters.⁸

This statement, as that of David Hume quoted earlier, reflects a belief that the "superiority" and "inferiority" categories are indicative of natural stations in human history to which individual races have been assigned by God. Nothing can be done to liberate them. God therefore, and not the White race, or any race for that matter, can be held accountable. This not only excuses the white man but it makes his position justifiable. To oppose the separation of these races would be contrary to the will of God, who is the author of the situation. This position is nowhere more vividly reflected than in the anger expressed by some Dutch Reformed Christians when slavery was abolished. The cry was:

The British have placed the slaves on an equal footing with the Christians, contrary to the laws of God and the natural distinction of race and religion so that it was intolerable for any decent Christian to bow beneath such a yoke wherefore we withdraw in order to preserve our doctrine in purity.⁹

Such a belief in the divinely given superiority of the White race, combined with the economic and political interests of White South Africa, is the basis upon which the apartheid system was built and is maintained. We shall attempt to describe briefly what this system means for South Africa. For a detailed study of the origins of apartheid the reader is referred to the following works: Apartheid by La Guma;¹⁰ The Economics of Colour Bar, ed. Peter Randall;¹¹ Race and Nationalism by T.M. Fanch;¹² 500 Years of South African History by C.F.J. Muller.¹³

~~(S)~~ Apartheid: An Extreme Expression of Racism

From the political point of view, South Africa is a State that is obviously not a nation. Its Government is a form of racial oligarchy with all effective political authority and power in White hands. The White community is the only group that enjoys parliamentary franchise. The State Parliament lacks the necessary national characteristics of a democratic society. The White parliamentarians tend, naturally, to be sympathetic towards the political wishes of their electorates who are afraid of the so-called swart gevaar (Black peril). Since Blacks have no direct parliamentary representation, White Ministers are appointed to represent Black opinions and interests. The Bantustans (Homelands) are

the best the Blacks can hope for in terms of political expression.

This political division of South Africa is generally explained as a recognition of the differences in culture - a view which refers particularly to what is seen as a lower level of "civilization" and technological attainment in the culture of most Blacks and the need for Whites to protect "superior" Western Christian standards.¹⁴ This explanation lacks authenticity, because if cultural differences were the basis of apartheid the policy would apply to the English, the Afrikaans, the Jewish and the Italian speaking Whites. The fact that it separates Whites and Blacks implies that more is at stake than mere cultural differences.

The investing of political power in the hands of a limited few has guaranteed them economic power. Through the legislation that limits some jobs to "Whites only", they have automatically eliminated Black competition, a competition which, if it were not controlled, would affect the present White privileges that are in most cases directly related to restriction of Blacks. In the Homelands (Bantustans) Blacks are supposed to enjoy economic upward mobility parallel to that of Whites, without any limit. But since the Homelands are located in the poor economic areas of South Africa and therefore

cannot provide adequate employment, Black economic power is virtually impossible. One of the reasons for the creation of Homelands was that Blacks facing acute unemployment in the Homelands would be in a position to sell labour very cheaply to the White industrialists in White areas. Migratory labourers are contracted for at least twelve months. They live in labour camps throughout their period of employment. Unlike White workers, these Black workers are legally forbidden to form labour unions. Strikes of any kind are heavily punishable. This is aimed at ensuring that the White industrialists' investment is secure. Cheap Black labour is an important asset for the economic prosperity of White South Africa. The indispensability of Black manpower is granted in the statement by Prime Minister John Vorster:

The fact of the matter is this: we need them (Blacks) because they work for us ... but the fact that they work for us can never entitle them to claim political rights. Not now, nor in future. It makes no difference whether they are here with any degree of permanency or not.¹⁵

Vorster's statement conveys the impression that from his political party's point of view, Whites need Blacks for as long as they can work for them. In other words, their relationship is purely an economic one. There is no need for

patriotic feeling between them. This cold, calculated attitude engenders a negative self-perception in Blacks.

Continued social differentiation is encouraged through legislation that prohibits multiracialism in organized public life, for example, in marriage, in residential areas, in public transportation, and through the provision of separate institutions.¹⁶

Education for South Africans is administered by separate departments. Whites are provided with free and compulsory education up to high school, and statistics show that the Government spends fifteen times¹⁷ more on a White student than on a Black student. This partly explains why the educational facilities and conditions are far better in White schools than in Black schools. Black students have no free and compulsory education as yet. The Government hopes to implement free and compulsory education for Blacks, but only up to the first four years.¹⁸ Beyond that, Black students will have to pay tuition. Because of the lack of a comprehensive free and compulsory education for Blacks, Peter Randall maintains that:

... there is a high drop-out rate with fully one quarter of the African children leaving school after first year, and less than one per cent proceeding to the end of the secondary school. By the end of Standard Two more than half the Africans admitted in Sub-A will have left to join the street gangs, the newspaper vendors.¹⁹

The reason why the Government spends so little for the education of Blacks is partly explained by the speech of the late Prime Minister H. Verwoerd who, addressing fellow parliamentarians, said:

I just want to remind Hon. Members that if the native in South Africa to-day in any kind of school in existence is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights he is making a big mistake ... There is no place for him in the European community above certain forms of labour. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption into the European community ... What is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?... It is therefore necessary that native education be controlled in such a way that it should be in accordance with the policy of the State.²⁰

The purpose of separate education different in quality from that of the Whites is to reinforce the ideology of apartheid. A Black child should be given an education that will discourage him from dreaming dreams that cannot be realized within the boundaries of Bantustans. The type of education he receives should enable him to settle comfortably in a society that denies him dignity and respect. The educational system has become the right arm of the Government, teaching Blacks that no matter what educational attainments they have,

socio-economic and political equality with Whites is utopian. On the other hand, White children, through the type of education they receive, are groomed to see themselves as legitimate heirs to the wealth of South Africa. They are encouraged to see themselves as different from Blacks, who are still at a low level of development. Most Whites are induced into assuming at an early age that they have a birthright to the material privileges because of who they are.

The effective implementation of this policy of racial separation involves an elaborate system of laws and regulations such as the Influx Control²¹ that controls Black mobility within the country. In addition to this, the Government has the Secret Police force as well as the regular police force to ensure that all races toe the Government-set racial lines. The police force has wide-ranging powers, with authority to arrest and detain incommunicado any suspect for a period ranging from 90 to 180 days.²²

The Afrikaner's single-minded dedication to defend his racially privileged position cannot be solely interpreted in terms of fear of assimilation or of economic interests. While these factors play a significant role in understanding Afrikaner racial policies, it should not be forgotten that the Afrikaner community, throughout its history, has interpreted itself in

the light of a theological notion that portrayed it as the "New Israel of Africa", bound to God and to one another through a covenant. The Biblical basis for such a theological self-understanding is Deuteronomy (14:2), where the author has the Lord God say to the Hebrew people:

For thou art a Holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord has chosen thee to be a particular people unto himself, out of all the nations that are upon the earth.

Thus the early Afrikaners, struggling to interpret meaningfully their presence in a country that seemed to be in the hands of enemies, namely the British and the Africans, found no other meaningful interpretation than to see themselves in the same light as that of Biblical Israel. It was as a result of this historical experience that Afrikaner Christians forged an indigenous theology which articulated their presence in South Africa in terms of divine calling. Johannes Degenar, for example, makes the following observation:

The Afrikaner people are called the "Israel of Africa". The Great Trek is seen as an exodus to the Promised Land. President M.W. Pretorius addressed the voortrekkers as the chosen of the Lord ... Malan is quoted to have said: The history of the Afrikaner reveals a determination and a definiteness of purpose which makes one feel that Afrikanerdom is not the work

of man, but the creation of God.
We have a divine right to be Afrikaners.²³

To maintain Afrikanerdom in all its purity was regarded as essential for the purpose of executing the divine mission. The preservation of the Afrikaner identity became equated with the hope of the success of their divine mission. The Afrikaner's aloofness was not only a social and cultural necessity but a theological necessity, just as God's chosen people had to keep their race pure. To keep the race pure required strict laws that governed and regulated the Afrikaner's socio-economic, political and religious relationships with other peoples.

A critical examination of the essence of Afrikaner theology leaves us with a strong impression that this theological stance corresponds to the doctrine of a racial and exclusive god, namely, the "god" of the Afrikaner. Thus Johannes Degenaar, writing about the God portrayed in Afrikaner theology, avers that:

The god of the Afrikaner is a very powerful, very exclusive and very fierce god ... He turns his face away from skins that are not White ... He has a traditional dislike for the English speaking folk ... His benignity is preserved for the Afrikaner speaking people; did he not bring them through the valley of the shadow onto the Highveld of the Transvaal so that they could get away from the British.²⁴

No doubt many contemporary Afrikaner theologians would deny our statement that the "god" of this theology is a tribal deity. They would point in all likelihood to the more recent official theological position adopted by the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1974. In this document, the Dutch Reformed Church Synod explicitly states that all men are equal before God (although they might have different talents) and that the position of the Church on the question of race relations must be determined by the Scripture alone.²⁵ The Document reads:

Hereby we confess the conviction that the Holy Scripture contains the principles normative for all spheres of life, therefore, also for relations between peoples and races, and that the Church of Jesus Christ must unconditionally and obediently bow to these principles.²⁶

This same theological document refutes the possibility of the Scriptures being quoted in support of racism, stating that the Scriptures teach and uphold the essential unity of mankind and the primordial relatedness and fundamental equality of all races.²⁷

However, the same Synod adopted a position which seems to contradict their stated theological stance. They maintain that:

... there is no exclusive national church in the sense that no believer from the ranks of any other people may join if he should choose to do so, even if we should uphold the importance of national identity, for the preaching of the Gospel and for experiencing the communion of Saints. A separate church is certainly not a closed church. If, however, such a transfer of a member should disturb the order and the peace of both the church and the people (people or section of the people) to such an extent that the kingdom of God is no longer served, that the fellowship of the believers and their duty to serve should suffer and the nation and nations concerned should find it difficult or impossible to give full expression to their national identity - in these circumstances a temporary arrangement against the transfer of membership cannot be condemned since it should enhance the well being of the churches concerned.²⁸

If, indeed, the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church takes the Word of God as the only norm and authority by which it governs its theological and social position regarding race relations, it is not clear why it continues to segregate its places of worship. The fact that this institution can contemplate suspending transference of members from one congregation to another within its own fellowship raises a question regarding its stated position that the Word of God is its only norm. A possible way of reconciling this contradiction, is to see the "weakness" of the racist members as normative; thus Christ,

whom they claim is the norm, ceases to be determinative.

As we mentioned earlier, the Dutch Reformed Church theologians would not admit that they espouse a racist position; but the fact that they continue to support the concept of separate worship leaves us with no other alternative but to conclude that their practical theology is a patently racist approach to Christianity. Robert Buis observes that:

The policy of no racial mixing is maintained in places of public worship where separate churches have been built for Africans, Coloured and Whites. No racial mixing is permitted by the Church even if the parties concerned have the same cultural values, for example, Africans who become Christianized and adopted Western cultural values are not to be integrated into the White community ...²⁹

Buis underscores our point that the maintenance of separate churches cannot be explained exclusively in terms of cultural differences. From the Dutch Reformed Church's theological standpoint, cultural differences would seem to be due to biological differences. If it were not for biological differences, as we suspect, the White congregation members would be comfortable with Black members who have completely identified themselves with White values. The Dutch Reformed Church's support of the Immorality Act, which forbids mixed marriages between Black and White adults, is a further demonstration

that the theologians of this denomination are to be suspected of racist presuppositions.

It would seem to follow, therefore, that if one supports the apartheid system theologically, one subscribes, consciously or unconsciously, to a racially determined theology which reduces God to a tribal deity. This doctrine bars the South African from human solidarity. It knows no human brotherhood which transcends racial, cultural and national barriers. The love for one's fellow neighbour, from the perspective of this racist theology, would imply loving only those who belong to your race or tribe.

In the Palestine of Jesus's time ~~there~~ were exclusivist groups too, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots. Jesus pointed out to his disciples and followers that the kind of exclusivism manifested by such groups lacked depth, for it involved loving those who loved you, something that even thieves were capable of doing. His own solidarity with the poor, the "nobodies" of the land and the religious outcasts, regardless of ethnic or cultural background, was a practical and normative demonstration that love of one's fellow man is not an abstract matter. His ministry was an appeal for an experience of solidarity with mankind, an experience that was non-exclusive and not dependent on reciprocity. In St. Luke,

Jesus tells his disciples:

If any man comes to me without
hating his father, mother, wife,
children, sisters, yes and his own
life, too, he cannot be my disciple.

(Luke 14:25-26)

New Testament students have battled over the exact meaning of the word "hate"³⁰ in this text. Without involving ourselves in the maze of New Testament exegesis, it suffices to state that Jesus was calling for detachment, saying that one should not give preference to one's own family for the sole reason that they are his family. Jesus wanted to replace the "old group" and family solidarities with a more fundamental "new solidarity" which included the rest of mankind. This new solidarity did not, however, imply the exclusion of one's beloved family, but rather suggested that one's own family is part of the larger family, and that one should love them because they are persons and not necessarily because they are one's family.

To conclude, White South Africa's adherence to the racist dogma that divides people into "superior" and "inferior" races has blinded its spiritual vision. Manas Buthelezi argues that "South Africa has elevated the factor of colour to the level of the ultimate. It is the colour of one's skin that

determines one's physical and even spiritual destiny."³¹

It is in the context of this racist Afrikaner theology which, in our estimation, espouses a racial deity, that Black theologians explain the necessity for a Black Theology in South Africa; a theology which does not reduce Yahweh to a racial or tribal deity, but which defines God as someone whose concern is to liberate and reconcile man with Himself and man with man. Our next chapter will seek to define Black Theology.

NOTES

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- 2 As cited by Professor H.M. Bracken of McGill University, Department of Philosophy, in an essay "Philosophy and Racism" expected to appear in Philosophia. Permission was given to quote from it prior to publication. Pp. 21-22.
- 3 J.R. Washington Jr., The Politics of God (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 8.
- 4 Washington Jr., Ibid. p. 7.
- 5 G. Kelsey, Racism and the Christian understanding of man (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1965), p. 23.
- 6 Kelsey, Ibid. p. 27.
- 7 Kelsey, Ibid. p. 27.
- 8 A. La Guma, ed., Apartheid (New York: International Publishers, 1951), p. 29.
- 9 Thoko Mbanjwa, ed., Apartheid: Hope or Despair for Blacks (Durban: Black Community Programmes, 1976), p. 9.
- 10 La Guma, op.cit.
- 11 Peter Randall, The Economics of Colour Bar (London: Merrit and Hatcher Ltd., 1964).
- 12 T.M. Fanch, Race and Nationalism (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1960),
- 13 C.F.J. Muller, ed., 500 Years of South African History (Pretoria: Academia, 1969)
- 14 Peter Randall, ed., Towards Social Change (Johannesburg: Sprocas Publications No. 6, 1971), p. 193.
- 15 A. Kirby, South Africa's Bantustans; What Independence for the Transkei (Geneva: W.C.C., 1976), p. 12.

- 16 This is in accordance with the Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act, No. 55, of 1949; or the Immorality Amendment Act, No. 21, of 1950; and the Group Areas Acts, Nos. 41 of 1950 and 77 of 1951, with Amendments in 1955 and 1957.
- 17 G.M. Nkondo, "The Educational World of Blacks in South Africa", in Black Renaissance (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1976), pp. 13-18.
- 18 This is a newly introduced law, which requires Black parents to sign a contract allowing the Government to keep children in school for the first four years.
- 19 Peter Randall, A Taste of Power (Johannesburg: Spro-cas Publications, 1973), p. 44.
- 20 Mbanjwa, op.cit. p. 17.
- 21 At times referred to as the Pass Law.
- 22 This is in accordance with the so-called Suppression of Communism Act, No. 44, of 1950, with Amendment of 1954.
- 23 J. Degennar, "Church and Nationalism in South Africa", Church and Nationalism in South Africa, ed. Theo. Sundermeier (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1975), p. 25.
- 24 Degennar, Ibid. p. 25.
- 25 Human Relations and the South African Scene in the Light of Scripture (1974) (Pretoria: D.R.C. Publishers, 1976).
- 26 Ibid. p. 21.
- 27 Ibid. p. 13.
- 28 Ibid. p. 47.
- 29 R. Buis, Religious Beliefs and White Prejudice (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1975), p. 48.
- 30 A. Nolan, Jesus Before Christianity: The Gospel of Liberation (Cape Town: David Philip Publisher, 1976), pp. 61-64.
- 31 M. Buthelezi, "Black Theology and the Le Grange-Schlebusch Commission", in Pro Veritate, ed. Roelf Meyer, vol. 13, No.6 (October 1975), p. 5.

CHAPTER II

BLACK THEOLOGY: A RELEVANT THEOLOGY FOR BLACK SOUTH AFRICA

A. INTRODUCTION /

When St. Paul began his public Christian ministry, his apostolicity was doubted by other apostles and other Christians. For this reason, he found it imperative to defend his apostolic credentials. Some of the salutations from his Epistles reflect this attempt. He opens his letter to the Galatians in the following manner:

Paul, an apostle not from man or through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.

(Gal. 1:1 R.S.V.)

And to Timothy, he writes:

Paul, an apostle of ~~Jesus~~ Christ by the command of God our Saviour and Jesus Christ our hope.

(Tim. 1:1 R.S.V.)

The reception of Paul's message as authentic and valid by his hearers depended, to a large extent, upon the authenticity of his apostolic credentials. With the above statements, Paul

wanted to emphasize to congregations and individual Christians that he was called to be an apostle by Jesus Christ himself and not by man, that his apostolicity was, therefore, rooted in Christ's command.

Black Theology in South Africa finds itself in a situation similar to that of Paul. Its Biblical and theological credentials have been doubted and questioned by some churchmen within the established Christian denominations of South Africa. The South African Government, too, has officially dismissed Black Theology as being without Biblical basis and therefore lacking in theological credibility. The appointment, in 1975, of the Le Grange-Schlebusch Commission to investigate both the Biblical and theological claims of Black Theology leaves one with the impression that the Government is highly suspicious of Black Theology's Biblical and theological claims. The Report released by this Commission has become the Government's official position towards Black Theology. Here is an excerpt:

As the Commission doubt whether the content of Black Theology as propagated by these organizations was based on scripture in every respect, and those of a revolutionary ideology [sic] and since it is possible to launch a subtle and dangerous subversive attack with the help of Black Theology, particularly through the Bantu churches, on existing political, social and economic order in the Republic, and in view

of the fact that the Church and religion still constitute a delicate and sensitive area in South African's national life, evidence was heard on this respect from various denominations as well as a representative of the Bantu separatist churches.¹

The Commission's attempt to determine with exactitude the true bases of Black Theology included not only the interrogation of persons, but also the examination of Black Theology's literature. Important in this respect is Black Theology: The South African Voice,² edited by Basil Moore. After studying the literature of Black Theology, the Commissioners drew the following conclusion:

When the document Toward a Black Theology, compiled by Basil Moore and distributed by the University Christian Movement is studied, the influence of the German authority on the New Testament, Rudolf Bultman, is clearly apparent ... Bultman's thinking is not founded on Christianity; it shows rather the influence of existential philosophy of the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre who is pro-communist.³

From the Commissioners' point of view, Black Theology is not Christian Theology because it is based on Communist "revolutionary ideology", which they interpret as being dangerous for the existing socio-economic and political order. Because of this suspected connection between Black Theology and pro-Marxist

philosophy, the Commission concluded that:

It is difficult to accept, therefore, that Black Theology is propagated without any ulterior motives, especially if the ideology of the circles which gave birth to the ideal of a 'need' for Black Theology is born in mind. Furthermore, according to the theologians who gave evidence before the commission, it goes without saying that the scriptural validity of a 'black' or 'white' or 'brown' theology must be seriously questioned, since the Gospel of the Bible is first and foremost concerned with the redemption of the sinner through Jesus Christ and not with racist ideology.⁴

The impact of this Report is that it has challenged and questioned Black Theology's credentials. Black theologians should, therefore, take the Report seriously because the Honourable Commissioners arrived at their conclusions through the help of unnamed "various theologians representing various denominations". Thus, the Report reflects the opinion of some influential church theologians as well as that of the Government. As a result, it has become necessary for Black Theology to submit its theological credentials. For, while silence may be golden, the situation in South Africa today calls upon Black theologians to elucidate the content of Black Theology in a manner that will earn it credibility. The need to correct misinterpretations of Black Theology such as those of the Le Grange-Schlebusch Commission is echoed by Dr. Buthelezi:

... a week or so ago, I read in one paper a report about a suggestion that Black Theology is part of some hideous conspiracy that is designed to install 'black socialism' in South Africa. Even though I did not understand what was meant by 'black socialism', I did get an impression of how far distortions and misunderstandings can go.⁵

It seems imperative, before we engage in the attempt to demonstrate the Biblical and theological rootedness of Black Theology's conception of God as Liberator and Reconciler, to make an "apology" for Black Theology. It is only after we establish that Black Theology is indeed a Christian theology and not a "hideous conspiracy" or a "revolutionary ideology" that we can at least hope that some critics of Black Theology will appreciate its conception of God as Liberator and Reconciler. The word "apology" in this thesis is given the meaning that it had when used to refer to the work of second century Apologists, who had to defend and explain the content of their faith to the "World".

To sum up, we shall attempt to demonstrate the Biblical and theological legitimacy of Black Theology by first establishing what we consider to be a working definition of Christian Theology. It will be in the light of this definition that we shall discuss the basic concepts of Black Theology and aim to show how the latter is indeed a form of Christian Theology.

B. WHAT IS CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY?

"Theology" is a combination of two Greek words: theos (God or god) and logos (the Word or rational thought). Theology is, therefore, a conscious reasoning about God. Descriptively, theology is defined as the study of the Word of God by man. The Bible is the basic source of the essential content of the Christian faith and, as such, an indispensable document for all Christian theological reflection.

Karl Barth, in his book, Evangelical Theology: An Introduction, defines theology in this manner:

Theology is one among those human undertakings traditionally described as 'science'. Not only the natural sciences are 'sciences'. Humanistic sciences also seek to apprehend a scientific object and its environment in the manner directed by the phenomenon itself; they seek to understand it in its own terms and to speak of it along with all the implications of its existence. The word 'theology' seems to signify a special science, a very special science, whose task is to apprehend, understand, and speak of God.⁶

In another book entitled The Humanity of God, Barth writes:

'Theology' in the literal sense, means the science and doctrine of God. A very precise definition of the Christian endeavour in this respect would really require the more complex term The-anthropology.⁷

This Barthian definition of "theology" suggests that at the centre of theology stand God and Man, without whom theological reflection is unthinkable. As an elucidation of this Barthian definition of theology as "The-anthropology", Professor D.J. Hall says that 'theology' is meditation on God's story of man;⁸ the implied meaning is that Christian theological reflection involves man as part of what is reflected upon from the perspective of faith in God.

Indeed, Christian theological articulation presupposes faith, that is to say, whoever is engaged in it must be a confessing Christian, active in the life of a specific confessing Christian community. This "epistemological location"⁹ implies that a Christian cannot speak authentically about the meaning of the Gospel in isolation. Every Christian theologian represents a community whose membership is bound together by a specific experience of faith. The representative theologian needs to share in the faith experience of those he claims to represent. John Macquarrie's definition of theology illuminates this point. He says:

Theology may be defined as a study which, through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith, in the clearest and most coherent language available.¹⁰

More light is shed in the following passage:

... we can no more speak intelligently about God without the experience of faith than we can talk about cricket without ever having handled a bat or bowled a ball.¹¹

Macquarrie thus supports our point that the theologian must share in the faith of the community in order to articulate authentically the Christian message. In this connection, there is a marked difference between a Christian theologian and a philosopher of religion. Philosophy of religion demands more detachment than does Christian theology. The Christian theologian must speak out of the community of faith, while the philosopher of religion is an individual investigator who is not necessarily committed in terms of faith to the religion he is investigating. There is, however, no suggestion here that the Christian theologian does not engage in critical reflection on the meaning of the "Word of God". His confessional participation in the life of faith does not mean that his work has no objectivity. In fact, his objectivity may be strengthened by the fact that he is in touch not only with the physical side of the community but also with its "spiritual" side. This physical and spiritual, and yet critical, participation of the representative theologian in the life of the community enables him to interpret with

depth and coherence the possible socio-economic and political implications of the Gospel for the constantly changing human situation.

This "epistemological location" within faith requires that every Christian theologian be aware that, as a theologian, he is grounded in a specific cultural, historical situation. He is not, so to speak, a "general theologian" who is engaged in a universal, objective and "eternal" theology that is directed to no one in particular. He always "theologizes" from a specific cultural perspective. He is located in his own very specific historical environment, which provides him with the language and other perceptual equipment by which he sees and interprets reality.

This observation, therefore, suggests that whenever one interprets reality, that interpretation, whether one knows it or not, is relative to the cultural conditions. Theology is always contextual. The socio-economic, political and religious experience of the theologian and of the community he represents are the context out of which and to which he speaks. Theology cannot address itself "To Whom it May Concern". Such an attempt would imply that theology is an eternal, propositional expression of the truth that was deposited into the hands of the church, of which church officials have become the expert interpreters

and preservers.

Thus theology is historical; that is, it develops at the point of contact between the Gospel and the World. Rosemary Ruether, speaking of the historical nature of biblical theology, supports our point:

Biblical Theology is universal but never abstract. The one God is the Lord of all history and all men, always addressed himself to man in his concrete historical situation.¹²

If God, as Ruether points out, is One who addresses "man in his concrete historical situation", then God himself is by nature One who reveals his presence in human history. And theology, as the study of God's Word, is characteristically historical. This "historicalness" is a mark that theology is indeed a study of the God who revealed himself in the historical man, Jesus.

Creeds such as the Nicene Creed are good examples of what is understood by the historical nature of theological reflection. Such credal statements are historical because their formulation was a result of an attempt by the earliest Christian community at dialogue with the world of its time. Any critical and appreciative interpretation of these statements would therefore require their being placed in the socio-economic, political and religious historical context of their times. This is true

also of such a concept as the "Two Kingdom" dogma found in the Lutheran confessions. This dogma will have to be reinterpreted if it is to be applied to contemporary South Africa, for the two historical situations are different: So, while the theological traditions of our predecessors are indispensable for an understanding of our past theological roots and of our present situation, they need constant redefinition.

The contextual and historical aspects of Christian Theology to which we have just referred imply that genuine theological articulation must be indigenous to the life of the theologizing community. This concern for indigenous and critical theological reflection has been expressed by the Canadian theologian Douglas J. Hall. Urging the North American theologians to engage in indigenous theological work, Hall argues:

We Christians have been notorious borrowers theologically, as North Americans have borrowed at almost every level of human understanding, including even natural science. Our theology, as the Canadian political philosopher George Grant has said, is usually the result of some ripple of thought begun by a European thinker - and very much watered-down in the process of crossing the Atlantic. It is fatal for theology when this happens because ... genuine theology is never merely 'doctrine' or 'dogma'; it is what happens when the tradition of Jerusalem meets and holds dialogue with the spirit of the times (Zeitgeist) ... It would be something new under the sun if the North American Christians began to engage in a theology which combined the tradition of their experience as "the most

advanced technological society ever to have been", i.e. the most problematic of all contemporary societies.¹³

Professor Hall's call upon North Americans to engage in an indigenous theological articulation has been echoed by the African theologian Idowu, about whom E.W. Fashole-Luke writes:

In a language reminiscent of that of Tertullian, the ancient North African Church theologian, Idowu unsparingly and relentlessly attacked African Church theologians and ministers for failing to produce relevant and meaningful theologies, which unmistakably bear the hallmark of mature thinking and produce indigenous theologies, which will satisfy the deepest emotional and spiritual needs of Africans.¹⁴

Idowu's chastisement of his fellow African theologians and Hall's urgent call for North Americans to cease the "notorious" habit of theological borrowing support our theological position that for Christ the Saviour to be presented meaningfully as indeed the Saviour of any people, he must be presented as one who knows and understands fully their collective and individual hopes, fears and anxieties. For the African continent, as already suggested by Idowu, this will mean the development of a genuine African theological reflection. This would require, as Kwesi Dickson of Ghana suggests:

... a more drastic re-thinking of all that

the Church is and stands for with a view to creating a more appropriate Christian instrument, one that will serve more directly and more effectively the spiritual aspirations of those in Africa who call upon the name of Christ.¹⁵

The process that leads to the development of a genuine indigenous theology will inevitably involve a critical "de-Westernization" of the Church in Africa and of its theological orientation. The point we want to emphasize here is that theology must be, by necessity, truly relevant to the theologizing community because, as Ruether points out:

The God who is one, presides over all men and histories by addressing each community and person where it [sic] really is.

Theology must therefore reflect this basic Christian theological presupposition that "God addresses each community where it really is".. He does not reveal his presence as a complete stranger without anything in common with those to whom he discloses his person. African Theology is an attempt by Africans to articulate the meaning of Divine salvation, as it is disclosed in the person of Christ, from within their traditions and experience. It is, in other words, a dialogue between the tradition of Jerusalem and the African "soul".

What then is Christian Theology? It is a human attempt to understand and articulate the meaning of human life in the

light of the Christian Gospel within the context of a particular historical and cultural experience. This definition will serve as background to our definition of Black Theology, which is our next task.

C. WHAT IS BLACK THEOLOGY?

In the preceding section of this work, an attempt was made to demonstrate that whether one acknowledges it or not, all theological reflections are contextual; that is, they arise from different historical and cultural experiences. The emergence of African Theology, American Theology and so forth, would consequently be in keeping with our understanding of what theology is.

(i) Blackness in South Africa

The word "Black" associated with the word "Theology" seems a strange combination. Yet, when it is associated with the words "magic" or "market", it raises no concern. "Black", like "White", has both an empirical and an existential meaning. Empirically, it is descriptive of a particular colour. Black people, for instance, are referred to as such because their skin pigmentation is black. Existentially, "blackness" connotes a state of being, a category of existence, that is characterized

among other things by poverty, discrimination, political powerlessness, and oppression. Empirically, "whiteness" refers to persons of white skin pigmentation, particularly those of European descent, for example, to Afrikaners, to the English, the French and the Germans. Existentially, "whiteness" connotes a state of being that is characterized by political power and often by material wealth. Perhaps the international economic power of the Japanese is the reason they have been afforded white status in South Africa.

In South Africa, however, the empirical and the existential meanings of both "Black" and "White" have converged. This convergence is probably easy to understand if one remembers that one of the legacies of the European colonization of Africa was the development of the dichotomy between the colonized and the colonizer. Since the colonized were dark-skinned and the colonizers were white-skinned, the black body of the colonized was always seen as the body of inferior and unwholesome biological status. On the other hand, the white body was seen as being of biological superiority and the norm of beauty and accomplishment. This dichotomy, no doubt, had a negative effect on the texture of racial interpersonal relationships. The black body acted as a barrier to full and effective interracial communication, while the white body thrived on its

characteristics and became a symbol of progress.

White skin in South Africa became a "passport" to attaining the best social, economic and political advantages. Black skin, too, became a "passport", but a "passport" that led down the desert path of despair, and economic and political failure. Commenting on the decisiveness of Blackness in South Africa, Dr. Buthelezi had this to say:

Blackness is a life category that embraces the totality of my daily existence. It determines the circumstance of my growth as a child and the life possibilities open to me. It now determines where I live, worship, minister, and the range of my closest life associates.¹⁷

The state of blackness, therefore, is a socio-economic and political straitjacket.

Another factor that seems to have contributed to the convergence of the empirical and existential meanings of "Black" and "White" is the fact that, since the present South African government came to power in 1948,¹⁸ it has geared the political machinery to the eventual elimination of the category of "poor white" within the white community. While the government has been set on improving rapidly the social and economic condition of the White, the percentage of poverty within the Black community has increased and apartheid laws have made it difficult

for Blacks to be economically mobile.

(ii) Black Theology's Method

Black Theology is an articulation of what happens when the tradition of Jerusalem meets the Zeitgeist of Blackness. It is a reflection of faith upon the present historical realities of "Blackness". This theological approach is fundamentally different from that of South African traditional theologies, be they conservative, progressive or modern. While traditional theologies tend to reflect upon faith as an independent body of truth revealed and deposited in the Bible and ecclesiastical tradition, Black Theology is trying to interpret the socio-economic and political realities of "Blackness" with the help of the Scriptures and of past traditions. Dr. Buthelezi terms this theological method "anthropological". He explains it in this manner:

In the light of this approach the starting point for theological reflection is the existential situation in which the Gospel finds men. Just as one needs to take man's sinful state seriously in order to grasp the depth of the forgiving love of God, one must also take seriously the decisive factors that shape the mode of man's daily existence in order to see the direction as well as the ultimate fruition of the formation of the new man in Christ through the Word of God. The Word of God reaches man in a real situation, which may not always be an ideal one.¹⁹

There may be some objections against this "anthropological method", because it starts with man's situation and not with the Word of God, that is, the Bible. But it should be emphasized that Black theologians, like Buthelezi, are not suggesting that the human situation is more important than the Scriptures. What they mean is that both the human situation and the Scriptures must enter into a dialogue which does not minimize the significance of either of them. Basil Moore's description of Black Theology reflects vividly this "anthropological method". He writes:

It [Black Theology] begins with people - specific people, in a specific situation and with specific problems to face. Thus it starts with Black people in the South African situation facing the strangling problems of oppression, fear, hunger, insult and dehumanization. It tries to understand as clearly as possible who these people are, what their life experiences are, and the nature of and cause of their suffering. This is an indispensable datum for Black Theology ... Then Black Theology will be able to turn to the Scripture and tradition. But it will turn to these classical sources of doctrine not for their own sake but to ask them what, if anything, they have to say to these people, with this history in this situation, facing such problems.²⁰

This "anthropological method", as Buthelezi chose to call it, is similar to Paul Tillich's "method of correlation".

Tillich claims that:

Theology moves back and forth between two poles, the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation in which the eternal truth must be received.²¹

In the case of Black Theology, the Black persons' condition of "blackness" is one "pole" from which questions arise, and the Scriptures and tradition are another "pole" from which correlative answers are sought.

What should be taken into full account is that Black Theology's analysis of and reflection on the "now and here" of Blackness, in the light of the Scriptures and of tradition, are an attempt to rediscover the signs of the times, that is, the signs of God's actions in the world today, the signs of God's judgement and God's will. This theological posture, we may add, is informed by the presupposition that history is the scene where God chooses to reveal the mystery of His Person; that the living God did not stop speaking after the last book of the Bible, but continues to speak in contemporary history.²² The search for God should therefore not be limited to the Bible and to tradition, but should extend itself to the present historical situation.

In fact, this method is used in the Bible itself. The

Judeo-Christian tradition (as recorded in the Bible) differs from other major religious traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism in its understanding of God as Lord of history. As one who acts in history, God keeps on doing new and unprecedented things. The Biblical prophets were people who could read God's words in the signs of their times, who could divine his purposes for the future in the historical and political events of the present. And so did Jesus. He embodied God's Word in his own history, and for this reason he was indeed a prophet. This means that the prophetic method of finding God within the Judeo-Christian tradition is the method of searching for him in one's own historical circumstances. And this is the method which Black Theology in South Africa uses. Black theologians want to find God in and through their own specific cultural, historical context of which Soweto is symbolic.

In an attempt to further illustrate the method adopted by Black Theology, we will briefly discuss a pertinent example of this approach, that of the Afrikaners. The theological method in question has been and still is operative within the Afrikaner theological stance. The Afrikaner spiritual fathers made the Gospel relevant to their political realities by integrating their religious consciousness and their national consciousness. During the Anglo-Boer War, the Dutch Reform Church

pastors agonized over the question of whether or not they should physically take arms against the British. P.G. Meiring points out that many of them felt divinely called to take arms and fight to defend Afrikanerdom. A cable sent to the troops at that time illustrates the extent to which Afrikaner national and religious consciousness were integrated:

Brothers! I exhort you to act with all promptness and with all zeal ... Read Psalm 33, from verse 7 to the end ... The enemy have fixed their faith on Psalm 83. Read Psalm 89 ... the 13th and 14th verses ... I need not draw your attention to the destructiveness of the enemy's works, for you know it, and I point again to the attacks of the Devil on Christ and the Church. This has been the attack from the beginning ... I am still searching the entire Bible, and I discover no other way which can be followed by us, and we must continue to fight in the name of the Lord.²³

Dr. D.F. Malan, the first Prime Minister of the present regime was a Dutch Reform Church cleric. His involvement in politics and Christianity is a classical example of "marriage" in the open between Afrikaner religious consciousness and Afrikaner nationalism. He is said to have claimed that the history of the Afrikaners revealed a determination and a definitiveness of purpose which made them feel that Afrikanerdom was not the work of man but the creation of God.

The physical participation of the Dutch Reform Church ministers in the armed struggle against Britain, Dr. Malan's interpretation of Afrikanerdom as the creation of God, the Dutch Reform Church's acceptance and implementation of apartheid policies, lead to the conclusion that theologians of this particular community have and are actually using a theological method analogous to that of Black Theology. They are engaged in theological reflection that begins with questions arising from their socio-economic and political realities, and they then turn to the Scriptures and to tradition to find the "right" answers. The above-quoted cable is an illustration of how this community has applied this theological method.

It is in raising questions and seeking for correlative answers in the Bible that there has developed a particular brand of covenant theology that epitomizes the Afrikaner community as the "New Israel of Africa". This Biblical concept of a chosen people seems to dominate the Afrikaner's entire relation with the rest of Africa. They are a chosen nation:

- a) to promote the Gospel, and
- b) to become the bulwark of Western civilization and Western cultural aspirations.

We may disagree with the Dutch Reform Church's covenant theology but that is irrelevant. What is of great significance

and worthy of taking into account is that their theology developed as a result of the Afrikaners' attempt to make the Gospel relevant to the situation in which they found themselves, a situation, let it be said in passing, which was far from pleasant. In other words, they searched and are still searching for God in and through their historical experience. Afrikaner theologians may deny that their theological method is similar to Buthelezi's "anthropological method" of Black Theology and to Tillich's "method of correlation", but this is, in fact, what it is. And thus, before they criticize and dismiss Black Theology as communist-inspired, they might do well to re-examine their own method.

We have been arguing in the preceding sections that Black Theology's theological method of reflection resembles that of the Biblical prophets, and also that it is an embodiment of the Gospel, that is to say, the Gospel is made relevant to the concrete historical context. It is on this basis that the method can be defined as a prophetic method.

(iii) The Contextual Nature of Black Theology

In our discussion of Black Theology's methodology, we were indirectly discussing its contextual nature. Its contextual character is implied in our statement that it is a 'theology

that develops at the point of contact between the tradition of Jerusalem and Zeitgeist of Blackness.

The need for an indigenous theology seems to be a particularly pressing necessity. A question once asked of Dr. Buthelezi points in this direction. Dr. Buthelezi recalls:

In one meeting of S.A.S.O. to which I had been invited to speak two months ago at Turfloop, during question time, one student asked me a very difficult question. He asked me why, if it is true that God is Almighty and is also Lord and God of the Black man, He has abandoned blacks for three centuries to be ruled by whites. He asked whether in fact we have not been worshipping a false god, a god who is himself an oppressor, who delights in and rules through the structures of oppression which shape and condition the daily lives of black people.²⁴

This question reflects a deep-seated need for a theology through which a Black person who lives in such a historical situation could find in God one who is not against him but for him. It should be a theological reflection that does not overlook him but takes him seriously. Christ must be presented as different and yet familiar to the Africans. Simon Gqubule echoes this need vividly when he says:

I remember how, some years ago, I was horrified by a religious film in which Jesus was presented speaking English with an American accent. His gestures, movement and his whole attitude seemed to me

to be American. I went home feeling that this was horrible; how can Jesus be depicted as an American? As I thought further on this experience, it occurred to me that in all the films I had seen before, Jesus was presented speaking English with a British accent. I had never questioned this, because I had grown to expect it as such. If Christ could speak English with a British accent, why should he not speak with an American accent? ... In the same way, if Christ is to be relevant to the Black man relating to his live situation ... he must speak with the accent of a Black man. This is the same essence of what is called Black Theology.²⁵

John V. Taylor makes a similar observation regarding the need for the development of an authentically indigenous theological interpretation of the Gospel from the perspective of Africans.

Thus he writes:

7
It is bad enough that religious pictures, films and film-strips should have almost universally shown a White Christ, child of a White mother, master of White disciples, that he should be worshipped almost exclusively with European music set to translation by clergy and people wearing European clothes; that the form of worship should have almost no relation to the traditional African ritual ...²⁶

These statements are thought-provoking and critical of how other theological traditions have tended to present Jesus Christ as the answer to the questions of White westerners. In other words, Christ has been presented as the Saviour of the European

cosmology, that is, from the perspective of a European world view. Black Theology attempts to present Christ as an answer to the questions that South African Blacks are asking.

Conventional theologies, including Afrikaner Theology, have failed to encourage relevant theological reflection that would point to a perspective of Christ's presence in the African cosmology as the redeemer of Man as Africans understand him. This failure has resulted in a situation in which becoming a Christian for most Africans has almost always implied becoming a "Black European". It has also meant breaking with one's cultural roots and being grafted onto European culture. This process of Europeanizing Africans was reinforced and accelerated by such institutions as the schools. Through the educational system, Black youths were programmed to accept European values without seriously questioning their validity and suitability. The Church in Africa became in effect a "daughter-church" of the European Church, a point that has been underlined by Taylor. In addition, a black pastor's theological education is European, oriented. His vestments are those intended for cold climates. Hymns are, in most cases, direct translations of the European hymns. While this likeness may be valid in testifying to the oneness of the Church Catholic, it has decisive drawbacks; for example, in the singing of hymns that have a completely different

background from what the Black believer is familiar with, the meaning is therefore lost.

To illustrate what is meant here, I recall that for many years, from Sunday school through confirmation school, I was taught the "Christmas Noel", that Jesus was born on a "cold winter's night". I never really could connect the birth of Christ with "a cold winter's night" until I celebrated Christmas in a snowy Canadian winter. In my home country, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Christmas is celebrated in the middle of summer, and yet Black Christians in that country still sing the "Christmas Noel" which evokes a very different scene.

Black Theology as indigenous theological reflection attempts to make the African Church realize that it is time for the Gospel to be genuinely adapted to the South African context; that it should reflect without apology and inhibition its true African-ness.

This attempt, however, will inevitably require that the theologian engaged in it be one who knows experientially what it means to be black within Afrikanerdom. He must participate fully in the condition of "Blackness" and be sensitive to the community's hopes, fears and anxieties at the collective and individual level. This deep experiential knowledge will enable him to articulate authentically the implications of the Christian

faith to the Zeitgeist of Blackness. A Black theologian cannot speak from a point of detachment like a philosopher of religion. He must participate in the faith that binds his community together.

Black Theology is, in summary, a contextual theology because it attempts to articulate the presence of God in the context of the socio-economic and political realities of Black people. It reflects on the Biblical and traditional sources in the light of the questions that arise from "Blackness".

(iv) The Content of Black Theology

When the oppressed Blacks of South Africa read the Biblical account of the Egyptian oppression of the Israelites and that of the Jews under Rome, they find striking similarities to their own situation. On reading the Gospel, the Black theologians encounter in Jesus Christ one in whom God identified himself with the sinners, the oppressed, those discriminated against, the poor, the colonized and the "marginalized" people of the earth.

As a result of this similarity, Black theologians in South Africa have to speak of "Christ as Black". This concept should be understood as a religious concept that was coined to symbolize indigenously God's identity and solidarity with those living in a state of Blackness. God is understood as particip-

ating through Christ in the contemporary affairs of Black South Africa. Thus, Basil Moore points out that:

Jesus as a Jew in first century Israel was one of the poor, the colonized, the oppressed. Through the incarnation, God identified himself in Christ with this group of people. Thus a meaningful symbol of God's identification with the oppressed is to say that Christ is Black.²⁷

It is the Black Christ, the incarnate God of the Exodus, that St. Luke cites:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me
He has anointed me to preach the Good News
to the poor,
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the
captives, and recovery of sight to the blind,
To set free the oppressed
And to announce the year when the Lord will
save His people.

(Luke 4:18-19)

In His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prays:

O Holy Father! Keep them safe by the
power of your name, the name you gave me,
so they may be one just as you and I are
one ...

(St. John 17)

These two scriptural passages bear witness to the fact that God is a God who liberates and reconciles men. The "Black Christ", the incarnation of God, though one with the oppressed, is also an embodiment of God's concern with human liberation from all

forms of bondage. Man is alienated from God, from himself and from nature. When the oppressed, the segregated and the "marginalized" reflect on their historical situation of Blackness in the light of God's historical records contained in the Bible, they encounter God the Liberator who comes into the world of Blackness to repair the damage caused by apartheid. He recreates a new man out of a Bantu. A new relationship between God and man is established which, in turn, brings into existence a new relationship between man and his environment.

The Cross is the symbol of this act of liberation and the new relationship - reconciliation. Since God is the Liberator and Reconciler, Black Theology is a theology of liberation and reconciliation.

In the preceding sections, we have argued that Black Theology is not inspired by a communist ideology, in spite of claims to this effect. It is, rather, a genuine attempt to bring the Gospel to bear on the actual historical and cultural context of the Blacks. We hope to have shown that it is a Christian Theology because it acknowledges the fundamental Christian confession of Jesus as Lord, through whom and by whom all of humanity is saved.

D. BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS AND BLACK THEOLOGY

(i) Defining Black Consciousness

The phenomenon "Black consciousness" cannot be satisfactorily defined in one sentence. For this reason, a discursive-historical resume approach will be used.

Blackness was, in earlier times, existentially defined as connoting a socio-economic and political state of being that is characterized by, among other things, poverty and political powerlessness. Black consciousness implies a critical awareness of the socio-economic and political causes at the root of this state of being. It is an awareness that leads to the courage to do something to eliminate this condition. It should be pointed out that this is an awareness which emphasizes that speaking the truth about the human plight should never be a substitute for doing the truth.

The present Black critical reflection on the status quo is rooted deeply in the history of South Africa. One can trace this phenomenon as far back as 1912,²⁸ when for the first time a transtribal political party was formed to oppose white domination. That party evolved in the course of history into the African National Congress. Until the late 1960's it was committed to policies of an integrated society,²⁹ while its sister party, the Pan Africanist Congress, looked upon South Africa as a home for Blacks only.³⁰ The different political ideological orientations of these organizations do not concern

us here. What we want to point out is that both these political parties resisted white domination.

The 1960 "Sharpeville Bloodbath" in which sixty-nine Blacks were killed and several wounded is a landmark in the history of Black consciousness. Black leadership was arrested, some sought exile outside South Africa and all political parties were banned. The Black community was denied a visible political expression. The existence of a political vacuum gave the Nationalist Party Government a free hand to attempt to break the possibility of a future resurgence of Black national solidarity. The Government moved quickly to implement its political ideology of Separate Development. Seven ethnic Black Homelands,³¹ including the Transkei, were created. These Homelands are located in poor agricultural districts of the country. In all, they constitute 13.7%³² of the entire country, and here all "Bantus" are supposed to reside. Homeland Governments generally consist of men and women who have accepted the policy of apartheid. Although some of them do not accept its ideological goal, they have to accept its methods, hoping that eventually official Government goals will be proved unworkable.

The economic plight of these Homelands has placed them, it seems, on a road to perpetual dependency on White South Africa. This dependency is destructive of the incentive of

Black communities to assert their rights to an equal share of the country's wealth. In addition to this, it makes White economic domination in South Africa morally justifiable.

From the "Sharpeville Bloodbath" in 1960 until 1969,³³ however, there was, in South Africa, no visible movement that appealed to Black South Africans beyond the Homeland ethnic consciousness. There was a vacuum.

It was in the context of this political vacuum that, in 1967, the students from Black institutions of higher learning assembled in Port Elizabeth³⁴ to discuss plans to launch a Black Student Organization to take care of the national concerns of Black students. This was an attempt to provide a podium for Black students beyond anything that was or could be offered within the limits prescribed by the Homeland philosophy. These discussions which began in 1967 matured in 1969³⁵ when Black students announced officially the formation of an all-Black Students' organization called South African Student Organization (S.A.S.O.).

S.A.S.O. released a long statement entitled "Credo", stating its national beliefs. In this document, S.A.S.O.'s position is stated as follows:

- a) that South Africa is a country in which both Black and White live and shall continue to live together;

- b) that the White man must be made aware - one is either part of the solution or part of the problem;
- c) that in this context, because of the privileges accorded them by legislation and because of their continued maintenance of an oppressive regime, Whites have defined themselves as part of the problem;
- d) that, therefore, we believe that in all matters relating to the struggle towards realizing our aspirations, Whites must be excluded;
- e) that this attitude must not be interpreted to imply "anti-Whitism" but merely a more positive way of attaining a normal situation in South Africa;
- f) that in pursuit of this direction, therefore, personal contact with Whites, though it should not be legislated against, must be discouraged, especially where it tends to militate against the beliefs we hold dear.³⁶

Black students wanted to withdraw from the multiracial organizations, e.g. the National Union of South African Students and the University Christian Movement,³⁷ because they had come to realize that such a participation was not genuine. Blacks did not have the necessary power that makes such participation meaningful. They called for a moratorium on multiracialism that was originally advocated by the African National Congress and White liberal students organizations like U.C.M. and MUSAS, because they had no viable political base from which to operate. These students realized that the Homeland policy had divided the Blacks into several ethnic communities that were without one national "dream". The call for a moratorium is an attempt,

as it were, to lead the Black community out of the "physical and spiritual desert" created by apartheid to a temporary seclusion for soul-searching and self-realization without White trusteeship.

S.A.S.O.'s consciousness is reflected in its policy statement:

- 1) the basic tenet of Black consciousness is that the Black man must reject all value systems that seek to make him a foreigner in the country of his own birth and reduce his basic human dignity;
- 2) that the Black man must build his own system and see himself as self-defined and not to be defined by others;
- 3) the concept of Black consciousness implies an awareness by the Black people of the power that they wield as a group, both economically and politically, and hence group cohesion and solidarity are important facts of Black consciousness;
- 4) Black consciousness will always be enhanced by the totality of involvement of the oppressed people, hence the message of Black consciousness has to be spread to reach all sections of the Black community.³⁸

The cessation of Black participation in multiracial organizations is therefore a temporary strategy that has a specific purpose, namely, that the Black community engage in self-examination in the hope of realigning its values. This is important for a people who have, for many years, taken the White man as their yardstick by which they measure and define themselves.

Since the time Black South Africans lost the war to the Whites as a result of the latter's military superiority, Blacks have accepted the White man's values without serious questioning. Besides, as the Black man became exposed to the White man's world of technological sophistication, he internalized the explanations of his own technological "deficiency" and thus looked to the Whites to define his being. The White man became the symbol of what it means to be a man. The embracing of his values and admission into his cosmology became a liberating path leading to true humanity. The power generated by the symbol of Whiteness is reflected in two separate incidents related by W.H. Hutt:

A well-meaning English lady who had assisted at the nursing school for coloured children in Cape Town once decided to buy in London a consignment of brown coloured dolls to distribute as Christmas presents to children of more or less the same colour. To her horror, she found that she had blundered. The coloured children wanted white dolls.³⁹

He further writes:

Not long ago my wife was invited to act as one of the judges in a beauty contest for African girls in Cape Town. The competitors all wore elegant and fashionable evening gowns. As an artist my wife was struck by the dignity and fine bearing of girls with typical African features; but she was warned

by her more experienced fellow judge that it would be tactful to accept the consensus of those whose opinion was expressed in applause as the competitors filed past. Judged by this criterion, there was no doubt that many Africans in the towns have already come to assess the beauty of their girls, in ... features, in the light of currently accepted white standards.⁴⁰

The first incident shows clearly that the Black man's negative image of himself has become something like a genetic disease. The children are affected by it at an early age. It must, therefore, be checked by the substitution of images that portray Blacks positively, otherwise the Black community will remain in a perpetual psychological bondage which will only enhance the power of White domination. Black consciousness, as it is defined in the statement of the S.A.S.O., is an attempt to raise the consciousness of Blacks living in a state of "Blackness", in order to encourage them to reject the White values as normative for their self-definition and interpretation of reality. In other words, the prevailing false notion that has identified white persons with authority and authenticity must be repudiated. It is this myth that the Black consciousness movement wants to destroy, if possible. For, in effect, the White man's ability has been exaggerated, as has the Black man's "deficiency".

Black consciousness is therefore indicative of a new mood that thirsts after new values for a new life which does not take "Whiteness" as its point of departure. This quest for new values has been summed up by Pityana as necessary for Black people in order that they may

... develop a new frame of reference which transcends the limits of White concepts, for White concepts have succeeded in making Black people feel that they are inferior.⁴¹

This new mood seeks therefore to establish a way of life that will reflect a genuine self-expression and self-awareness, without having to take clues from Whites of what it means to be a human being. This Black self-awareness, to employ a Biblical expression, is like "new wine that cannot be contained in old wine skins without the latter bursting"; it cannot be contained in the old social order of apartheid and belief in the inferiority of Blacks. Blacks seek liberation from the status quo and are fully aware that the task of liberation needs a strong inner power, a positive attitude towards oneself and one's fellow man who shares the existential bondage of Blackness. This positive attitude in regard to oneself and others is described by Paul Tillich as the "courage to be".⁴² Commenting on the Black South African "courage to be", Allan Boesak says that it is the power that affirms one's dignus, one's own being in the presence of the destructive powers of

non-being.⁴³ The powers of non-being that destroy and negate the ability to define oneself positively and threaten to annihilate the new man that is born as a result of this new awareness are, in South Africa, symbolized by institutional racism. It is in this desire for liberation from Blackness and all its consequences that Blacks have taken it upon themselves to work towards the creation of a societal environment that will support this new awareness.

Practical steps have been taken in this direction. The establishment of several Black organizations is a demonstration that the advocates of Black consciousness are dedicated to the reconstruction of South African society. The following are some of the organizations which have been recently formed:

B.A.S.	Black Art Studios (1972)
B.A.W.U.	Black Allied Workers (1972)
B.W.P.	Black Workers Project (1972)
M.D.A.L.I.	Music, Drama, Arts and Literature Institute (1972)
N.W.A.	Natal Workshops for African Advancement (1972)
S.A.B.T.U.	South African Black Theatre Union (1972) ⁴⁴

Some Blacks have been sensitive for a long time to the fact that White-controlled newspapers and literary publications

tend to give priority to what is happening in the White world, though they occasionally report on Black events in which the White consumer has an interest (for example, disputes among the different tribes). The Black community has established, with difficulty, its own newspapers and other literary forums in order to put forward the Black man's interpretation of South African reality. Among these we have S.A.S.O.'s Newsletter and its books on Creativity and Development and Black Viewpoint, published by the Black Peoples Convention. The newspapers, such as The World and Ilanqa, are widely read by Blacks.

In the field of art and theatre there is also a new re-awakening. Blacks have opened a new art studio in Durban where Black art is exhibited. Thus Black artists, whose works could not survive White criticism, have now found an outlet.

In the area of music, similar phenomena can be noticed. There is a tremendous surge of Black appreciation of indigenous music. As Khoapa notes:

What is happening in the world of music is that the Black "superiority" in music of which Blacks have been condescendingly told by White tourists and liberals for a long time, is now being used effectively as a means of communication, often running deeper than words.⁴⁵

Black consciousness has also manifested itself in trade

unionism. By the law of the country, White trade unions are not allowed to extend membership to Black workers.⁴⁶ For this reason, Black workers have established organizations such as the Black Workers' Project and the Black Allied Workers' Union in an effort to bring Black workers together. The concerns of the Black trade unions go beyond the traditional concerns of unionism in the Western European countries. As Khoapa points out:

The classical Western elements of trade unionism have had to be modified to accommodate the fact that Black workers' interests extend beyond the factory; they extend to the ghetto where the workers stay together in hostels under squalid conditions; to the crowded trains and buses that carry the workers in and out of town at the risk of serious accidents; to the absence of amenities for Black workers in and around town ...⁴⁷

Such statements demonstrate that the Black community is determined to break loose physically and psychologically from the position of White trusteeship to a position of at least some degree of self-reliance and self-help which will contribute to establish Black human dignity, without dehumanizing other races. The above-mentioned Black programs point in that direction. They are visible manifestations of the Black people's inner cry for liberation. This cry for liberation is the first

initial step towards making South Africa

A country in which both Black and White
... will continue to live together.⁴⁸

This goal can never be achieved unless Blacks, who have been rendered impotent by others, are given the chance to participate with dignity and respect in the affairs of South Africa. The idea of reconciliation is implicit in the hope of Black consciousness for a South Africa where Black and White can live together in peace, justice and love. Such a South African society will require an acceptance by each other of both Blacks and Whites. But the possibility of a reconciled society presupposes liberation as the initial step.

To conclude, what is Black consciousness essentially?

It is a critical awareness of the nature of the oppression of Blacks; an awareness that has enabled Blacks to transcend their own oppression in order to realize that White South Africa, albeit in a different manner, is indeed also oppressed. This awareness has prompted Blacks to seek for the liberation and reconciliation of all South Africans in the hope for the creation of a peaceful country.

(ii) The Theological Significance of Black Consciousness /

In the preceding subsection we claimed that the word

"Black" within the South African context has a meaning which transcends the significance of skin pigmentation. It connotes an existential situation of the Black South African. This is an interpretation which is supported by Dr. Buthelezi:

Far from being a casual thing like length and size, in South Africa colour has been elevated into a critical decisive principle of social, economic and political order. Tall and short people, fat and thin people can have a common social and political destiny, but black and white are being separated because of their colour.⁴⁹

Allan Boesak illustrates our interpretation further when he writes:

A person's blackness dooms him to live the life of a second-class citizen. It determines who his friends may be, who he may marry, what work he can do and that the work he does is invariably inferior to that of the white person. A person's blackness determines that if he does the same job as a white person he gets paid less. It not only determines what education he can get, it often means that he will get no education at all. It determines whose hospitality he may accept, or to whom he may extend hospitality, if he is in a position to do so. It determines where he can get medical treatment, if he is fortunate enough to live in an area where he will not die of malnutrition and neglect before he reaches the age of five.⁵⁰

Black consciousness, as the quest for true humanity of those

living in a state of "Blackness", is the anthropological medium through which the critical and reflective questions of Blacks are raised. These are questions to which Black Christian theologians must provide answers. Black consciousness has questioned the Black man's uncritical acceptance of the White man's world view, and this questioning has had implications for Black Christians in particular. For Black Christians have in the past also accepted, without challenging them, the White man's theological presuppositions which are related to a different experience. This point was made by theologians Simon Gqubule, John V. Taylor, Idowu and Buthelezi in their statements quoted earlier. It has dawned on the Black theologians that to provide genuine theological answers to the "Black questions"⁵¹ requires a relevant theology, that answers provided by a European theological stance will not suffice. Thus the emergence of Black Theology must be interpreted as an attempt to meet this need.

Black Theology has proved to be remarkably independent in its way of thinking, contrary to the general belief that Blacks need White trusteeship in order to make progress in whatever they are engaged in. The shallowness of this belief has been demonstrated by the creation of Black community programs. This initiative shows that Blacks, at the level of faith, do not need to become "Brown Europeans" in order to prove them-

selves. In other words, to be a Christian, a Black person does not need to become Westernized. The New Testament debate (Acts 15) regarding the circumcision of Gentiles as a prerequisite for attaining salvation may serve to illustrate our point. Some Jewish Christian teachers demanded that Gentiles accepting the Christian faith be circumcised as stipulated by the law of Moses. This position amounted to this: to be a Christian one had to be first a Jew and then a Christian. It was, however, finally resolved that this requirement was superfluous for Gentiles, whose cultural background was different from that of the Jews. Similarly, Black consciousness, in challenging the Black people's uncritical acceptance of the White man's theological assumptions, has awakened in them a realization that they do not need to become first "Brown Europeans" and then Christians. Black consciousness maintains that the Yahweh of history, whom the early Christians confessed as "Lord", can speak directly to the Black community without passing through white cultural symbols of revelation.

In defining the phenomenon under consideration, we stated that it is characterized by the search for Black liberation and that its ultimate goal is to make South Africa "a country where Black and White will live together" in peace and in equality. This search has challenged Black theologians to re-

formulate a theological alternative that articulates how God fits into the historical events of the Black situation. This challenge is expressed by Dr. Buthelezi in the following manner:

Black consciousness, which tries to cultivate black identity and a sense of pride for the Black man, challenges Black Theology to define in a relevant way the meaning of the doctrine of the "image of God". Dominion over creation? Which creation? The Black man experiences that he is ruled and does not rule.⁵²

In searching the Scriptures for the right answers from the vantage point of Blackness and Black consciousness, Black theologians have pointed out that throughout the history of Israel God is known as the Liberator.⁵³ Historical events like the Exodus from Egyptian bondage, the Covenant, the settlement in the Promised Land, the rise of the Prophets and release from the Babylonian captivity, demonstrate that Yahweh is involved in historical processes for the purpose of liberating man from oppression.

This liberation theme reappears in the New Testament in the historical events of the birth, life and death of Jesus. In Him, God takes the place of man and thus, with man, he becomes the oppressed one. His acceptance of this condition is interpreted within the context of New Testament theology as necessary for the liberation of man.

If God then liberates man within history, he will liberate Blacks within the context of South African Black historical experience. Black consciousness is a human quest in history for liberty and freedom; and thus, this phenomenon is the historical medium through which God seeks to re-affirm the humanity and dignity of Blacks. Christians need therefore a faith that will enable them to hear the divine voice that speaks through this anthropological phenomenon.

As a further illustration of this point, I should like to make reference to the position taken by a young representative from the Soweto Student Representative Council during the Ecumenical Conference that I attended in Durban (August 3-5, 1976). The young speaker seemed to have startled some members of the conference when he said that Soweto students were convinced that God had whispered in the 1960 Sharpsville bloodbath, but that he was now shouting in the Soweto riots. What is implied in this "unSouth African" interpretation of historical events is an awareness that the Black people's struggle for liberation is indeed in accordance with the will of God the Liberator. Black desire for liberation is thus, theologically speaking, a desire to be in the image of God. For to be created in the image of God means, among other things, to be free and not to be a slave of other men.

We said that Black consciousness hopes to reconstruct South Africa into a society where peace and equality will prevail. Implied in this objective is the idea of reconciliation. For, without it, the society envisaged in the struggle for liberation would simply be a substitution of Black supremacy for White supremacy. Reconciliation, as an important dimension in the creation of such a society, does not mean a polite gesture of letting bygones be bygones. It means a frank, co-operative exchange and deep examination of the roots of the race relations problem.

NOTES

- 1 Le Grange-Schlebusch Commission Report, Appendix I, p. 184
- 2 Basil Moore, ed., Black Theology: The South African Voice (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1973).
- 3 See Appendix I, p. 191-192.
- 4 See Appendix I, p. 189-190.
- 5 Manas Buthelezi's "The Relevance of Black Theology", a paper which he read in Swakopmund (Namibia) in August 1974. I got a copy from him with authorization to quote him.
- 6 Karl Barth, Evangelical Theology: An Introduction, trans. by Grover Foley (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 3.
- 7 Karl Barth, The Humanity of God, trans. by Thomas Wieser (Virginia: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 11.
- 8 D.J. Hall, "Major contemporary phenomenon in the field of Christian Systematic Theology", ARC, ed. E.K. Malloy-Hanley, vol. IV, No. 2 (Spring 1977), p. 5.
- 9 I have coined the phrase "Epistemological location". In the context of this work, it means theologizing from a Christian theory of knowledge, which assumes divine revelation.
- 10 John Macquarrie, Principles of Christian Theology (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1966), p. 1.
- 11 Macquarrie, Ibid. p. 2.
- 12 Rosemary Ruether, Liberation Theology (New York: Paulist Press, 1972), p. 131.
- 13 Hall, op.cit. p. 8.
- 14 E.W. Fashole-Luke, "The quest for African Christian Theology", The Journal of Religious Thought, ed. J.B. Roberts, Sr., Vol. XXXII, No. 2 (Fall-Winter 1975), p. 69.

- 15 Kwesi Dickson, "African Theology: Origin, Methodology and Content", The Journal of Religious Thought, ed. J.D. Roberts, Sr., Vol. XXXII, No. 2 (Fall-Winter 1975), p. 40.
- 16 Ruether, op.cit. p. 131.
- 17 Buthelezi, op.cit. p. 4.
- 18 Alan Paton, "Short History of British Nationalism in South Africa", Church and Nationalism in South Africa, ed. Theo. Sundermeier (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1975), p. 52.
- 19 Manas Buthelezi, "An African Theology or A Black Theology", Black Theology: The South African Voice, ed. Basil Moore, op.cit. p. 33.
- 20 Basil Moore, "What is Black Theology", Black Theology: The South African voice, op.cit. p. 6.
- 21 Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. I (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 3.
- 22 This idea is not original. Though I am unable to locate a reference, it is a view shared by many scholars.
- 23 P.G. Meiring, "The Church and Nationalism in South Africa", Church and Nationalism in South Africa, ed. Theo. Sundermeier, op.cit. p. 63.
- 24 Manas Buthelezi, "The Christian Challenge of Black Theology", Black Renaissance, ed. Th. Thoahlane (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1975), p. 19.
- 25 Simon Gqubule, "What is Black Theology", Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, Vol. 3 (1974), p. 18.
- 26 J.V. Taylor, The Primal Vision (London: S.C.M. Press, 1963), p. 49.
- 27 Moore, op.cit. p. 8.
- 28 Thoko Mbanjwa, ed., Apartheid: Hope or Despair for Blacks (Durban: Black Community Programmes, 1976), p. vi.
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- 44 Thoko Mbanjwa, ed., Black Review 1974-75 (Black Community Programmes, 1975), Chapter 5. The city where the publishers are located is not indicated.
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- 46 Ibid. p. 105.
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- 49 Manas Buthelezi, "The Relevance of Black Theology". A paper read in Swakopmund, August 1974.
- 50 Boesak, op.cit. p. 26.
- 51 I have coined this phrase to refer to situational questions raised by Blacks.
- 52 Buthelezi, "The Christian Challenge of Black Theology", op.cit. p. 23.
- 53 See Joseph A. Johnson, Jr., "Jesus, the Liberator", Quest for a Black Theology, ed. J.J. Gardiner and J.D. Roberts, Sr. (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1971), pp. 97-111. See also Ananias Mpunzi, "Black Theology as Liberation Theology".

CHAPTER III

GOD AS LIBERATOR

A. INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters we maintained that Afrikaner history is characteristically marked by the integration of the Afrikaner religious and nationalistic consciousness. This integration is the immediate background to the Afrikaners' self-definition as the "chosen people". Their wars against the British and against the African peoples were interpreted as holy wars of liberation. They were convinced beyond all doubt that the Yahweh of Israel was fighting on their side. T.D. Moodie observes:

So certain was Kruger of the righteousness of the Boer cause that in a telegram to the General Piet Joubert he stated that although the British might have thousands in the battlefield to the hundreds of the Boers, we have a supreme commander of heaven and earth, Jesus Christ. He saw the British onslaught on the Republic [of the Boers] as an attack of the devil on the church of the Lord, "but God would not allow his Church to be destroyed ..." As the battle turned against the Boer armies, Kruger's cables took on an apocalyptic note: "God will drive them (the Boer army) into the dust and thereafter will rescue them with miracles. They live at a time when power is given to the beast to persecute the Church of Christ ..."¹

This same observation is made by P.G.T. Meiring who points out that:

Every single Voortrekker was considered a faithful member of the Church. The Voortrekker saw themselves in the position of Israel of old, the people of the Lord threatened and attacked from all sides by the heathens ... But they were not alone, the Voortrekkers knew, the God of Israel was fighting their cause.²

These statements demonstrate powerfully that Yahweh was perceived as the Liberator of the Afrikaner community. He had called them to lighten the dark continent of Africa. Their whole existence had to be seen in that perspective. The hardships they had to go through were theologically interpreted as part of the burden of being a chosen "volk". Therefore Yahweh would not abandon them, but would fight for their existence.

Black theology's conception of God as Liberator is therefore not something new in the South African theological arena. It is a theme that is the core of Afrikaner theological tradition. Its emphasis, however, has fluctuated from time to time, as a result of the changing Afrikaner historical realities. For the Afrikaner too, the political reins of South Africa in 1948 have resulted in an obvious deflation of the theme. Meanwhile, it has become popularized within the Black community.

whose socio-economic and political situation resembles that of the Afrikaner under British dominance before 1948.

It is therefore out of the socio-economic, political and theological dominance of the Afrikaners that Black theologians have raised the question concerning the nature of God.

James Cone, one of the Afro-American theologians who found himself in a situation similar to that of Black South Africans, has asked the question, "How can we speak of God without being associated with the oppressor of the land?"³ On the same theme, Sabello Ntwasa of South Africa writes:

In this situation the Western images of God's absolute authority, power and knowledge are too distressingly familiar for comfort. In this situation, too, Western theological authoritarianism provides a tremendous support for the status quo. Too many of our tyrants appeal to their "hot line" of communication with God to justify their tyranny. If this is a twisted application of God's authority as it is to be expected the black man must reject the pious nonsense that man cannot be free, he can only choose whose slave he will be.⁴

Mokgethi Motlhabi, a colleague of Ntwasa, expresses a similar concern when he says:

... Black Theology has a new role, if it is to speak of a new word of freedom to our power-mad situation. On the one hand it must reject all language about God which seems to make him out to be the authoritarian

par excellence. This means rejection of the various "Master" images of God as well as the concepts of his controlling the lives of people and carrying the power to reward the obedient with heaven and to punish the disobedient with hell. None of the images and concepts allow us to be free and be authentically ourselves in our relationship with God ... In the place of these authoritarian images we should explore those images which speak of the suffering God Who is identified with the oppressed in their sufferings and who struggles in and with them to lift the burden of oppression. Such a God is neither our servant to be treated as we choose but our comrade and friend in the struggle for freedom.⁵

Ntwasa and Motlhabi are concerned about the authoritarian and oppressive deity of a conventional Christianity that has become the civil religion. The God of conventional Christianity, of Afrikaner theology in particular, is at best irrelevant to the existential situation of the Blacks and, at worse, its architecture. Thus Motlhabi says that Black South Africans should take upon themselves the task of "exploring those images" which identify God meaningfully with the oppressed.

Cone, Ntwasa and Motlhabi, in their respective contexts, are giving a word of caution to their fellow Black theologians: answers and images about God should be indeed relevant and meaningful to the Blacks, and not mere replicas of the answers and images of those living in a state of "Whiteness". This means that an attempt on the part of Black Christians to engage

in theology should not be reduced to pious metaphysical talk or to a merely academic exercise. The new images of God cannot ignore the political realities of Black South Africa. Afrikaner theology is a case at hand of what we mean by doing theology in a manner that seriously takes into account the political realities of a people out of whose context theology emerges. Dutch Reformed Theology in South Africa is a result of the adaptation of traditional Calvinist Theology to the unique Afrikaner situation. As the new Afrikaner community evolved out of the "old" European Dutch community, a new theology evolved out of orthodox Calvinism to meet the existential questions raised by the Afrikaner. While theologizing in a manner similar to that of Afrikaner theologians, Black theologians in their search for new and different images about God should guard themselves against turning God into a nationalist or tribal deity, for such deities are always captives of nationalistic ideologies. They are gods made in the image of the images of particular races and nations.

Dr. Allen Boesak, a South African theologian, asks what we consider a pertinent and key question in relation to the search for meaningful images of God for the Black Christians.

His question is, "What is God doing?"⁶ This question is posed in the socio-historical context of a people engaged in the struggle for liberation from racism. The Soweto riots are

symbolic of that struggle. It is from this context that Boesak proceeds to answer his own question: "God is doing his will."⁷ Thus Yahweh of Israel, the One to whom the Afrikaner appealed for his liberation, is actively involved in the lives of Blacks. / He is not a tribal deity whose historical activities are limited within a particular tribe. Rather, as Lord of history, He reveals the mystery of His person in history. He encounters men in their particular situations. Thus He encounters Black South Africans in their struggle against racism and becomes one with them in their search for freedom. Yahweh, whose messenger Moses approached Pharaoh with the decisive question: "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me" (Exodus 10:3), wants to free Blacks from the bondage of racism.

The liberation aspect of divine activity may be over-emphasized in contemporary Black South Africa because of the social context out of which the "Black questions" are raised. God's liberation of those living in an apartheid society should nonetheless be understood in the context of God's liberation of man from the human condition in general. Our next task is therefore to discuss briefly the human condition and show how this condition has concretized itself in South Africa.

B. A THEOLOGICAL VIEW OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

Gregory Baum, in one of his books, Religion and Alienation, discusses among other things the young Hegel's and Karl Marx's analysis of the human condition. He points out that both are in agreement that man is in a state of alienation from (a) self, (b) nature, and (c) his fellow men.⁸ Baum, however, disagrees with Hegel and Marx regarding the root cause of this state of alienation. For the young Hegel, bad religion is the source of man's alienation. Bad religion,⁹ he maintains, is due to man's futile attempt to rationalize the interaction and co-existence of the infinite and the finite. Hegel points to Old Testament religion as a concrete example of what he understands by bad religion. Like the Deists, Hegel argues that the God of the Old Testament is removed from history and therefore a stranger that resides in heaven, seemingly unconcerned about the affairs of humanity. He thinks the solution to the human condition is in the establishing of what he calls 'good religion'.¹⁰ Good religion sees God as inclined towards the world, that is, it portrays God as one who is concerned about the affairs of man.

According to our judgement, Hegel's view that Old Testament religion reflects a God that is removed from the

historical realities of man is faulty. God is depicted in the Old Testament as one who is Lord of history, actively involved in human affairs. He is referred to as the Lord of the Exodus and the commander in chief of the Israelite army. It is, however, not our intention to pursue this argument here; suffice it to say that Yahweh in the Old Testament is concerned about the affairs of man.

Karl Marx, on the other hand, maintains that the source of human alienation is due to bad economics; it is due to man's bad relationship to the means of production. The key to human redemption is in establishing good economic patterns, that is, the realignment of man's relationship to the means of production.

Christian theology refers to human alienation as a state of sinfulness that has resulted from separation from God. Thus man is referred to as a sinner. James Cone maintains that, in order to understand the full implication of Christian theology's reference to man as a sinner, this concept must be placed within the immediate context of social relationships. He writes:

In order to understand clearly the function of sin in Biblical tradition, it is necessary to point out that it is meaningful only in the context of man as he is separated from the essence of the community.¹¹

What is of fundamental importance about this concept is that it presupposes the existence of a community of persons with a degree of conscious fellowship within itself and with Yahweh. Outside the Yahweh community frame of reference, sin cannot exist. The garden of Eden story illuminates this point. Before the fall, Adam is portrayed as being in harmonious relationship with God and with Eve. After the fall, he is described as a sinner whose relationship with God and Eve is broken.

Sin is therefore a relational concept which describes man's estranged state of being, interpreted from the religious point of view. It is thus, Cone points out, "a definition of being in relation to non-being; it is a condition of estrangement from the source of being and purpose in the universe."¹² Along the same lines, J.D. Roberts observes that "sin is a broken vertical relationship before it is a broken horizontal relationship."¹³

This relational definition of sin constitutes a fundamental difference between Biblical and Greek conceptions of sin. Emil Brunner pointedly states this distinction:

The concept of sin in Greek philosophy, which accompanies the whole of the development of Western thought, and to a larger extent influences it, is this, that evil is due to the life of the senses, that it is based upon the fact that sense instincts of man paralyse the will, or at least dim

or suppress it. Evil is due to the nature of man; it springs from the outset, from his twofold constitution. It indeed is the fault of the spirit that it cannot bring them under control, that the higher elements in man prove to be too weak to keep lower elements, the natural double of the spirit. If this evil is to be brought into relation it has to be described as that which is not yet good, or it has not yet reached the plane; or not yet been dominated by the spirit.¹⁴

Greek philosophy in general espouses a doctrine of dualistic anthropology¹⁵ whereby man is divided into incompatible elements, namely body and soul. The body, the lower element, is regarded as evil and therefore the source of sin. The soul, on the other hand, is depicted as being of divine origin and therefore good and a higher element. What is important to grasp here is that while Christian theology interprets sin relationally, this type of Greek philosophy interprets sin substantially. Christian theology's stance on this matter is informed by Biblical anthropology, which sees man in his wholeness and not in terms of duality. He is a "besouled body" and an "embodied soul". Sin as separation from a spiritual relationship with God affects man in his totality, as body and soul. In other words, while the sinfulness of man in Greek philosophy applied to the body only, in Christian theology¹⁶ it applies equally to the body and to the soul. Brunner illustrates our

point of view when he says:

It is as a whole that the person commits sin; this is not due to some of his personality. I am a sinner, not this or that aspect of my nature. Sin is falling away from God, therefore it is an act of the whole man.¹⁷

The question of alienation and sin is therefore not a question of bad economics, bad religion or the result of the paralysis of sense instincts or of the human will, but rather a revolt against God. Disobedience to the first commandment, in which God calls upon man not to bow down or serve any other gods besides him,¹⁸ is in our estimation the root of human alienation. Man has, in his totality, rebelled against Yahweh the Creator and has turned to worship nature, and particularly himself as part of nature. The story of Adam and Eve epitomizes the human rebellion that has constituted man's state of being in broken relationships with God and creation. Their acceptance of the serpent's counsel instead of that of the Creator is symbolic of man's trust and faith in natural objects rather than in God.

At the "horizontal level", this state of estrangement from God is also manifested in the context of the community of persons. In this connection, James Cone's position is illuminating:

It is incumbent on all members of the community to define their existence according to the community's essence and to defend the community against that which seeks to destroy it. To be in sin, then, is to deny the value that makes the community what it is. It is living according to one's private interest and not according to the goals of the community. It is believing that one can live independently of that source that is responsible for the community's existence.¹⁹

Behind Cone's statement is the assumption that the essence of the community, particularly of the Christian community, is grounded in God's purpose for the world. The community is captivated by it, shaped and directed by it. It must therefore always reassess its existence in the light of God's purpose in Christ for the world. An existence that contradicts the divine purpose constitutes therefore a state of being in rebellion against God and against what the community stands for.

The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15) is a good illustration of what Cone is talking about. The prodigal son asked his father to let him have what would be his inheritance according to customary laws. After the father gave him what was lawfully his own, he left for a distant country where he spent the inheritance irresponsibly. The son broke his relationship with his father, who in the context of a tribal society²⁰ is a representative of the community and all that the community stands for. The son's breaking of this relation-

ship can, therefore, be interpreted symbolically as the breaking of a relationship with the community. Judging his action in the light of what has been said above, the son sinned against his father, but above all he sinned against the community.

While it is possible to speak of the individual as living in a state of severed relationship vis-à-vis the community, it is also possible to speak of the sins of the community against the individual. The community into which the individual is placed by the creator serves as the physical and spiritual environment of his psychosomatic growth. It has certain mandatory obligations towards the individual. We will attempt to clarify this contention. Within the Black community of South Africa, every member of the family has a birthright to material inheritance.²¹ In addition, the community has the responsibility of socializing and of teaching the young the cultural mores. In other words, the community has a duty to deliver to the individual the "cultural goods" for his psychosomatic growth. For the community not to fulfill these duties amounts to sinning against the individual.

Since to be a member of the community means to be grounded in God, the source of human life, sin against God and against the community or individual members of the community, means, among other things, a refusal to participate in the liberating activities of God. The cross is the symbol of

God's concern for liberation. True discipleship would therefore involve carrying the cross and thus participating in that which it symbolizes.

In summary, then, we understand sin not in terms of biological genes or sexual morality, but as a human state of being that is characterized by alienation from God and from creation. This separation affects man in his wholeness as an "embodied soul" and as a "besouled body". It is a universal state of being, as St. Paul observes in Romans (3:28), that manifests itself in human institutions and relationships. This point is clearly expressed by J.D. Roberts:

Sin ... [which] manifests itself in the brokenness in human relations (i.e. between Black and White), is personal and is social. Black men as well as White men must reckon with the personal and social directions of sin. Sin is a disability in the individual's life, but it is also a hindrance to reconciliation between man and his brother. In our broken world, sin is the great separator of one ethnic group over against another - of race against race, of class against class.²²

We shall now focus on how this universal phenomenon manifests itself in the South African situation.

(i) Domination: an Expression of sin

In the Biblical story of creation, man, who is part of

nature but at the same time transcends nature, is called upon by God to have dominion over creation. This act on God's part entrusts man with authority and lordship over creation, a responsibility not assigned to other creatures. Commenting on the nature and meaning of the Biblical concept of man's dominion over creation, Douglas J. Hall cautions that the true meaning of this concept should be sought neither "in modern political philosophy"²³ nor associated with "dominion in the history of Western civilization and in Christendom".²⁴ He observes that:

The relationship to the Creator, which for the Scriptures is the primary focus of man's relatedness, means that man's dominion of nature is set within the context of God's dominion over the whole world, including man. Man's mastery is conditioned and circumscribed by the mastery of the one who grants him mastery.²⁵

Adam's dominion did not imply possession or ownership of the garden of Eden and of the animals that lived therein. He was a steward whose stewardship was grounded in God's dominion over creation. Divine dominion does not mean an "arbitrary exercise of power",²⁶ nor should it be associated with the modern concept of "mastery" or of an "imperialism of humanity against nature, a crass unconcern for the natural."²⁷ "His [God's] rule", Hall maintains, "is for the sake of the ruled.

His dominion is nothing other than his love, expressing itself in order."²⁸ Man's dominion over creation should be characterized, among other things, by a concern for creation rather than by plunder of it "stimulated by the impression that nature exists merely to satisfy human needs."²⁹ What should be emphasized here is that man's harmonious relatedness to creation is determined by his relatedness to God.

Sin, which resulted in a broken relationship with God, has set man against the rest of creation, including his fellow men, of whom the woman is representative. Man's delegated dominion becomes domination of creation. He sees creation as an enemy that must be brought under control for his own sake. He wants to possess and dominate creation rather than be a steward. His new relationship after the fall is characterized, among other things, by a self-centred, unconcerned plundering of nature with the intention to satisfy his appetite. He relates to the whole universe from the perspective of his needs which exclude the needs of others. The story of Cain and Abel illustrates this latter point. Cain feels insecure at the presence of his brother and so puts Abel out of sight, he kills him, hoping through this act to establish security in the midst of a hostile world.

Within the South Africa situation, and particularly

within White South Africa, sin has concretized itself in the form of domination of others for the sake of White socio-economic and political privilege. This desire for domination is echoed in the words of Cecil John Rhodes:

We have given the natives no share in the government and rightly too We don't teach them the dignity of labour and they simply loaf about in sloth and laziness ... Now I say the natives are children. They are emerging from barbarism. I will only give them power to build roads and bridges, construct dams and plant trees. This is a proposition submitted to provide them with district councils in order to employ their minds on simple questions in connection with local affairs.³⁰

Rhodes' official attempt to subordinate the Black population of South Africa by placing it on the periphery of the economic and political structures is parallel to the position adopted by H. Verwoed regarding Black education in South Africa. Verwoed was applauded in Parliament when he told members of the opposition party that

... if the native in South Africa today in any kind of school in existence is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake ... There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. For this reason there is no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community ... What is the

use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? ... It is therefore necessary that native education be controlled in such a way that it should be in accordance with the policy of the state.³¹

Seen in the light of Rhodes' and Verwoed's statements, the separate development program is an attempt to keep the Blacks from ever entertaining the possibility of, in the words of Verwoed, living an "adult life under a policy of equal rights". The Homeland leadership itself is under control by the Pretoria Administration. Most chiefs appointed by the Government to head the Homeland Governments know little of the democratic political process. Their power is delegated not by the governed, but by the White administration in Pretoria. For this reason they are not responsible to the people whom they govern. Their monthly stipends are paid by the White Government. The control of Homeland Legislative Assemblies by Pretoria has been denounced by H.B. Ncokazi, who comments that

... the Pretoria Government is not prepared to leave their puppets in the lurch, one Bantustan leader's membership to the Legislative Assembly was terminated by the Supreme Court . . .³²

An incident involving Ncokazi himself and Chief Kaizer Matanzima is a case in point. Ncokazi was a popularly elected

leader of the New Democratic Party which opposed Transkei Independence. Matanzima refused to accept him as a legitimate leader of the official opposition party because of his critical views about Transkei Independence. Ncokazi's political stance was apparently a threat not only to the political ambitions of Chief Matanzima but also to the architects of the apartheid system. He had to be politically "liquidated" in order to ensure a smooth implementation of the policy.

Many well-meaning White South Africans have argued that racial separation is meant to give both Black and White South Africans a cultural identity that former British assimilatory liberal policies could not provide. They point at the Afrikaner historical exclusivism as the method that protected and preserved Afrikaner cultural identity. What they wanted for themselves under British rule, namely, a chance to be themselves, to use their mother tongue, to develop their own culture, they also wished for the Blacks. The question, however, that still remains to be answered by apartheid apologists is: If it is admirable to allow and encourage the development of distinct cultures, why force it by law? Why require that a Black child be taught to remain within the African culture by force? It is, therefore, logical to conclude that the real reason behind the Afrikaner's emphasis on Black cultural identity is not a

genuine care for the Black man; rather, such a concern seems to be the best way of ensuring the Afrikaner's own economic and political dominance. The Black man's dependency on White technology will, the White man hopes, prolong White dominance.

In addition, White assimilation into the Black community is interpreted by racial purists as a decline of Western civilization and Christian values. The identity of the White race, ensured by economic and political power, is seen as necessary for the protection and preservation of Western Christian values. For Western values are usually equated with "Christian" values. Decline of Western Christian values would, according to this argument, precipitate the decline of the Western technological culture which Whites have built in South Africa.

While assimilation of Whites or of any other minority group should be discouraged, the protection and preservation of the White race and of Western technological culture has been at the root of the exploitation of Blacks. This means that White dominance has been erected on the backs of cheap Black labour.

What the apartheid apologists should realize is that the racial peace they hope to bring about through this system is not possible. Instead, apartheid has created a social environment conducive to racial violence. It has created not

only a physical chasm between the two races, but also a spiritual chasm between them. The normal channels of communication have been damaged. The Soweto riots are the tip of the iceberg; they indicate to a partial extent only the seriousness of spiritual alienation in the society. The sole channel through which the Blacks can register their grievances, it would appear, is physical violence. The White Government, too, channels its reply through the barrel of the gun. If the normal channels of communication were open, the prospects of physical violence would be reduced.

Apartheid, as an attempt to ensure economically and politically White control of South Africa, is symbolic of the White man's denial to the Black man of his God-given humanity. It symbolizes the fact that the White man has written off the Black man as spiritually non-existent, except (as Cecil John Rhodes pointed out) as a "builder of roads and constructor of dams and one that is engaged in planting trees". This reduction of Blacks to the level of instruments and objects to serve the glory of the White man is contrary to the fundamental Christian teaching about the brotherhood of mankind. The separation of the Black and White races is parallel to the original separation between God and man, the latter being the direct cause of the former. The impulse to seek domination of others is a violation

of God's commandment to love your neighbour as you love yourself. White power has humiliated Blacks and has made them ashamed of their God-given skin pigmentation. Blacks are no longer proud of their particular humanity.³³ They have been made to think Whites are inherently superior. Thus, while sin concretizes itself in the White community in the form of desire for domination, within the Black community it takes the form of an inferiority complex.

(ii) Black Inferiority: An Expression of Sin

While Western technology has boosted the White community's moral and personal image, it has produced the opposite effect in the Black community. It has deflated the latter's evaluation of itself. In our discussion of "Black Consciousness" we stated that a good many Blacks have internalized their own technological deficiency in such a way as to interpret it as a natural inferiority. In the presence of the Western enormous and sophisticated cultural development, they have become more and more conscious of their lack of cultural equipment and technological know-how in dealing with the quickly changing world. As a result of Black and White cultural encounters, the Black man has accepted "Whiteness" as an authentic norm by which he measures and defines himself. Since the Black man has become ashamed of his

cultural "backwardness", his whole lifestyle has been characterized by the struggle to be "White". James Matthews describes this in a provocative verse:

White syphilization
taints blacks
makes them
carbon copies
imitating white
man's acts
turning aside
from ways
of blacks
the women
faces smeared
skin bleached
hair straightened

White man's
fashion dolls
black man
dressed in
tailored suits
silk shirts
italian shoes
dreaming dreams
of houghton
swimming pools.
wake up black fools.³⁴

Matthews puts his finger on an enormous problem of this society, namely, the problem of self-rejection and self-hatred among some South African Blacks. South Africa has a rapidly expanding cosmetic industry which manufactures "hot" cosmetics exclusively aimed at the Black consumer. When these cosmetics are applied to the dark African skin, they produce a lighter complexion.

Many African men and women use these lighter-complexion-giving cosmetics because they crave for liberation from their naturally dark African complexions, which have become a burden that denies them full expression of their inner selves. "Whiteness" has become a normative ideal.

The decisiveness of skin colour in South Africa was apparent during the late forties and early fifties, when many people applied for "coloured status".³⁵ The coloured have a somewhat better social status in South Africa than Zulus, Sothos and Xhosas. Within the category of non-Whites, "coloureds" are better paid. For social and political reasons, many South Africa non-Whites ("non-White" is here used technically) who were lighter in complexion capitalized on their skin colours to be classified as "coloured". This classification exempts them from the social degradation that is suffered by those of darker complexion. Instead of carrying "Passbooks" which are regarded by most Blacks as symbolic of the White power that humiliates them, the "coloured" carried "Identity Cards".

The Black man's struggle to liberate himself from the ordeal of Blackness and all its consequences is reflected vividly in Manas Buthelezi's statement that:

For many people to-day, blackness is a life stigma from which they continually try to escape both psychologically and

intellectually. That is why many Zulu-speaking black people switch over to broken and rotten Zulu when they address White people who fail to speak Zulu properly; Fanakalo is a language which has flowered from the grave of the Black man's dignity.³⁶

Fanakalo is a bastardized inferior version of Zulu with a very basic vocabulary, commonly used as a language of communication between Whites and Blacks. Buthelezi sees the adoption and use of such an inferior language by Zulus as a psychological acceptance of an inferiority complex. This, to him, is symbolic of the death of the dignity of the Zulu people. For language is an important vehicle for the preservation of one's cultural roots and therefore of one's dignity. The attempt, therefore, to escape the Black condition by the application of "hot" cosmetics to one's dark skin and by the adoption of Fanakalo leaves the Black man without dignity and self-respect. The Black man's cry for liberation from Blackness through the "White connection" is thus dehumanizing.

This "White connection", that is, the seeking of liberty and dignity by proximity to White power, has precipitated alienation at various levels of interpersonal relationship within the Black community itself. We have already made reference to the alienation between the Chiefs and the communities they govern. Traditionally, the Chief governed with the consent

of the governed. Should he abuse his power, the community had a right to discipline him. The story of King Shaka the Zulu is a case in point. When he became a tyrant he lost the support and loyalty of some of his chieftains, such as Mzilikazi.³⁷ Shaka was finally murdered by his brothers because he had become a high-handed dictator. In South Africa today, the Chiefs are appointed by officialdom and are, therefore, responsible to the Pretoria Government;³⁸ as such, they become the administrators of the alienating apartheid policies.

The desire to be "White" or to maintain some "White connection" has manifested itself also in the Christian Church. In Chapter Two, we pointed out that some Black Christians still cherish denominational affiliation with White Christians. While this may be a good sign of the oneness of the Church Catholic, the reasons for this desire for White affiliation status by Black Christians are highly questionable. The "White connection" is interpreted as if it were a guarantee of prophetic and apostolic tradition, if not a guarantee of the Divine presence.

As far as Christian theology is concerned, the Church's authenticity is guaranteed by the presence of God. To make any human race or individual the guardian of the Church is tantamount to idolatry. Jesus is credited with having said that where two or three are gathered in His name, he would be present.

The Black inferiority complex is a sign that the Black community, deep down in its psyche, does not have confidence and faith in the ground of its being. Like the nation of Israel when Moses delayed on the mountain, they have asked Aaron his brother to make them a god. They have lost faith in the Yahweh of whom Moses was the messenger. Blacks seek after "Whiteness" to establish their humanity and they have, in the process, made the White man their "god" after whose likeness they are re-creating themselves through the application of "hot" skin creams, the usage of an inferior language and the adoption of White values. Blacks have, theologically speaking, sinned against God by giving the honour and glory due to Him to a creature - White man. And this is idolatry.

Black theology recognizes the particular spiritual dilemma of all South Africans and calls upon them all to face up to their sins and to admit them. Each community must engage in a thorough soul-searching to determine how it can amend its ways. Black theologians, however, find in the Biblical God one who is already engaged in the liberation of the oppressed. They thus call South Africans of all races to live up to the Gospel of liberation.

C. GOD: THE GROUND OF HUMAN LIBERATION

Human liberation from sin and its consequences is the work of God. All Christian theological articulation about human salvation must be informed by this presupposition.

Thus in the Book of the Exodus (6:2-8), we read:

And now I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, enslaved by the Egyptians, I have called my covenant to mind. Say, therefore, to the Israelites I will rescue them from slavery there. I will redeem you with arm outstretched and with mighty acts of judgement. I will adopt you as my people, and I will become your God.

God is the God of the Exodus, the escape from Egyptian bondage. He is referred to as such because he is the active person behind this historical event. The Exodus became the paradigmatic event that provided Israel with the clue to the Divine nature and also with the basic principle of interpreting His action. This event is understood as redemptive; through it, tyranny is dethroned and the oppressed go free. Therefore Israel knows Yahweh as the Liberator who hears and is moved to take appropriate action at the sight of his people's need.

The Exodus experience was a landmark, through which the Israelites saw in Yahweh the one whose liberating presence revealed the significance of that event. As slaves, their lot was in the hands of Pharaoh. They were a people without a history. Their identity and worth were submerged and concealed

by the shadow of the Egyptian dream. They were a people only in so far as they were builders of the Egyptian glory. But out of this seemingly hopeless state, God, through the Exodus, brought into existence, out of slaves, a new nation, with new values and a new sense of purpose and hope. This nation became a living testimony to the concreteness of the liberating power of their God. For Israel, the belief that God is the Liberator was not an abstract question nor an intellectual truth to be discovered through spiritual meditation: Israel itself stood as a tangible witness to the liberating nature of God. For God is by nature the Liberator, but one comes to this knowledge only in so far as God reveals himself as such. It is this conception of Yahweh as Liberator that inspires the Psalmist to sing:

What is man that thou art mindful
of him, and the son of man that thou
dost care for him.

(Ps. 8:4)

Yahweh cares about the oppressed. His concern is embodied in the person of Jesus, the "Emmanuel", that is, "God with us". This title signifies the historicization of God's liberating concern. He is "with man" in Jesus Christ. He becomes one with the sinner; he is, as James Cone puts it, "God of the

oppressed".³⁹ Furthermore, motivated by love (John 3:16), he chooses to become the oppressed one.

The Gospel writers Luke and Matthew in particular describe how the wise men and the shepherds came to pay homage to the newly born baby. They emphasize that he was born in a stable, a lowly place. While the validity of these historical narratives may be questionable, Cone maintains that

... the mythic value of these stories is important theologically. They undoubtedly reflect the early Christian community's historical knowledge of Jesus as a man who defined the meaning of his existence as being one with the poor and the outcasts.⁴⁰

This solidarity is further demonstrated by Jesus at His baptism. John's baptism was for the "repentant sinners".⁴¹ Jesus' submission to this baptism is a declaration that He has become one with the sinners and outcasts, making their condition His own.⁴²

The Gospel writers repeatedly point out that Jesus is moved with compassion for the sick, the poor and the dead. Luke (7:13) states that Jesus was touched by the tears and condition of the widow of Nain. The English word "compassion" seems too weak to convey the emotion that moved Jesus. The Greek word used in almost all the texts that have to do with Jesus' compassion for the people is derived from splagehznizomai,

a derivative of the noun splagchnon, which refers to the intestines, bowels or heart, that is, the inward parts of the human body which Greeks thought were the source of the emotions. Therefore, within the original Biblical Greek meaning, Jesus' compassion for the sick and the needy was a welling up from the depths of His being. The Zulu word Isililo expresses the same meaning. It means a cry, a particular kind of cry which is heard during mourning periods, the cry that expresses pain which cannot be expressed in words. When Jesus wept for Jerusalem, for example, it was isililo. God's liberating concern in Jesus Christ should therefore be understood in the context of the Zulu meaning of isililo and the original Greek meaning of "compassion".

The liberating power of God was experienced by men and women who came into contact with Jesus Christ during His life on earth. Luke (9:1-10) relates the encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus is depicted as a notorious sinner, whose "sinful" profession was that of tax collector in the city of Jericho. He had earned for himself great wealth through overtaxing the population. The religious purists of his society had written him off as a gross sinner, and no respectable Pharisee or religious elder would dine with him. Jesus ignored the socio-economic and religious barriers and invited himself

to Zacchaeus' house where they dined together, a gesture that displeased the religious authorities. Jesus did not look at Zacchaeus as an outcast, and therefore as a lost cause, but rather as a child of God. It was God's solidarity with Zacchaeus through Jesus that changed him into a new person, who then saw his fellow men as the children of God and not as bloodless objects out of whom he extracted wealth and through whom he won political favour from Rome. The earliest Christian community retained this Zacchaeus story because Zacchaeus, who remained a faithful and devoted Christian, was a living witness to the liberating power of the God of the Exodus who identified Himself with man in Jesus.

Another New Testament example which demonstrates God's liberating concern and power in Jesus is recorded in Mark (6:30-44). Jesus feeds a multitude with five loaves of bread and two fish.⁴³ New Testament studies⁴⁴ have been concerned with the attempt to explain how Jesus could have possibly performed such a miracle. The more traditional and literary interpretations emphasize that Jesus miraculously multiplied five loaves and two fish into several thousand morsels. The more recent interpretations, however, argue that the miracle was not in the multiplication of food but rather in Jesus' remarkable ability to persuade each member of the crowd to share what he had. This interpretation assumes that some persons in the

crowd had brought food provisions for the day. Albert Nolan maintains that

... either Jesus told the others who had brought food to do the same within their group of fifty or else, seeing Jesus and his disciples sharing their food, began of their own accord, to open their food-basket and share the contents.⁴⁵

The importance of these two accounts (Zacchaeus and the feeding of the multitude) is that they demonstrate that people in concrete situations became liberated as they came into contact with Jesus; and that God is the source and ground of their liberation.

Jesus' choice of "the way of the cross" is a concrete demonstration of God's concern for human freedom from sin. Death on the cross was reserved for criminals of non-Roman citizenship. A crucified criminal's soul was thought to be denied a place of abode either in the spiritual world or on earth. For the Semites, the spiritual world was understood as a place where one's soul would reside in tranquillity with one's ancestors. To be denied a place in that world was the worst imaginable spiritual agony. Therefore Jesus' acceptance of the cross illustrates God's solidarity with the politically powerless as well as with those that have been declared spiritually lost.

To elucidate this point further, here is an example from a South Africa scene. From the days when European missionaries

were directly involved in the South African Church until the present day, some of the Lutheran Mission Stations have had cemeteries where they bury the dead. At Umpumulo Lutheran Mission Station, as it was called at that time, where the writer was a theological student for three years, the church cemetery was divided into two separate sections. One section was reserved to the Christians, and the other section was set aside for the burial of those classified as "heathens". Now, on Easter Sunday it is common practice for the Christians at Umpumulo to celebrate the occasion by gathering at sunrise at the cemetery to sing Easter hymns. But the interesting thing about the whole practice is that these resurrection-centred Easter hymns are sung from the "Christian" section of the divided cemetery. The obvious implication here is that hope for resurrection applies only to the dead Christians. But this implication distorts the meaning of Jesus' acceptance of the cross. The point we are trying to make here, is that Jesus' death on the cross, as the symbol of God's solidarity with men within the South African context, is analogous to His being buried in the "heathen" section of the Umpumulo Lutheran Mission Station cemetery.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, God gives the oppressed an alternative way of existence, different from that of the fallen Adam; man can now be free from the power of the oppressor. God brings the weak, the hopeless and the out-

casts into a new existential relationship with Himself, a relationship of freedom which Biblical writers characterized by saying that man is created in the imago Dei. The concept imago Dei, from the perspective of Black Theology, is more inclusive than Thomas Aquinas' analogia entis⁴⁶ or the analogia relationis of Bonhoeffer.⁴⁷ James Cone, in a strongly worded statement, maintains that:

The image of God refers to the way in which God intends for man to live in the world. The image of God is thus more than rationality, more than what the so-called neo-orthodox theologians call divine-human encounter. In a world in which men are oppressed, the image is man in rebellion against the structures of oppression. It is man involved in the liberation struggle against the forces of inhumanity.⁴⁸

Freedom is an important ingredient of being in the image of God. God's freedom is characterized by the fact that He "expresses his will to be in relation to his creatures in the social context of their striving for the fulfilment of humanity. That is, he is free for us."⁴⁹ Since Yahweh's freedom circumscribes man's freedom, the struggle to be free from enslavement is a positive attempt in the search for genuine humanity.

To be free in the context of divine freedom means to be man for others (Bonhoeffer). It means a new interpersonal relationship, a totally new orientation of one's life that differs

from that which St. Paul terms "the old Adam".⁵⁰

The grounding of human liberation in God has been stated rather powerfully by the South African Council of Churches in a theological document addressed to all South Africans under the title A Message to the People of South Africa. Parts of the document read as follows:

The Gospel of Jesus Christ:

(a) is the good news that in Christ God has broken the walls of divisions between God and man and therefore also between man and man'.

(b) declares that Christ is the truth who sets men free from all false hopes of grasping freedom for themselves, and that Christ liberates them from a pursuit of false securities.

(c) declares that, in the resurrection of Jesus, God showed himself as the conqueror and destroyer of the most potent of all forms of separation, namely death, and he proved the power of his love to overthrow the evil powers of fear, envy and pride which cause hostility between men.⁵¹

The desire to be free from the captivity of the "old order" that separates man from his ground of being and from the community within the context of South Africa invites a critical assessment of the apartheid claim that it provides racial freedom. Since God through Christ, is the ground of human freedom, that is, the Lord, and since South Africa is part of his terri-

torial authority, there can be no compromise between Christianity and the "traditional South African way of life". For to do so would be equivalent to rejecting God as Liberator and to choose instead to serve human idols, namely the "god of racism".

From the perspective of Black Theology, the presence of Emmanuel is a declaration that all attempts to ameliorate the human condition must be grounded in Yahweh who is, indeed, to use Paul Tillich's phrase, the "ground of being". It follows that discipleship implies taking one's cross and participating in divine liberation; that is to say, man must become a co-liberator with Yahweh.

D. MAN AS CO-LIBERATOR WITH GOD

The basic question underlying this subsection is: if God, through the Christ-event, is the ground of human liberation, what should man who is the captive do in order to be liberated? This question is similar in essence to that asked St. Paul and Silas by the jailer of Philippi in Macedonia: "What must I do, Sirs, to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Paul and Silas replied: "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved". This answer is implied in John 3:16:

For God loved the World so much that he gave his only son, so that anyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.

Man must respond to divine salvation by faith. He must accept through faith the Lordship of Yahweh as Liberator, thus subordinating all his loyalties to Yahweh. W.A. Whitehouse's descriptive definition of faith illuminates what we are trying to say:

The core of this Hebrew concept [Faith] is firmness, reliability or steadfastness. To believe is to hold on something firmly, with conviction and confidence. It is implied that steadfastness is sought in the object believed, and that in laying hold of the object, the believer himself will become steadfast.⁵²

What we understand Whitehouse to be saying is that firm belief in an object leads to the attainment of the characteristic attributes of the particular object believed in. In the case of belief in God the Liberator, man attains the liberation attribute of Yahweh. Faith is an act of trust in Yahweh through which man appropriates the divine gift of salvation. Faith is a response of trust that God through "Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1). It is man's trust that God has broken the power of his (man's) captors; that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, Yahweh has ushered into human history a new possibility, that of man's freedom. The appropriation of this essence of Christianity into man's daily life brings into being a new relationship between the believer and Yahweh. Man's

past life, which was characterized by separation from God, is now characterized by the fact that man joins God in His divine activity of human liberation; that is to say, man is a co-liberator with God.

In the Gospel according to St. Matthew (28:19), Jesus commissions his disciples to "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". The ritual of baptism is theologically significant because it implies that those who are baptised in the name of the Triune God are committing themselves to God's own activity, in this case His liberation. In addition, baptism means that the believer is publicly announcing his uttermost intent to join God in His activities of liberation.

Through this ritual, the individual believer is admitted into the Ekklesia; a gathering of men and women, called into being through the divine act of liberation. In other words, their basis of being is the Christ-event. They are bound together by their common faith in Yahweh as the Liberator. Thus they are co-liberators with God as a community. To be a Christian, therefore, means to participate in the essence of the Christian community - liberation.

The sacrament of Holy Communion, too, is of theological significance. The partaking of this sacrament by the Ekklesia

is a conscious celebration of what Yahweh, through the Christ-event, has done and is still doing through human institutions. Those who participate in this celebration are openly affirming their loyalty to Yahweh the Liberator, that is, their individual and collective commitment to the divine cause of liberation. They are thus "called to fight against suffering by becoming God's suffering servants in the World."⁵³ Like Israel, the Ekklesia is called to suffer with Yahweh in the establishment of justice in the world. It is therefore suffering that is liberating. James Cone supports this point:

Israel's suffering is redemptive, because she is suffering with and for her Lord who is always identified with the little ones in agony. Therefore, it is God who makes human suffering redemptive! For Yahweh takes upon himself the pain of the widows and orphans and transforms slavery into freedom.⁵⁴

To be, as Paul puts it, mystically incorporated into the "body of Christ", means to live in an environment where there is a living commitment to suffering with God, a commitment which is understood as part of the Cross. It means total identification with the despised, the outcasts and the "nobodies" of the land.

This vocation to suffer with God and therefore to be ~~co~~-liberator with Him does not mean a silent endurance of in-

justice nor the ignoring of the reality of injustice but, rather,

A political and social praxis of liberation in the world, relieving the suffering of the little ones and proclaiming that God has freed them to struggle for fulfillment of their humanity.⁵⁵

To function redemptively means that each person and the community as a whole must struggle to free humanity from poverty, from authoritarian rule, from racial discrimination and from other oppressive societal structures.

How does this apply to Blacks in South Africa who, in spite of what Christ has achieved, are experiencing continued dehumanization? They are enclosed in the "cocoon" of apartheid. White power seems total. The Cross of Christ seems overshadowed by the superiority of the military apparatus of Afrikanerdom. Racism runs deep into the soul of the South African society. In spite of this seemingly hopeless future for Blacks, Ananias Mpunzi⁵⁶ has called upon Black South African Christians to respond to White racism which "dehumanizes" all Blacks, in a mature manner, that is, a manner in accordance with their faith. He exhorts them to develop healthy and positive attitudes about themselves and about those responsible for the "creation" of the apartheid system.

To illustrate what he means, Mpunzi cites the case of

Solzhenitzyn in The First Circle:

Nerzhin, indefinitely detained in prison refuses to see the slops served to prisoners as slops. They are a sacrament. Perhaps the deep significance of this is that slops are meant for pigs. Prisoners are served slops because they are seen as pigs and are being encouraged to see themselves as pigs. But the sacrament is for humans. To see the prison slops as a sacrament is thus a tremendous act of self-affirmation - despite the prison and despite the slops.⁵⁷

In South Africa, where a Black person is referred to in derogatory terms and names like "Kaffir", "Bantu", "non-White" and so forth, the above would imply that Blacks should affirm their humanity, and not accept the limitations that are inherent in such derogatory categories. Nor should they, in the process of affirming their own humanity and dignity, effectively dehumanize their oppressors. The Black person's being, according to Mpunzi's trend of thought, is guaranteed by God in Jesus Christ, "the man for others" (Bonhoeffer). For this reason it is also true to say that the Blacks' humanity and dignity is found in affirming the humanity of White South Africa, in spite of what Mpunzi reports:

We have been treated as less than human.
We have been debarred from having a say in
making the decisions that intimately affect
our lives. Whites have come to see us as

dogs (signs reading "No dogs or Bantu" are not uncommon). Our Blackness has been seen as the sign of our non-humanness. It stands for that which is dark and evil. Our past is seen as a past of barbarism. We are seen as little more than a troop of baboons with remarkably human-like features. The tragedy is not simply that we have been served the slops of pigs. It is also that we ourselves have seen slops and thus ourselves as pigs. Thus, our own self-affirmation has been bound and chained. When we cease to love ourselves we cease to love others. Love is a give and take relationship. What has a pig to give? Our self-denigration then becomes the reason for denigrating others, and we learn also to behave as pigs. Thus we destroy not only ourselves but others. First, like dogs in a park, we turn on the other wounded among us, we turn against those who should be our brothers in suffering.⁵⁸

Mpunzi concludes his analysis in this way:

For our sake, therefore, we have the task both of affirming the humanity of others and helping them to affirm it for themselves when it seems as if they denied it. Thus freedom also entails enabling black people ... affirm what they are - Black people - and enabling White people to affirm what they are - just ordinary people.⁵⁹

The Black people's faith in God the Liberator and their joining Him in the work of liberation, according to Mpunzi, entrusts them with the responsibility, not only of liberating themselves, but of liberating others also. In other words, faith in God the Liberator involves the liberation of Black people from

racism and from self-rejection to self-acceptance; for the White persons, it involves their liberation from racial self-elevation to seeing themselves equal to other races.

While Black Christians need to affirm unequivocally their own humanity, this affirmation cannot be sought at the expense of the humanity of others, namely the Whites. To be a "co-liberator" with God requires the simultaneous recognition and affirmation of one's humanity and that of others. St. Paul underscores this point when he says that Jesus disarmed the principalities and powers and made public example of them, triumphing over them. This can be interpreted as a demonstration of Jesus' continuing concern for his enemies in contrast to the brutality of the crucifixion which he had to endure. In spite of the negative experience the Blacks have had under White rule, they should not succumb to the temptation to subject the Whites to a similar experience. Liberation is the opposite of revenge. It assumes the validity of eliminating or transforming oppressive structures; but it does not mean injuring or enslaving some men to set others free. When one is a co-liberator, he is an agent of liberation, and therefore cannot be at the same time an agent of oppression or of death. The life style of Martin Luther King Jr. illustrates well the point made here. King was concerned about the affirmation of the Black people's dignity, but he was

equally concerned about the humanity of White Americans.⁶⁰

The Black community's efforts to work towards the re-creation of positive attitudes among South Africans of all races is likely to encounter official opposition.⁶¹ Official opposition is inevitable because such attempts will be contrary to the Government's apartheid policy. However, opposition should not discourage Blacks, for their commitment to these attempts is dictated by what God has done through the Christ-event, and not by what apartheid apologists expect. Dr. Buthelezi is aware of such an opposition when he writes that:

Black Theology is an attempt on the part of Black theologians to define the Gospel in a way that helps to repair the damage inflicted by apartheid. The Gospel so defined then says to Black people: You too, Black as you are, and even though poor and feeling powerless, were created in the image of God for a higher destiny than what you experience. Do not despair; take courage in the liberating Gospel of Christ. Take your own initiative ... Come on, be creative.⁶²

According to Dr. Buthelezi, the Black people ought to realize that they have been created in the image of God and not in the image of some superior race. In other words, it is time for them to awaken to the fact that they are called, like everybody else, to liberating themselves and others. The fact that they are poor, that is, without economic and political power and

with no historical heroes of a stature comparable to that of the White community's figures, is not a reason to feel less than human. Blacks must "take courage" in the Gospel of liberation, for through it they encounter God who in Christ calls them to a "higher destiny", contrary to what they are presently experiencing.

Faith in the Lord of the Exodus enables the Black to "take the courage" which Dr. Buthelezi refers to, in spite of official opposition and lack of co-operation on the part of the White community.

Dr. Buthelezi was invited as a guest speaker in Cape Town, on March 21st, 1975, at the African Bank opening celebrations. In his speech he pointed out, in a precise and coherent language, that he saw the opening of the African Bank of South Africa by Black people as a practical demonstration that they have become more and more capable of conducting their own affairs:

This day on which we celebrate the launching of the African bank has a significance beyond itself. In the final analysis what is of paramount importance is not the matter of setting up of the African Bank as such, however economically significant and historic this may be, but what the existence of this Bank tells about what has happened and what is happening in the soul of the Black man whose creative forces have been laying dormant for three centuries.⁶³

Buthelezi concluded his speech in a provocative and determined

tone:

Now we have realized that we can no longer wait. We can no longer wait for the circumstance and the people to change before we can do the job that needs to be done. We can no longer wait for the dehumanizing laws to change before we can involve our people in self-help projects and processes that will in a therapeutic fashion enable them to become aware of their worth and potential as human beings, an awareness that defies the legal outward circumstances.⁶⁴

Official opposition and a general lack of co-operation from the White community will not, from what Buthelezi says, deter Blacks from engaging in projects of liberation. The launching of the African Bank is symbolic of what is happening in the "soul" of the oppressed. They will engage in self-liberation with or without the participation of the White community. This Black initiative is not a refusal to acknowledge the existence of the White man. It is rather an attempt to rediscover anew the Black man's dignity. In a widely publicized speech entitled A Message to South Africa from Black South Africa, Chief M.G. Buthelezi, a cousin of Dr. Manas Buthelezi, argues along the same lines:

I do not believe for a moment that God created men to be divided among themselves. There was no apartheid in the Garden of Eden and there is no apartheid in heaven. Why should there be apartheid between? [sic] We need to organize ourselves into a disciplined body to support each other. We can-

not wait until the Parliament in Cape Town falls before we achieve that dignity which comes from self-help and from making the best of the miserable mess we find ourselves in. Blacks in every corner of the country are shrugging off the dependency mentality and this attempt is embodied and is expressed in the philosophy of Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe.⁶⁵

Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe is a cultural liberation movement led by Chief Buthelezi that aims at raising the consciousness of the rank and file within the Black community. Buthelezi links Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe to his personal belief in God. He does not believe for a moment that God constituted and sanctioned apartheid and for that reason he sees this cultural liberation movement as a task in which God is engaged. This movement is therefore, in the words of Dr. Buthelezi, the Black man's "taking courage in the Gospel of liberation".

It would therefore seem logical to conclude from the statements of Ananias Mpunzi, Dr. M. Buthelezi and Chief G.M. Buthelezi, that they endorse the interpretation of Black South African domestic struggle for liberation as an attempt by Blacks to affirm their God-given human dignity. We should not, however, be misunderstood to imply that all Black people involved in the struggle to be free are inspired by the Gospel of liberation. There is no doubt that a good many of them are not motivated by what God has done for them in Christ; that is to say, their

cry for liberation is not necessarily a conscious faith-response to be a co-liberator with the Yahweh of the Exodus. But there seems to be enough evidence for us to maintain that Christian theologians like Dr. Manas Buthelezi, Ananias Mpunzi and lay Christians like Chief Buthelezi interpret the Black people's struggle to overcome self-rejection, the rejection of White paternalism and of the limits imposed on Blacks by racism as significant steps towards the practical confession of the Lordship of God over South Africa. This objective is appropriate and inevitable once the oppressed cease to define the source of their humanity by taking "Whiteness" as their norm.

In the discussion of the Black consciousness movement in South Africa and of its practical efforts towards the development of a positive self-image on the part of the Blacks, reference was made to the establishment of community programs, such as Black Art Studio (1972), Music and Drama, Literature Institute (1972) and the African Bank (1975). It was pointed out repeatedly that in no way do these efforts mean the rejection of the White person's humanity. From the statements of theologians like Buthelezi and Mpunzi, we have tried to demonstrate that any attempt to affirm Black personhood which negates the humanity of the White person would be theologically unacceptable.

Such an attempt would be similar to that of Cain who approached

God without Abel his brother. The question God asked Cain is decisive for Black Theology's doctrine of God. "Cain, where is your brother?"⁶⁶ Similarly, God might ask of the Black person: "Black man, what are you doing? How can you possibly hope that you can affirm your dignity and personhood while rejecting your White brother? Was not the death and resurrection of Jesus enough to liberate you from falling into the same error as your White brother who destroyed his humanity and that of others through the pursuit of apartheid ideology?"⁶⁷ Since "White power", that is, socio-economic and political dominance, was achieved within South Africa at the cost of the rejection and abuse of the Black man's personhood, Black theologians see themselves as having the responsibility of being a critical conscience of the Black community in its search for liberation, to avoid the adoption of a tribal or a racist deity. Bengt G.M. Sundkler demonstrates how, within certain South African Independent Religious Movements, White racism has provoked Black racism:

In a country where some irresponsible Whites tell the African that Jesus is only for the White man, the Africans take their revenge by projecting the colour-bar right into heavenly places. The colour-complex has painted their very heaven black, and the Black Christ at the gate has to see to that ... The colour-complex takes the parable of Jesus into its service. Here is one to which I have heard references in some Zionist Churches: "There were ten Virgins. And five of them were White, and five were Black. The five Whites were foolish,

but the five Blacks were wise, they had oil in their lamps. All ten came to the gate of Heaven. But the five White virgins received the same answer as the rich man received [in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, Luke 16]: Because the Whites rule on earth, the Blacks do so in Heaven. The Whites will go a-begging to dip the tip of their finger in cool water. But they will get as a reply: Hhayyi (no) - nobody can rule twice.⁶⁸

The type of theology espoused by this particular brand of Zionist Church⁶⁹ is highly racist. It depicts Christ as a Black who hates those of White skin pigmentation. Black theologians like Ntwasa and others have also employed the concept "Black Christ". In their case, however, they are attempting to articulate as relevantly as possible the meaning of divine salvation for Blacks. In a country like South Africa, where to be Black means to be "inferior", to refer to Christ as "Black" has the same impact as the reminder that Jesus was a Jew in Hitler's Germany. To affirm that Christ was a Black man in South Africa is as revolutionary and radical as it would be to say that Christ is Castro to the U.S.A. Republican Christian voter.

The creation of such radical concepts for the purpose of Black psychological liberation is accepted by Dr. Buthelezi, who writes:

As long as somebody else creates concepts about your life and its impact on him, that is a sign that you are still in bondage. Let me illustrate my point. As long as someone else says to you, "You are black, you are black", blackness as a concept remains a symbol of oppression and of something that conjures up feelings of inferiority. But when the black man says: "I am black, I am black", blackness assumes a different meaning altogether. It then becomes a symbol of liberation and self-articulation. Self-articulation as the setting loose of iron chains is accompanied with disturbing noise, self-articulation cannot happen without creating its own impact. It inspires some and disturbs others depending on whether they see it as guilty spectators or as people who experience being introduced to a new lease of life.⁷⁰

Such concepts of self-articulation, which are a radical departure from the South African conventional theology, arise when Blacks are awakened to their capabilities and responsibilities for self-theological expression. The concept "Black Christ" should be understood as an attempt to satisfy the Black community's hunger for relevant and meaningful divine revelation. The depth of this hunger is vividly expressed in the following Zulu verse of Abantu baka Moya (the people of the Spirit):

Jesu, woza noyihlo
Abantu bayafa
lapha emhlabeni⁷¹

(Jesus, come with thy Father
People are dying here on earth)

The Zulu word ukufa (death) is very inclusive. It includes a whole range of life situations such as sickness, physical and mental torments. Expressions like sengifile ukuhlupheka (I am dead with suffering or hardship) are very common. When the "people of the Spirit", as quoted above, call upon Jesus to come with his Father because people are dying on earth, they are appealing to him to liberate them from the physical and spiritual burdens, among others, imposed upon them by the "South African Way of Life". Bishop Sundkler said: "Jesus, the White God, seemed so mute and so remote and all the while people are dying here on earth."⁷² Thus the concept "Black Christ", from the perspective of Black Theology, is an attempt to present Jesus as liberating the Black people from ukufa in its inclusive meanings.

Such concepts are an indication of the beginning of liberation from, as Ntwasa points out, "every image and symbol which, by presenting God as "White", reinforces this sense of human inferiority and worthlessness."⁷³ They are therefore essential for the psychological liberation of the Black community as an initial stage towards self-acceptance and the acceptance of others as equal before Yahweh. The significant point about the concept "Black Christ" is that it is not used in a racist sense by Black theologians; it is rather a genuine attempt to articulate from the perspective of the Blacks God's

solidarity with them, without of course suggesting that He does not care about others who live in situations different from that of Black South Africa.

In this last section we have discussed how man is co-liberator with God, and we have attempted to show how in liberating himself he is committed, as an individual and as part of a community, to liberate others; we have seen that this involves not revenge for the oppression by others, but a recognition of their own humanity.

In conclusion, the Biblical God is one who liberates and at the same time reconciles those who are estranged from Himself and from one another. Liberation and reconciliation are two "moments" of his atoning act. Our next chapter will focus on Reconciliation.

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CHAPTER IV

GOD AS RECONCILER

A. INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter we stated that the concept "Black Christ" should be understood functionally. That is, it is an attempt to articulate Christ's solidarity with the outcast, the oppressed and the "nobodies" of the land. "Black Christ" is therefore the particularization of the "Universal Christ" in Blackness.

Through the "Black Christ" God recreates out of a "Bantu" or "Kaffir" a new man who becomes the core of the new South African society envisaged partially in the S.A.S.O.'s manifesto: "a country in which both Black and White will live and shall continue to live together".¹ While "Black Christ" has become the Black Christian's theological symbol of his liberation, it is a concept which also points beyond this goal. It points to what God has done for men in the Christ-event, namely reconciliation. This means that through this "Black Christ" God liberates and reconciles man with Himself and with other men.

In an attempt to spell out the connection between "liberation" and "reconciliation", Dr. James Cone says the following:

Liberation is what God does to effect reconciliation and without the former the latter is impossible. To be liberated is to be delivered from the state of unfreedom to freedom; it is to have the chains struck off the body and mind so that the creature of God can be who he is. Reconciliation is that bestowal of freedom and life with God which takes place on the basis of God's liberating deeds. Liberation and reconciliation are tied together and have meaning only through God's initiation.²

Reconciliation can be seen as identical with liberation, but it is best seen as a logical consequence of the latter, that is, liberation is the precondition of reconciliation. However, reconciliation, like liberation, is not a "human quality".³ It is initiated by God and is grounded in His being. While this act of reconciliation is grounded and initiated by Yahweh alone, it must, however, be accepted by man in order that he may indeed be reconciled with God and with his neighbour. Without man's acceptance of what God has done for him in Christ, reconciliation would be unthinkable. Man's appropriation of what God has done for him makes him a co-reconciler, that is, he becomes one with God in the work of reconciliation.

In South Africa, the appropriation of the divine Act of reconciliation has radical implications for race relations. Our main objective in this chapter is to discuss reconciliation as an Act of God and to assess its implications for South Africa.

B. RECONCILIATION: AN ACT OF GOD

Allan Richardson, the New Testament scholar, observes that:

Reconciliation has the significance of a new stage in personal relationship in which previous hostility has been put away in a decisive act.⁴

This means that the Act of reconciliation presupposes a state of estranged fellowship within the context of interpersonal relationship. It presupposes that at some stage the estranged persons were friends, but due to certain factors the friendship was terminated. The resumption of former fellowship is achieved through a "decisive act", the act of reconciliation.

An account of the Zulu traditional act of reconciliation will serve to illuminate what we are trying to say here. When the head of a homestead dies, his burial is accompanied by the appropriate rituals.⁵ The living members of the family have an obligation to make the necessary and customary stipu-

lated sacrifices to the "living-dead".⁶ Should they fail to make the offering, this failure is sufficient to precipitate a state of alienation between the ancestor and the rest of the family. The ancestors were believed⁷ to retaliate by causing death or severe illness. To bring about reconciliation, a mediator - usually the elder son or one of the senior members of the family - slaughters a cow and invites the other members of the clan to participate in the ritual of reconciliation. The angry ancestors are asked to pardon the clan for the omission.⁸ Without going into the details of the ritual of reconciliation, what is of importance here is that it involves the spilling of a cow's blood. A cow is a highly treasured part of the traditional property, in as much as it provides the Zulus with milk and meat; as such, it is the precious means by which reconciliation between the estranged ancestors and the clan is effected.

Similarly, as St. Paul writes in addressing the Ephesians about the reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles: "by his death on the cross Christ destroyed the hatred; by means of the cross, he united both races into one single body and brought them back to God" (Eph. 2:16). To the Corinthian Christians, he writes that "God was in Christ reconciling the World to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). What is central in these

Pauline passages, and indeed in Biblical theology, is the point that reconciliation between man and God - and consequently between man and his neighbour - is grounded in the initiative of God, that is, God is the source of human reconciliation. He chooses to reconcile estranged man through a "decisive act": the death of Jesus, the mediator.

Reconciliation in this "social community" context means that the barriers between man and God and man and his neighbour, which characterized human existence, have been removed. Man has been brought back to fellowship with God and with his fellow men. Christ is the Person through whom man encounters God the Reconciler in history. He (Jesus) is the embodiment of the divine concern to have man reconciled with His Creator.

The suggestion that man cannot initiate his reconciliation with God of his own accord is supported by E.C. Blackman:

It is God who effects reconciliation.
He is the subject, mankind the object.
God takes the initiative; only he can
act in this situation of estrangement.⁹

Out of the "Old Adam", God re-creates a new person the purpose of whose existence can only be understood in the context of divine reconciliation. Furthermore, man's social relationships

are permeated by this act, as is underlined by James Cone:

Reconciliation is a divine action that embraces the whole world, changing our relationship with God and making us new creatures. Formerly we were slaves; but reconciliation means that we are now free. Formerly we were separated from God, alienated from his will and enslaved to the evils of this world. Now we are reconciled; fellowship with God is now possible, ... Formerly our knowledge of our identity was defined by those who had power over life in this world. Now God has redeemed and reconciled us, so that we know that true life is found in him who conquered death on the cross and was resurrected on the third day.¹⁰

In Chapter III of this dissertation, we stated that God liberates man by taking upon Himself the sinful human condition. He becomes one with the sinners. The presence of the historical man Emmanuel, we contended, is a demonstration of the historicization of Yahweh's concern for human liberation. Now, since liberation and reconciliation are two "moments" of one and the same divine Act of Atonement, the presence of Jesus in human history means also the historicization of reconciliation. The grounding of this act into human history is the only way in which one can logically speak of it as affecting man in his concrete situation. For man to be affected by this "decisive act" of reconciliation

(Richardson), God must meet him where he is, namely in history.

Thus, reconciliation, like liberation, is historical; it is a question of "here and now". In other words, history is the arena where the "drama" of reconciliation occurs.

During the life of Jesus on earth, God's reconciling power was experienced by persons in concrete situations.

St. Luke writes:

As Jesus made his way to Jerusalem he went between Samaria and Galilee. He was going into a certain village when he was met by ten lepers. They stood at a distance and shouted, "Jesus Master! have pity on us!" Jesus saw them and said to them, "Go and let the priests examine you." On the way, they were made clean. One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back, praising God with a loud voice ...

(Luke 17:11-15)

Leprosy had alienated these persons from the rest of the community and from their families. They were, for health reasons, isolated in leprosy colonies. They missed the warmth and the affection that is part of the normal community life. There was nothing, from the human side, that could be done for them, except to isolate them. Through the miracle of healing, Jesus redeems them from isolation and makes it possible for them to be welcomed back into the community.

What is of significance in this illustration for our purposes is that it is through Christ that God brings back the alienated lepers to the community fellowship. Reconciliation in this incident is made a question of "here and now", and not something that is merely hoped for in the future.

In the early centuries of Christianity, Christian theologians from time to time attempted to express the "historicalness" of reconciliation by using familiar analogies. For instance, when the institution of slavery was most prevalent in the Roman Empire, Christ's atonement was explained as the payment of a ransom,¹¹ an appropriate and meaningful analogy for the society of that time.

Following the breakdown of the Roman Empire, a new society with a somewhat different social and political structure emerged, namely the feudal system. The nature of this society is described by Professor Eric Jay:

Each man was reckoned to owe a debt to the immediate overlord who gave his protection, the debt of upholding the honour of his overlord and of performing such services as was demanded.¹²

It was in the socio-political context of the feudal system that St. Anselm (1033-1109) wrote his famous book Cur Deus

(5) Homo? (Why did God become Man?). He explained that, because of sin, man owed the Creator so great a debt that he could not afford to repay it on his own. God was the only Person who had the resources to repay the debt, and thus became a God-man.

These examples serve to illustrate our point that divine atonement is located and grounded into human history, that is, divine atonement is not ahistorical.

For our purposes, we need new analogies that are relevant to our contemporary situation.. Black theologian Mokgethi Motlhabi refers to Jesus Christ as a "comrade".¹³ 'Comrade' has been associated with communist revolutionary ideology, and evokes a chilly feeling. But what Motlhabi attempts to establish with this sensational image is that God, through Christ, meets us in our history as one of us; as someone to whom we can relate. In addition, 'comrade' includes the notion of "friendship", which St. Paul refers to in Romans 5:9-10: "by his death we are now put right with God; ... We were God's enemies, but he made us his friends through the death of his son." Through the death of Christ, man has been made a "comrade" of God. Comradeship between God and man implies an alliance, that is to say, reconciliation through the blood of Jesus means that God and man enter into a covenant, into a new alliance based on friendship. This analogy is appropriate for a world of

multinational co-operation, economic and military alliances, and more so for a South Africa that is desperately yearning to experience the warmth of genuine friendship that transcends racism.

The notion of comradeship implies also peace among the comrades. The origin of the Christian concept of peace can be traced back to the Old Testament, to the Hebraic concept of shalom. Shalom, for the Hebrew, meant the prevalence of a harmonious relationship between God and His people. Such peace was concretized in the everyday life of the people by the absence of wars, of starvation, of natural and supernatural catastrophes.¹⁴

The theological implication of such a definition of the God-man relationship is that man has committed himself to what God is doing, that he is now a co-reconciler with God. Man's whole raison d'être in the world can only be comprehended within the context of this relationship.

If divine reconciliation is grounded in comradeship between God and man, what concrete consequences does this theological stance have for a South Africa that is permeated by racism? Our next task will be an attempt to answer this question.

C. MAN AS CO-RECONCILER

In the introduction to this chapter, we stated that reconciliation, like liberation, is (a) grounded in divine initiative, and (b) that it requires man's acceptance of it in order to bring about change in his relationship with God and with the rest of creation. James Cone supports this position:

Reconciliation then is not only what God does in order to deliver oppressed people from captivity; it is also what the oppressed people do in order to remain faithful to their new gift of freedom.¹⁵

St. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:18, makes a similar point when he says that "All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also." To be reconciled with God means, as we have already said, to be in an alliance of comradeship with God through Christ. This involves, as Paul points out, being entrusted with the responsibility of making others the friends of God. Along these lines, Mokgethi Motlhabi states that "The closer we are to our fellows, the closer we are to Christ. Christianity, therefore, means Christ's presence in the world among men sacramentalised in

our fellow-men."¹⁶ One's reconciliation with the Creator is thus intimately linked to the reconciliation with one's neighbour.

(i) Reconciliation: Black and White

Specifically in connection with the need for reconciliation in the context of Black and White South Africans, Bruckner de Villiers says:

South Africa must surely be regarded as a candidate for the first prize in the field of non-communication, not only because of the immensity of its historical and in-built schisms, but simply because keeping people apart from each other and virtually incommunicado happens to be the official policy of its present Government... The only basic problem is - ideologically speaking in any case - that the Government fondly regards itself as a "Christian" government and that a sternly applied policy of keeping people, the law-abiding citizens of the same country, apart from each other can by no stretch of the sane imagination be reconciled with the injunctions of the Bible or with the basic and universally accepted tenets of Christian morality.¹⁷

On the same theme, Peter Macan writes of his South African experience:

Born and raised in Cape Town, South Africa, I was educated at a Church School

where I was introduced to the Christian faith and came to realize that South African racial segregation was contrary to the teaching of Christ and the spirit of the Kingdom. But the intellectual acceptance of this teaching, and the practical expression of its consequences, were two very different things, as I was soon to discover. My only contact with other racial groups was with servants at home, at school, and the African servants whom I taught to read and write at night school.¹⁸

These two passages demonstrate the urgency for radical change in South African race relations. In the discussion of the phenomenon of Black Consciousness we said that it signifies the Black man's search for a kind of South Africa in which every racial group will be accorded dignity and respect. To achieve this goal, there is a need for racial reconciliation. Genuine acceptance of one another is an essential prerequisite of such a hoped for society.

Reverend E. Baartman, in an unpublished article entitled "The Reconciling Hypocrite"¹⁹, observes that the South African Government's so called "Enlightened Outward Policy"²⁰, of which the Detente exercise is an expression, is in some respect an attempt by this Government to find racial peace. He thus states: "the latest political exercise in South Africa is detente. Detente is an aspect of reconciliation."²¹ Through

this political gesture, South Africa hopes to reach a peaceful co-existence with the rest of Black Africa which has declared itself opposed to the apartheid system. That South Africa should seek to be at peace with its neighbours is welcomed by many South African Blacks. But what they have questioned and doubted is the genuineness of the motives behind this political gesture. S. Mogoba, A.T. Tembela, S. Solcupa and Reverend T.T.S. Farisani are among those who have questioned the genuineness of detente. Mogoba asks: "Has detente been motivated by a genuine quest for peace?"²² An answer to this question is implied in a statement by Tembela:

... in order to be at peace with people you must be at peace with yourself. This can be taken as a principle because it is universal. At the individual level a person who is mentally and emotionally unstable can never relate himself amicably to other people. Stated in Christian terms, we might say you can only love your neighbour if you first love yourself. In other words charity begins at home. If this principle is applied to our cases it might therefore be assumed that in order to achieve amity with the nations abroad, South Africa will have to reach internal harmony within its borders.²³

As an answer to the question raised by Mogoba, Tembela maintains that genuineness of detente is highly suspect on the grounds that, domestically, South Africa pursues policies that violate

the basic human rights of the Black community. To seek peace with the rest of Black African States while discriminating against 16 million local citizens is hardly logical. In addition, Tembela's statement implies that for South Africa to participate meaningfully in the political exercises of detente, she needs to start from a position of strength based on the unity of all South Africans. Under the prevailing political circumstances, it would appear that these detente exercises will not achieve anything.

Reverend Baartman maintains that for genuine peace to prevail in South Africa itself definite steps must be taken:

For reconciliation to be effective we should have to remove all masks. There is going to be real communication where soul speaks to soul. We may have to discard even the Christian masks and reveal the self who is encountering Jesus Christ.²⁴

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines a mask as "a covering worn on the face to conceal one's identity". Baartman holds that the concealment of true identity by each race in South Africa is a great obstacle to genuine attempts of reconciliation. He observes how Blacks conceal their true selves in the presence of Whites:

In the presence of the boss [white boss]

he must show how much he is becoming like the boss. Thus in this context his theology must not be too far removed from what his boss wants. The sermons that he preaches must not be too challenging lest he is asked to move on.²⁵

The point that Baartman is making was raised earlier on in this thesis. We demonstrated how some Blacks have tried to escape their Blackness through what we chose to call the "White connection". The Black man's concealment of his true self is further portrayed in the play by Athol Fugard, Sizwe Bansi is Dead. We quote from the play at length to help the reader achieve a rapport with its message. The story takes place in a subsidiary American Ford Company factory in South Africa, where the Blacks, under the supervision of an Afrikaaner "Baas", Mr. Bradley, have been engaged in a general cleaning in preparation for the inspection of the factory by Mr. Henry Ford Jr., the owner of the plant. However, Mr. Bradley can only speak to the black workers through a black interpreter, since he has no knowledge of the African (non-white) language, a very common limitation of White South Africans. Styles is the name of the black interpreter. We introduce the play at the point where Mr. Bradley is instructing his Black "manpower" on how to behave in the presence of Mr. Ford Jr.:

"Styles."

"Yes, sir."

"Tell all the boys they can now go to the bathroom and wash themselves clean."

We needed it! Into the bathroom, under the showers ... hot water, soap ... on a Thursday! Before ten? Yo! What's happening in the plant?

The other chaps asked me: What's going on, Styles?

I told them: "Big-shot cunt from America coming to visit you."

When we finished washing they gave us towels ... (laugh). Three hundred of us, man! We were so clean we felt shy! Standing there like little ladies in front of a mirror.

From there to the General Store.

Handed in my dirty overall.

"Throw it on the floor."

"Yes sir!"

New overall comes, wrapped in plastic.

Brand new, man! I normally take a thirty-eight but this one was a forty-two. Then next door to the tool room... brand new tool bag, set of spanners, shifting spanner, torque wrench - all of them brand new - and because I worked in the dangerous hot test section I was also given a new asbestos apron and fire-proof gloves to replace the one I had lost about a year ago. I'm telling you I walked back heavy to my spot. Armstrong on the moon!

Inside the plant it was general meeting again. General Foreman Mr. "Baas" Bradley called me.

"Styles."

"Yes, sir."

"Come translate."

"Yes, sir."

(Styles pulls out a chair. Mr. "Baas" Bradley speaks on one side. Styles translates on the other).

"Tell the boys in your language that this is a very big day in our lives."

"Gentlemen, this old fool says this is a hell of a big day in our lives."

The men laugh.

"They are very happy to hear that, Sir."

"Tell the boys that Mr. Henry Ford the Second, the owner of this place, is going to visit us. Tell them Mr. Ford is the big Baas. He owns the plant and everything in it."

"Gentlemen, old Bradley says this Ford is a big bastard. He owns everything in this building, which means you as well."

A voice came out of the crowd:

"Is he a bigger fool than Bradley?"

"Certainly ... (groping for words) ... he is a Makulu Baas."

I loved that one!

"Mr. 'Baas' Bradley says most certainly Mr. Ford is bigger than him. In fact Mr. Ford is the grandmother baas of them all ... that's what he said to me."

"Styles, tell the boys that when Mr. Henry Ford comes into the plant I want them to look happy. We will slow down the speed of the line so that they can sing and smile while they are working."

"Gentlemen, he says that when the door opens and this grandmother walks in you must see to it that you are wearing masks of smiles. Hide your true feelings, brothers. You must sing. The joyous songs of the days of old before we had fools like this one next to me to worry about." (To Mr. Bradley)

"Yes, sir."

"Say to them, Styles, that they must try to impress Mr. Henry Ford that they are better than those monkeys in his own country, those niggers in Harlem who know nothing but strike, strike." Yo! I like that one too.

"Gentlemen, he says we must remember, when Mr. Ford walks in, that we are South African monkeys, not American monkeys. South African monkeys are much better trained ..."

Before I could even finish, a voice was shouting out of the crowd:

"He's talking shit!" I had to be careful!

(Servile and full of smiles as he turns to Bradley.)

"No, sir! The men say that they are much too happy to behave like those American monkeys."26

The writer of this play, himself a White South African, seems fully aware that wearing masks among Blacks is a fact of life. It has become a matter of survival. Blacks in this play verbalized their honest feeling about "Baas" Bradley because they knew quite well that he did not understand a word of what they said and Styles, the interpreter, would not dare convey their true feelings. Black servants have learnt from past experience that the best way to survive a White man's wrath is to say those things which he wants to hear. For instance, Styles in this play accepts that Blacks are to be compared to monkeys: black servants will always say "Yes" when in actual fact they disagree. This, according to Reverend Baartman, is the mask that must be removed if Blacks hope to become co-reconcilers with God.

Baartman also observes that the White man's attempt at reconciliation - detente - is hypocritical. He maintains that:

**The reconciling hypocrite [White man]
comes to work in the attitude of arrogance.
He tends to look down at certain things
and people. He has all the answers and**

never really listens to the questions
[raised by Blacks].²⁷

White arrogance is, according to Baartman, a barrier to healthy Black-White relations. Mr. "Baas" Bradley is in our estimation a typical example of such White arrogance. He does not hesitate to call Blacks monkeys. He seems to be absolutely convinced that Blacks are happy under White rule. Obviously, such an attitude towards other races is an obstacle to genuine reconciliation.

The Black and White inferior-superior syndrome manifests, according to Baartman, ~~un~~belief in Yahweh. He argues as follows:

It is difficult for this person [the hypocrite i.e. Black and White] to do many things in terms of reconciliation because of his unbelief. A hypocrite cannot believe in Jesus Christ and remain within hypocrisy. Belief in Christ and his mission is something that requires complete commitment to Jesus Christ. ~~Commitment~~ Commitment to Jesus means believing in your fellow men. Those who seek to bring about reconciliation must believe in the people they wish to reconcile. In this presence and absence they must have absolute confidence in them as God's children.²⁸

To be a co-reconciler, as we noted before, requires faith, that is, trust in God as the liberator and reconciler of humanity. This trust manifests itself on the horizontal

level in faith in one's neighbour. Like the story of Cain and Abel, one cannot offer sacrifices to God while killing one's brother. Man can never say that he loves God when he hates his brother. Commitment to Christ through whom God reconciles the estranged man implies and presupposes commitment to one's fellow man. The White man's arrogance and the Black man's inferiority complex do not commit them to each other. It is also questionable, in the light of what we have said, whether either of them is indeed committed to God the Reconciler.

For Blacks who have this "dehumanizing" inferiority complex to participate in God's work of reconciling man to divine fellowship presupposes, as we pointed out in chapter three, liberation from self-rejection and self-hatred. Only after such a liberation can the Blacks become engaged in bringing their fellow South Africans to fellowship with God, the ground of their being. The death and resurrection of Jesus provides a solid ground for their new knowledge that they are not "monkeys" but men with dignity and self-respect. Their discipleship to the "Black Christ" entrusts them with the enormous task of liberating and reconciling Mr. "Boss" Bradley to God and to themselves. This point is vividly made by Dr.

Manas Buthelezi:

Does it occur to Black people that they have an evangelistic duty of getting the White man out of the spiritual darkness which prevents him from seeing that the Black man is his daily life brother? God will ask: Black man, where were you when the White man abandoned my Gospel and went to destruction? When the Black man answers, "I was only a kaffir, how could I dare preach to my baas?" God will say: Was Christ's resurrection not sufficient to liberate you, Black man, from that kind of spiritual and psychological death? Go to eternal condemnation, Black man, for you did not have the courage to save your White brother.²⁹

Blacks cannot hope to be co-reconcilers with Yahweh without being reconciled to their neighbours, of whom the Whites are representatives. They must realize that the fact of Christ on the cross is not a sentimental commentary on race relations,³⁰ but that, as Cone points out, "it reveals the depths of divine suffering for the reconciliation of enslaved humanity."³¹ The cross therefore symbolizes God's struggle against the principalities that enslaved man in order to bring man to fellowship with Himself. Man is therefore not a "cheap monkey" but a creature that cost God very dearly. It is in the context of this costly act of reconciliation that Dr. Buthelezi calls upon Blacks to take courage and become mediators, as a community, of divine reconciliation through their faith in God the Reconciler.

The notion of co-reconciliation, that is, to be a partner with God in the work of reconciliation, means that man is the agent of God's forgiveness of the wrong-doer. Through the action of forgiveness God makes possible the reparation of the broken fellowship; forgiveness removes the barriers to fellowship. Therefore, Dr. Buthelezi's urging of Black South African Christians to engage in an "evangelistic" work among White South Africans means that Black Christians are to proclaim the Good News of forgiveness to White South Africa. In Matthew 6:14-15 Jesus tells his disciples: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you don't forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." In Matthew 18:23-35, Jesus says to Peter:

... the Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." And out of pity for him the lord of that servant forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seized him by the throat and said, "Pay what you owe! So his

fellow servant fell down and besought him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me, and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt.

Jesus ends this parable with the following caution:

So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

God's forgiveness and that of man's are linked. Yahweh's divine forgiveness of man, as the parable demonstrates, entrusts him with the responsibility of forgiving others. In order to be a "forgiver" of one's neighbour, the forgiver must believe that God has, through Christ, forgiven his sins; and must accept himself on the basis of God's forgiveness. In other words, man must forgive himself before he can be "forgiver" of his neighbour.

Forgiveness is conditional upon repentance, a word which "involves a change of mind and intention".³² Forgiveness, which always follows repentance, presupposes in the repenting

man a sound ethical and humanitarian change of conduct; the forgiven party must admit and accept his wrong-doing. The parable of the prodigal son illustrates this point. The son is forgiven by his father when he shows repentance of his old ways. The same point is also made by the Old Testament prophets: they maintained that no sacrifice was of any avail unless it was accompanied by repentance.

What is the relevance of this to the point we are trying to make? Blacks, whom Dr. Buthelezi calls upon to be co-reconcilers with God, must forgive White South Africans their sins. While they proclaim God's universal forgiveness, they must, in their concrete situation, forgive their fellow White citizens the past years of oppression. If they do not, they will be like the unforgiving servant. One needs to acknowledge, however, that for Blacks to forgive and forget the humiliation of White racism is not easy. And yet Blacks should "look again at Christian salvation as expressed forgiveness. God has forgiven us our sins not because we deserve or have earned His forgiveness, but because He loves us in spite of our fallenness."³³ The capacity to forgive those who have sought to destroy one is possible only in the context of liberation. One has to experience personal liberation in order to love one's enemies. This is why we said earlier that liberation

is a precondition for reconciliation. Dr. Buthelezi illuminates this point:

Man's acceptance of God's acceptance must include the acceptance of all things which God accepts. What does God? He accepts the objects he has created as being worthy of mediating his grace to man ... in his forgiveness God accepts fallen man into a living fellowship with him.³⁴

Since God has accepted all men, and that includes White South Africans, Black Christians have an obligation to accept Whites. This means forgiving them their trespasses as God forgives Blacks their trespasses. It is, Dr. Buthelezi continues, "in accepting what God has accepted, that man accepts other men into his fellowship."³⁵

But for the White community to be forgiven is conditional upon their repentance. Repentance in its theological sense means much more than a mere change of mind: it involves a re-orientation of one's life, and the adoption of a new ethical line of conduct.³⁶ The true meaning of repentance is illustrated in the parables of the prodigal son, the lost coin and the lost sheep (Luke 15). Total reorientation of White South African life and ethical conduct will mean the abandonment of the Apartheid system. However, such a radical re-orientation will only be possible if and when Whites accept in faith the

Christ-event. This acceptance of divine liberation "should lead the White man to repent the sin of racism. He should realize that the only way to God is through reconciliation with the brother."³⁷ Through this faith, White persons will be enabled to repent and seek, without feeling shame and humiliation, forgiveness from Blacks whom they have derogatorily referred to as "Kaffir". Such repentance is unthinkable under the Apartheid status quo. However, the White man's sincere repentance should not place the Black man on a pedestal of self-righteousness. On the contrary, it should humble him and open his heart "with an honest desire to express true forgiveness."³⁸ Both White and Black should repent and forgive one another on their knees.

Within the context of liberation, repentance, as a precondition of forgiveness, does not mean that Whites will be humiliated to compensate for the years of Black humiliation. There is, however, no doubt that this new relationship of love between Black and White South Africans will have implications for the socio-economic and political status of the rich. The life style adopted by the White Christian groups called the self-taxers is an example of such changes. The groups are found in several South Africa cities. Their system of existence is summarized by one of them as follows:

Their concern is to tax themselves on a part of their income which they explain is not due to them. In two ways the South African social system delivers money to Whites, and a few better off Blacks, which is really due to the ordinary black worker. First, it pays the unskilled worker too small a portion of the money paid out in wages ... Secondly, the effect of the job reservation is to establish the same sort of proportions in industry, because the black is not allowed to compete for the better work. The self-taxers will not accept the benefit of this money unjustly delivered to them, and voluntarily tax themselves handing the amount to Black development agencies as "restitution". The self-tax is without strings, for the recipients do not have to account to the payers for its use, but to their Black community.³⁹

This move by the self-taxers reminds one of the radical ethical conduct adopted by the repented Zacchaeus:

Sir! I will give half my belonging to the poor; and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay him back four times as much.
(Luke 19:8)

The self-taxers illustrate our point that to be reconciled with God and with one's neighbour includes putting oneself and all that belongs to one at the disposal of our neighbour's needs. Zacchaeus could not therefore be reconciled with God and with his fellow Jews without a significant change in relation to his wealth. Reconciliation means to love one's

neighbour as oneself. A life of reconciliation is a life that is informed by Christ's office as a priest who mediates health between Blacks and Whites in a racist society where they are "disabled spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically by the sickness and cancerous growth of racism."⁴⁰

The Ekklesia, therefore, as a body of those assembled as a result of God's reconciliation of the world with Himself, is characterized by this office of reconciliation. It is called upon to co-operate with God in reconciling man to Yahweh and man to his neighbour.

(ii) The Church: The Reconciling Community

The Ekklesia is a body of persons gathered and bound together by the common faith that Jesus is Lord; that through the act of atonement God saves man from alienation and opens to him a spiritual and existential life of friendship with Himself. Christians are therefore those who have consciously declared their intent to accept the divine call to discipleship; a discipleship that includes participating in the liberation-reconciliation activity of Yahweh in the world; they are by definition those who are reconciled with God and with one another.

Through the Sacrament of Baptism, the individual converts

are admitted into the fellowship of those who have committed themselves to be reconciled with God and with one another. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is a celebration of their being reconciled with God and with one another. As a Church, they are a historical witness to what God has done for the World, and they are also an embodiment of the message of the Gospel, namely that through the Christ-event there exists now the possibility of man's reconciliation with God and with his neighbour.

The Ekklesia, therefore, 'is the community where divine reconciliation can be experienced and through which God's mediating concern affects men and women in their life situations. Roelf Meyer of South Africa observed that the Church in that country has lost its vocation to be a reconciling community. In describing its failure to mediate divine reconciliation, he refers to it as a "sanctuary":

Hitherto the Church has been seen as a sanctuary. It is regarded as a place of refuge in a hostile environment for protecting and nourishing the Christians. The Church was seen as a sacred vessel of salvationist resources not really available elsewhere and its mission was to extend its unique riches to those who were willing to join it.⁴¹

Meyer's assessment of the conventional Church in South Africa

is echoed by another South African, Charles Vella-Vicencio, who observes that:

The institutional Church in South Africa has become captive by the status quo and dances to the tune of the White elite. St. Bernard's words spoken in the twelfth century of the papacy apply too well to the twentieth century ecclesiastical institution - a successor not to Peter but to Constantine ... The institutional Church in South Africa has accepted the values and the ethos of the unjust society in which she finds herself - her religion is no longer prophetic but civil.⁴²

These passages demonstrate that the conventional Church in South Africa has, through the pursuit of political power by proximity with the rich and powerful, departed from the original purpose of its existence, namely, to be a co-reconciler with Yahweh. Instead of mediating the Gospel of reconciliation between the oppressor and the oppressed, that is, between Whites and Blacks, it has joined the ranks of the powerful of the land. A new image of the Church, of a Church that has awakened to its reconciling responsibility, should be put forth. It should be an image that reflects the Church's function of reconciliation. Meyer suggests that, rather than be a sanctuary, the Church should see itself as a "sign". He writes:

The new image of the Church is not that

of a sanctuary but of a sign. This offers a radical new starting point for the concept of the Church and its mission. The Church as a sign points beyond itself and has an impact outside itself in the world. Unlike a sanctuary, the Church, as a sign, is not an enclosure but a disclosure; it performs its function not by containing, by communicating, not by annexation, but by representation.⁴³

Meyer goes on to comment on the significance of "sign" as a new image for the Church:

The emphasis of the Church as a sign is not to convert people to its own way of thinking and to its structures, but rather to testify and co-operate in God's saving love in the world. Witness is thus not for the sake of conversion but conversion for the sake of witness and emphasis is not on decision in the Church but on Christ in his work ... The Church must not be based on hierarchy but on brotherhood; partnership ...⁴⁴

Meyer's analogy of Ekklesia with 'sign' is, however, problematic. The word "sign" evokes an impersonal image and therefore conveys an impersonal meaning. A road sign that reads "Johannesburg", directing motorists to Johannesburg, does not in any way actively participate in the affairs of that city. It would seem more appropriate to see the Ekklesia as a "symbol". According to Erika Dinkler-von Schubert, "Symbol is a pattern or object which points to an invisible metaphysical reality and participates in it. In this participa-

tion symbols differ from myths, for the latter tell about the metaphysical beyond but do not represent it!"⁴⁵ The Church is a symbol of God's reconciliation in so far as it is a body of the people of God whose being is based on this act of reconciliation; the Ekklesia is at the same time an embodiment of that act. Christians are therefore not only those who speak the truth about what God did and continues to do for men; they also represent and actively participate in that truth.

While we would rather refer to the Church as a symbol than as a sign, as Meyer did, we are in full agreement with the meaning he gives to "sign" when applied to the Church. His point is that the Church is not a sanctuary, that is, a place to which one escapes from the anxieties and cares of this world, but rather an assembly where the affairs of men are critically reflected upon in the light of the content of Christian faith; where the South African racial conflicts are scrutinized from the perspective of the Christian faith.

In recent years, some Christians in South Africa have attempted to adopt a life style which reflects their being a Church. They have attempted to be a community of people reconciled with one another, that is to say, a community that bears witness to its vertical reconciliation with Yahweh through the reconciliation of its members. St. Antony is a

congregation in Johannesburg where Black and White Christians see themselves as mediators of the Gospel of reconciliation in the racist socio-political status quo. Rob Roberts describes St. Antony as

A congregation of about 40 adults of all races that meets on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. for worship services in which there is considerable congregational participation through designing the service, leading parts of it, or discussing the sermon. Everyone stops for tea afterwards. They sing in all languages ... Each week there are several house meetings either in the immediate vicinity of impoverished and run down Vrededorp, or in one of Johannesburg's or Soweto suburbs. These informal meetings have been invaluable means of enabling people to know and care for one another across the barriers imposed by society and through the attitudes developed by ignorance.⁴⁶

Similar efforts to engage the Church in the task of racial reconciliation have been made by the South African Institute of Race Relations in collaboration with the Christian Institute. Individual representatives from these organizations have been, with the permission of the Elementary School authorities and of the parents, allotted a few hours a week in White schools where they teach White children to respect other races, especially the Black race of South Africa. They have produced a five-point pamphlet which deals with the everyday South

African sensitive racial issues. The pamphlet is entitled

Know my Name, and it reads:

(1) We know that the commonly used term "non-White" is negative and unwelcome. When we refer to individual people we can usually leave out their group label. It is not necessary to say "a non-White helped the woman with her parcel". Say "a man helped the woman ..."

(2) Do not say "boy" or "girl" when speaking to adults; use "man" or "woman". Flat cleaner, gardener, kitchen help, dustman are acceptable alternatives. How would you feel if you were a mother of four, or a respected elder in your community, and your employer referred to you as "my wash-girl" or the "milkboy".

(3) Do not use offensive group names. Stop your friends from using them too. Never use such words as kaffir, munt, wog, hairy back, rooinek, coolie, hotnot, yid or goy, or others like these.

(4) When speaking to someone whose name you do not know, say "Excuse me" or ask the person's name; do not call a stranger, "Hey Jim!"

(5) Remember that a person's name is a most personal possession. Know your employees' names and surnames. If they have clock numbers at work, use their actual names as well when speaking or writing about them. The use of proper names and courtesy titles common in our language, such as Mr. and Mrs., Dr. or Sir, has nothing whatever to do with race or colour, wealth or poverty.⁴⁷

The efforts of an apartheid South Africa, such as those

of St. Antony and the educational program of the South African Institute of Race Relations and of the Christian Institute arise from the conviction that the Christian community has been called to mediate the Gospel of reconciliation in a racially torn South Africa; that the only hope for a secure South Africa is not to be found in military power or in the skills of political diplomacy, but rather in reconciliation. Theological reconciliation, therefore, means in South Africa the overcoming of the racial polarization which divides God's people. Reverend Canon Burgess Carr observes that:

At the theological level, the demand for unity is a demand to overcome the polarisations that divide God's family of men. As such, the struggle for justice and reconciliation in the world is integral to the call to unity among Christians. What we truly seek is not the unity of Church as an end in itself, but in order that the Church may be an agent of God's for the liberation, justice and reconciliation among men and women. It follows naturally that therefore the struggle against racialism and apartheid, tribalism and colonialism are not external to the demands of the Gospel for unity.⁴⁸

The Christian opposition to apartheid is therefore in accordance with the will of God who, as we pointed out earlier, loved mankind to the extent that He was Incarnate to reconcile creation with Himself and man with man. To oppose, with love, the forces which polarize and divide people, be it on the basis

of race, class or sex, is an obligation entrusted to the
Christians by God.

NOTES

- 1 B.A. Khoapa, ed., Black Review 1972 (Durban: Black Community Programmes, 1973), p. 40.
- 2 James H. Cone, God of the Oppressed (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. 229.
- 3 Ibid. p. 228.
- 4 F.J. Taylor, "Reconciliation", A Theological Word Book of the Bible, ed. A. Richardson (London: S.C.M. Press, 1957), p. 185.
- 5 I. Noko, The Communion of Saints from an African Perspective. S.T.M. unpublished thesis, submitted to the Lutheran Faculty of Theology (Saskatoon: 1974), p. 16.
- 6 Ibid. p. 18.
- 7 Ibid. p. 20.
- 8 Ibid. p. 21.
- 9 E.C. Blackman, "Reconciliation", The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. G.A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 17.
- 10 Cone, op.cit. p. 228.
- 11 H.T. Kerr, ed., Readings in Christian Thought (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 83.
- 12 E.G. Jay, Christ Died for Us (London: S.P.C.K., 1958), p. 18.
- 13 Mokgethi Motlhabi, "Black Theology and Authority", Black Theology: The South African Voice, ed. Basil Moore (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1973), p. 127.
- 14 R.R. Ruether, The Radical Kingdom: The Western Experience of Messianic Hope (New York: Paulist Press, 1970), p. 2.
- 15 Cone, op.cit. p. 233.

- 16 Mokgethi Motlhabi, "Black Theology: A Personal View", Black Theology: The South African Voice, op.cit. p. 77.
- 17 See Appendix III, pp. 204-205.
- 18 See Appendix III, p. 204.
- 19 See Appendix III, p. 200.
- 20 See Appendix III, p. 205.
- 21 See Appendix III, p. 205.
- 22 S. Mogoba, "Detente", Detente, ed. T. Mbanjwa (Durban: Black Community Programmes, 1975), p. 15.
- 23 A.J. Tembela, "Detente - An Analysis of the Condition Necessary for the Success of Detente", Detente, op.cit. p. 11.
- 24 See Appendix III, p. 205.
- 25 See Appendix III, p. 207.
- 26 A. Fugard, Sizwe Bansi is Dead (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 6-7.
- 27 See Appendix III, p. 208.
- 28 See Appendix III, p. 207.
- 29 See Appendix III, p. 203-204.
- 30 Cone, op.cit. p. 236.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 J.D. Roberts, Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press,), p. 115.
- 33 Ibid. p. 117.
- 34 Manas Buthelezi, "Theological Grounds for an Ethic of Hope", Black Theology: The South African Voice, op.cit., p. 152.
- 35 Ibid.

- 36 A. Richardson, "Repent", A Theological Word Book of the Bible, op.cit. p. 191..
- 37 Roberts, op.cit. p. 121.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Cedric Mayson, ed., Pro Veritate, Vol. 14, No. 8 (January 1976), p. 9.
- 40 Roberts, op.cit. p. 121.
- 41 Roelf Meyer, ed., "The Mission of the Church to the World", Pro Veritate, Vol. 13, No. 2 (April 1975), p. 4.
- 42 Charles Vella-Vicencio, ed., "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church", Pro Veritate, Vol. 14, No. 11 (April 1976), p. 10.
- 43 Meyer, op.cit. p. 4.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Erika Dinkler-von Schubert, "Symbol", A Handbook of Christian Theology, ed. Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen (New York: New American Library, 1974), pp. 358-359.
- 46 Rob Roberts, "A Church for All People", Pro Veritate, Vol. 14, No. 11 (April 1975), p. 14.
- 47 The pamphlet was distributed to schools by the Race Courtesy Council, located at 68 De Korte Street, Braanfontein, Johannesburg.
- 48 See Appendix III, p. 211.

CONCLUSION

Christian theology was, in this dissertation, defined as an attempt to understand and articulate man's raison d'etre in the light of the Christian Gospel, from the perspective of a given historical and cultural experience. That is, theology, as human discourse about Yahweh and His relationship to man, is limited by the socio-historical, cultural and political circumstances of any given community. This point is underscored by theologian James H. Cone, who maintains that

Although the revelation of God may be universal and eternal, theological talk about that revelation is filtered through human experience, which is limited by social realities. Therefore, not only the questions which theologians ask but the answers given in their discourse about the Gospel are limited by their social perceptions and thus largely a reflection of the material condition of a given society.¹

This, we maintained, means that all theological statements are by nature contextual. And on the basis of this observation, regarding Christian theology in general, we proceeded to demonstrate the contextual nature of Black Theology; that it develops at the point where the tradition of Jerusalem meets and holds a dialogue with the Zeitgeist of Black Consciousness. For this reason Black Theology cannot claim to be theologia eterna, valid for all people. On the contrary it recognizes its limits due to the

socio-historical factors. This means, therefore, that all Black theological statements are limited by the social factors that constitute the State of Blackness.

This "limitedness" of Black theological articulation applies also to Black Theology's conception of God. The question Who is God? or "What is God doing?"², as Dr. Allan Boesak chose to phrase the question, and the answer to this question are "filtered through"³ the Black man's experience, namely the painful experience of one without power. The Zeitgeist of Black consciousness is characterized by the unanimous cry for liberation from oppression and for a free interpersonal relationship that transcends the racial lines. The attempt by Black theologians to arrive at the Knowledge of God from within the socio-historical limits of Black people's cry for liberation and racial reconciliation, has led them to rediscover and re-emphasize the Biblical interpretation that God is Liberator and Reconciler. We contend therefore that Black Theology's conception of God is very close to the prophetic and the apostolic conception of God.

The Black theological definition of Yahweh as Liberator and Reconciler is arrived at not through a metaphysical meditation on the dogma about God, or on God in heaven divorced from terre des Hommes (Man and his world) but through an encounter with Him in Black South African history that is symbolized by "Soweto". He is defined as such in so far as He reveals His presence, so to speak, in the dusty streets of Soweto. The question asked by Dr. Boesak "What is God doing?" illuminates our point that it is

through His past and present actions that Black theologians conclude that God is Liberator and Reconciler. Concepts such as "Black Christ" and "God as Comrade" serve to demonstrate Black Theology's existential conception of God.

The God espoused in Black Theology, we contend, differs from that depicted in the Afrikaner theological tradition. He is not a racially exclusive God, but one who is concerned about the liberation of Black and White South Africans. Black Theology's conception of God is summed well by Black theologian Desmond Tutu when he observed that:

Yes, the oppressed must be ~~set~~^{set} free because our God of the exodus, the liberation God who is encountered in the Bible for the first time as a liberator striding forth with an outstretched arm to liberate the rabble of slaves, to turn them into people for his possession, for the sake of all his creation. This liberation is absolutely crucial for both the oppressor and the oppressed, for freedom is indivisible. One section of the community can't be truly whole while another is denied a share in that freedom. And we are involved in the black liberation struggle because we are also deeply concerned about White liberation...God wants to set us all free from all that dehumanizes us together, to set us free for service of one another in a more just and more open society in South Africa. It will be a society, where true peace, justice and righteousness will prevail, where we will have real reconciliation because we will all be persons whose God-given dignity is respected, where we will be free to carry out the obligations and responsibilities for being human.⁴

Therefore, the God of South African Theology is one through whom and by whom the racially estranged South African society

can be freed and united. Black Theology's conception of God therefore resembles that of the Biblical Theology.

By way of conclusion let it be pointed out that we do not pretend that this study exhausts Black Theology's conception of God. We have merely introduced the discussion. Much more remains to be done. We, however, feel that our dissertation constitutes an original contribution to scholarship because no major work has been devoted to this issue, except for some short essays.

NOTES

- 1 J.H. Cone, God of the Oppressed (New York: The Seaburg Press, 1975), p. 43.
- 2 A Boesak Farewell to Innocence (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok. 1976), p. 68.
- 3 Cone Ibid
- 4 D. Tutu, "God-given dignity and the quest for liberation in the light of the South African dilemma". Liberation (Johannesburg: S.A.C.C. 1976), p. 58-59.

APPENDIX I

An Excerpt From The Report Released by The Le Grange-Schlebusch Commission in 1975

Chapter VIII "Black Theology"

BLACK POWER

8.1 In Chapter XVI of its Fourth Interim Report, the Commission reported on the phenomenon of Black Power. In summing up, the commission concluded that chapter with the following general observations:

- (a) "Black Power", as defined and popularised by Stokeley Carmichael, is a strategy used on an international level to bring about polarisation and confrontation between the White nations of the world and the peoples of the so-called Third World.
- (b) This concept was brought to South Africa by the University Christian Movement (UCM). It found fertile soil already prepared by movements like the PAC. The UCM assisted in the establishment of the South African Students Organisation (SASO).
- (c) SASO's philosophy not only closely resembles the philosophy of Black Power as expounded by Carmichael: its leaders, and the leaders of NUSAS also, even quoted him almost verbatim in order to explain the philosophy.
- (d) NUSAS leaders, the most important of whom being Neville Curtis, played an important role in making it possible for Black Power, with its vast potential for creating a race war, to be established in South Africa. In doing this these leaders outwitted the initial considerable opposition within the ranks of NUSAS.
- (e) A very alarming aspect of this philosophy is to be found in its reliance upon the writings of Frantz Fanon, which appear to glorify the use of brutal physical violence against Whites.

(f) Another alarming aspect of this philosophy is the fact that it is based on Marxian dialectics in which the view is held that all change is the result of confrontation between opposing groups in society, and which accepts revolution as being "natural and inevitable".

(g) Continued promotion of this philosophy of confrontation can only lead to a dangerous situation in South Africa, holding very little imaginable benefit and a great deal of misery for all population groups and indeed for every individual South African.

8.2 Black Theology.

8.2.1 In the course of its inquiry into the activities of organizations that want to show their Christianity by their names, for instance the Christian Institute of Southern Africa and the University Christian Movement, the Commission frequently came across references to the phenomenon of Black Theology. It was particularly noticeable that it was precisely the organisations that are working for so-called "change" that propagate this concept.

8.2.2 As the Commission doubted whether the content of a Black Theology as propagated by these organisations was based on scripture in every respect, and felt that the characteristics it manifested were more those of a revolutionary ideology, and since it is possible to launch a subtle and dangerous subversive attack with the help of Black Theology, particularly through the Bantu churches, on the existing political, social and economic order in the Republic, and in view of the fact that the churches and religion still constitute a delicate and sensitive area in South African national life, evidence was heard on this aspect from various theologians representing various denominations, as well as a representative of the Bantu separatist churches.

8.2.3 Summarised, the evidence on this phenomenon presents the picture given in the paragraphs that follow.

8.3.1 There was considerable confusion at first about the content and aims of Black Theology. For instance, Die Kerkbode of 14 April 1971 (page 509) observed, in connection with an article on "Black Theology" by Gabriel Setiloane in the South African Outlook of February 1971:

"It sums up our traditional missionary policy most effectively."

Another periodical, however, "Woord en Daad" of June 1971, had this to say:

"It is necessary, of course, that the black people's circumstances should be taken into account, that liberation through Christ should be fearlessly propounded and applied by the church, and that justice should be done to the concept of diversity, but a black church that denies unity in Christ and does not take into account the diversity of nations (not races) cannot be defended in any circumstances. Unity in Christ must be manifested organisationally also."

This periodical therefore sees no justification for "... a church that is intended for black people only and has no ties with historical Christendom."

8.3.2 This confusion about or conflicting assessments of the propaganda for Black Theology in the Republic may be ascribed to the following factors in particular: Black Theology, as it is propagated, is often thought to be synonymous with concepts such as "Africanisation" and "indigenisation". This generalisation sometimes gives rise to serious confusion, since the latter two concepts relate to the theological efforts of Bantu theologians to theologize the Christian religion in terms which can fit in with the Bantu's cultural milieu. The policy of "Africanisation" and "indigenisation" which is applied by the Gereformeerde Kerk in the Republic is, according to evidence, an attempt to encourage the Bantu to retain his own identity in his theology and his church organisation, with the Bible as his basis, rather than to force him into a Western pattern as regards his Christian religion.

8.3.3 A second possible reason for the confusion about the intentions of Black Theology was (and possibly still is among certain people) the fact that the different aspects of the phenomenon were not all properly understood by its reviewers.

8.3.4 Factors that influenced "Black Theology" in the Republic.

8.3.4.1 Towards the end of the previous decade, various movements and organisations gave rise to the propagation of Black Theology in the United States of America. The original idea of a Black Theology came mainly from the circles of the Black Power-Black Panther movement, the Student Non-Violent co-ordination Committee (S.N.C.C.), and the Students for a Democratic Society - S.D.S. The Negro leader, Stokeley Carmichael, was the first to argue the need for a Black Theology. Carmichael was one of the leading figures in the American New Left movement, the "Prime Minister" of the "Black Panthers" and, for a time,

(1) the leading figure in the SNCC. The SDS, which emerged from the sixties, liaised and co-operated closely with the SNCC from the outset, especially while the latter was still operating under the chairmanship of Carmichael. Herbert Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man was compulsory reading for the members of the SDS who wanted to propel the existing order in the USA radically to the left and eventually overthrow it by means of Student Power.

8.3.4.2 The Black Panther movement, which was founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, California, evolved from Communist ideology and from the idea that the Black man had to discover his own human dignity and cast off the yoke of the oppressor (the Whites), developed militantly, particularly under the influence of the ideas of Malcolm X. Newton writes as follows, inter alia, in an organ of the Black Panthers:

"Only with the power of the gun can the black masses halt the terror and brutality perpetuated against them by the armed racist power structure."

This statement by Newton justifies the conclusion that the part played by the Black Panthers or their leaders in the propaganda for a Black Theology in the United States of America could certainly not have been solely for peaceful; purely nationalist or theological considerations. The same conclusion, surely, also applies to the propaganda that the Black man must discover his own human dignity, since, in this propaganda campaign, the Black man is held up as the "oppressed" and the White as the "oppressor".

8.3.4.3 It is noteworthy, then, that the discovery by the Black man of his own dignity vis-à-vis his oppressor (the White man), is the recurrent basic theme of Black Theology, the emphasis always being on "Black" and not on "theology". It is clear, therefore, that this theology is employed as a means to an end. Although Professor Preston Williams of Boston University sees in Black Theology the possibility of "... authentic freedom for both white and black people", he does on the other hand emphasize that "... It is the affirmation of black humanity that emancipates black people from white racism ..."

(1) 8.3.4.4 It is difficult to accept, therefore, that a Black Theology is propagated without any ulterior motives, especially if the ideology of the circles which gave birth to the idea of a "need" for Black Theology is borne in mind. Furthermore, according to all the theologians who gave evidence before the

Commission, it goes without saying that the Scriptural validity of "black" or "white" or "brown" theology must be seriously questioned, since the Gospel of the Bible is first and foremost concerned with the redemption of sinners through Jesus Christ and not with racist ideology.

8.3.4.5 It is clear from the above that the initial propaganda for a Black Theology in America was not inspired by the church and religion but was much rather politically inspired. Although Gabriel Setiloane wants to place Black Theology propaganda in the Republic on a different basis from that in America, the propagandists for a Black Theology in the Republic employ the typical American theme of the black man's discovery of his own human dignity and even the same slogan, "Black is Beautiful". Some of the propaganda publications disseminated in the Republic also hold up the Whites as the "oppressors" and the Non-Whites as the "oppressed". It is difficult to believe, therefore, that the nature and pattern of and propaganda for a Black Theology in the Republic stand completely apart from the American.

8.3.4.6 When, for instance, the propaganda publication, "Towards a Black Theology", which was distributed by the UCM, is studied, the influence of the thinking of Professor James H. Cone, Associate Professor at the Union Theological Seminary, New York, is clearly apparent. Two of his works in particular, namely "Black Theology and Black Power" and "A Black Theology of Liberation", have evidently had a great influence on the propaganda for Black Theology being made in South Africa at present. A lecture by Professor Cone was handed out at the seminar on Black Theology held in Roodepoort from 8 to 12 March 1971. In his writings, Cone consistently tries to interpret the Gospel in socio-political-economic terms. The following two excerpts from the above-mentioned works illustrate the spirit in which Cone propagates Black Theology. He says, among other things:

"The religion of the Black man can be a message about the position of the Blacks and about Jesus Christ only if it explicitly teaches the fundamental doctrines of Black Power. That is why Black Theology seeks to turn the religion of the Blacks into the religion of Black Power." (As published in a Dutch source).

8.3.4.7 In his work "A Black Theology of Liberation", in discussing God's love and justice in a chapter entitled "God in Black Theology", Cone makes the following pronouncement:

"Black Theology cannot accept a view of God which does not represent him as being for blacks and thus against whites. Living in a world of white oppressors, black people have no time for a neutral God ... There is no use for a God who loves whites the same as blacks. We have had too much of white love, the love that tells blacks to turn the other cheek or go the second mile. What we need is the divine love as expressed in Black Power which is the power of black people to destroy their oppressors, here and now, by any means at their disposal. Unless Gos is participating in this holy activity, we must reject his love".

8.3.5 The ideas of Rudolf Bultman.

8.3.5.1 When the document "Towards a Black Theology" compiled by Dr. Basil Moore and distributed by the University Christian Movement is studied, the influence of the German authority on the New Testament, Rudolf Bultman, is clearly apparent, according to the evidence.

8.3.5.2 In his attempt to make the New Testament of the Bible comprehensible to modern people, Bultman distinguishes between "truth" and "myth" in the New Testament. According to him, everything in the New Testament refers to a supernatural God, a heaven, a life after death, and the future kingdom of God is purely a myth. By calling it mythology, Bultmann lowers the message of Christ to a purely temporal and human level, without any perspective of eternity. God is therefore a mythological concept and does not really exist, so that Jesus is not the Son of God who became a human being. The New Testament, as a book of the revelation of God to man, is reduced to the level of a story about "the Jew" Jesus who succeeded in a very extraordinary way in improving the world. The New Testament is therefore merely a collection of ethical or moralistic precepts to be followed by human beings. In these terms, then, there is an essential relevance for modern man in the message of the New Testament.

8.3.5.3 The line of thinking referred to in the previous paragraph forms the main basis of the propaganda for a Black Theology as we find it in the document "Towards a Black Theology". Jesus is depicted as a poor, oppressed Jew who, like the rest of his people, was in revolt against the colonial power of the Romans. Thus "Jesus becomes of relevance to the poor, oppressed, colonialised black people in the Republic who are in revolt against the colonial power of the white man". By implication, therefore, the White Christian churches in the Republic do not understand

the "truth" of the Bible's message and can therefore not offer Non-White Christians a home. These White churches allegedly do not offer Non-Whites a relevant message but are rather used "to justify the oppression of the Non-Whites on Biblical grounds". (Efforts to make the Non-White Christian Churches independent are not mentioned).

8.3.5.4 As regards Bultmann's influence, the following observations were made in the evidence:

Bultmann's thinking is not founded on Christianity, showing rather the influence of the existentialist philosophy of the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, who is pro-Communist. Like the Marxists, Sartre fights for the liberation of the working classes and regards the classless society as a prerequisite for the total liberation of man. Colonialism, anti-Semitism and every form or supposed form of oppression must be mercilessly exposed since they place human beings at the mercy of one another and violate human freedom.

According to Sartre, man's responsibility is not confined to himself and his own actions but goes much further; it embraces not only those in our immediate vicinity but virtually the whole of mankind. Sartre denies the existence of God and sees man himself as both a devil and a god, since man invariably does both good and evil simultaneously. What Sartre's assertion actually amounts to is that man is neither god nor devil but man. It is clear, therefore, that Bultmann's thinking stems from Sartre's existentialist philosophy, especially in view of the fact that Bultmann, in his interpretation of the New Testament, negates, and virtually denies, the divinity of Christ, placing the emphasis on Jesus the human being. In terms of Sartre, therefore, the Supreme Being is pure fiction. "In God man projects his yearnings for Paradise and for absolute knowledge". From the foregoing it is clear by implication that to Bultmann, the divinity of Jesus is a "myth", his humanity being the "truth" in the New Testament. If, therefore, propagandists for a Black Theology were to build on Bultmann's ideas, they could justify themselves for "Nationalising and socialising" the teachings of Jesus so as to make them serve as a basis for a "theology of liberation".

8.3.5.5 These few observations suffice to show clearly that a serious question-mark must be placed over this scriptural exegesis as employed by the propagandists for Black Theology under the influence of the thinking of Bultmann and Sartre, to justify Black Theology.

8.3.5.6 When this synthesis (love of God and love of one's neighbour) is broken down and "love of one's neighbour" is taken to be the only or the dominant message of the Bible, grave doubt arises as to the scriptural as well as the theological correctness of a Black Theology. If the Bible is used (or abused) as a means of achieving or propagating a political or a social ideal, the Black Theologians have certainly strayed from the path of the true Biblical Christian religion.

8.3.6 The Social Gospel.

8.3.6.1 It is clear to the Commission that, in the propaganda for a Black Theology, the American Social Gospel is carried through to its logical conclusions. So the Gospel is put to the service of both socialist and Communist doctrine to equate the ethical implications of the New Testament with the ideological basis of Communism. The Social Gospel, therefore, consistently tries to interpret the message of the Gospel mainly in social, political and economic terms.

8.3.6.2 According to the evidence, the Social Gospel group has gradually succeeded in taking over and dominating the theological thinking of the World Council of Churches, and some of the churches in South Africa for the first time clashed openly with Social Gospel theology at the Cottesloe consultation of December 1960. By means of Social Gospel theology, theology is turned into a vehicle to convey socialist propaganda to the member churches of the World Council of Churches (and now also the Non-Whites in the Republic) while cloaked in the respectability and prestige of theology.

8.3.6.3 The adherents of Communist ideology know very well that the church is a channel through which their propaganda can be conveyed gradually but extremely effectively to well meaning but uninformed Christian believers. A statement by Lavrentia Beria is significant in this connection:

"Since the turn of the century, we have striven to eliminate all Christian influences in America and we will succeed". (As published in a Dutch source).

In similar vein Claude Williams, Director of the People's Institute of Applied Religion and a former employee of the Federal Council of Churches (FCC), made a statement to the effect that church-wise he was a Presbyterian, by religion a Unitarian and politically a Communist - he did not preach to make people

good or anything of the sort. He was in the Church because this made it easier for him to reach people and so to organise them for Communism.

8.3.6.4 It is clear, therefore, that this theology, under the influence of Communist ideology, will emphasize only the "horizontal aspect" (the relationship between man and his fellow men), doing so at the expense of the "vertical aspect" (the relationship between man and God). Throughout, this method and approach form the basis for Black Theology as a theology of "liberation", in its socio-political sense.

8.3.7 The World Council of Churches.

8.3.7.1 For a better understanding of the deeper significance of Black Theology as propagated in the Republic, it is necessary to touch briefly on the "shift in power" that has taken place in the World Council of Churches. We do so especially in view of the fact that this body has recently been actively working for socio-political change in the Republic through the Church and religion (e.g. the granting of large sums of money to terrorists on the borders of the Republic at the meeting of the World Council of Churches in Utrecht).

8.3.7.2 Since the late fifties, the World Council of Churches has been seeking rapprochement with the Russian Orthodox Church. As has now become evident, this has resulted not only in less criticism of Communism, but also in the total cessation of criticism of and opposition to Communist ideology and methods.

8.3.7.3 In its editorial of Thursday, 20 July 1961, the Cincinnati Enquirer, a newspaper in the United States of America, warned the Western delegates to the World Council of Churches that if they allowed the Russian Orthodox Church to join the World Council of Churches they would provide International Communism with yet another platform from which to attack the Free World. Despite this warning, the Russian Orthodox Church was admitted to the World Council of Churches at a meeting in New Delhi in December 1961. In the same year, the International Missionary Council, to which churches in Africa and Asia (which are non-Western in orientation) belong, also joined the World Council of Churches.

APPENDIX II

Black Creativity as a Process of Liberation

Manas Buthelezi.

African Bank Celebration, Cape Town, March 21st, 1975

This day on which we celebrate the launching of the African Bank has a significance beyond itself. In the final analysis what is of paramount importance is not the matter of the setting up of the African Bank as such, however economically significant and historic this may be, but what the existence of this bank tells us about what has happened and is happening to the soul of the black man whose creative forces have been lying almost dormant for three centuries.

In a sense the last three centuries can be rightly called the dark ages of the black man's spirit of creativity. It was a time during which many a black man largely only saw himself as a victim of political circumstances. He waited and hoped that the outward circumstances would change before he could activate the creative forces within him. He allowed the outward circumstances to set the pace and time table for the manifestation of the creativity of his spirit.

Now we have realized that we can no longer wait. We can no longer wait for circumstances and the people to change before we can do the job that needs to be done. We can no longer wait for dehumanising laws to change before we can involve our people in self-help projects and processes that will in a therapeutic fashion enable them to become aware of their worth and potential as human beings, an awareness that defies the adverse legal outward circumstances.

We can no longer wait for constitutional conditions of racial polarisation to change before taking upon ourselves to lay a black foundation of racial harmony in South Africa. In short we can no longer wait to take initiatives of positive action even when we find ourselves beset by negative outward circumstances.

The African Bank is an instance of the black man's creative and positive action under the economic circumstances where there is no equal sharing of wealth in South Africa. It is a penultimate step taken by the black man before South Africa has decided to move towards the ultimate solution of its problems.

It is therefore fitting that I should use this celebration of the African Bank as a point of departure in sharing with you my thoughts on the topic "Black Creativity as a process of Liberation".

Liberation of History

Literature of the 19th century especially is full of statements that have denigrated the Black man. It was argued for instance that the colonisation of Africa was a God-sent blessing because left to her devices Africa would not have the incentive for progress and creativity. This was used to explain why the African did not invent the wheel.

Even in school African history was merely a footnote in the teaching of European history. May I add that even today in our schools the basic assumption is that significant South African history began in 1652. It was and is tacitly assumed that before Europe came to Africa, Africa was standing still.

That is why today in our schools we need a teaching of history that reflects the black man's perspective. Before this can happen, we must raise black historians who are creative enough to rewrite South African history in the light of the black man's historical presuppositions. You know, for instance, that it is a contentious issue as to whether the so-called Bantus had always been in what is today known as South Africa. I believe that the black man had always been in Africa including South Africa. He was free to move up and down its length and across its breadth at and during times chosen by him. But, you see, I am no historian. I cannot speak with authority. That is why we need our own historians.

We need our own historians who will tell the story of our own lives in the historical drama of South Africa. We need black historians who will treat the factor of the black man not under the item of the racial problems of South Africa but under the item of the heroes who have helped build South Africa's skyscrapers and helped make South Africa the world's largest gold producer.

There is a limit to which somebody can tell your own story. It would take a genius of a man to tell your story exactly as you would tell it. There are not many of such men around. That is why we need our own narrators and interpreters of historical development.

There is a sense in which our liberation is inseparable from the liberation of truth about our past, present and future. Many people understand liberation as only referring to physical and political domination. Liberation has also something to do with the liberation of the spirit. When the black man begins to create concepts about his life, destiny, and aspirations, that would be part of a process of his liberation.

As long as somebody else creates concepts about your life and its impact on him that is a sign that you are still in bondage. Let me illustrate my point. As long as somebody else says to you: "You are black, you are black", blackness as a concept remains a symbol of oppression and of something that conjures up feelings of inferiority.

But when the black man himself says: "I am black, I am black", blackness assumes a different meaning altogether. It then becomes a symbol of liberation and of self-articulation. Self-articulation is the setting loose of the chains of the spirit. Just as the setting loose of iron chains is accompanied with disturbing noise, self-articulation cannot happen without creating its own impact. It inspires some and disturbs others depending on whether they see it as guilty spectators or as people who experience being introduced to a new lease of life.

Black Consciousness

That is why the phenomenon of Black Consciousness has been greeted with such a mixture of public reaction. To some black consciousness is self-articulation. It is a black man's attempt to create a world of concepts about himself.

To others black consciousness is a threat to South Africa's peace of mind. If this is the case we should not be surprised. It belongs to the nature of novelty to be threatening to the status quo. Creativity as a process of liberating the mind to create and interpret concepts about the self is always threatening to those who exist outside the self. You will remember what happened to those scientists who introduced a revolutionary

idea that the earth rotates on its own axis as it revolves around the sun. When one of them was forced to recant he said: "I recant, but she continues to revolve".

If black consciousness threatens perhaps the only thing a black man can do is to say "I am sorry for the inconvenience this is causing you. But I continue to be myself and to be my own interpreter".

Yesterday I was more fortunate than most of you to see the cow whose meat you are going to eat this afternoon. I saw it while it was still on the truck and while it was tied to a post by means of a very small rope. Each time it tried to get itself loose. As much as I was looking forward to eating its meat, I could understand its creative struggle for liberation. It desperately tried to get itself free. If it has succeeded in breaking the rope and running in freedom towards me I am sure that I would be scared by its freedom even though from the cow's point of view it would see its freedom as a positive thing.

The point I am trying to make here is that a creative struggle for liberation always carries with it an element of threat depending on where you stand in relation to it.

If for instance the African Bank became so successful and attractive that people withdrew their moneys from other banks and invested in it, it would certainly become a threat to other banking institutions. But that would not mean that black people are not entitled to exercise their own creativity in setting up such self-help projects as the African Bank.

Creative effort

In the Bible we read that man was created in the image of God and given domination over the rest of creation. Man's creative effort to subdue nature through technology is an expression, however partial, of God's divine image in him. Technology and art are just some of the examples of human creativity, man creating after God.

It is only recently that the black man has drawn full implications of the fact that he too was created in the image of God. The so-called Black Theology is thus another example of the creativity of the black man's spirit.

It is a recent discovery on the part of the black man to realize that he is entitled to interpret the Bible in the light of his own experience and presuppositions. For the first time the Bible has become an open book in the sense of being a liberating factor by enabling the black man to think creatively about his spiritual existence. As soon as you begin to think creatively there is set in motion the loosening of the truth about your existence and destiny. In a sense you become a free man with an open future. That is why black creativity is a process of liberation. It is a way of establishing a prophetic presence.

APPENDIX III

The Reconciling Hypocrite (by E. Baartman)

I was asked to speak on Black Theology and choose any subject which I thought was important. The subject must of necessity be one which I judge to be of urgency to the salvation of man, particularly man in South Africa. I read my invitation a number of times and nowhere was I asked to be 'nice' or polite to you. That does not necessarily mean that I am going to be rude.

The title I have chosen may seem to suggest that I have decided to turn down the invitation. Is there or can there be such a creature as a reconciling hypocrite? In the gospels Jesus is portrayed as a man who regarded hypocrites with utter contempt. They appear as people who could not work positively and reconciliation is part of the very positive mission of the church. Reconciliation is an important doctrine in Black Theology.

Many people ask, "What is Black Theology?" I am sure that there is no one in this room asking that question. A Black American wrote, "I am often asked, 'What is Black Theology?'" I have that this question, more often, is not a request for a definition, nor is it usually a call for the statement of the raison d'être that is demanded of every new discipline. Rather, the questioner is generally asking: "Is Black Theology theology?" And the latter question, I suggest, is a disguised way of asking, "Is Black Theology good theology?" It would appear that though we speak of American, of German theology and then the term "Black Theology" is still for many a theological and semantic monstrosity, akin to speaking about a married bachelor. Is this yet another instance where the quality is suspect because it is black or is its novelty at issue?

Let us try and see what Black South Africans say: The Rev. E.Z. Sikakane, Director of the Edendale Lay Ecumenical Centre writes:

1. Africans define Black Theology as a process of reasoning about God in the context of black experience. The New Testament gives evidence that the Gospel is preached to meet specific situations, and, therefore, in the African situation the Gospel must be related to the situation peculiar to Africans. Black

Theology is in harmony with the NT declaration of personal experience, of what we have seen and heard and touched with our hands. It is a Christian experience within the scope of a black man. It proclaims the kind of SALVATION which involves the life of the whole man.

2. Afro-Americans (NEGROS) define black theology as BLACK LIBERATION which I understand to be the liberation of the whole man to make his full contribution without limitation. Therefore, the Gospel is a message of freedom to which Christ is a black liberator.

HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES
AND RECOVERING OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND. TO SET AT
LIBERTY THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE
ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.

The Rev. D.D.L. Makhathini says of Black Theology: "It is the witness of God through some Christian Blacks, to all Black people in and outside the Church concerning the Gospel of Jesus Christ." In other words, "Black Theology is the knowledge of God's encounter with Black existence, i.e. what God's answers are concerning the Black man's existence." It defines the results of God's encounter with Black people in the natural life setting, confronting them with his will which challenges them to become while they are where they are (in culture and custom), what he created them to be."

The Rev. Simon Gqubule, Principal of John Wesley College has written an article in the Southern African Journal of Theology on "Black Theology: What it is".

No doubt many people will write on Black Theology. Many will give a critical evaluation. Prof. David J. Bosch of the University of South Africa in his paper, Currents and Cross-Currents in South African Black Theology, with great circumspection, writes: "An evaluation of South African Black Theology is at this stage extremely difficult, not least because of the different and opposing currents we encounter in the movement."

It is true many "theological statements are situational". Black Theology however, will live on as long as man is fallen. Black Theology will disappear only when man has no need to have the gospel preached to him. That will be the time when man has no need of a Saviour and the cross is a monument and even a relic of the past. Of course there will be no need for ASATI.

Black Theology will always do what it seeks to do today. It must interpret God to the oppressed, the imprisoned, the blind, the poor and the broken-hearted. It must bring unity where there is division, and wholeness where there is brokenness. Theology written by theologians who were mainly white, or fairly comfortable in book-filled studies in well-fed, theory-weaving universities, colleges and seminaries tended to gloss over the question of oppression, poverty, imprisonment and hunger.

For all the people in these circumstances the outlook is black whether they be Black, White or Yellow, the future is bleak and black. It is an extremely narrow view of Black Theology to see it limited to black people in terms of pigmentation. It is true to say the term Black is both too wide and too narrow. Black people are as guilty as anybody else; and too narrow because there may be people in the privileged group who agonise over the plight of Black people, although this is debatable. Nevertheless, it is a definite possibility. In South Africa it is Black people who need to hear, understand and work out Black Theology. There is a sense in which many of the white people in this room will be on-lookers, not listeners. They need to listen and hear and respond, not in intellectual exercises, but in concrete terms. Blacks will be required to go beyond the word games and emotional gymnastics often displayed in the discussing of Black Theology.

The Church is called to the task of reconciliation. Man is called to be at one with God, his Creator. In being reconciled to God, he must allow God to help him find his brother. Very often this subtle point is not made explicit. We tend to speak of a relationship between God and man; and man and man. We seem not to stress the point that it is in God through Jesus Christ that man finds a brother in the next man. It is God from the beginning who expresses concern for the broken relationship between man and man and draws man's attention to it. "Cain, where is your brother?" Cain, not being reconciled to God, not really caring who God is, could not care a damn for his brother. Hence the reply, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

In reconciliation the initiative always lies with God. Ours is always a response to God's calling. What was happening on the Calvary that beautiful Friday morning? Was a criminal just suffering for his misdeeds? God was in Christ reconciling man to Himself. While man was relaxed in the soul-destroying comfort of his sin, God was suffering on the body-bruising rough wooden cross. Those who bring about reconciliation cannot do so in comfort or being part of dividing forces or institutions.

God gives us the ministry of reconciliation. We cannot engage in something we do not quite understand. What does the word reconciliation mean? Richardson puts it thus:

The root meaning of the word is an exchange of equivalent values, and then through the idea of exchange of sympathy and mutual understanding, the notion of a thorough or radical change.

In our context we can say that those who need to be reconciled have things of equal value to exchange. A prior question is: Who needs to be reconciled? There are as many groups as there are people in this room who need to be reconciled. I do not think there is great urgency to have Herstigtes and the verkramptes reconciled. There are groups who could make it very difficult for us all to have a meaningful tomorrow unless they are reconciled today. In South Africa Black and White must be reconciled; different denominations need to be reconciled.

To reconcile Black And White there is no doubt in my mind that Black Consciousness needs to be seen as part of Black Theology. Black Consciousness must be seen as God's gift to the Black man and God's way leading to reconciliation. Many blacks and I include myself amongst those, still have a very strong sense of insecurity. This is so because there is very little in this country that is financially independent which is not controlled by whites. Physiological needs then force the Black man to preserve himself. I am amazed at how those in white-oriented structures will harp on oneness and Christ's prayer "That they may be one". No Christian in his right senses will want in any way to underplay that prayer. The tragedy is to stress it when the need is to first of all help the Black man become by developing the potential in him and freeing psychologically from that which dehumanizes him. I want to say it loud and clear that if Black Consciousness is God's gift to the Black man in this moment in history then the white man and his black employees have nothing to fear from the black man but just the humanness they bring and offer to them. Unless Black Consciousness sees both Black and White as dehumanized beings then it has to be thrown out. The same gospel that frees the Black man must in gratitude be taken to the White man. The Black man has a responsibility to God for the White man who is lost. Dr. Manas Buthelezi expresses better than many Black theologians: "Does it occur to black people that they have an evangelistic duty of getting the white man out of the spiritual darkness which has prevented him from seeing that the black man is his daily life brother? God will ask: 'Black man, where were you when the white man abandoned my Gospel and went to destruction?'

When the Black man answers, 'I was only a kaffir, how could I dare preach to my baas?' God will say: 'Was Christ's resurrection not sufficient to liberate you, black man, from that kind of spiritual and psychological death? Go to eternal condemnation, black man, for you did not muster courage to save your white brother.' There is a great need to free Black theologians from this what-do-you-want-to-hear-Boss attitude. If we wish to save our lives we must take the risk of losing them. Potentially the whites who work with us are a force for change. Ours is to help join us in a meaningful change. My repentance must have fruits for my neighbours. There is always a sense salvation must benefit the unsaved.

God calls us to help reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable. We take the risk of failure. Jesus dangled between heaven and earth. He was neither God nor with man but was always with God ever seeking to obey God's will. He was between two criminals. Two irreconcilable characters. One was insulting Jesus. The other was praying to Jesus. Between them Jesus was seeking to reconcile them. Christians are called to occupy the middle plot of ground and take the blows to bring about reconciliation.

Black Theology must then say South Africa for us more than any country needs Christians to take up their cross and follow Jesus on the path of reconciliation. Peter Macan in WACC Journal Africa 1/71 writes: "Born and raised in Cape Town, South Africa, I was educated at a Church School where I was introduced to the Christian faith and came to realise that South African racial segregation was contrary to the teaching of Christ and to the spirit of His Kingdom. But the intellectual acceptance of this teaching, and the practical expression of its consequences, were two very different things, as I was soon to discover. My only contact with the other racial groups was with the servants at home and school, and with the African servants whom I taught to read and write at Night School.

In the same Journal, Bruckner de Villiers writes an article on "The Breakdown of Communications in South Africa": 'South Africa must surely be regarded as a candidate for the first prize in the field of non-communication not only because of the immensity of its historical and in-built schisms, but simply because keeping people apart from each other and virtually incommunicado happens to be the official policy of its present Government.' He then continues, 'The only basic problem - ideologically speaking, in any case - is that the Government fondly regards itself as a "Christian" government and that a sternly applied

policy of keeping people, the law-abiding citizens of the same country, apart from each other can by no stretch of the sane imagination be reconciled with the injunctions of the Bible or with the basic and universally accepted tenets of Christian morality.

In South Africa everyone is being officially and vigorously confined to his own domain, incarcerated in his own cell - however softly padded. And this applies not only to the most obvious and notorious instance: the rigoristic separation by law of white and non-white. Even the whites among themselves are firmly confined, each to his own tribal "kraal", by law. According to the official policy of Mother Tongue Education, Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking whites are ever so benignly, but ever so relentlessly segregated from earliest childhood. By law, every white South African child who attends a state-supported school must go to either an exclusively Afrikaans-speaking or English-speaking school - strictly according to the home language spoken by his or her parents.

It may be added that ethnic grouping has not helped the situation. Many of the people who support the government may be sincere but one cannot say that they are honest. One is honest when one takes into account all the facts and makes a genuine response to them. For instance, the people who make the laws, know as well as the next person that Blacks are human. They just go on making inhuman laws for Blacks.

If the Church is going to be true to her mission she must concern herself with broken relationships. The African has always been concerned with the healing of relationships whenever there was a relationship to be healed between Man and supernatural and between man and man, an animal was slaughtered. More than just an offering to 'abaphansi' it was restoration of broken relationships.

This Christ has done once and for all. However, I see absolutely no harm in doing this symbolically. It is important always to keep before the people what Christ has done for them. They will put less emphasis on what they must do to earn their salvation and place more importance on their deeds being a response to Christ's great act of salvation. There is a great urgency for the church to engage in reconciliation. The latest political exercise in Southern Africa is detente. Detente is an aspect of reconciliation. The climate for reconciliation needs to be created.. You do not create that by removing all that reminds

you of the separation Jesus Christ seems to have set about reconciliation in a costly manner. Reconciliation between Jesus Christ and Peter was painful if we are to go by the account in John's gospel Chapter 21. The reminders are there. The fire, the cold, it was early in the morning, the three-fold question, "Do you love me, more than these?" There seems to be a need to open old wounds, because they could never have healed properly. The whole episode sounds and feels unpleasant yet it was necessary to restore oneness where there was separation. Black Theology does not derive pleasure from exhuming the dead past.

Even here for us to be reconciled it may be necessary to go through some unpleasantness but we certainly will and must go through pain.

For reconciliation to be effected we shall have to remove all masks. There is going to be real communication where soul speaks to soul. We may have to discard even the Christian mask and reveal the self who is encountering Jesus Christ. What is hypocrisy if it is not putting on a mask.

Jesus Christ was very strong in his condemnation of hypocrites. In Matthew 23:13-29 in the space of seventeen verses Jesus Christ calls the Scribes and Pharisees hypocrites seven times. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees hypocrites." He tears into them and lashes at them mercilessly. He is a little more than the "gentle Jesus, meek and mild" we are made to know. This is the Jesus who is not gentle with sin. This is the Jesus who does not sit around a conference table and discuss sin when the humanity of widows and the proselyte is concerned, where mercy, judgement and faith are concerned.

We know that many a Christian in South Africa pretends to be what he is not. We preach that all men are equal but provide unequal opportunities. We are going through exciting times in South Africa where the humanity of the Black man is beginning to assert itself. It is also exciting in that the white man is struggling to see beyond the Blackness. How many of Blacks in this room fall into that unfortunate category of "The first Black person to occupy a position previously held by whites?" You are still a novelty and at my most generous mood I could say, perhaps moving towards being a human being. It is your successors and even your sons who will be human beings. Have you not as the first black person in a meeting made a point which was ignored because you are not really experienced. After all you are only the first black person. Is there not the danger that in being proud of being such a Black you might be tempted into

believing you are the first Black human being? Or more subtly you have at last attained being human. I know the positive side which will become meaningful only alongside the negative. Paulo Freire has a word on this when he says, "But almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation tend themselves to become oppressors or 'sub-oppressors'. Many of these "firsts" have as their ideal to be men, but for them to be a 'man' is to be like the white predecessor.

We have dealt very scantily and perhaps most inadequately with Reconciliation and Hypocrisy. The former is a positive ministry given to us by God. The latter is an attitude strongly condemned by Jesus Christ. It seems absurd to speak of a reconciling hypocrite. Yet that is exactly what many people set out to be. They may not deliberately plan to be reconciling hypocrites but they are because they have not examined the motives and their commitment to Jesus Christ. We need now and again to take a long critical view of relationships. To the extent to which we are responding to God's grace to that extent will our relationship with others be genuine. The more open I am to Christ and allowing Christ to take hold of me, the more will people find me open and be prepared to go into a meaningful relationship with me.

This the reconciling hypocrite will not and cannot do. He himself is frightened of the hypocrisy in himself.

Let me say why I believe the reconciling hypocrite must fail. Even before he starts he is en route to failure:

1. Jesus Christ is not central to what he sets out to do. All the activities of this man are not in response to the gospel. Occasionally, where it suits him and it is safe he will mouth some pious irrelevancies like unity in spirit. Unless unity in spirit is unextricably linked with concrete unity we are playing games of Christianity.

When he tries to put into practice any injunction of Jesus Christ, he is prepared to drop it like a hot potato at the first sign of opposition. His acceptance in the community, or his position or status is more important than saying, "Thus says the Lord". Because what he seeks to build does not stand on the rock it must disintegrate. It will quickly burn brightly and die away just as quickly. In Xhosa we say 'umlilo weendiza'.

2. The person's non-involvement must ensure failure. When we have masks on we do not meet people. They, in turn cannot meet us. They, for a while, may struggle trying to communicate. Eventually they give up because nobody wants to talk to a mask.

The reconciling hypocrite is always afraid of revealing anything of himself. He tries to be what he believes people expect of him. In the presence of the boss he must show how much he is becoming like the boss. Thus in this context his theology must not be too far removed from what his boss wants. The sermons he preached must not be too challenging lest he is asked to move on. He may encourage others to fight but he must be safe to see that the struggle goes on. He comes again and again saying: "Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat," Jesus answered and said unto them: "GIVE YE THEM TO EAT."

3. The Person's Unbelief. One of the most striking things about the disciples of Jesus Christ is their unbelief in Jesus Christ before the resurrection. They answered the call and leaving all behind, followed him. They watched him pray and asked him to teach them how to pray. Probably to pray as he did and only as he could. They went out with him. Having done and gone through a number of experiences with him they still did not know who he was. In answer to Phillip's request to be shown the Father, Jesus says, "Have I been so long a time with you and yet thou dost not know me, Phillip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the Father?"

It is difficult for this person to do many things in terms of reconciliation because of his unbelief. A hypocrite cannot believe in Jesus Christ and remain with hypocrisy. Belief in Christ and his mission is something that requires complete commitment to Jesus Christ. Commitment to Jesus Christ means believing in your fellow men. Those who seek to bring about reconciliation must believe in the people they wish to reconcile. In their presence and in their absence they must have absolute confidence in them as God's children.

We have failed to help in reconciliation because we have not believed in the power of God to do this and have not allowed ourselves to be frightened by people who benefit from separation. Like the father who brought his son to Jesus to be healed we need to shout out and pray now, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

4. The person's arrogance. Many a person has missed great opportunities because of their arrogance. For a long time black people in South Africa have suffered because of the arrogance of whites. Until blacks help whites out of this arrogance there can be no reconciliation.

The reconciling hypocrite comes at his work in this attitude of arrogance. He tends to look down at certain things and people. He has all the answers and never really listens to the questions. Blacks are not really people. Blacks are not people with whom you keep your word. The path of black and white relationships is littered with pieces of broken promises and unfulfilled undertakings. These are made by men who prefer to be servants of God, who is true to His word. No promise of God is unfulfilled. Even where he Promises judgement, much as it pains Him, He carries it out. The pain of judgement is shown to us through the cross of Christ.

Johnny Cash, an American Indian Folk singer, referring to this habit of breaking promises says:

As long as the moon shall rise
As long as the rivers flow
As long as the sun shall shine
As long as the grass shall grow ...
Later generations said, Our Father,
George Washington was wrong
After all, what is an Indian?

Reconciliation is going to become more difficult because whites have not seen and treated blacks as people and the young black person is equally failing to see the Afrikaner as a human being or capable of human feelings as far as the black man is concerned. Both must be helped to use the same words with the same meaning. Whites must stop using different words for different people. For instance a young white is intelligent but a young black is 'skelm'; a young white graduate is confident and a young black graduate is arrogant. The reconciling hypocrite must fail because he is a contradiction.

The question to which we must now address ourselves is how does a Black man view the church as represented by you? There are more than enough groups and people in them who speak about unity but live and act separately. We, in the church, by and large condemn separate development. We castigate the South African government and I believe rightly so but move our into separate

denomination lands. You speak here in one voice about being one and about saving South Africa but you will leave this place and go into your little kraals and wait for next July. Do we really mean what we say? Do our actions support our words? If Meloughlin is right that the MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE then we must examine our positions very carefully.

I cannot speak here about unity and use all the theological language at my command to tear down separate development and then go on to be principal of a sectarian theological college. You have all the reason, nay excuses for perpetuating this sinful situation but what is your response to the gospel? Sometimes one gets the feeling that life in the church would become too exciting without conferences. To save us from the hard, bruising cross-ridden life we would rather sit and talk in conferences. What would it cost the head of colleges here to say we are going to live out our belief and to hell with the excuses? Does it mean the church finding another principal? I believe and accept your response that this is a wild statement. However, it is made in love and anger.

Love requires of us to come together and accept one another. Love asks us to examine our own standpoint critically. Love instructs me to examine my motives in the light of the gospel. Love requires of me perhaps to lose my job in order to find my calling.

The anger is in that there are few men outside of this room in this country who can interpret the demands of the gospel better than the men in here. Each time you meet those outside wait for a new direction. They may not be looking for a press statement. God save us from God language. They wait for a sign. They are waiting for the day when Federal Theological Seminary will be a Theological Seminary without the pollution of the federal denominational pollution. They are waiting for the day when a white Presbyterian minister will say I studied under Simon Gqubule as my principal. How long must we wait? The black theologian waits. He asks, "How long?"

Even designations like the South African Council of Churches, even world Council of Churches immediately suggest the reluctance to fight the evil of separation. I am not asking people to defend themselves but I am asking them to examine the response to the gospel. What Black Theology seeks to say is that Christ was probably enjoying receiving applications for help but he did not look forward to applications being renewed. He helped

people develop the capacity to rely on themselves, through their faith in God. Somebody has written: "The development of a specific project is less important than the development of the capacity of a people to establish the project."

Why we need to be reconciled quickly:

1. There is always an urgency about the gospel. The Christian is always in a hurry. In the fullness of time - a phrase we all know. This is the fullness of time. There is no other tomorrow. Christ has come, Christ has come and conquered. We need to complete that victory now.
2. South Africa is faced with a choice. A choice between a reconciled nation or warring tribes. Where there is war there is chaos. The Christian cannot plan violence as a form of strategy. Jesus says that violence begets violence. The Black Theologian says the way of Christ is the way of suffering. The way of the devil is the way of causing suffering. To cause suffering is to be against Christ.

How can the Black man help South Africa? The only way is that of love. He must turn the other cheek. However, I must remind the oppressor that the black man has two cheeks only. He must take the nails in the palms of his hands. Difficult as it is he must love the white man. One way of loving the white man is refusing to be dehumanised. When he does this he prevents the white man from dehumanising himself. That has been said ad nauseam. The nausea must stop when you take that fact in and act on it. Until you have obeyed the commandment you haven't listened.

3. Here I wish to quote the Rev. Canon Burgess Carr:

At the theological level, the demand for unity is a demand to overcome the polarisations that divide God's family of man. As such, the struggle for justice and reconciliation in the world is integral to the call to unity among Christians. What we truly seek is not the unity of the Church as an end in itself, but in order that the Church may be an agent of God's mission for liberation, justice and reconciliation among men and women. It follows naturally therefore that the struggle against racialism and apartheid, tribalism and colonialism are not external to the demands of the Gospel upon us for unity. Because we are committed to unity, we must oppose apartheid. Similarly, because we are opposed to tribalism, we must reject the Bantustans as a solution to the problem or political and economic injustice in South Africa.

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