

No 22
 March 1978

1978-03

THE TASK OF BLACK THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

BONGANJALO GOBA

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of black theology in South Africa demands that black theologians and black Christian communities address themselves to the task of black theological education in South Africa. If we are serious in engaging ourselves in the black theological enterprise in the context of the existential situation of oppression, then we have to find out and articulate the purpose of black theological education. No one is not aware within the black Christian community and especially amongst those who are involved in the training of black ministers, that our theological education continues to be dominated by what I call the Western intellectual ethos. But the real issue is not so much the pervasiveness of the Western intellectual ethos, but it is how it has ignored our Africanness, blurred our vision in becoming God's instruments of salvation in South Africa. Apart from that there is no doubt in my mind that it has aided the forces of dehumanization in the black community.

At the present moment most of the teachers in theological colleges are

white expatriates whose worldview emerges out of the Western intellectual ethos, and because of this their presence in these colleges continues to create a problem in the achievement of the selfhood of the African church in all Africa. Apart from this their presence creates confusion as to the real issues confronting blacks in the context of the political situation in South Africa. I believe Father G. Ashbey's words are more clear as he puts it:

Many of the staff of South African theological colleges have come straight out of England and it would not be at all unusual to hear gossip in the staff common room about what so and so used to say in his lectures at Mansfield or about what Prof. X's theories were in "my day" at London.

There is a tendency to react to this observation by those who want to justify the continual presence of overseas and South African white lecturers, that blacks are reluctant to take up the responsibility of their own theological education. My own reaction is that this is not true, especially in the context of our political situation characterized by white

Rev. B. Goba is a South African doing doctoral research at the Chicago Theological Seminary.

G. Ashbey, essay, *Ministry Theological Review*, VII (April, 1967), p. 115. Published by Morija Sesuto Book Depot.

paternalism in which whites continue to understand their role as that of educating blacks. Apart from that for a very long time the mainline Protestant churches have been reluctant to train black candidates to assume the responsibility of theological education. I think the present majority of white theological teachers in our seminaries reflects the life of the Church in South Africa. Although black Christians constitute the majority in most Protestant and Catholic churches, the decision-making and administrative power is still the monopoly of the white minority. As black Christians in South Africa we are not only victims of Apartheid in the secular sphere but also in the Church and this is one of the bitter facts about the Church in this situation.

The critical question, which some of us are asking, is how and what can white theologians who participate in the structures of Apartheid teach blacks about theology? My immediate response to this question is, only those white theologians who have become black by identifying themselves with the oppressed, black people's struggle for liberation, can be in a position to participate in black theological education. I am aware that this is a very controversial question, however, I suppose a very serious question directed to those white theologians who are presently involved in black theological education.

Whilst this essay is directed to the black clergy in South Africa, I am also anticipating a response from the white theological community. It is not my intention to give a general survey of theological education in South Africa, but to try and ask some fundamental questions about the task of theological education as it relates to the role of the black church in

the struggle of liberation. This means we have to discover from a black theological perspective the purpose of the ministry. To do this, I believe in the context of the South African situation we have to take seriously the black African worldview as well as the existential fact of oppression and therefore our quest for authentic liberation. In the following paragraphs I will attempt to respond to these concerns and in doing so I will depend on some of the insights from H.R. Niebuhr on the subject of theological education.

I am a product of the theological education process I am raising critical questions about. After having been in the parish ministry for a short period of five years, it is still not clear how the education I received from the Federal Theological Seminary was relevant to the situation for which I was trained. Whilst there was intellectual value in studying various aspects of the Christian's faith, e.g. biblical studies, church history, dogmatics, etc., no clear attempt was made to relate these to the situation. A situation in which (1) the African worldview is pervasive, and (2) in which all black people are victims of oppression. The point is not how biblical studies or theology is taught, but the issue is how the prevalent African worldview is taken seriously in the teaching of these subjects as well as the situation of oppression.

So for three full years I spent time studying biblical studies, theology, church history, but in doing this my Africanness was completely forgotten, completely ignored, which reflects the attitude of those who were responsible for theological education. I believe Desmond Tutu is right in the following observation:

Thus the theology we have purveyed has often been disastrously cut off from real life.

We have acquiesced in the denial of the authenticity of our own life experience or our distinctive selfhood. We have seemed to want to apologize for our existence, the agenda of which has been determined by the Westerner.²

As long as the Westerners insist in having the monopoly of theological education there can be no relevant theology which emerges out of the African worldview let alone a theology which deal seriously with the vital issue of our oppression. For the black church to be relevant in the South African situation, theological education must seriously deal with these questions, but that can only be realised when black theologians take the initiative of providing that theology. I agree with Professor Oosthuizen's observation:

If the church in Africa does not make a drastic change in its theological training and accept the fact that its greatest immediate challenge is relevance, then it will be an even greater instrument in creating post-Christianity than has been hitherto.³

Let us proceed to examine the context of black theological education.

II THE CONTEXT OF BLACK THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

By theological education I mean that reflection which is undertaken by the theological community to understand the meaning and the praxis of the Christian faith in the every-

² Desmond Tutu, "Whether Theological Education: An African Perspective," *Theological Education* (Summer 1973), p. 271.

³ G.C. Oosthuizen, *Post-Christianity in Africa* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1968), p. 255.

day life and ministry of the Church. If we take this definition seriously then theological education cannot be separated from the total ministry of the Church. Niebuhr also makes this point clear:

In the first place such education, now as always, is concerned with the nurture of men and women whose business in life it will be to help men to see their immediate perplexities, joys and sufferings in the light of an ultimate meaning to live as citizens of the inclusive society of being, and to relate their present choices to first and last decisions made about them in the totality of human history by sovereign power.⁴

Theological education takes place in the concreteness of the human community as response to God's activity revealed in Jesus Christ in the world. The point I wish to emphasize is that the context of theological education is the Church as it exists in any contemporary situation. This is what makes it urgent. This means within the context of the South African situation theological education has to be part of the black religious experience, it must be an expression of what God is doing in the black church and move towards the discovery of his will and purpose for humankind.

Unfortunately black theological education at the moment does not express in its content the religious experience of the black Christian community. It is even difficult, at the moment, to talk of black theological education as there is only Western theological education. I believe Desmond Tutu makes this point clear

⁴ H.R. Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1956), p. 2.

in his vision for theological education in Africa:

Theological education in Africa must seek to engage in a dialogue with its own particular context and not that of others. It must become authentically African (black) helping the whole people of God to engage in God's mission to his world to liberate men from all kinds of oppression, to set them free to enter into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God, to enable them to be fully themselves so that they will grow to full personhood; that is, to be measured by nothing less than the personhood of Christ, the perfect person.⁵

The particular context of theological education is always determined by those who engage in it. Niebuhr raises a very important question in this regard: "What is the community in which the theological schools carry on their work and in which they in part represent?"⁶ For him this is a broad question in which he raises questions about the denomination, the nation and social context. However, in doing so he is confronted by what he calls the "baffling pluralism of protestant religious life" in the United States and Canada. Religious pluralism is not the issue in the context of black religious experience, but the real issue for us is the existing political situation in which the church continues to make witness. It is to this political context that black theological education must address itself.

The scope of this essay unfortunately does not allow me to give a broad analysis of the South African political situation, but I will attempt to relate some of the aspects of my critique to it. The critical question is

5 Tutu, p.279

6 Niebuhr, p.5.

to discover the task of black theological education within the situation of the oppression of black people. To do that let me explore the purpose and the role of the black church in the process of Liberation.

III THE PURPOSE AND ROLE OF THE BLACK CHURCH IN THE PROCESS OF LIBERATION

If theological education is reflection by the theological community to understand the meaning and praxis of the Christian faith in the everyday life and ministry of the church, this means black theological education will have to explicate an understanding of the purpose and role of the Church. Without this understanding of the Church, it is impossible to define adequately the task of theological education.

Niebuhr raises very critical questions in trying to define the purpose of the Church, especially in the context of the American experience. His understanding is dialectic; it is characterized by what he terms polar synthesis. For him there is always tension in an understanding of the nature of Church, for example, the tension between community and institution, common mind and forms, unity and plurality, the Church and the world. In trying to understand and articulate the purpose and the role of the black church, it is my intention to address myself to some of these questions as they relate to the South African situation.

The Church is that community of believers called into existence by God's liberating activity in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ; a community characterized by profound communion with Jesus Christ. To put it in another way, the Church is

that community of believers which participates in God's activity of liberation in the world fully realized and authenticated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such an understanding of the Church already implies its social context, as well as affirming its spiritual dimension. The Church understood in the context of black religious experience is that dynamic community attempting seriously to live in accordance with the gospel, a community characterized by that profound sense of African kinship in which there is interrelatedness and solidarity amongst its members. The only problem emerging out of this understanding of the Church is that in the context of the South African situation, the black church has been so spiritualized that it fails to deal with questions arising out of the political situation, e.g., oppression of black people.

The emphasis is on the church as a *community*, but there is very little awareness of the church as an institution existing under a certain social order, e.g., Apartheid. The point which needs to be emphasized is that in the context of liberation, we cannot afford the split of the church as a community and institution, but our view of the church must be holistic. The Church exists in the world as a consequence of God's disclosure in Jesus Christ as the one who liberates and in whom liberation becomes possible. The church, therefore, manifests itself as that community which reveals God's activity of liberation in Jesus Christ as well as that institution which transforms society. In the South African situation this means the church has to affirm its existence by divine initiative as well as manifest its prophetic existence by being critical of society. The current tension between the church and state

in South Africa and eventual victimization of the church by the state reflects on the part of the Christian community the absence of this holistic view of the church.

The other important aspect in trying to understand the purpose and role of the church is the tension between *unity and pluralism*. This is a very complex question for the black church in South Africa, especially those churches founded by the missionary movement. As black churches we reflect the schism of Western church going back to the period of Reformation. It is at this point that we see the negative aspect of Western Christianity. The present lack of unity in the black church can be ultimately solved by our new vision of liberation. This would also apply to the question of religious pluralism, which we have also inherited from the West. To combat it, as a Church in the process of liberation, we need to retrieve the African worldview which blacks commonly share in South Africa.

The church in the process of liberation is understood in the context of its mission to the world — the church incarnated in the world taking a concrete form in manifesting God's liberating activity in the world in Jesus Christ. In this context the church becomes the expression of God's love for the wretched of the earth — in this case the oppressed; God's giving himself in Jesus Christ to the world to liberate it from sin. Whilst emphasizing this aspect, we should also realize that the church is in the world and yet not of the world. The church as that community of believers participating in God's liberating activity takes seriously the plight of the oppressed, and on the other hand calls them to repentance from their sin and thus liberates them from that which denies their relationship with

Christ in whom liberation is made possible.

Having given this quick, perhaps oversimplified view of the church, the question arises where does theological education fit into all this? Black theological education becomes an endeavour to understand the church as a community in which God's liberating activity in Jesus Christ takes place. Its task is to reflect on the serious implications of such an understanding. Black theological education must articulate and actively participate in the drama of God's liberation of the oppressed. It is from this perspective that it discovers its authentic relevant task in the South African context. To return to Niebuhr once more, theological education understood in the context of the purpose of the church has as its task the increase of the love of God and neighbour among men. This understanding is also implied in the black perspective I have just explained: In the South African context, however, it is to wrestle with the question of our white neighbour who is the oppressor, especially as the Gospel makes it painfully clear that we should love those who persecute us. I do not wish to enter into this question here as it is one which warrants separate treatment. Let us now examine briefly a theological understanding of the ministry from a black perspective.

IV TOWARDS A BLACK THEOLOGICAL UNDER- STANDING OF THE MINISTRY

For black theological education to be relevant to the South African situation, an attempt must be made to deal with the purpose of the *ministry*. At this moment within the black Christian community there is no

clearly articulated understanding of the ministry, except that which has been imported from the Western churches. A proper perspective of theological education depends on our understanding of the ministry.

And here I am not addressing myself to the broad context of the ministry of the whole church, but my concern is with the ordained ministry. However, we cannot even understand this aspect of the ministry apart from the total mission of the church, in which we find the following elements: 1) the conduct of Worship, 2) administration of Sacraments, 3) Preaching and Caring of Souls. Throughout the life of the Church it has always been necessary to train ministers to perform these tasks.

In South Africa within the black Christian community, ministry has been and continues to be based on the Christian traditional pattern of ministry. However, the significant point is to discover the purpose of the ordained ministry by which the church gives full-time responsibility to men and women to work and participate in the mission of the church. From a black theological perspective ministry should be understood in the context of mission, that of God's activity in the world expressed and authenticated in the life and work of Jesus Christ in liberating the wretched, the oppressed, from their situation of oppression. Black ministry is that response to God's call to participate in this liberating activity in the world. It is also in the broader sense the active participation of the black Christian community in God's reign and his identification with the wretched of the earth fully realised in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This understanding leads to a radical conception of the specific office of the ministry. For example, the go-

verning or caring of the souls assumes a new meaning; it becomes a liberating activity in which the concrete social conditions of those who are ministered to and for are taken with utter seriousness. The point is, pastoral responsibility becomes political in the sense of being critical of the social conditions, e.g. oppression in which human sinfulness is made manifest. In South Africa this raises a problematic question of having pastoral responsibility even to those who participate in the oppressive structures, because they too belong to the wretched of the earth as victims of demonic power manifest in the policy of Apartheid. The other important aspect related to what I have just said is the conduct of worship. Worship, whilst retaining the traditional elements, becomes in the new understanding not just a ritual palliative amidst the experience of oppression, but becomes a celebration of God's liberating activity in Jesus Christ, moving the worshippers to a profound involvement in the everyday affairs of life under oppressive conditions. Worship becomes an expression of God's victory over the demonic powers of evil in the world, it becomes that in which God's victory finds expression in the spiritual consciousness of the worshippers. The same could be said to the question of the administration of sacraments and preaching, in which the proclamation of God's word is both judgement on the sinful human condition in South Africa characterized by alienation and oppression, as well as celebration of the good news of God's liberating activity in Jesus Christ.

This discussion is incomplete if we do not discuss the call to the ministry. In doing this, I find Niebuhr's delineation of the complex topic very helpful.

1) The call to be a Christian, which

is variously described as the call to discipleship of Jesus Christ to hearing and doing the Word of God, to repentance and faith, et cetera.

- 2) The secret call, namely the inner persuasion or experience whereby a person feels himself directly summoned or invited by God to take up the work of the ministry.
- 3) The providential call which is that invitation and command to assume the work of the ministry which comes through the equipment of a person with talents necessary for the exercise of the office through divine guidance of his life by all its circumstances.
- 4) The ecclesiastical call, that is, the summons and invitation extended to a man by some community or institution of the church to engage in the work of the ministry.

The purpose of this rather long quotation serves to illustrate, I think significantly, all the dimensions of the call, however, my concern in this section is to respond from a black theological perspective to the first dimension, the call to the discipleship of Jesus Christ. This I believe is the basis for the call to the ministry. We are first and foremost called to participate in the ministry of Jesus Christ, a ministry which is itself a liberating event in which Christ is the hope of the oppressed. It is a call to become this hope or to participate within it. It is an expression of obedience in which we fulfill what Jesus has already and continues to do for the world. It is a call to be prophetic in the sense of being critical of social conditions which oppress and dehumanize God's people (Cf. Isaiah 61:1-11).

* *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Having said all this, the question then arises, by what authority do we engage in this ministry? For Niebuhr this is a complex question especially in the context of the American experience of religious pluralism. In South Africa authority for black ministry is derived from the ministry of Jesus Christ but there is a (negative) tendency to equate the role of the minister with the authoritarian role of the chief. A proper understanding of the authority of the ministry only becomes possible when we understand authority in the prophetic context whereby we engage in the ministry of liberation manifest in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The other important aspect is to understand authority as that which the Christian community makes available to us. The ministry of liberation is always for the people, that is, the oppressed. It is people-oriented, deeply involved in the world and very critical of the world. As Niebuhr rightly emphasizes:

The political needs of men struggling for survival or status, the economic needs of hungry and competitive man, the psychological needs of anxious and guilty interpersonal beings, these and other important wants seem to require the ministrations of the church.⁸

If from a black theological perspective ministry is understood as participating in God's activity, of liberation authenticated in Jesus Christ, then this understanding has serious implications for black theological education. It means black theological education in South Africa must equip black candidates for ministry to actively engage in this liberation by taking seriously the existential, socio-economic situation of

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

the oppression of black people, and examine all the forces which perpetuate that oppression. We have to acquire expertise in analysing our situation not only from a theological perspective but from other secular disciplines, e.g., sociology and political science. This means the area of black pastoral theology has to be understood in the radical context of the hermeneutic of liberation.

V THE ROLE OF A BLACK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Seminary as an institution exists in a social context not in a vacuum, its life and reflection are affected by various forces of society. The Seminary cannot escape its environment but interacts and interprets its environment. Whilst controlled by its environment the Seminary constantly finds itself as a community isolated and in a relation of conflict with it. The Seminary is responsible to the Christian community, however that responsibility is exercised in the environment of its existence. This means in the South African situation the Seminary cannot avoid interacting either positively or negatively with the existing political order and this also has bearing on its theological educational process. This means the black-theological Seminary must be aware of the social context in which it exists, and therefore relate its intellectual life to it.

In South Africa the Black Seminary exists in an Apartheid society in which every institution of the society is affected by the basic pattern of enforced racial segregation, discrimination, in favour of whites. And because of this, in its existence as a theological community there is already a conflict. For example, because of

this system, most blacks are victims of starvation and oppression. Whilst whites enjoy the privilege of supremacy, blacks are insulted and dehumanized because of their blackness. This cuts through all the social structures, e.g., education, economy, the legal and political system. It is not the purpose of this essay to analyse all the aspects of the policy of Apartheid but to highlight the fact that the Seminary exists in this situation. Whilst the Seminary is called upon to exist in this situation, if it is black it represents those who come from the oppressed group and this affects or becomes the critical medium of theological education. The black Seminary in all honesty cannot avoid the constant consciousness of the experience of oppression, what makes it exclusive and distinguishes it from all other seminaries is the experience of oppression,⁹ and it exists effectively as long as it addresses itself to the fact of oppression. The medium of its life of theological reflection is the experience of oppression and a pilgrimage towards liberation. Unfortunately, because of the prevalence of the Western ethos which even determines the curriculum, the Seminary has not dealt seriously with this context in which it exists.

The context of a theological Seminary also leads us to the other aspect of its existence, that of its theological responsibility. In attempting to respond to this aspect I believe Karl Barth has some interesting insights:

No one can be a theologian without at some point participating totally in the problematic aspects of Christianity. The theologian participates in the life of Christianity, which is always threatened by destruction, although again and again rescued from it. He participates in its partially

necessary and partially accidental, but mainly self-incurred, isolation from those sections of humanity which do not belong to it, and from the spiritual, psychical and physical powers that rule mankind.⁹

It is true that any theological community in South Africa participates in the problematic aspect of Christianity. It has to explicate and defend the principle of the Christian faith. It has to undergo constant moments of isolation because of its commitment to the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ. It is in this sense of participating by its life and reflection in liberation that Christianity exercises its responsibility to a particular society. The black Seminary, if these points are taken seriously, is called to witness to and to be a witness of the liberating event of the Christian gospel. Whilst it exists in this situation it also exists apart from it in terms of its prophetic vocation in the proclamation of God's liberating word against the demonic forces of oppression. The theological responsibility of the Seminary only becomes alive as it is challenged by the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let us now look at the Seminary in the process of theological education for freedom. The critical question is what is the underlying theological pedagogy operating in black theological seminaries at the moment in South Africa? There can be many answers to this question, but when we evaluate the theological education process from a black perspective, we see how it is dominated by the Western intellectual ethos or colonial ethos by which a kind of theological "castration" takes place, leaving those who participate in it as theological

⁹ Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1964), p. 70.

nonentities. To survive this kind of castration you either become an English (black) theologian or American (black) theologian but whatever you become you are regarded by Imperialist theologians as theologically *persona non grata*. In our quest for a relevant black theological process I believe we have to attempt and develop a theological pedagogy that will deal with the situation of oppression and this is what I will attempt to do in the following paragraphs.

The problem with the existing theological pedagogy in black seminaries is what I wish to term the theological process of adaptation to the existing social conditions as opposed to a theological process of intergration resulting from the capacity to be critical of the existing conditions. The significant point here is how black seminaries conduct their business of theological education. If we go back to the definition I gave for theological education, perhaps we will then be able to start developing a theological pedagogy. Theological education is a reflection which is undertaken by a theological community to understand the meaning of the Christian faith in the everyday life of the ministry of the church and to discover how that faith becomes praxis. If we take the social context in which black theological education takes place, the Seminary should then stimulate a learning theological process, which enables those who participate relate to that context in a critical way. It must become an educational process in which critical perception unravels the ambiguities and social discrepancies which exist in that situation.

But such a theological critical consciousness can only develop from a critical theology, e.g., a political theology which I understand as a theo-

logical hermeneutic which affirms the political dimension of the Christian faith and poses its challenge to the social human condition. Such a theology is not a justification of any existing political situations but becomes critical of such justifications. It also does not attempt to identify religion and politics, but is critical of theological images of any such identifications. The Christian gospel is not political because we make it so, but it is political in its essence. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross, for example, is not political because of the political circumstances surrounding his death under the Roman Empire, but it is political because in his death we see God identifying Himself with the wretched, the downtrodden of the earth.

It is in this context that a black theological pedagogy finds its basis and *modus operandi*. The Christian faith in South Africa is political not ultimately because of the existing political conditions but because the gospel is itself the hope and source of liberation for those who are victims of oppression, and in this specific context they are black. Black theological education, by its very nature based on reflection of the Christian gospel, becomes critical more than ever now because in the gospel there is already an intrinsic challenge to the existing political structures of the South African situation. This would be true of any situation where the evil of oppression is manifest in a society. Let us not be under the illusion that it is because of existing political structures of oppression that the Christian gospel becomes political. The Gospel is always political because of its identification with the wretched of the earth, and in terms of its incisive opposition to all forms of human sinfulness. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a challenge to all forms of human

alienation and in our context that alienation takes a specific category of oppression. The political dimension of the Gospel is *suu generis*. God's activity of liberation in Jesus Christ has a total decisiveness about it, i.e., it is thoroughly eschatological in the Moltmannian sense. Black theological pedagogy must fully participate in this political decisiveness of the Christian gospel.

The problem which confronts any educational pedagogy is the question of praxis: the way in which the educational process becomes concretized in human conditions. Black theological responsibility in terms of our specific situation cannot be acquired only intellectually, that is, by doing the academic thing, but will become a praxis by experience. This experience means the black theological community represented by the Seminary must be constantly involved in the life of the Church, wrestling with all the questions confronting God's people. For example, if our theological reflection takes seriously the intrinsic political dimension of the gospel, we cannot avoid being involved in community development projects, dealing with questions which emerge from the economic situation in which most blacks are poor. The feeding of the five thousand by our Lord assumes a new concrete significance for us in this situation. This means our theology becomes problem-solving and people-oriented because this is what the gospel is about, fully and ultimately.

Let me attempt to give an example of how this theological pedagogy would work in terms of our situation. Take a specific aspect of a theological curriculum, e.g., practical theology. A course in practical theology will require the following elements.

Phase I

(1) The nature and purpose of practical

theology

- (a) As informed by biblical perspectives and perspectives from the African worldview in the context of oppression.
- (b) As informed by Christian tradition and a critique of that tradition from a black African perspective
- (c) Working towards a black method in practical theology

Phase II

(2) Contextual practical theology

- (a) Weekly workshops with black congregations
- (b) Reports on progress and evaluation
- (c) Weekly workshops with community organizations
- (d) Reports on progress and evaluation

This would be a tentative structure of the course which will be conducted on a seminar basis requiring that all those involved, including the initiator, will conduct research on various aspects of the program and actually be involved in workshops. This is just an outline in which the theological pedagogy I have briefly outlined is applied. Such an approach, whilst attempting to deal with the academic questions, will also attempt to deal with those questions in a concrete social condition. A similar kind of thing could be attempted with other theological disciplines, with appropriate variations of course.

VI CONCLUSION

What this essay attempts to do is to emphasize the need for a black contextual theological education in South Africa. The black theological community has a responsibility to work toward it and if there are white theologians who want to share in this significant endeavour, they can only do so if

they become black in the sense of identifying themselves with the oppressed — that which the Christian gospel already witnesses to. Black theological education will only become relevant if it deals 1) with the context of black theology, 2) the purpose of the church in the liberation process, 3) black theological understanding of the ministry, 4) and works towards a black theological pedagogy. My contention is that ASATI (the Association of South African Theological Institutions), especially in its relation to the so-called black theological seminaries, will not be condu-

BLACK THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

cive to this radical structure as it reflects the structures of the South African political situation in which whites have the final word in deciding what is right for us (blacks) irrespective of the fact that there are blacks who participate in that Association. The task and destiny of black theological education will depend on what kind of theological input the black South African theologians make in terms of the social conditions, and above all the challenge of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in whom all forms of authentic human liberation are made possible.