

Journal of

**BLACK
THEOLOGY**



in South Africa

Vol. 3 No. 2

November 1989

JOURNAL OF BLACK THEOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

November 1989

Vol. 3. No. 2

EDITORIAL

ARTICLES

- The Thought of Steve Biko as the historico-philosophical base of South African Black Theology by Rev. M.S. Lamola 1
- Christian Socialism as Precursor of Liberation Theology by Prof. S.S. Maimela 14
- Christianity and Socialism: Appropriating Moses and Jesus for National Liberation in Azania by Dr. Itumeleng J. Mosala 28
- The Cross in the Search for Humanity: Theological challenges facing South Africa by Dr. Takatso A. Mofokeng 38
- African Liberation Theology by Dr. Gwinyai H. Muzorewa..... 52
- BOOK REVIEWS:
Theology and Violence: The South African Debate by Charles Villa-Vicencio (editor) reviewed by Takatso Mofokeng..... 71
- Life and Work of J. Th. Van der Kemp 1747-1811. Cape Town and Rotterdam: A.A. Balkema, 1988. X1+234pp.R55,00. By Enklaar, Ido H. reviewed by S.S. Maimela..... 73
- Praying and Preaching the Sunday Gospel by Donders reviewed by Lizo D. Jafta..... 75

EDITORIAL

It is now twenty one years since the first conference on Black Theology was held in South Africa. It is therefore proper for us to pause for a moment, look back in the corridors of theological history again. We also need to refresh our memory of the greatest theological development ever to take place on this southern most tip of Africa. When we think back to the early days of Black Theology in South Africa, we can remember many names of black theologians who had a hand in its formation. All these names are important for us to remember because they are milestones on the long and glorious track of Black Theology in our search for liberation and theological self-expression. Among the names which need to be remembered is that of Steve Bantu Biko who, though not a theologian, was able to make theological history with his philosophical contribution. In his speech entitled ***Black Consciousness and the quest for true humanity***, Steve Biko linked Black Consciousness and Black Theology in a way in which no one in South Africa had done before. Ever since he made that linkage many theologians, social scientists and philosophers have debated and discussed Black Theology within the context of Black Consciousness and Black Consciousness within the context of Black Theology. That debate still rages even today. In this issue of our journal we include one article that continues this discussion within our changed situation in which confusion reigns supreme. In the next article the author takes us back again. This time to the history that, according to him, could explain the emergence of Liberation Theology. He takes us back to that theological movement which, though short lived, shocked the conservative theological world and excited those Christians who had been searching for the relevance of the gospel in society. In this present article the author traces the link between Liberation Theology and the American social gospel movement. In our own time and on our continent, especially at this southern most tip of it, it is not possible to discuss liberation and avoid questions on the relevance of socialism, not only for the future of oppressed and poor people, but also for that of Christianity. You will therefore find an article exploring the relationship between Christianity and socialism in this issue. The last two articles also deal with issues which are still very relevant for the theological discussions in this region. You will undoubtedly find them very interesting to read.

The Thought of Steve Biko as the historico-philosophical base of South African Black Theology

by Rev. Malesela John Lamola

1. Introduction

It is hardly possible to do justice to an analysis of the development of political thought in South Africa and the dynamics of the social conflict undergirding this development without making mention of the life, death and thought of Steve Bantu Biko (1946-1977). On the other hand, no historical account of Black Theology, or of the debates accompanying its development, would be complete without taking account of the philosophy of Steve Biko, which was seminal in the development of Black Theology in South Africa. Equally, any account or active construction of a South African Liberation or revolutionary theology which fails to take account of the findings and perspectives emerging from Black Theology, and its ideological source-the philosophy of Black Consciousness, would be defective.

In the lexicon of South African protest politics, Black Consciousness as a political philosophy, is synonymous with controversy. It has, from the moment of its embryonic appearance, been greeted with scepticism, cynicism, fear and suspicion. It has also been misrepresented. This negative response to Black Consciousness and its take-over, falsification and misuse by some political factions in contemporary South Africa (bantustan leaders for example), has detracted attention from a serious theological study of and dialogue with the latter, as a revolutionary "weltanschauung" for South Africa. On the other hand, Black Theology, because of its association with Black Consciousness is being marginalized as a political theology. It is feared that its promotion militates against the popular vision of a movement toward a nonracial humanism in South Africa.

As a political philosophy, Black Consciousness, is one of those few philosophies in modern history which, like the socialist movement of the previous century, can claim to be an authentic intellectual product of the creativity of an oppressed people. As a systematic articulation of the ideas of the unpropertied class, it started off with the disadvantage that it had to contest with dominant ideas of some of the most organized ruling classes in the U.S.A. and South Africa. It will be one of the greatest scandals of history if, after preaching a theological methodology of bias in favour of the poor and the underdog, liberation theologians end up colluding with liberal bourgeois classes in pronouncing a summary anathema on Black Consciousness which has painfully and miraculously arisen out of a people who are denied every means of political self-expression and full intellectual development.

The object of this paper is a revisitation of Steve Biko from a black theological historical enquiry. It is an attempt at a reinvestigation and systematic reconstruction of his thought. This is done in the service of both Black Theology in particular and South African political philosophy in general.

Black Theology as an epistemologically self-defined theological system, is a phenomenon which is secondary to a consciousness of the reality of being black in a white racist world. It is secondary to the primary epistemological orientation of black self-awareness and expression, an awareness of the meaning of one's blackness and an acceptance of the demand to view and interpret the world from the standpoint of this self-consciousness. Being a theological system, it is an institutionalisation of a religious awareness of the fact of being black, which seeks to ask and address questions and practical dilemmas from this experience within the context of a formalised religious epistemological system. It is an open-ended way of seeing things through black eyes — as a Christian, and interpreting them in a black way — culturally, politically and theologically.

Therefore, a commitment to a critical black religious hermeneutic is not conditional upon one's affiliation to some "camp of Black theologians". The divisive tendency of traditional liberal thought to analyse and arrange reality into a series of boxes, should be resisted. The existence of a class of professional exponents of Black theology, should be no cause for an entrenchment of a sectarian view of either Black Theology or these theologians. The challenge of Black Theology remains an interventionist call to all black people to hear and interpret the Christian kerygma from the perspective of their context and experience of daily brutalisation and for this reason, its relevance in South Africa is perennial.

2. STEVE BIKO AND BLACK THEOLOGY

The period of the polemics surrounding the emergence of Black Consciousness under the leadership of Biko, that is, the years 1968 to 1971, is regarded as the period of the genesis of Black Theology in South Africa. Related to Biko's analysis of the plight and experiences of the oppressed blacks, was an expose of the role colonial Christianity had played, not only in legitimising the racist South African status quo, but chiefly in helping to cement a slave-mentality and self-alienation in the collective consciousness of black people. Biko's analysis revealed how on the one hand a sacralisation of white European cultural values endowed these values with a religious mystique, while on the other hand African culture was heathenised. This created an inferiority complex in black people. He actively set out to challenge the Black clergy to practically appraise the apparent European inspiration of their "ministry" and to learn that the

sine quo non of authentic, and thus liberating Christian communication lies in its contextuality. The context of suffering, estrangement, induced self-debasement and struggle of the Black people in South Africa called for a Black Theology, which Biko defines as ...a situational interpretation of Christianity... which seeks to relate the present-day black man to God within the given context of the Black man's sufferings and his attempts to get out of it.¹ What he found valuable about Black Theology was that "it shifts emphasis from petty sins to major sins in society, thereby ceasing to teach people to suffer peacefully."² He saw this as a remedy for the sustained guilt-inspiring nature of European Christian theology and its homiletics which only served to enhance and deepen the self-alienation and self-hate of black people.

Biko was subject to the conservative influence of a typical African family. He was not a professional theologian, nor a theological student. But through his participation in the University Christian Movement (which existed from 1967 to 1972), and from his close relations with outspoken theological students such as Stan Sabelo Ntwasa and Mokgethi Motlhabi, grasped enough of the Christian religion to engage in his own creative reflection on matters theological, particularly as it affected the political plight of the black community.

By devoting himself to the systematic enunciation and the general propagation of a philosophy of Black Consciousness, Biko served to create an intellectual climate, a *Zeitgeist* in which theological questions and activity loosely institutionalised itself into a South African Black Theology. This process was to be the foundational scheme from which the current South African political theology and Church-based political activism was to emerge.

The appearance, language, and objectives of South African Political Theology from the pre-Black Consciousness era is distinctly different from that which immediately preceded it. Before 1969, the leadership of the anti-apartheid ecumenical movement was the preserve of white liberals and white-led institutions, foremost among which were Dr Beyers Naude and the Christian Institute (CI). This movement was largely concerned with "race relations. This concern about "race relations" formed the background against which the policies of the Apartheid regime were evaluated. In this evaluation use was made of a liberal European biblical hermeneutic, especially that of the German theologians of the anti-Nazi movement.³ The impression was created that if only the racist government and its white voters would accept an ethically responsible concept of "race relations" it will lead them to accommodate blacks, sharing the privileges accruing from the current system. All the problems of South Africa would then be done away with. Biko's understanding

of Black Consciousness was generated by a compulsion to refute this kind of thinking. He maintained that not only was it wrong, but that it was a dangerous misunderstanding of the South African problem.

His counter-assertions were eventually formalised into a clear agenda of "a struggle for black liberation" as a paradigmatic anti-thesis to the "normalisation of relations between races" mentality which was then in vogue. The problem, he argued, is a deliberate malevolent white racism. This racism which was built into economic and political structures was dependent on the acquiescence of black people, who had been conditioned through the control mechanisms of the system into an apathetic catalepsis. An essential and foundational element of any attempt at a solution, he maintained, was for blacks to realise how this racism, as a social system, feeds on their complacency. They need to wake up, to reject and guard against all stereotypes which this system seeks to inculcate in them, and to realise the potency of their collective communality as a people who are racialistically defined and are made to suffer by reason of that definition.

The impact of this new perspective could not but influence the ecumenical theological thinking which since 1960, under the leadership of the CI and later the SACC, had shown such a dedicated concern for political developments in the country. The most obvious sign of this was the drastic radicalisation of the programme of the CI immediately after 1971. This shift was so clearly evident that the Vorster regime could not ignore it and initiated a series of repressive actions against the CI and its personnel, culminating in them (CI, Beyers Naude and some staff members), being included when the Black Consciousness movement and related organisations were banned in October 1977. This radicalisation of the South African theological language and praxis was facilitated by the churches' painful response to the Black Consciousness challenge of the "fact that, most of the churches have 70, 80, or 90 per cent of their membership within the black world ...(but) have 70, 80, or 90 per cent of controlling power in white hands.⁴ In 1969 the CI and the SACC established SPROCAS (Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society/Study Programme for Christian Action in Apartheid Society) in conjunction with the Black Peoples Convention, a Black Community Project. In 1972 Ben Khoapa, one of Biko's "lieutenants" was appointed its Director. This act symbolised the formal accommodation of Black Consciousness by the ecumenical Church. In 1974, the CI appointed Dr Manas Buthelezi, then the most respected exponent of Black Theology in South Africa at that time, as its first black regional director.

As Black Christians learnt to refuse token representation in the corridors of ecclesiastical power and theological formulation, they slowly began to occupy influential positions. With the insistent articulation of their black perspective and aspirations the Church began to adopt the poise of a liberation front.

3. THE THOUGHT OF STEVE BIKO: BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

3.1 Summary

The hallmark of Steve Biko's thought in South Africa's protest politics was his scathing critique of the widely held thesis that the problem in South Africa is racial segregation per se. It followed therefore that it would be remedied by the formation of inter-racial political and social organisations to oppose and subvert Apartheid. Biko rejected the widely held notion that the problem of South Africa was the blacks and that the government did not know what to do with them (cf. the perennial theme of 'The Native Problem' in South African history textbooks). Biko declared that: "There is nothing the matter with blacks (sic). The problem is WHITE RACISM, and it rests squarely on the laps of white society"⁵. He argued that a remedy against 'organised white racism should be the strong reactive political solidarity of all black people and the cultivation of an assertive critical self-awareness among Black people. This would deny white racism its feeding ground, and as an organised force black people would be able to challenge this structural racism. In his essay on "Black Consciousness and the quest for True humanity,"⁶ Biko employed the Hegelian dialectical method of the negation of the negation, with a view to producing a positive⁷. He argued that the dialectic between organised white racism and Black solidarity which gave rise to unequal and conflicting, thus false, human consciousness, should be accepted as an obvious fact. In this process both whites and blacks would be conscientised. The former becoming aware of the racism from which they need to be redeemed, and the latter of their responsibility to redeem the former by refusing to be willing victims of racism. A "slave-mentality" has been cultivated in Black people. This led them unwittingly to collude with their own oppression. Only when they have attained freedom from this mentality, and begin to rise in revolutionary anti-racist self-assertions would this conflict, the dialectic, dissolve into a positive synthesis. White humanity, i.e. human self-consciousness would be starved of its racist superiority complex as there would no longer be blacks willing to have this superiority exercised over them. In the process, "black humanity" would have been emancipated from its self-denigrating inferiority complex. The result of this will be a True humanity, an authentic sense of being human. That is, a new conceptualisation of being human in a new South Africa where blacks and whites will no longer perceive each other in terms of racialistic superiority-inferiority complexes. According to Biko, it was

for the attainment of this sense of being human, that Black Consciousness was formulated and propagated. This is the core of Black Consciousness, all that followed was only polemics on the means and methods of achieving this, and a general defence of Black Consciousness. Biko was convinced that all other organisations that were then organised against apartheid, more specifically, the Black Sash, NUSAS, the South Africa Institute of Race relations, and even the Christian Institute, were working on an oversimplified premise. They have taken a brief look at what is, and have diagnosed the problem incorrectly. They have almost completely forgotten about the side effects, and have not even considered the root cause⁹. He saw his task as the isolation of this root cause and pointing out the impact of the side effects of Apartheid on black people.

Unlike all other previous revolutionary analyses of the problem of South Africa, Biko determined not to target his ideological attack against the obviously racist and lethargic whites or the Vorster regime per se. Instead he concentrated on castigating those white people who had come out in the fight against black oppression, as he examined their motivation and the mode of struggle they were propagating. Also, instead of the traditional tendency of lamenting the woes inflicted by the apartheid regime on the black community, he turned sharply on the black people themselves, showed them how oblivious they were of the psychological damage racial oppression was inflicting on them, and blamed them for allowing themselves to be oppressed.

3.2 On multiracial anti-apartheid alliances

Biko's uniqueness lay largely in his ability to clinically and incisively analyse the nature and dynamics of South African racism. Beyond the socio-political structure of Apartheid he identified and drew a picture of a society that was disfigured by a form of neurotic deviance. This deviance from its conflicting misconceptions, inspired by a political culture which was forcing people to find the basis of their self-definition in race. According to Biko the root cause, and at the same time effect of this mass dehumanisation or malhumanisation, was a pervasive anti-black racism among the white people of South Africa. A colonial white racism which found expression in the institution of Apartheid. Biko deciphered four model elements of this racism, namely: (1) paternalism, an assumption of the intellectual and moral superiority of the "caucasian race over the negroids, (2) prejudice against blacks — a prejudice which has been reinforced by the distortion of historical facts in state education, and the resultant psychological identification of blackness with negativity and evil; (3) self-induced white fear of blacks¹⁰; and (4) a deliberate and well-calculated systematic degradation of black people. Biko went on to assert that whereas all these manifesta-

tions of racism could generally be found in any like situation, paternalism was unique to South Africa, where in the late 1960's extra-parliamentary groups were teeming with white people who wanted to help black people. He concludes from his analysis that the behaviour of these "liberals" could only be equated with racism. It still harboured assumptions of white hegemony. Those white people had not yet been adequately challenged to criticise their own superiority complex which an apartheid society had naturally ingrained into them. Therefore as they perpetuated a false white humanity, they were reinforcing the false-consciousness of catalepsy in black people.

During the massive government repressive clampdown of 1960-63, all forms of Black resistance were snuffed out by the Verwoerd-Vorster regime. Within that vacuum the Church and the white-led multiracial student movement, the National Union of South African students (NUSAS), emerged as the only two vigorously outspoken¹¹ voices of extra-parliamentary opposition. Unfortunately the church opposition organised under the Christian Institute, which was founded in 1963, and NUSAS, which was then a more or less 40 year old organisation, had their leadership based entirely in the white community. Their concerns were primarily directed at exposing and opposing the injustices of Apartheid against the black section of the population. However, even though they maintained over multiracial membership the mode of articulation of policies and programmes remained "white" due to the social orientation of their leadership. However, even though Liberal whites were speaking on behalf of "pitiful" blacks: all of this was being done within the context of the social constraints imposed by the Apartheid legislation. For instance many of these leaders had never spent any time in a black residential area, more obviously, a black education institution. Having entered the University of Natal in 1966, Biko was elected into the Student Representative Council and as such secured a place in the leadership of NUSAS. This position was to expose him to a distressing observation of how his fellow white comrades perceived the problems of South Africa, and how their mentality was alien to the pains, humiliations and aspirations of black people. In 1968 he led a stormy walkout of all black university students from NUSAS and founded the South African Students Organisation (SASO) on a charter of Black Consciousness. The foundation of SASO was the consummation of a wide-spread feeling of dissatisfaction among politically active black students. Biko expressed it as follows: Even those whites who see much more wrong in the system make it their business to control the response of the blacks to the provocation. No one is suggesting that it is not the business of liberal whites to oppose what is wrong; however, it appears as much a coincidence that liberals—few as they are—should not only be determining the

modus operandi of those Blacks who oppose the system, but should also lead it.¹² However, criticism of a situation in which the whites usurped the leadership of the struggle seems to have been secondary to Biko's general analysis. What was primary was his argument that such overtures from white people and the racially integrated organisations they were encouraging was essentially dangerous, misconceived and perilous for the very goal which they thought they were working for, because "...people forming the intergrated black sub-ordinative complex and unchallenged white-superiority complex) have been extracted from segregated societies with their in-built complexes of superiority and inferiority and these continue to manifest themselves even in the 'non-racial' set-up of the integrated complex. As a result the intergration so achieved is a one-way course, with the whites doing all the talking and blacks all the listening."¹³ Proceeding from this, he stated that the "myth of intergration as propounded under the banner of liberal ideology must be cracked and killed" because it was dangerous in two respects. "...firstly 'it made' people believe that something is being done, when in actual fact the artificial intergrated circles are a soporific on the blacks and provide a vague satisfaction for the guilt-stricken whites." He proceeded: "It works on the false premise that because it is difficult to bring people from different races together 'in South Africa', therefore achievement of this is in itself a step forward towards the total liberation of the blacks"¹⁴. Secondly, pointing out that this liking of acceptance by white people is a perfect demonstration of what racial oppression has done to blacks. He explained that blacks have been made "to feel so inferior for so long that for them it is comforting to drink tea or beer with whites who seem to treat them as equals"¹⁵. And in turn, this served to boost the ego of these few "acceptable" elite blacks to the extent that they feel slightly superior to other blacks who did not get similar treatment from white people. The result being that, the black political leaders, operating in this multiracial set-up, develop elitist self-images, which end up alienating them from their own people, thereby thwarting their goal of serving their communities. Taken together this made Biko's analysis a novelty. His criticism of white liberals and multi-racial political groups was the most controversial aspect of his belief and career. He held to this position in a firm and unequivocal manner up to the moment of his death, and sagaciously defended it against the attacks of the white liberal press and the reconciling, white-led Church. The polemic stimulated him to gradually clarify himself while building up the structure of a philosophy of Black Consciousness for South Africa.

3.3 On racial integration

It is necessary to look again at Biko's postulates on racial integration. What we have elaborated on in the foregoing paragraphs is

largely his conviction regarding the participation of white liberals in the liberation struggle. Although the same basic principles apply, he needed to develop this matter as it pertained to the road ahead towards a South Africa liberated from racism of the apartheid social system.

The pre-Biko post-1964 anti-apartheid movement mainly operated on the conviction that the process of encouraging racial integration in a society where races were separated from each other by law, did not have to wait for the day of the downfall of the Apartheid regime. It held that people should begin to mix not only socially, but that in addition open up economic opportunities to encourage a black middle class which would help to serve as a link between white circles and the black underdog masses¹⁶ It was hoped that this strategy would ultimately not only have a subversive effect on the socio-political structure of apartheid, but that it would also promote much needed understanding between peoples who had grown up being literally socially regimented and psychologically engineered into seeing one another only in racial terms and master-servant categories. Steve Biko contended against this. He maintained that the promotion of racial integration “as often extolled in white liberal circles, is full of unquestioned assumptions. Assumptions which as Biko observed, embraced white cultural values. It is an intergration in which the black man has to prove himself in terms of these values before meriting acceptance and ultimate assimilation”¹⁷. It was as such, not an intergration of two hitherto separated groups, instead, it is an assimilation of Black people into an unchanged white world. To back up this assertion he explained that South African life, i.e. its culture and its formative influences are very much Anglo-Boer in nature. Because white people, both English and Afrikaans, constituted a dominant class in whose hands resided all power-economic, political and intellectual — the predominant life-values and ideas in South Africa are singularly “white. It is a society that is structured to protect the racist, nationalist and exploitative interests of the white people. He therefore felt that an invitation to Blacks “who can make it” by sections of this racial class to become assimilated, meant a denial of their class identification with their people as well as with their cultural selves in order to ascend into a whitehood of being bourgeois upholders of the apartheid structure, which in Biko’s words was nothing but “a white power structure. Consequently, instead of pushing Blacks to join this politico-cultural world of white power Biko declared that “It is an intergration in which Black will compete with Black, using each other as rungs up a step-ladder leading them to white values”¹⁸. It is an invitation to Blacks to climb onto a table which is already set and prepared in a white dominating way, as it were. In response to this invitation, Black people were to scramble over each other, further dividing themselves as the

strong among them use the weak as means of securing a seat at this "white man's table".

But what was Biko's alternative proposal to apartheid's racial segregation and regimentation? It is here that he begins to apply Hegelian dialectics. There should be a negative process in which the related negative self-misconceptions of both white and blacks are destroyed, he proposed. This will in effect lead to the complete destruction of the present "table" with all its trappings. Out of this, a positive trend should emerge. Both whites and blacks, as "true humans" released from a prior racial definition, should get together, as equals, and democratically create a new set-up in which neither would be the guests nor the hosts. There would be complete egalitarianism, and not a mere assimilation of the weak into a value system and social structure which is created and maintained by the powerful". If by integration you mean there shall be free participation by all members of a society, catering for the full expression of the self in a freely changing society as determined by the will of the people, then I am with you, since "... at the heart of true intergration is the provision of each man, each group, to rise and attain the envisioned self"¹⁹. This line of thinking found its way into the 1971 Policy Statement of SASO. It reads "SASO believes that ... intergration cannot be realised in an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. Integration does not mean assimilation of blacks into an already established set of norms drawn up and motivated by white society. Intergration implies free participation by individuals in a given society and proportionate contribution to the joint culture of the society by all constituent groups"^{19b}.

These assertions made under the loose context of a quest for a true humanity, were to expose for Biko a problem which became the focus of his entire thought. He had become aware that black people had no strongly expressed understanding of their culture in which their current oppression and aspiration for liberation was assimilated. They had no collective, affirmative and native Weltanschauung to present at that summit of the amalgamation of hitherto conflicting South African socio-cultural self-perceptions. A development of their "culture" or self-consciousness had been thwarted and totally disfigured, if not destroyed, by centuries of racist colonialism and Apartheid. To make matters worse, black people, in Biko's view, had internalised this affront to their cultural being to the extent that affected even their political articulation. They could stand up as a people and look white people in the eye with a coherent and unequivocal declaration of their demands; they always went begging cap in hand, even for political rights unalienably theirs. This was Biko's only lamentation: To a large extent the evil-doers have succeeded in producing at the output end of their machine

a kind of black man who is man only in form... reduced to an obliging shell, he looks with awe at the white power structure and accepts what he regards as 'the inevitable position'. In the privacy of his toilet his face twists in silent condemnation of white society, but brightens up in sheepish obedience as he comes out hurrying in response to his master's impatient call... His heart yearns for the comfort of white society and makes him to blame himself for not having been 'educated' enough to warrant such luxury.²⁰ Biko opined that Black people had been reduced to, cowed-down, self-alienated copy-cats who were perpetually enticed to graduate into whitehood. He pointed out that the distortion of African history by the imperialists was one of the most significant assaults against African selfhood in South Africa. He indicated that, "the African child learns to hate his heritage in his days at school. So negative is the image presented to him that he tends to find solace only in close identification with the white society"²¹. Pondering the extent of alienation and the resultant negative self-image of the black people, Biko sadly, but truly concluded: "All in all the Black man has become a shell, a shadow of man, completely drowned in his own misery, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity"²². In the light of this, Biko rejected the proposed integration because as far as he could see, the Blacks were not yet ready to integrate self-assertively and with a pride in themselves. Any hasty integration will merely enhance their individual self-alienation as they realise that they can never become whites, as that, it seemed, is what their present mentality sets them to aspire for. In line with this observation in his "Steve Biko — A Tribute". Desmond Tutu remarks that "with his brilliant mind that always saw to the heart of things, Steve realised that until blacks asserted their humanity and their personhood, there was not the remotest chance for reconciliation in South Africa. For true reconciliation is a deeply personal matter. It can happen only between persons who assert their own personhood, and who acknowledge and respect that of others. You don't get reconciled to your dog, do you?"²³. What Tutu, using the language of South African political theology calls reconciliation, Biko, in raw political terms, called "integration. Biko took it together as follows:" The first step, therefore, is to make a black man come to himself: to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity; to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth. This is what we mean by an inward-looking process,. This is the definition of Black Consciousness."²⁴

3.4 Conclusion

This body of thought, a critical analysis of both the South African political struggle and in particular the devastating plight of a black

person under apartheid, originally challenged Black theologians and revealed the need of a Black Theology. A theology which in its nascent stages was quite correctly viewed as being primarily pastoral, albeit "revolutionarily pastoral. It was revolutionary in redeclaring the "somebodiness" of a people who have been taught that they are dispensable nothings by reason of their skin colour alone, and by fixing this declaration on the religious faith so tenaciously held by the black masses, an eventual black uprising against white domination was rendered inevitable. Biko saw Black Theology as a sine qua non of black redemption from the throes of the highly organised white racism of apartheid. In his view, Black Theology is an attempt "to relate God and Christ once more to the black man and his daily problems ... to describe Christ as a fighting God, not a passive God ... is an important aspect of Black Consciousness, for quite a large proportion of black people in South Africa are Christians still swimming in a mire of confusion—the aftermath of the missionary approach." A theological expression related to addressing colonial Christianity, one of the current media of black self-subjugation was sorely needed, consequently a formulation of a black theological critique of white Christianity and society resulted²⁵.

REFERENCES

1. "The Church as Seen by a Young Layman, paper delivered at the Conference of Black Ministers of Religion of the Black Community Projects (BCP) and held at Edendale. Natal in May 1972. In, Steve Biko. *I Write What I Like*. ed, A Stubbs, Penguin Books, London. 1978. pp. 75-86.
2. Ibid. p.80.
3. See for example, the 1968 "Message to the People of South Africa. Also, in confirmation of this observation, John De Gruchy in *Resistance and Hope* (De Gruchy, Villa-Vicencio. eds. David Phillips, 1985. p. 17) notes. "for most of the sixties, its 'the Christian Institute' theology and orientation was Reformed and its main source of inspiration was the Confessing Church struggle in Nazi Germany.
4. Biko, op cit., p. 72.
5. From, "Black Souls in White Skins, in, op cit., p. 37.
6. See G W F Hegel. *Introduction to the History of Philosophy*. in Q. Lauer, Transl & ed, *Hegel's Idea of Philosophy*. Fordham University Press, New York, 1971, pp. 73-82; Biko makes an indirect reference to Hegel in, *I Write What I Like*, p. 106.
7. In, *I Write What I Like*, pp 103-114, also in Mokgethi Motlhabi. ed, *Essays on Black Theology*. Ravan Press (BCP), Johannesburg, 1972, p. 20ff.
8. Basil Moore, ed. *Black Theology: The South African Voice*. Hurst & Co., New York, 1973, p. 69.

9. I Write What I Like p. 47
10. NB. "Fear—an Important Determinant of S A Politics. in *ibid.* p. 47.
11. Other organisations; South African Institute of Race Relations, Black Sash, University Christian Movement.
12. I Write What I Like, p. 105.
13. *ibid.* p. 35
14. *ibid.* p. 36
15. *ibid.* 16. In, *The struggle for South Africa: A Reverence Guide. Vol. 2.* (Zed Books, London, 1984). R. Davies, D. O'Meare, and S. Dalmini, eds. argumentatively demonstrate how since the 1930's the SAIRR developed and promoted this brand of English capitalist liberalism. pp. 418-420.
17. *op cit.*, p. 38
18. *op cit.*, p. 36
- 19a. *op cit.* pp. 35, 37
- 19b. *Black Review* 1972. Bennie A Khoapa, ed. BCP, Durban. p.42.
20. *op cit.*, p. 43
21. *op cit.*,
22. *op cit.*,
23. *Crying in the Wilderness.* ed. John Webster, Mowbray Press, Oxford, 1982. p. 62.
24. I Write What I Like p. 43
25. S. Biko. "Towards a True Humanity in South Africa. in *The Ecumenical Review.* Vol 30. No. 4 Oct. 1978. Geneva, p. 365

CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM AS PRECURSOR OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY by PROF S S MAIMELA

Among many other important developments in the nineteenth century which laid the foundation for a more explicit theology of liberation, the most important is the so-called "Christian Socialism". This is a theological movement which was dedicated to the radical reconstruction of society in accordance with the ideal of the Kingdom of God. This theological movement of the socially concerned christians, developed into what was later to be known as the "Social Gospel." It is characterised by a changed understanding of the relationship between the christian faith and the socio-political order, especially in economics.

If we are to see the emergence of the "Social Gospel" in its proper perspective, and appreciate its contribution towards a broader, more holistic and inclusive understanding of salvation in all its spiritual and physical dimensions as propounded by Liberation Theology, we need to look again at the preceding centuries to see what factors contributed to the rise of this movement.

First, during the Enlightenment there was a greater appreciation of and interest in the political, economic and cultural achievements of humanity. There was a greater interest in the world and earthly needs, which led to major socio-political upheavals in Europe (the French Revolution) and North America. In the medieval period and during the Protestant Reformation the emphasis was on what is "above" and "beyond. Life on earth was seen primarily as a preparation for the life hereafter. While Luther, Calvin and other reformers believed that social institutions were ordained by God, they thought that the main purpose of these institutions was to further the religious life of christians, and not the satisfaction of people's bodily needs.

The "humanist" stream of Renaissance thinking, however, focused on human achievements, the goodness of human nature and culture, and valued human freedom as an ideal. Calvinism, in its activist and "this-worldly" aspect, regarded the world, though fallen and evil, as God's creation, a gift of God to the human race, and these views were embraced by the thinkers of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. These factors, combined with the development of science, gave rise to a religious perspective that emphasised the achievement of human happiness on this side of the grave. The result was growing optimism about human possibilities and achievements on earth. Ernst Troeltsch, in his two-volume work, *The*

Social Teachings of the Christian Churches (1911/1960)' factually substantiated Weber's view, and adopted it with certain qualifications.

Secondly, the Protestant concept of a christian calling or vocation helped to emphasise the importance of human achievements on earth. This understanding of the christian role in the world led to a rejection of the supposed superiority of the so-called religious vocations over secular vocations. The difference between the calling of a farmer and that of a priest was understood for the first time as a division of labour, and the two callings were regarded as equally important. The farmer and the priest both serve God in their own way. Luther argued that each person is called to serve God and his fellows in whatever situation he finds himself. In Calvinism, according to Weber and Troeltsch, this idea of vocation, in which God is glorified through daily work, led to an "activistic" trend in social life.

Thirdly, there was the profound christian concern for the welfare of the oppressed which first appeared among the seventeenth-century Quakers, and expressed itself in the call for social reforms during the nineteenth century. A good example of this concern was the campaign of Wilberforce and others to abolish slavery and the slave trade in the British empire. Another example was the contribution of Lord Shaftesbury to the improvement of factory conditions during the Industrial Revolution and his fight against the extensive use of child labour.

Though these reforms were advocated by devoted and sincere christians and did improve conditions for people who had been oppressed, they were conceived largely within the socio-economic structures and conditions of the time. None of these reformers called for the dismantling of the existing oppressive and exploitative socio-political and economic system. Instead these social reformers concentrated on the removal of specific abuses and their concern for reform was overshadowed by the priority they placed on the life hereafter. It is therefore not surprising that Wilberforce, in his book entitled ***Practical View of the System of Christianity***, suggests that the value of Christianity lies in making social inequalities less bitter to the lower classes. He counsels them to lead a life of diligence, humility and patience².

Implicit in the beliefs of these reformers was the view that the christian religion sanctioned the inequities of the economic order, and their reform programmes were designed to give temporary relief because they thought that the imbalance would be redressed and that justice would be done for the oppressed in the life after death.

From a different perspective, despite the positive aspects of the Protestant ethos referred to above, the Church was unable to stop the gradual watering down of its prophetic ministry and social concern when, in the prevailing economic trends of the nineteenth century, there was an increasing call for a separation between Church and State. As a result, the church's view that secular life should be shaped by the ethics of the gospel was gradually abandoned. The result was a growing tendency to harmonise christian goals with the major social forces such as free enterprise, democracy, and patriotism, leading to an implicit and explicit sanctioning of the social, political and particularly the economic status quo.

It was this uncritical acceptance of the inequitable socio-economic system as a whole which was to call forth the most vigorous criticism from the nineteenth-century thinkers to whom we now turn our attention.

SOCIAL CRITIQUE FROM OUTSIDE THE CHURCH: THE CHALLENGE OF MARXISM

An important external attack on the church's alliance with the ruling classes came from Marxist socialism following the publication of Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Das Kapital* (1867). In Karl Marx's view, history is dictated and determined by economic forces which give rise to class conflict. Marx's thesis is simply that all human institutions and ideas are to be understood as reflecting directly or indirectly the interests of the ruling (dominant) class in the economic struggle.

Marx argued that capitalism by its very nature necessitates the continual expansion, concentration and centralisation of the means of production in the hands of a few capitalists. Hence it thrives on the exploitation of the workers for the benefit of the owners of the means of production who in Marxist theory are called "capitalists". The interest of capital and labour are in principle irreconcilable, and so Marx predicted that they would grow steadily further apart until there would be whole societies divided into only two classes: the exploiting capitalists and the exploited working class (proletariat). This conflict would intensify until finally resolved by a revolution to be brought about by the working class, which would result in the establishment of a communist (egalitarian) society in which each person would produce according to his/her ability and share in the goods of society according to his/her need.

In Marx's view, religion is also a product of the economic forces that shape the structures of society. Because it reflects the interests of the ruling classes, religion is used by the capitalist class as an instrument to maintain their power and justify their exploitation of the

working classes. In other words, religion keeps the proletariat docile by promising the poverty-stricken and exploited masses a wonderful future in the life to come. By focusing their attention on the life to come, religion diverts the attention of the exploited workers from the parlousness of their present economic and social conditions. It was for this reason that Marx called religion the ‘‘opium for the masses’’.

Marx’s sharp critique of the church’s collusion with the dominant classes was not altogether unjustified because, as has been pointed out already, even such prominent and influential christians as Wilberforce still held the view that religion was a means of making social inequalities less bitter to the lower classes.

When Karl Marx made his observations about contemporary economic conditions in Britain there was abundant evidence to support his contentions. As Morris correctly points out, no slave or servile class was more brutally exploited than the industrial proletariat during the Industrial Revolution in late eighteenth century England, and ‘‘in no age perhaps was the use of Christianity as an antidote to social unrest more blatant’’³ than during that period.

To be sure, Marx was not the first to express horror at the church’s misuse of religion to underpin the socio-economic interest of the ruling classes. But Marx’s critique, based on social analysis of the evils of capitalism, was so persuasively argued that the church could not simply ignore him. He passed judgement on the injustices and exploitation of the Industrial Revolution with tremendous force and conviction. Nobody before Marx had ever been able to produce a reasoned critique of such persuasive power — a critique in which he unequivocally declared that the church was implicated in the oppression of the working classes. Indeed so forceful was his critique that even today the church still reels under the impact of the Marxist critique of Christianity, especially in Third World countries.

CRITICISM FROM WITHIN THE CHURCH: THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHRISTIAN SOCIALISTS AND OF THE ‘‘SOCIAL GOSPEL’’

At about the same time that Marxism appeared on the scene, a school of thought arose within the church itself which questioned and eventually came to reject the identification of Christianity with the existing socio-political and economic order as manifested in the Western civilisation of that time. This school went beyond the reformers and philanthropists with their deep concern for the corrections of social abuses, and developed a more inclusive social criticism which dealt with the underlying structures of society. This movement, which began in the nineteenth century, is being carried

forward today in the work of the liberation theologians as they search for a more humane and just social order.

Before considering the role that the "Social Gospel" movement played in the struggle for human freedom and justice, we should look at the work of some of the theologians who laid the foundations for the present-day Christian critique of the role of the church in society. We shall limit ourselves to two figures, one British and the other American.

Frederick Maurice

Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872) and his colleagues were the most prominent theoreticians in the Christian Socialist movement in Britain. They were inspired and challenged by the atheistic Marxist critique to find an appropriate christian method of social reform as an alternative to the Marxist class struggle. Maurice was one of those who recognised the failure of the church to be the voice of the voiceless and of the oppressed, and he devoted his energies to change and social reform.

Traditionally, theologians regarded theology as a special kind of speculative thinking. Maurice's basic thesis, however, was that theology is not speculation. In contradistinction to this traditional view, Maurice believed that theology is a reflection on the ultimate relation of oneself as a believer to the family of God (the church), society and God. These three relationships provide a healthy social environment for christians to be free to devote their lives to the service of their fellows.

Maurice's theological outlook was heavily influenced by his fundamental belief that human beings are essentially social. He therefore postulated a definite connection between individual redemption in Jesus Christ and christian morality which he expressed in social terms. He argued that the structure of creation is grounded in the triune being of God and, as such it constitutes a set of relationships in which an individual person is a member of a family and is, by nature a son or daughter. This set of relationships, according to Maurice, provides the spiritual basis of the human race, one in which all various social arrangements such as the family, the nation and the church are to be understood.

This theological emphasis on the social nature of all human beings became the fundamental tenet of the Christian Socialist Movement in Britain. Maurice and his colleagues (Kingsley and Ludlow) offered their view of the human condition as a christian response to the Marxist theory of the class struggle. Maurice contended that the christian view of humanity is truly socialist, but that this socialism

needs a spiritual rather than a materialist basis. Writing to Ludlow in the *Tracts on Christian Socialism* (1850), he observes that "Christian Socialism" seems to him to be ...the only title which will define our object, and will commit us at once to the conflict we must engage in sooner or later with the unsocial christians and the unchristian socialists.⁴

Maurice rejected christian quietism as well as the unspiritual activism of the Marxist socialists and pointed out that society needs to be transformed and reconstituted in accordance with the principles of its spiritual constitution, namely: existence in Christian love in fulfilment of Christ's command that christians should love one another. Maurice also felt that socialism is the best expression of this "existence in love" because it insists on the principles of mutual co-operation and partnership as the basis for building a more humane and just society.

Kingley agrees with Maurice's rejection of both unsocial christians and unchristian socialists when he observes:

We have used the Bible as if it were a mere special constable's handbook, an opium for keeping the beasts of burden patient while they are being overloaded.⁵

Armed with these basic convictions, christians socialists under the leadership of Maurice worked hard to improve the conditions of the working class through religious regeneration and the formation of producers' co-operatives in which workers might be their own employers. They also encouraged the formation of trade unions to work peacefully for better conditions for their members. All this was inspired by Maurice's ideal of co-operation and co-partnership in society.

The spirit of Maurice and his colleagues permeated both the Anglican church and British society at large, and helped to prevent intensification of the hostility between the organised militant labour unions and the church which was a characteristic feature of societal conflict on the European continent at that time. Maurice was a living example of the church's prophetic ministry. The Christian Socialists showed that the church has a duty both to analyse critically the social evils that characterise industrial society and to work for the radical transformation of society so that a more humane and just social order might be created. Maurice's Christian Socialism influenced later British socialism and the Labour Party in England. Although its effectiveness in dealing with the social and economic abuses of its time should not be overestimated, the movement inspired widespread theological reflection about the social order and, in so doing, was a precursor of Liberation Theology of today.

Horace Bushnell

Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) took the age-old debate about the freedom of the will as the starting point for his theology of social reform. This debate, in Bushnell's opinion, fails to take into account the social nature of human existence. Arguments for free moral agency and those which deny a capacity for moral choice on the part of the individual were both based on the assumption that people exist as isolated entities rather than as social beings.

Bushnell's contribution to this debate was to insist that each child is indeed born into a world of sin and is a slave of sin because it is in the power of a network of sinful relationships. But being "born," according to Bushnell, means much more than a biological process; it means being formed or shaped in the organic unity of the human family. Hence he speaks not only about the "influence" that society exerts on individuals to move them towards some desired end but also of the psycho-spiritual bonds between the individual and his/her social environment so intimate and internal that they are unintended and even unconscious. This effects a reproduction of parental characteristics in children and parents find themselves reproducing certain features of themselves in their offspring whether the latter will it or not⁶.

In addition to this organic social matrix into which individuals are "born", Bushnell propounded a theory of the individual self coming to be itself only in a continuous process of gradual becoming. According to him, there is no single moment at which an individual becomes a moral agent, passing, as it were, from "moral nullity" to being an independent moral agent. A child gradually moves from dependence on its parents' moral judgement towards accepting moral responsibility on its own. Because of this, Bushnell thought that neither virtue nor sin can be interpreted adequately as the product of the separate and independent choice of an individual person. Because the self is a social self, virtue and sin are states or conditions, rather than specific acts.

In Bushnell's view, therefore, sin and redemption can only be adequately understood in social, psychological and historical terms rather than in metaphysical terms. Bushnell thus interpreted the traditional notion of original sin in terms of an organic unity of humanity in sin, a view similar to St. Paul's teaching about the corporate sinfulness of humanity in Adam⁷.

In other words, Bushnell rejected the understanding of original sin as something biologically transmitted from parent to child. In his view sin and guilt cannot be transferred from one person to another, and people are only responsible for their own sins. Nevertheless

the human race constitutes an irreducible social, historical and biological unity, and thus there exists in human society a principle of moral causality by means of which human beings affect one another for better or for worse. Because of the operation of this principle, Christian virtues are implicated in an actual struggle between good and evil; similarly, Christian redemption, in the context of the postulated organic unity of the human race, is social and corporate⁸.

According to Bushnell, Jesus Christ thus initiated a fundamentally new order of relations or organic causes which continue to operate redemptively in history. True Christian education should therefore mean nurturing a child within this new social order of relations so that the child might grow up as a Christian without being selfconsciously aware of it.

Bushnell's organic understanding of Christian community, both in sin and in redemption, became a very useful tool when the "Social Gospel" movement emerged. It enabled theologians to see more clearly the extent to which society might have to be transformed in order to bring about a free and just social order. Indeed, theologians past and present are forever indebted to Bushnell's insights as they try to reshape society and human relationships politically, economically and otherwise.

RITSCHL AND CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM IN EUROPE

Those on the continent who had been influenced by the theology of Albrecht Ritschl also advocated the reconstruction of society in the light of the gospel. As an advocate calling forth for justice, Ritschl insisted on the uncompromisingly ethical character of the gospel. This together with the sensitivity of Christian social reformers to the injustices in industrial society, made them aware of the church's responsibility for righting the wrongs of society, and for establishing new social structures which would be more consonant with the ideal of the Kingdom of God.

In reconstructing Christian faith Ritschl reduced, so to speak, the gospel (teachings of Jesus) to practical affair, that is — morality. In discussing the doctrine of justification and reconciliation accomplished in Jesus Christ, Ritschl is persuaded that Christ's redemptive work is now mediated through the church with a view to delivering humanity from bondage to the sensual nature, so that Christians might enjoy dominion over nature. This victory over sin was initiated by Christ who taught that moral and religious pursuits are in accordance with the will of his Father, whose goal is to establish the fellowship of freed persons, namely, members of the Kingdom of God. In Ritschl's view, therefore, reconciliation accomplished in and

through Christ was for the sake of the Kingdom of God, defined as the “organisation of humanity through action inspired by love.”

In other words, Ritschl’s contribution to the promotion of Christian socialism lay in his attempt to harmonise the ethical ideals of Christianity with some of the ideas (such as the widespread demands for social justice) prevalent in the culture of his time. This particular activity came to be known as “Kultur-protestantismus” (culture-protestantism). Many people regarded this as a confusion of cultural goals with Christian faith⁹. However much we may disagree with Ritschl, his rediscovery of the idea of the Kingdom of God as the key element in the teaching of Jesus gave a powerful impetus to the development of the “Social Gospel”. It also helped to develop the social conscience of the church.

The Christian socialism of Ritschl was carried further by his disciple Harnack who also stressed the ethical character of the gospel and the importance of the Kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus. Ernst Troeltsch also made a valuable and constructive contribution to this school of thought.

In conclusion, we may note that these social tendencies in Protestant thought are mainly interesting because they gave birth to a form of Christianity that was prophetic and socially relevant and because it emphasised the importance of working out the consequences of one’s faith in the spheres of economic and social justice — what Jesus called “bearing fruit”. This development gave the church the moral authority to confront the challenges of secular socialism and the rise of militant labour unions. It also enabled the church to take the lead in doing something constructive about the evils of modern industrial and exploitative society.

WALTER RAUSCHENBUSH: THE EMBODIMENT OF PROTESTANT SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

The most impressive and powerful expression of Protestant social conscience in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is to be found in the American movement commonly known as the “Social Gospel”. This movement reached its zenith just prior to the First World War. Its proponents called even more strongly than their European counterparts for a radical reconstruction of society along Christian lines in conformity with the ideal of the Kingdom of God. They believed in the possibility of human virtue on a large scale and the sacredness of human life. As a corollary to this they also believed that human society could be changed. The theological foundations for the “Social Gospel” movement had already been laid by Bushnell and Maurice who had effectively criticised the extreme individualistic conception of sin and salvation. These two men

emphasised that human beings cannot be redeemed in isolation from society but can only be redeemed in and with society because human social solidarity exists both in sin and salvation.

The champion of this Christian socialism in America was Rauschenbush (1861-1918) who was concerned about the problems created by industrialisation; problems such as the breaking up of social and family life, the failure of technology to provide for the needs of the masses of workers, the growing labour unrest, the exaggerate individualism of American capitalism, and the disregard for human rights reflected in the prevalence of poverty and slum conditions.

Rauschenbusch identified the conflict between capital and labour as the key problem in modern industrial society. As a theologian he insisted that the relations between capital and labour were theological and moral issues which had to be dealt with by the church. His most powerful exposition of both the individual and the social aspects of Jesus' ethical teaching is found in his ***A Theology for the Social Gospel*** (1917)¹⁰.

Like Bushnell, Rauschenbush stressed the unavoidably social dimensions of personal existence. Society is organic and holistic rather than an aggregation of individuals. In Raudchenbusch's opinion, there is a profound solidarity in the fabric of human society. It is for this reason that Rauschenbusch advocated for an intensive and systematic study of social conditions as a precondition for devising an effective programme to heal the social and spiritual malaise of society.

One of Rauschenbusch's basic tenets was that establishment of the Kingdom of God lies at the heart of the gospel. For him the "Social Gospel" demands a re-establishment of God's Kingdom in accordance with this central message of Jesus. But he was careful enough to qualify his central thesis by stressing that the Kingdom of God cannot simply be reduced to the social dimension. He was convinced that the most important part of the gospel is one's personal encounter and relationship with God and that this personal rebirth is the necessary precondition for social involvement. In Rauschenbush's theology, a person's relationship with God is of such central importance that his/her thinking cannot be understood without taking it into account.

Although Rauschenbush stressed the importance of a personal experience of the redeeming power of the gospel, he nevertheless insisted that a personal relationship with God should make people more aware of social and economic ills and abuses.

Rauschenbush, and others who thought like him, believed that Western societies should be reorganised in accordance with the ideal of the Kingdom of God, especially in the economic field. They feared that, if the church did not take the lead in the transformation of society, millions of oppressed and exploited people would ultimately experience moral dissolution leading to spiritual destruction.

Rauschenbush also called for a scientific approach to social problems so that accurate and reasonably complete information about societal problems could be accumulated. He hoped that the wisdom thus gained would find its way into programmes of religious education. He was one of the first prominent theologians to advocate for an interdisciplinary approach to theological studies at seminaries and other theological institutions.

Rauschenbush had a sensitive appreciation of the complexity of the human condition and of the problems which bedevil the human race. Because of his appreciation, he understood that the gospel might be experienced in many different ways. He argued persuasively that changes in the traditional ways of understanding the doctrine of salvation need not threaten the integrity of the gospel itself. This was his main argument against those fundamentalists who raised objections to the social involvement of the Church because they saw it as something new. He believed that it is sometimes necessary for the form in which the gospel is experienced to change. During the Protestant Reformation, for instance, almost everything had changed. Thus, although the reformers established a new ecclesiastical order without a pope, bishops, priests, monks, rosaries, saints pilgrimages or indulgences, they nevertheless retained the gospel itself. Although contemporary Roman Catholics felt that these innovations signalled the end of personal piety, what in fact happened was that a new type of piety came into being. In the same way, the development of socially concerned Christianity was not a threat to personal dedication to God, but merely a different way of showing the empowerment of the gospel.

Fired by this vision, Rauschenbush called for a restatement of Christian teaching in terms of the new social vision. One of his major works in which he attempted just such a restatement of the Christian faith was appropriately entitled ***A Theology of the Social Gospel***. Ernst Troeltsch had earlier published his ***Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*** in which sociological and religious themes were interwoven, and he demonstrated how important doctrines of Christianity could be reformulated to take into account the particular social, economic and philosophical concerns of Christians in a given society.

Rauschenbush's theological restatement eliminated all hierarchical, absolutist and despotic imagery from discourse about God. This was done in order to bring those conceptions into line with the democratisation of the Fatherhood of God already initiated by Jesus' teachings. (This is the view that God is the father of everyone, rather than of the chosen few, such as the kings of Israel). Rauschenbush did not follow the traditional Christian line of emphasising the personal nature of sin: sin, to him, was more like the expression of a malign social force embodied in the very structures of society. He emphasized that sin could influence the lives of people in a terrible way if it were to become institutionalised in social structures. Parallel to this, he emphasised that redemption can also be understood as a social force. This force can be applied by groups of Christians who are motivated by the love of God. Redemption thus becomes complete and permanent when each individual person takes his or her place as part of a social organism which is ruled by love, righteousness and purity. In other words, for Rauschenbusch, genuine salvation requires a Christian social order which will provide the spiritual environment in which individual Christians can live their faith.

Rauschenbush's reformulation of Christian teachings brought to an end the old conflict between religion and science. He pointed out that the establishment of the Kingdom of God in which individuals are motivated and governed by God's love requires less dogma and theology but calls on everyone to use their scientific know-how and work together for the transformation of society. In this way righteousness would become manifest in the world. Rauschenbush felt that, if this programme were acceptable to Christians, there could never be a conflict between science and religion because Christians would have to use scientific knowledge as a means of transforming society. Many modern Christians are attracted to a formulation of their faith which emphasises an awareness of social and economic injustices: the kind of Christianity which contains a "Social Gospel" component. The reason why many Christians are attracted to this expression of the gospel is that it enables them to express their solidarity with the suffering and oppressed people of the world. It also enables them to contribute towards the worldwide struggle for equality, liberation, and kinship of all people.

Rauschenbush did not fail to appreciate that there would be people who were truly involved in the life of the church who would become so involved in the struggle for social justice advocated by the "Social Gospel" that they would lose all perspective and cease to be Christians in any orthodox sense of the word. He nonetheless felt that it would be the fault of the institutional church (and not of the "Social Gospel") should such breaks occur. Rauschenbush

believed that so many Christians have such a tenuous, uncommitted or merely formal relationship with the institutional church, that it is scarcely surprising that they abandon it once they become fully committed to the struggle for social justice. It would be quite wrong, in Rauschenbush's view, to imagine that individual salvation and social redemption are opposed to each other, because the gospel of Jesus Christ offers humanity a full and all-embracing salvation, which does not disregard any aspect of human life and which cannot be reduced to a purely individualistic piety. It is important to note that Rauschenbusch's theology of the "Social Gospel" is often misrepresented as denying the importance of personal salvation and a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Rauschenbusch's theological proposals were bold and imaginative even though they were tainted by the optimism of nineteenth-century liberal theology. After the First World War there was a reaction against liberal Protestantism, and its optimistic outlook came in for a lot of criticism. In spite of this, the "Social Gospel" of Maurice, Bushnell, Ritschl, Harnack and Rauschenbusch was prophetic in its insistence that it is those Christians who are not afraid to champion the cause of the oppressed, suffering and exploited peoples of the earth who are, ultimately, the most effective defenders of the Christian faith. It is not, therefore, surprising that it has had such a far-reaching influence on the social activism of the World Council of Churches in the twentieth century, as well as on liberation theology. The exponents of liberation theology continue to argue that it is the church's resolute cooperation in participating in the worldwide struggle for the oppressed majority of the human race which has regained for the Christian faith the credibility which it had lost when it was perceived to be in league with the oppressors of the poor and dispossessed. Indeed, it is the ethical imperative of the "Social Gospel; the emphasis on Christian social responsibility; the concern for both the individual, and for the welfare of the oppressed, that remain the legacy of the proponents of the "Social Gospel" such as Rauschenbush. The contemporary Christian world is indebted to Rauschenbush and all those other theologians who provided the basis for a worldwide prophetic witness against the evils of exploitation and oppression. By providing the theoretical basis for such a witness these theologians helped to ensure the future of the Christian faith in a changing world and have also contributed towards restoring the moral and ethical integrity of the Christian religion, emphases currently propounded by liberation theology.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, New York: Harper, 1960.
2. Cited in Dillenberger, John and Welch, Claude, *Protestant Christianity*, New York: Scribners, 1954, p.238.
3. Ibid., p.240.
4. Ibid., p.242.
5. Ibid., p.242.
6. Maurice Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947, pp. 93-947.
7. Romans 5: 12-15, 17.
8. Romans 5: 15-21.
9. George Rupp, *Culture-protestantism*, Montana: Scholars Press, 1975, pp. 33-35.
10. Walter Rauschenbush, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1945.

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIALISM: APPROPRIATING MOSES AND JESUS FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION IN AZANIA

Dr. Itumeleng Mosala, University of Cape Town.

Introduction

Comrades, students of Fedsem and neighbouring institutions, non-academic and academic staff, distinguished guests, Principals of Colleges, Mr President; your invitation to me to deliver this year's anniversary lecture constitutes the most important honour bestowed on me in recent years. This is so for obvious reasons. For the sake of posterity however, let me state one of those reasons.

I love Fedsem. I embrace the principles of Christian ecumenism represented by the common theological training done at Fedsem. I value the quality of theological training that I personally received from this institution. I am committed to this form of autonomous black theological education which is open to nonblacks and yet subordinate to no nonblacks. I think I am not wrong when I say that as a matter of fact, Fedsem is the only autonomous, ecumenical, black institution of higher learning in the country. If we lose this, we lose everything we have in this regard. It is for this reason that a few of us once risked being killed or as it turned out, being imprisoned in a Christian chapel for three days rather than voluntarily participate in the forced removal of Fedsem from Alice in 1975.

What is more, the tradition of radical scholarship here seems to us, looking from the outside, to continue unabated. This probably explains why the forces of reaction and status quo maintenance in the country continue to harass and even ban some of your staff and students.

Allow me, therefore, to pay tribute at the outset of my lecture, to the history of radical and committed theological scholarship at Fedsem; to the history of politically engaged learning at Fedsem, because there is no such a thing as neutral learning. One takes political and ideological sides by what and how one learns, whether at Fedsem or at any other learning institution. For this reason, black students in South Africa have since 1976 refused to acquiesce in the politics of repression that underlie apartheid education; let me pay tribute to the commitment that used to be there — and hope still is there — to a renewal, a transformation of the church by facilitating the self activity of the oppressed masses in the churches.

Again, thank you for honouring me with this invitation. The topic

of my lecture is: Christianity and Socialism— Appropriating Moses and Jesus for national liberation in Azania.

Introduction

I have decided on this topic not least because like a student in a house of meeting, “I wish to propose progress.” The 1970s saw the coming of national independence for Mozambique and Angola in the sub-continent of Africa. The beginning of the 1980s witnessed the national independence of Zimbabwe. It looks like before the close of the 1980s we might live to see the national independence of Namibia. What is more, there are rumours of a possible negotiated settlement in Azania before long. I personally doubt that this will happen soon, quite apart from having difficulties with the whole notion of a negotiated settlement.

Be that as it may, my topic is prompted partly by what seems to me to be the need to distinguish between independence and liberation. Although it is true that there can be no liberation without independence, it is equally true that independence is not liberation. This we have seen not only in what happened in most of the Third World, including Africa, but in particular in what has happened in this sub-continent since the 1960s. In reflecting on this problem, I recall Claude Ake’s political prophecy. At the end of his insightful book on revolutionary pressures in Africa he insists that in the absence of political and moral will to establish a just and progressive economic system, Africa is marching inexorably towards fascism. This is a real prospect in a situation where there is economic stagnation. Ake asks how the desperation of the alienated and hungry masses would be contained. Allow me to quote from him at length:

By bread and circuses?” he asks further. Circuses perhaps, but not bread because this would simply not be available. But one thing that would surely be needed in ever increasing quantities in this situation would be repression. As the economic stagnation persisted, the masses would become more wretched and desperate and the contradictions would develop. Wretchedness and desperation would lead peasants to subversion, workers to industrial action and the lumpen proletariat to robbery and violence. Punitive expeditions would then be sent out to liquidate whole villages, armed robbers would be punished by public executions, and other crimes against property would be dealt with by imposing sanctions of exceptional harshness. Striking workers would be chased by police dogs, locked out, starved out, shot at. Any person or group of persons who looked like being a rallying point against the system would be summarily *liquidated*. All this is already happening. And things are likely to get worse, if only because repression demoralize the country, impedes productivity and ties up too much of the meagre surplus in

servicing coercive institutions. So we have a vicious circle promising ever more blood and sweat. It would appear that the choice for Africa is not between capitalism and socialism after all, but between socialism and barbarism" (1978:107).

If one makes exceptions of extreme cases such as those of Idi Amin in Uganda and Bokasa in Central African Republic, the truth of Ake's prophecy is still validated by the repression we have seen in the South African "Homelands" which are not even independent in the same sense as say Angola or Zimbabwe.

It is my contention that the salvation of the entire sub-continent depends on the coming of a genuine liberation in South Africa. And again, here as in other parts of the Third World, the choice is not between capitalism and socialism; it is between socialism and barbarism. If we do not go socialist we can only go barbaric, as indeed we have already begun to do.

I contend further that it is a christian question whether our liberation is socialist or capitalist. I mean of course by christianity the best of the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth. I do not mean what christianity has been in the West, namely the religious ideology of Western history and culture. In this country, unlike in other parts of the christian world, the issue of christianity and socialism has not been addressed. We tend to speak about christianity as if it is unproblematically monolithic. We ignore the fact that there are bourgeois forms of christianity as well as working class forms of christianity. We delude ourselves by thinking that the tension between these two conflicting streams of christianity can be resolved non-ideologically.

In this lecture I wish to defend these two contentions by arguing that the roots of a socialist politics and society are strongly established in the progressive traditions of the Bible. Consequently, I maintain that unless christians are socialists they cannot be christians. In other words the fundamental thesis of my lecture is that capitalist christianity is contrary to the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth.

Let me not waste time by multiplying the basic assertions which I adhere to in respect of christianity and capitalism. Let me get to the heart of the matter by addressing what must be the uppermost question in the minds of most of you by now. It is this: What on earth does he mean by socialism? It is correct to ask this question even before one deals with whether genuine christianity should espouse the ideals of socialist thought.

SOCIALISM

In one sense socialism must be seen as a critique of capitalism. I mean by this that we struggle for socialism because of our frustrations with capitalism and our desire to be liberated from its bondage.

Capitalism is a socio-economic system of the past. It is a product of peoples' struggles against oppressions of the past. It has nothing to offer by way of the creation of a future liberated human dispensation. Karl Marx had in mind the bankruptcy of capitalism's ability to usher in genuine human freedom when he declared in a document which serious activists for justice should read, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, that:

“The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all superstition in regard to the past. Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to drug themselves concerning their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead. There the phrase went beyond the content; here the content goes beyond the phrase. (1968:98).

On the one hand capitalist history and culture is based on the heroic struggles fought against feudal decadence and stagnation. On the other hand, it derives its discipline from the culture of necessity not the spirit of freedom, arising from the violent dispossession of former producers from their fundamental means of production. In addition, its logic of development and accumulation is a product of alienated, and therefore, exploitative ownership relations to the fundamental means of human subsistence, such as land, raw materials, factories, industries, ideological instruments like schools, universities, churches, radio, television etcetera.

The sole purpose of capitalist economies is profit-making through the process of capital accumulation. Rather than bore you with the details and complexities of how capitalism works, albeit so important to know that, let me summarise the issue by making reference to a political discussion between two workers where the one argued that whatever one may think one cannot do without capital.

The conversation between the two workers is described in Walter Green's novel *Love on the Dole*. In response to the statement that one cannot do without capital the other worker replies that nobody wants to do without it; the argument is that it is wrong to use it as a means for making profit. To this the first worker retorts that it is necessary to make profit otherwise the profit-making enterprises would close down.

The second worker, making specific reference to the company that both of them worked for, replied as follows:

Yes. And Marlowes are making so little profit nowadays that it is possible that we'll all be out of work in a month's time. But that doesn't prove that Marlowes — or this engineering works — couldn't carry on simply because shareholders aren't getting any dividends. The machinery is still there ready to be used, and all of us are willing to use it, and there is plenty of raw material in the world, and people want things making. So what's stopping us all from working full time?" (1969:181).

After some instructive exchanges between the two workers that included among other things, the definition of money, the second worker summarised his argument this way:

"Money means commodities and commodities mean raw materials and labour power, so money, really, means the fruit of labour. And if you did without that — labour — everybody would starve. And whenever you use the word 'capital, again, remember that it only means raw material and the labour of working people combined, saved, stored up: then you will also remember that millionaires are men who possess millions of pounds' worth of working people's labour. That is all that money is; your labour, our fathers' and our fathers's fathers' labour. You must ask yourself whether we can do without that. Do you think we can?" (1969:184). The first fellow's final statement was a repetition of what he had said at the beginning: "You can't do without capital.

Historically, therefore, socialism arises out of the struggle to overcome and transcend the basic contradiction and alienation that lies at the heart of the capitalist system. The alienation of capitalism manifests itself in three forms.

Firstly, the socio-economic system is based on an antagonistic relationship between capital and labour. By turning labour into a commodity which can be sold and bought at the marketplace capitalist relations create a situation where those who pay wages can enslave and control the labour time of workers for purposes of squeezing every ounce of energy in order to score more and more profits. Thus the freedom to sell yourself into unfreedom is no freedom at all.

In this regard William Tabb makes a relevant observation when he declares that:

"It is difficult to be a good employer in a Christian sense. Some of us know of good employers. But it is exceedingly difficult because a good employer faces competition from a bad employer. The bad

employer produces the product and it sells for a penny less. The consumer goes to the shelf, sees the difference, buys the cheaper one. The employers who can force more out of their workers can reduce that price just a little bit and can profit from it. so it is difficult for capitalists even with a Christian background to be good, since they are caught in a structural situation” (1979:39).

Secondly, capitalism thrives on the alienation between worker and worker. This is so because unemployment, which is the basis of division among working class people, is an inherent characteristic of capitalism. Unless there exists a pool of desperate unemployed people, capital cannot reduce the costs of production in order to make more profits. In order to forestall any possibility of making demands for more pay by the workers, capital needs starving unemployed masses who can undermine such demands by their willingness to take any job at any wage level. Such a culture of fear is a structural feature of capitalism without which it could not survive.

Thirdly, capitalists are themselves at each other’s throat. Not only does their system threaten justice for whole communities and societies, but the competition between them has in the past been, and will in the future continue to be the biggest threat to world peace. The only time capitalist work together without conflict between them is when they unite against the threat that working class people pose against their system.

Again the problem of the competition between capitalists is a structural one, belonging to the very essence of the system. It is true that

“Before there was capitalism, people produced what they needed and if they produced more than they needed they exchanged with somebody else for something they wanted. There was exchange. But production was basically for use. Now corporations don’t care what they produce. They’ll produce anything — bombs, pesticides, or plastic things. The question is, ‘Does it make money?’ It is production for exchange, not for use.” (W. Tabb, 1979:40).

What is more, this conflict among capitalists creates chaos in production. This chaos is the product of unbridled competition. One of the undesirable outcomes of this chaotic production is the tendency to overproduce. When this overproduction does occur it results in sinful wastage because capitalists would rather destroy products than avail them at low prices or at no price to the people who produce them. This is only to ensure that profit levels are maintained. Frank Cunningham captures the essence of the problem when he writes:

“The contradiction between social labour and private ownership is

formidable. One effect of this contradiction is the mess all capitalist economies are in. Food in one part of the world is destroyed, while in other parts of the world (or even in the same country) people starve. There is chronic unemployment. Inflation continues. The gap between rich and poor widens. And social revolution occurs as working people organize to take political power and institute social ownership of the means of production” (1979:46-7)

It is this social ownership of the means of production that defines what socialism really is. An economy that is based on this social ownership and control of the means of production plans production to be production first and foremost for meeting human needs. It aims to eradicate alienation between people and people, between people and the things they produce, between people and the environment from which and in which production takes place.

Above all socialism refers to the liberation of the productive forces of a society. That is, the advancement and development of the technological forms as well as the forms of labour organisation. The goal of such a system is freedom. It is the liberation of human activity from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom. All this though in order primarily to meet the needs of human beings.

In such a society the christian doctrine of the human person is bound to change. For those of us who are on the underside of history have over the time found it very difficult to accept, as an explanation of oppression, the theory that the oppressors are but sinful mortals. I refuse to accept differentials when it comes to the benefits of society and a common humanity when it comes to taking responsibility for sin and punishment.

I have offered only a very schematic description of socialism. A proper understanding of its many facets and perspectives can be gained through serious study, discussion and social practice. My aim in this paper is to raise the question of its roots in the progressive traditions of the Bible. Previously, capitalist and liberal perspectives have been employed to appropriate these traditions. The result has been truncated and distorted outcomes.

Let me illustrate my point by referring to the socialist egalitarianism of the Moses traditions in the Old Testament and the socialist politics of Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament.

MOSES AND SOCIALIST EGALITARIANISM IN THE Hebrew SCRIPTURES.

Many Old Testament scholars now agree that there are three major

strands that dominate the various theologies of the Hebrew Scriptures. These are the Moses traditions associated with the exodus experience; the Davidic traditions linked to the establishment of the State in ancient Israel together with the concomitant restructuring of the society along class lines; and the apocalyptic traditions which represent cultural resistance in the absence of the power of political institutions and religious structures.

Of all these, the Moses traditions are the most politically progressive. This is so politically, economically and spiritually. Politically, Israel before David's time preferred a bottom-up system of government whereby power was vested first and foremost in the common action of the *bethavim* and *mishpahoth*, i.e. the network of households and extended families.

Economically, the mobilisation of village labour resources to take advantage of the newly introduced iron technology enabled forests to be cleared to make way for agriculture; terraces were developed to harness the best potential of the soil; water was captured through the newly created water storage cisterns; cooperative labour was set in motion across households that enabled the much needed surplus to be produced so that there could be development.

Spiritually, a new religious faith developed which was dialectically linked to the historical encounter of the people of Israel with Yahweh. Thus Yahweh was both the starting point and the culmination of their struggle for liberation. This faith was also both the driving force and the product of the democratic socialist egalitarianism.

There in the Hebrew Scriptures this strand is strong, even though it has suffered numerous distortions and misappropriations by later generations in Israel, not least David and his followers. It is an important basis for thinking in a socialist way within a biblical framework.

JESUS AND SOCIALIST POLITICS.

Liberal scholarship has spent a lot of sweat trying to prove that Jesus was not a revolutionary. No attempt that I am aware of has ventured to claim that Jesus's politics were not socialist.

I would like to submit that contemporary socialist politics will find a firm, if critical, support in the praxis of Jesus of Nazareth. This assertion can be illustrated from many parts of the New Testament. I will pick on one text to demonstrate my contention. I refer to Luke 14:12-14. Here Jesus elaborates a fundamental socialist ethic; and this, in the book of Luke who is normally so oriented towards the rich and the powerful. Jesus describes doing good in terms of ser-

vice for the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind; in other words, it is service for the victims if the structures of society and nature that shapes the vision of a liberated future. In particular, this new liberated future is not pie in the sky. It is a reality which the self-activity of these victims themselves will bring about.

The ideologically inspired mistranslation of the last sentence of verse 14 is staggering. The English version translate "God will repay you on the day the good people rise from death. I contend that the correct translation should be "You will be rewarded on the day of the uprising of the righteous. It is important not to conceal this radical self-activity of the poor and oppressed.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude by pointing out that in view of the vascillating position of the Church and of christians on the matter of how to liberate christianity and the Church from their enslavement to bourgeois ideology and practice, there is no liberated future unless a socialist christian practice can be established. Addressing this question in Chile, Latin America, after the coup that overthrew Allende's regime, Gonzalo Arroyo has this to say:

"Over and above their personal involvement in the revolutionary struggle, the political task of socialist christians is to be found in the domain of ideology. This task will be made easier for them, since a 'third alternative' between fascism and revolution becomes more and more impossible every day for the popular masses and politicized christians. The reformism of christian social doctrine... has been laid to rest by the machine guns and bayonets of the military junta. That much is clear at least. Socialist... Christians now have that much to their advantage in the struggle that lies ahead. The question now is whether they will be forced to carry it on outside the Church." (1975:244).

I take the liberty of reminding us that many of the politically active church leaders in the country today were not made in the church. Their political baptism was received in the crucible of the struggles of the oppressed communities of South Africa. I refer here to Desmond Tutu, Stanley Mogoba, Allan Boesak, Frank Chikane etcetera. What this means for christianity and socialism in South Africa I do not know. In the area of Bible reading many of us have already decided that there is no such a thing as a politically and ideologically neutral reading of the Bible. And so we have started the struggle to liberate the Bible so that the Bible can liberate us.

Bibliography

1. Ake C: Revolutionary Pressures in Africa, Zed Press, London 1978
2. Cunningham: Must we choose sides, Community for Religious Research and Education, Berkeley,,1979
3. Marx K. and Engels F.: Selected Works, Lawrence and Wishhart, London 1968
4. Greenwood W. Love on the Dole, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1969
5. Arroyo G. Christians, Church and Revolution in Christians and Socialism edited by Eagleson J, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y. 1975

THE CROSS IN THE SEARCH FOR TRUE HUMANITY: theological challenges facing South Africa. by Dr. Takatso Mofokeng

1. Historical Tour

Every serious study of the history of theology in South Africa will undoubtedly show very vividly that the various and different theological trends that have emerged in this country are preceeded and periodically punctuated by interventions of social forces and events. These social forces and events have evidently succeeded to redirect theological thinking or even radically alter theological agendas and priorities and introduce new ones which occupy positions of priority until the next forceful intervention by other social forces and processes. In systematic theological circles this would be called a series of epistemological ruptures in the hermeneutic circle.

A penetrating view of South African theology as it developed and evolved since the introduction of christianity and the birth of the christian church in this subcontinent will manifest or reveal many successive trends. Of these I will deal with only a few.

When the forefathers of the present Afrikaner population (whites of European descent who speak Afrikaans) started to colonize South Africa in the 17th century, they introduced a theology which could underpin and foster colonialism, namely a version of the theology of election and the covenant as propounded by theologians in Holland at that historical period. In this theology, according to its adherents and propagators who were Afrikaners themselves, the Afrikaners identified themselves very closely with Israel as a people that had been elected, called and led by God of the covenant into the unknown and with a promise and a mission. God had elected the Afrikaners, it was believed and taught by these theologians, made a covenant with them (the day of the covenant - a national holiday in South Africa - is a clear symbol of this trend), and promised them that their children would inherit a land (South Africa). For their part, they would be under an obligation to kindle the light of christianity and establish a church among the conquered and colonized African population whose land they had violently taken away.

This theology which continued to be modified and sharpened according to the needs of the particular geographical area and historical period, was propagated until the wars of colonization had been won and the African population had been vanquished and

subdued. Since that process of their subjugation coincided with that of their conversion, it will, therefore, be correct to say that that theology continued until Africans were completely subdued and were converted to enter the christian family as conquered, chained and silenced christians. Whenever they spoke, and some did do so, they spoke the theological language of their conqueror or at best they spoke within the framework of the theology that supported their conquer.

The conquer and christianization of black people opened an era of relative calm and stability during which the white population could face new socio-economic challenges that resulted from the industrial revolution in Britain, a revolution that had an impact in South Africa due to the colonial links between the two countries. In circles of the church of the Afrikaners which had succeeded to convert large segments of especially the slave population and their descendents in the Cape of Good Hope, racism intervened and split the church into a white church of the white master and a black church of the slaves. (De Gruchy J and Villa-Vicencio C 1983, 10ff) Inevitably, a theology that justified racist division and separation of christians in church and society had to be developed to strengthen the foundations laid in the above action. It continued to be the dominant trend in the churches of the Afrikaners up until the present.

When colonial power changed hands in 1802 and the British violently annexed the Cape of Good Hope to the British Empire the Afrikaners were subdued politically and economically. It did not take very long for poverty to start severely crippling the Afrikaners. When this happened, a new dimension of empowerment and resistance was added to the local blend of reformed theology. It emphasized God's preferential option for the Afrikaners, who were the underdogs in the contest for lordship over black people in their land. The Exodus was made into the reference pole of this theology which contested the right of the English to hold power over the Afrikaner "chosen people of God." It also aimed at restoring Afrikaners to the helm of political power as well as setting them on the path to economic recovery and power over black people. No consideration was given to the human rights of black people at that stage. As a matter of fact, the missionaries who tried to champion their cause were opposed and hated. (Enklaar I 1988) The God of the Exodus and the Sinai covenant, who descends to liberate the victims of human neglect, greed and hatred identified, according to those theologians, with these Afrikaner "victims" and empowered them to assert their humanity and claim dignity as beloved creatures of God. This is briefly what its contents were. It should, however, be clear to all that this theology which worked very effectively, was

nothing but a more modern variant of the former one. It was in that sharing of a common origin, foundation and goal that its glaring weakness lay (see H. L. Pretorius N.G.T.T. 18.4.1977, 343ff). It still evolved on a firm foundation of racism which infested white theology at that time and continues to plague it up to the present day. The conquering and dispossession of black people were not a concern to Afrikaner Reformed Theology. While it contributed effectively as a powerful resource to the upliftment of the Afrikaners as a white group, it continued to foster and promote their denial of the humanity of black people and their deprivation. Instead of humanizing the Afrikaners, it dehumanised them by promoting their inhumanity to their black fellow human beings. S. Maimela, in his book ***Proclaim Freedom To My People***, portrays a very enlightening picture of social currents and theological developments in the English speaking community and churches in South Africa around that period. These churches were established with a theological paralysis which, according to him, was a legacy of the traditional close link between the church and the monarchy in Britain. It was not surprising therefore that colonisation of an already colonized people could be undertaken with the blessing of the churches of England. Empirical interests coincided with divine interests. Things worsened with the emergence of the spirit of liberalism in the 18th and 19th centuries which swept Europe and Britain and subsequently led to the privatisation of religion and its removal from public sphere. God was banned from public life and its challenges. Deism and pietism which gained influence around the same period, only worsened this theological paralysis of the English speaking churches. As S. Maimela puts it:... We find a God so staunchly British and so domesticated that he approved everything British colonialism did without raising any finger or murmur of protest; this God was so inactive in human lives that he could neither give them guidance nor rebuke wrong political actions that dehumanize fellow humans “(Maimela, 1987, 11). The challenge facing these churches today, Maimela continues, is...” to produce a theologian who would tell what difference it makes to talk about God who is the creator and continues to meet and work among humans in order to establish God’s kingdom.” (Maimela, 1987, 12)

It might be surprising to some of you that I have so far omitted social and theological developments among the oppressed and disinherited christians and churches. This is done deliberately for the following reason. In this entire historical period which spanned about a hundred years, black christians were dominated not only socially, politically and economically but also religiously and theologically. It was not until the beginning of the urban migration and industrialization of the country that black christians emerged as a religious force which would later claim the right to engage in

a theological contest against all the variants of the theology and ecclesiologies of racial separation and oppression. The formation of African Independent Churches as early as the 18th century was one such announcement of black christians' courage to read the bible with their own eyes and interpret it as they felt guided by the spirit of wisdom. It was only then, one could argue, that the basis was laid even though feebly for the development of modern Black Theology which started seriously during the second half of the 20th century. During the period that preceded the emergence of that new theology, a form of theology of hope in God's eschatological future, which included a restoration of human dignity to the dispossessed African people formed the core of the theology of the African Independent Churches at the time of their formation in the early 18th and 19th century.

2. A Moment of break and new beginning

These examples in the history of theology in South Africa form a clear and firm basis for my argument that the only way of a reasonably correct identification and discussion of theological challenges which will face South African churches and christians in the immediate and long term future depends, to a very large degree, on an understanding of historical events as well as a reasonably correct projection of socio-political developments in this country. It also depends on how the church will be led by God's Spirit to intervene as it so often had to do. It is these socio-political and cultural forces and developments as they are already doing presently which will continue to contextualize theology and shape the politics of the church in this country.

Admittedly, it is hazardous to attempt such a projection of developments at both the socio-political as well as theological dimensions of South African society. I shall, however, attempt to take the risk of being wrong.

My starting point in this matter, is the present epistemological rupture which has been articulated on different occasions in the last eight years by different churches, theologians, theological documents and confessions of faith. All these church conferences and individual christians and documents, some of which you may have heard of or seen, not only announced the final limit to the life of all theological support and justification of apartheid and its state. They also laid the basis for a new theological beginning as well as indicating possible viable theological issues for the church in the late 1980s and early 1990s. We are here referring to the following.

2.1. Events within the church-historical Context.

In 1981 the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in South Africa (ABRECSA) took a bold and historic step by declaring apartheid a heresy, a theological declaration that had eluded the South African white churches which are opposed to apartheid for the four decades of apartheid theology and social practice. What made it possible for this movement to do so was a new definition of heresy that was adopted by it. That definition was articulated by Allan Boesak who defined heresy, not only in the limited classical sense as an expression of false theological ideas, but also in a broad ethical sense that includes christian practice as the only reliable verification of the correctness or falsity of such theological ideas. As he aptly puts it: Heresy is....“the use of the Word of God in such a way that it becomes divisive and separates human beings from God and each other. Heresy is an expression of the Word in service of some other interest than the love of and communion with Jesus Christ. It is a proclamation that creates distrust rather than trust, confusion rather than understanding, isolation rather than community” (De Gruchy, J & Villa-Vicencio, C, 1983, xii). According to this definition, apartheid is a theological heresy and an ethical heresy because it violates, at a theological level, the basic teaching of God’s Word and, at a concrete ethical level, God’s purpose with humanity. During this entire period of four decades, prior to the ABRECSA declaration, the white reformed churches of South Africa were able to practice, support and justify the social sin of apartheid and still occupy seats of honour in world ecumenical fora. They could get away with it because of their skillful use of the orthodox “escape hatch” of a definition of heresy that restricted scrutiny to theological teaching, and left social practice out. They accept all the confessions of faith which distinguish them as truly reformed and still practice apartheid internally and support its social, economic and political manifestations in society. Confessing the equality of all human beings to them means confessing the equality of white people, loving the neighbour means loving another white person and being charitable and paternalistic to black people, reconciling with black people means stopping black people from using force to claim justice and freedom. At this moment, even after calling apartheid a sin, they still won’t participate in unity discussions with black reformed churches. Is this not a continuation of a heretical ecclesial practice by these churches?

The historic declaration we referred to above ushered in an unparalleled theological onslaught on apartheid teaching and practice by many church synods and conferences, here and abroad, and led to the suspension of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1982 for this church’s theological support and practice of racism (apartheid). In the same

year, the South African Council of Churches adopted that declaration at its national conference thereby uniting all its member churches against apartheid as white South Africa's institutionalized racism. This step was followed by the birth of the **Belhar Confession of Faith** in the N G Sendingkerk which committed this church to the struggle against racism in all its forms and manifestations. Before very long the Kairos Document appeared, throwing one of the major popular theological bricks shattering the already fragile windows of the theology of apartheid. Several churches, and religious associations and individual theologians both locally and internationally responded to this document, some favourably and others very critically. Among churches which launched a scathing attack on the Kairos Document is the white N. G. Church. Its attack was embodied in its own official document called **Church and Society** which goes no further than calling apartheid a mistake, thereby relativizing the immeasurable misery, violence and loss of life that resulted from its teaching. It is only as recently as 1988 that, after years of ecumenical isolation and pressure, the N. G. Church was forced to admit that apartheid is, not a mistake but a sin. As we stated above, it is these theological, confessional and church-political developments that mark the historical moment of the epistemological explosion and rupture in the South African theological universe.

2.2. Events in the socio-political Context

On the socio-political front, the above mentioned period follows on the 1976 Soweto uprising which formed a watershed in the modern history of the black struggle for liberation in South Africa. Never before had so many young black boys and girls resolved to take so much suffering and death upon themselves as an act of self-sacrifice against racism in all its forms and manifestations. Never before had the violent nature of the apartheid state and society been more exposed than during that uprising. The entire church-internationally and locally — could not but respond politically as well as theologically, ushering in a clash between Church and State which is unparalleled in the modern history of South Africa. Even the government confirmed the existence of this clash paradoxically by denying and relativizing it, calling it a conflict between the State and a few misguided church leaders.

Since our interest at this moment is theological and not church-political, we shall not dwell on the political responses of the South African churches. But before we enter the area of theological challenges of the present and the near future, allow me to add another very significant development on the social front that has had a direct impact on the theological agenda. I'm referring here to the emergence and rapid growth of the trade union movement

among black workers. Its numerous industrial actions which periodically paralyzed various selected segments of the South African economy, including state run and controlled industries, won total victories and concessions from industry and from the government. The church could not but notice its power and impact and proceed to ask theological questions about the growing awareness and display of revolutionary power by black workers, most of whom are devout christians. The astounding courage displayed by these already impoverished workers in opting to suffer hunger for a noble goal of attaining economic and political justice could not but be understood as the voice of God in and to South Africa today.

3. Theological challenges facing the Church today.

It is not possible within the scope of this paper to deal with all major theological challenges facing the Church in South Africa today. We shall, however, select a few and deal with them as incisively as possible.

3.1 Theological anthropology: insurrection of the crossbearers.

Since the development of a more positive anthropology by many black theologians in the 1970's and early 1980's in which the image of God in the human being was interpreted positively, many more black theologians have further deepened and broadened it in different directions. In the 1970's Manas Buthelezi argued that being created in the image of God implied that black people whose humanity was denied and who were treated like dirt by whites were under an obligation to affirm their humanity. (Mothlhabi M, 1968) Self-love and self-respect had to issue out in attitude, behaviour and actions that showed unambiguously that they were acting subjects who were prepared to transform their socio-political and economic circumstances. Self-love and human dignity of blacks had to be objectified in concrete projects wherein blacks transformed their environment and that of other fellow blacks into a life affirming environment. Allan Boesak took this theme a step further and argued that being human means "... having dominion over the earth" and that since people are social beings, to say that one is made in the image of God meant that... "there is an interdependence between human beings and between human beings and creation." (De Gruchy J. and Villa-Vicencio C. 1983,3f). This political, cultural and economic dominion have to be shared, he said. Boesak continued to condemn racism- an ideology of racial domination that entrenches racism in socio-economic and political processes and structures of the South African society. In his argument he asserted that to be made in God's image means "...to be able to realize this essential humanity in the social-historical world in which we all have responsibility." (De Gruchy J. and Villa-Vicencio C. 1983,4). To be able to do that, and this the next logical point that had to be

developed, people have to possess power which is a prerequisite for assumption of responsibility on the part of those who are created in God's image. Defending this positive anthropology Maimela argued that it could be upheld because of God's gracious presence among those who respond to God's call and obligation. God, he said "...stays with them, surrounding them with love and reproving them as a Father would his son in whom he delights (Prov 3:12)." (Maimela S. 1987,101ff)

Before any critique is levelled against this positive, some would even say optimistic anthropology, it should be borne in mind that the concrete conditions in which South African black children are born and in which they and their parents have to live their entire life are themselves very negative. They tell black babies already at birth that they are a negative people. That they are made by the left hand of God and in His/Her negative image. In other words, their life is a negative anthropology itself. Their political domination, social discrimination, denial of educational, cultural facilities as well as exclusion from white churches confirm that they and they alone are indeed born in sin and are not worthy of the love and grace of God. Such a negative anthropology can by no stretch of imagination, empower people who have been beaten to the ground by everything they see and hear. It cannot inspire them to stand up and assert their humanity, especially where the christian gospel is used against them. In recent years the positive theological anthropology we referred to, has been deepened quite significantly through the timely contributions of Dr I J Mosala and Fr B Tlhagale and most recently the Kairos theologians. I deliberately called these contributions timely because they were made exactly when the labour union movement was gaining ground and becoming a very formidable force on the factory floor as well as in the street. In terms of these contributions the factory floor has become a new locus theologicus and the worker our new interlocutor. The place where workers are engaged in a process of carrying out their cultural mandate of transforming nature into life supporting cultural goods, should not be turned into a place where they are dehumanized and alienated from nature and nature from them. When this place is turned into a place of exploitation and dehumanization and work into a curse it is the workers' religious duty to turn it into an arena of struggle for true humanity. It is for this reason that the Kairos theologians are persuaded that "campaigns of the people, from consumer boycotts to stay aways need to be supported and encouraged by the Church." (Kairos Document, 1985,22)

What has to be borne in mind is how much courage it takes for already underpaid workers to decide to sacrifice the small starvation wage they earn. In addition to this, it has become common prac-

tice for the state to use its coercive units to break up these workers' strikes at any cost including beatings and killings. As a result of this violent repression by the state, the workers' efforts to seek redress, which in Western countries would be legitimate, are acts of crossbearing in view of the suffering they choose to bear in a struggle for full humanity. Workers are carrying a similar cross as the one which in Roman times was a punishment for the crime of trying to escape from slavery and political rebellion. When they do carry it, this cross is transformed into "a sacred symbol of hope for liberation." Albert Nolan in his new book ***God in South Africa*** concludes a chapter on "A crucified people" in which he describes the suffering of black people in South Africa, by saying: "the point, however, is that unless we, both white and black, face the monstrous reality of evil and suffering in South Africa we shall not find God and we shall not hear his good news of salvation from sin." (Nolan 1988:57). What Nolan is in fact saying is that the crucifixion of the black people of South Africa is a window through which we can see what is happening to God and to Jesus in South Africa today.

This sacramental function of suffering workers introduces us inevitably into the areas of Christology and the concept of God. But before we get into this area let us remark that European theology as far as we know, does not deepen anthropology to the level to which black theologians are doing in South Africa. As a result it does not descent to the area where it deals with the material basis of theological concepts like sin, repentance and salvation. If the theologians would take the experience of workers seriously as of theological importance, I cannot see how theology would not be critical of the basic element of capital accumulation which is surplus extraction at the expense of workers here and abroad.

3.2. What God is doing in South Africa today?

As a christian community, we find it difficult to discuss the above issues to our satisfaction without posing the question on God's presence and what God is doing. In our attempt to grapple with this impenetrable and inexhaustible question we have to find a point of entry that will enable us to deal with this question as intensively and meaningfully as possible. Our preference is for a concrete point of entry that is very close to us. We consider the suffering and crucifixion of black people of South Africa as a window through which we are enabled to see the transcendent reality in terms of Mt. 25;40 ff. The crosses of oppressed people cannot but remind us of the cross of Jesus at Calvary. Thinking and speaking about Jesus of Nazareth is also and primarily thinking and speaking about God who emptied Him/Herself of all glory became the lowest of human beings, the Oppressed. We are also reminded of the intolerable suffering of God. In addition to reminding us of the cross

of Jesus they also enable us to understand even though inadequately, the historical dimension of the crucifixion and the pain suffered by the innocent son of Joseph and Mary, who was sacrificed in an act of political assassination which was aimed at driving fear into the hearts of the colonized people of Palestine. Conversely, the suffering of Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God enables us to critically understand the suffering of the innocent in human history, evoke indignation in us as well as call us to an act of commitment to combat against root causes of human suffering. This connection and reciprocal affectivity of the two realities of suffering and dying is affirmed very strongly especially in Black Theological circles. The reason is not far to find. It derives from the intensity of Good Friday celebrations in Black churches. On this occasion black Christians who pack churches give witness to their understanding of the events around the capture, torture, humiliation and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth and how these events relate to them. They experience a transposition to the time of Jesus and consequently suffer with him in Jerusalem. That is the one side of their experience. There is another side to their experience. Jesus is being abused, tortured, humiliated and crucified in them in their country and in their time. They suffer a long Good Friday throughout their lives, a long Good Friday that relates very closely to Jesus' Good Friday. Jesus' cry of abandonment is their own daily cry. As bishop Tutu says, they experience abandonment by their God who they believe is righteous and good. (K. Appiah-Kubi and S. Torres, 1981, 163) I have argued elsewhere that this concentration on the events of Jesus' suffering and crucifixion is not just a psychological aberration nor a purposeless exercise. These Christians reflect on the suffering of Jesus in the light of their own in order to draw consequences which will orientate their own personal lives and communal action towards resurrection in their lifetime. None other than Karl Barth articulates this presence of the suffering Jesus in our own time when he says: "But the fact that he is risen to die no more, to be taken from the dominion of death (Rom6, 9), carries with it the fact that his then living and speaking and acting, his being on the way from Jordan to Golgotha, his being as the one who suffered and died, became and is as such his eternal being and therefore his present-day being every day of our time." (K. Barth, C. D. 1V. 1., 313).

The question of the presence of God and what God is doing in South Africa is a pertinent one to Christian and non-Christian. It decides whether one remains a Christian or not. As a matter of fact many young Christians abandoned the Christian faith because of this question. Ironically, others' faith was strengthened at this point. We have to understand that this question becomes pertinent because everything around black South Africa loudly denies the presence of God. Everything witnesses to the absence of God at a time and

to people who need God's presence desperately. What makes this question a torment is because everything in that country is done in the name of Christ and for him. Worse still, it is done by people who confess his name, and are members of the christian church. They perpetrate the sin of apartheid to fellow christians. This triple contradiction is at the heart of South African life, faith and theology every day of our life as a deeply divided nation. It is also at this point that theology devides into two ie. Black Theology on the one hand and white theology on the other or even into three according to other theologians i. e. state theology, church theology and prophetic theology. (In this regard we cannot but note with amazement how white theologians have generally been quick to acknowledge the existence of the three theologies after having refused on the whole to acknowledge the existence of white theology and deal with it!)

3.3. What God is doing in South Africa today? Our starting point on this matter is a confessional one, which we make with our eyes on those who were "dead" as subjects of their history of liberation but are now alive. When we witness their insurrection, when we witness their emergence from the dark tomb of Crossroads, Soweto, Winterveld and other ghetto's of our country alive, we cannot but confess the presence of God among the oppressed. When we see the great sacrifices they make, we cannot but confess that God is among His/Her people. When we see them daring to die for their life and that of their fellow men and women, we cannot but confess that God is indeed among his suffering people. The confessional statement which we made above finds biblical support according to the Kairos document. God ". . . is always on the side of the oppressed. " (Kairos Document, 22) God is by virtue of the incarnation- unto- death with the oppressed. It is from this perspective that God sees the world, all creation, all creatures including people. It is by being with those who have no one on their side, who have no one to champion their cause, no one to stand for them before the mighty of this country, that God is on the side of all people. It is by saving those who are entirely dependent on God's mercy that God is merciful to all people. It is by saving these victims of human brutality that God saves humanity from self destruction and self annihilation. God has made this choice graciously and not because the oppressed deserve God on their side. The oppressed are chosen by God unconditionally. They are chosen solely because they suffer. The God of the christian faith is not a sadist who delights in the suffering of creation. Instead God suffers its suffering. As K. Barth aptly puts it: He ignored all those who are high and mighty and wealthy in the world in favour of the weak and the meek and lowly..." (Barth T. Vol. IV, 2 p.168f). Many white theologians who consciously or unconsciously represent the ideological interests of the oppressors and the privileged in our society disagree with this position, asserting that all people are poor and oppressed in one way

or another before God and that God loves all people equally and is therefore on the side of all of them. Some would even argue that all people, including the poor, are sinners who have to repent before they can be forgiven, before they can have God's mercy. Noordmans, a Dutch theologian, deals very aptly with this uneasiness of people who have never experienced exclusion in real life, who in most cases benefited socially, politically, economically and psychologically from the exclusion of their fellow human beings, who cannot tolerate a God who would dare to exclude them. He points to the sequence of the parables in Luke 16:19-31 and 18:9-14 in which the one dealing with liberation from physical hunger precedes one dealing with forgiveness of sins. Physical suffering in these parables is brought into close relationship to salvation. (See O. Noordmans, 1980, 15ff). Asserting that God is on the side of his suffering people wherever they are in the world and that God's son suffers with them and for them may not explain adequately and in depth what that means. What we can say in this regard is that in Jesus of Nazareth, God took the entire force of torture, the entire pain of crucifixion and death and exhausted it upon Him/Herself. God solidarizes with suffering humanity to that depth and to that extent and thereby breaks the power of death as the ultimate weapon in the arsenal of all oppressors. They will and can still kill the weak but death can no longer be the limit to a life that is committed to humanity and justice. It is in this regard that A. Nolan, reflecting on the suffering and death of committed black people in South Africa, says but the great new insight is that these people will be a prophetic witness to the world through their suffering.' (Nolan, 1988, 65) We can immediately think of Steve Biko, whose death convicted the South African government of the collective guilt of all white people who are members of the South African racist state, more forcefully than his words ever could. The power of this committed life comes from the resurrection of Jesus. I have argued elsewhere that: "The Son lives never to die again and raises a community that loves and suffers with him, a community that struggles against the powers which are opposed to the liberation of humanity and fraternity among people." (Mofokeng, 1983, 263). I have also argued elsewhere that observation has shown that especially black christians have a difficulty knowing what to do with the event of the resurrection. The reason for this inability is not hard to find. I have argued that "...the fact that Jesus of Nazareth's resurrection which is an important datum of the christian faith falls outside the scope of such intensive celebration because it falls outside the purview of the life experience of an average black christian who takes concrete life seriously and would not want to escape out of it into pietism, which is an internalization of life... No one really knows what to do due to this lack of a relevant experience and related categories for perception." (Mofokeng, 1983, 29)

Maimela has found a way of dealing with this problem which might be useful to many black christians. He insists that Jesus' resurrection is proof that God has acted to defeat sin and procure liberation salvation which has to be actualized by the oppressed. In other words his starting point is an objective reality of God's finished work which needs to be accepted and actualized in the life and praxis of the contemporary black christians. He continues in this regard and says: "Fortunately for humankind, this failure and darkness of Good Friday was not permanent, for God demonstrated the divine power over sin... by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, thereby revealing by way of anticipation the outstanding human future..." He continues elsewhere and says: "And by raising Jesus Christ from the dead as a first sign that sin can be conquered, it means that God has succeeded in procuring a real cure for human sinful conditions..." (Maimela, 1987, 115). As far as the human responsibility is concerned, he says: This commitment to the liberation of African humanity will be born out of the realization that God's victorious power is freely available to those who remain faithful to the struggle against sin, the struggle which was set in motion by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead." (Maimela, 1987, 119) This construct does not, however, appear very satisfactory to me. My question is, how does Maimela know that after saying this, the oppressed will stand up, take what God has procured for them and actualize it? What is the meaning of God's achievements, to oppressed people if they do not respond to God's call? Obviously denial of justice and dignity will continue unabated. But as we all know, black people are already making huge sacrifices for justice and humanity. They are taking up the cross as a means of affirming their humanity and their right to power at all dimensions of organized society, i.e. social, political economic, cultural and religious. This movement of crossbearing, of insurrection, serves as more fertile reality to which theology should connect talk about Jesus Christ's objective procurements. In other words theology should find connections in the foot prints of the "Spirit" of Jesus among those who are bearing the cross. Those who have resigned themselves to injustice and inhumanity, as well as those who are paralyzed by fear have to hear Maimela and be invited to join the existing community of crossbearers among whom Jesus continues to traverse his journey from Jordan to Golgotha, from Crossroads to Cape Town, and from Soweto to Pretoria, again and again. To this entire movement, resurrection stands ahead of us as a coming and beckoning object of hope that encourages and empowers the crossbearers of our day.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Cloete, G. D. and Smit, D. J. (eds), 1984: A moment of Truth; W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.
2. De Gruchy, J. and Villa-Vicencio, C. (eds.) 1983: Apartheid is a Heresy; David Philip, Cape Town.
3. Maimela, S. 1987: Proclaim freedom to my people, Skotaville, Johannesburg.
4. Mofokeng, T. A. 1983: The Crucified among the Crossbearers, J. H. Kok, Kampen.
5. Nolan, A. 1988: God in South Africa, David Philip, Cape Town.
6. Noordmans, O. 1980: Verzamelde Werken, No. 8. J. H. Kok, Kampen
7. Tlhagale, B. and Mosala, I. 1986: Hammering swords into ploughshares, Skotaville, Johannesburg.
8. Villa-Vicencio, C. (ed.)1987: Theology and Violence, Skotaville, Johannesburg.
9. Villa-Vicencio, C. 1988: On reading Karl Barth in South Africa, W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.
10. Villa-Vicencio, C. 1988: Trapped in Apartheid, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York.
11. Vorster, W. S. (ed.) 1986: Reconciliation and Construction, Unisa, Pretoria.
12. Challenge to the Church-(The Kairos Document). Published by the kairos theologians, Box 32047, Braamfontein, 2017.
13. Journals Theologia Viatorum, Vol. 16, Dec. 1988.
14. Journal of Black Theology in South Africa, Vol. 1, No. 1., May 1988 and 2. Nov. 1988.

AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

by Dr.Gwinyai H. Muzorewa

1. INTRODUCTION

Confronted by vast pockets of abject poverty, rampant disease, ecclesio-political oppression and unhealthy paternalistic domination by the Western church (during and after the Colonial period), the church in Africa—mainly through church-oriented nationalists and nationalist-oriented church leaders — began to create and develop a liberation theology which would express the Christian faith from an African perspective and celebrate what they believe God is doing among them and for them with genuinely African expressions.

The winds of change began to create a serious current following the second world war.¹ However, it was not until the mid-1950's that actual liberation movements, (political, cultural and ecclesiastical), began to produce desired results. Needless to say, most Westerners, mainly missionaries and of course colonialists, opposed and attempted to suppress the spirit of African nationalism. Consequently, Liberation Theology in Africa has been more or less a reflection on the political and ecclesiastical as well as the cultural realms because the oppressive forces dealt a double blow on Africans. As a Christian reflection based on the Scriptures, African theology is being created and interpreted by the African people themselves. Some of us have already begun to enjoy a sense of triumph because we can see some progress.

The church has become more vocal through the All Africa Conference of Churches which was formed during the late 50s² when it became apparent that the traditional Christian theology, which the missionaries and some Africans who were trained abroad brought, did not reflect the daily African experience — neither was it intended to. Yet such a theology was portrayed as the orthodox faith! So, Africans were expected to consume it as it was. No effort was made to reflect upon the actual needs of the people beyond worshipping God on set times. This did not really nourish the African soul. It was just a cosmetic symbolized by western clothing, homes, and general life-style. Therefore it was necessary to create a theology that would liberate us from dominant Western theology which did not reflect our faith experience but was imposed upon everyone. Of course we do not expect the Western church to understand African Theology completely, let alone consume it, but one would hope that our sister Western churches would learn something from how the Africans are living out their faith. It is going to require a lot of spiritual

maturity for the missionaries to learn “something” from the so-called “younger churches” in the Third World.

Third World theology in this paper means an umbrella theology that includes a Black theology of liberation,³ and an African liberation theology, both of which reflect upon the socio-economic, ecclesiastical and political context of the Third World peoples in Africa with special reference to Black Africa.⁴ This tendency gives Liberation Theology its character wherever it is being done — a universality based on particularity, which is defined in terms of the black people’s condition and pigmentation. It should be made clear that the condition in which black people find themselves is created by other cultures’ racial attitudes toward people with a dark skin. Consequently blacks react in various ways to that treatment.

Thus Liberation Theology has certain characteristics which may not necessarily apply to all regions but certainly distinguish it from the traditional Euro-American theologies which are generally an abstract reflection upon some metaphysics.⁵ It is also important to note that Liberation Theology is the account of how the believers are set free from both Third World oppressive structures inherited from colonialists and some created during the neo-colonial era, and Western theological as well as political domination. The West often creates burdens for the Third World by indifference to our cry for justice, peace and human dignity.

God’s justice does not discriminate between forms of justice but very often courts of law are used to perpetrate injustice in subtle ways in many countries. It almost leads one to the conclusion that unless a sense of justice is “written” on everyone’s heart, the courts of law cannot really “let justice roll down like mighty waters.” The courts cannot make people love one another, and therefore any attempt to exercise justice where there is no love and respect for fellow humanity is often sheer vanity. God says: let justice roll down like mighty waters.⁶

2. Characteristics of Third World Theologies

There are several general characteristics of Third World Liberation Theologies as perceived by various African scholars.⁷ Let us highlight a few here: (1) Theological disillusionment. According to Prof. Kwesi Dickson, Liberation Theology developed because the theological status quo in all of Christendom did not address the socio-economic and political realities which the African people experienced. This irrelevance consequently undermined Christ’s work because Africans believe in a God who works in history, one who makes a difference for the better. I concur with all liberation theologians who contend that Christian theology ought to be

experiential; it must address the human condition and reflect upon what God is doing to alleviate it. James Cone was correct when he said liberation is the top priority of Christian theology. Christ came to save! Suffering cannot continue when God in Christ steps into the situation to save the creature!

European and American theologians are rendered inadequate to do Liberation Theology on behalf of the Third World Christians in Black Africa because in most cases black people have been oppressed by the whites — thus the two groups lived on different sides of the railroad tracks, so to speak. Furthermore, Westerners tend to be content with “logic” which they may arrive at in their academic gymnasium, whereas Africans find “logic” in a theology that works because their theology is only good as an instrument with which to arrive at a saving truth. Africans are not merely interested in logic itself as an intellectual exercise.

Of course they may use the same Bible and even worship the same God sometimes in the same sanctuary! But since their experience influences their theological reflection, there is no way these “two communities” can be represented by one theological perspective. True, both share the same faith — Christian theology — but their perspectives are certainly divergent on account of their different social contexts, and presuppositions. So, the disillusionment comes from the deadening irrelevant characteristic of Western theology which seems to be undermining the meaning of our belief in a Christian God who acts for justice and salvation. (2) Function of theology: Some liberation theologians, including Africans in the Third World, argue that theology is not merely an articulation of the faith for purely abstract, spiritual, or mental edification — totally divorced from the rest of the material context we live in. For many liberation theologians, theology spells out the truth — it attempts to articulate what God is saying to, and doing for the despised, the marginalized, the exploited and the oppressed people who believe that only God has made it possible for them to come “this far.”

Most liberation theologians accentuate not only praxis but reflection practice. They even advocate a shift from traditional orthodoxy to revolutionary orthopraxis because faith without works (practice) is not worth the name. But African theologians do not end with praxis as some of my European colleagues alleged.⁸ We again reflect on our actions — if necessary we do this until the seventh time when God says: “It is good!” Thus, the function of theology is to reflect upon the mystery of what God is doing until it is clear how we benefit from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior through whom God acts in history. If the Westerners do not take theology as a serious reflection on how God makes us survive, I can readily appreciate the

mutual disinterest and lack of solidarity between the two parties (African and Western churches). For the African, theology, viewed as the word of God through the mouth of humanity, must be taken very seriously in order that it addresses our concrete temporal situations. Hence, our theological methods may have to differ. (3) Theological methods: Liberation theologians, especially Africans use culture as a tool for the doing of a theology which is relevant to their people. The Scriptures are also used to liberate the oppressed who are often victims of their own culture when culture is used to interpret the word of God. In Latin America liberation theologians use a dialectical Sociology (of a Marxian type) to establish the socio-economic and political realities to which the gospel brings a word of salvation. Among the Bantus, (a section of Africans) culture is the commonest form through which the Gospel may be taught. (4) Tradition: Liberation theology as it is being done in Africa is open-ended. Because God has not finished working among us yet, and because our faith and experiences are not static, there is always room for spiritual growth as well as intellectual development, both of which are by definition dynamic, not static. Liberation theologians have to be selective in what they can draw from the tradition of the Church. For them tradition means those points in the history of the church when the Holy Spirit "broke in" in order to ensure justice, truth and true peace. Examples would be Martin Luther's 95 theses, John Wesley's accidental departure from the tradition of the Anglican Church, Richard and Simon Kimbangu's position which led to the founding of what is now the largest independent church in Africa (Kimbanguism). Such tradition is not racially motivated. Rather the Holy Spirit is the guiding principle.

Thus, Liberation Theology in Africa is not interested in perpetuating norms and creeds, or the limits of the power, justice, and grace of God, but to continue to reflect upon what God is doing on the basis of which new norms and creeds can be established. In fact, it is possible that this is what makes First World theologians restless when they hear the term "Liberation Theology." The term frightens many of them because they want to be in control even if it means not listening to the Holy Spirit.

Now let us just skim through the background, and focus on liberation theological activities in Africa without dealing with any particular topic, such as the Atonement, Salvation, Justice or Incarnation.

3. THEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

(a) Traditional Africa

We cannot even attempt to mark the beginning of the doing of theology in Africa since some of it has been done orally ever since Africans knew and believed in God the creator,⁹ (and this means

long before the missionaries planted Christianity on the continent of Africa; and after the planting of Christianity on the continent). However, we should clarify that African theology which is not based on the Bible is properly designated as African traditional theology because reflection is based on traditional beliefs, general revelation, reason, proverbs, etc.

We may say that African theology began when the first African communities started to reflect upon their experience of what they believed God was doing among them, and for them. This would demonstrate the fact that African knowledge of God is not just a result of a reaction to the West, rather it is a response to God's acts in history as we shall repeatedly make the point. Unfortunately, whenever that was, we do not have it on record at all. Nevertheless we cannot ignore such beginnings just because we do not know when it was, and cannot document it. I suspect Westerners are likely to get "hung up" on documentation because they value that in their scholarly tradition. We Africans have other criteria.

Since much of African wisdom and tradition has been passed down orally, it is customarily safe to assume that, along with other artifacts, customs and beliefs, theological knowledge has also been handed down orally from generation to generation. So, we really cannot say when African traditional theology began on the continent. But one thing is certain: it is a reality and has been since God revealed Himself to the Africans and the people responded in song and prayer.¹⁰ Most Westerners do not want to hear the Africans claim that the God who revealed Himself to traditional Africa is the same Parent of "our Lord Jesus Christ" because they insist that one can only know God through the son Jesus Christ, they also believe that Jesus first appeared in 1 A.D. Which is clearly erroneous in the light of the African knowledge of the living God, the creator, who is also the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as portrayed in both the Old and New Testaments.

According to Justin the Martyr's Christology, for instance, "It is the Logos who forms the universe, who 'appears' to Abraham and Moses, and who confers knowledge of God on all humanity by giving people a share in God's rational nature. It becomes understandable, therefore, that it is the Logos who, in the person of Jesus, becomes incarnate to overcome the forces of demonic unreason and to open the way to a new life for humanity." (The Christological Controversy, Richard Norris, p. 7.) Although Justin did not develop a complete Christology, what he argues is sufficient for us to make the point that since Africans knew God before the church, and since knowledge of God is made possible primarily through Jesus, it therefore makes sense to contend that the pre-existent Christ

revealed God to the Africans. Consequently Africans may legitimately refer to God the Parent of "our Lord Jesus Christ."

(b) Christian Tradition in Africa.

In an academic setting, we are expected to attempt to explore the formal beginning of African Christian" theology within literary circles, and document any volumes, authors, and conferences dealing with the subject. For instance, in *The Origins and Development of African Theology* (Muzorewa, 1985), my research dealt with studying and establishing the "origins" as well as the "sources" of African theology as it is now done by African Christians. I cite five sources that mark the beginning of written Christian theology on the continent. 1 . The A.A.C.C.: I cited the first assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (A.A.C.C.) held in 1958, as having laid a foundation on which African scholars formally began to do African theology in a literary sense. Apart from some articles on the subject, noteworthy is the book co-edited by Kwesi Dickson of Ghana and Paul Ellingworth entitled *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* (1969). This seems to mark the beginning of serious attempts at the creation of a written African Theology. In this book, theology is not expressed as liberative at all, possibly because the people who contributed articles probably sought to conform to the academic status quo at the time. Instead the book attempts to include traditional concepts which are evidently dominant in African churches. Nevertheless to take that first step to write a book on theology was daring. It took liberated persons to attempt such a task.

2. The N.A.A.C.P.: The Conference of Black Churchmen which was held in Tanzania (Aug. 22-28, 1971), sponsored by the African Commission of the National Committee of the Black Churchmen in the U.S., and the Tanzania Consultative Council, also contributes to the literary beginning of African Theology intentionally done by Black people themselves. It is important to note their theme: "Black identity and solidarity and the role of the church as a medium for social change." Needless to say, the terms "identity" and "solidarity" sound a high note of black consciousness and the spirit of liberation.

Many sources agree that black consciousness movement in South Africa and the Civil Rights movement in the United States greatly influenced the rise of Black Theology in both regions. The black Americans had experienced oppression and segregation on the basis of their skin colour. So had the colonized Africans. Therefore "liberation" became a common theme and concern. This set the tone for political liberation in Africa since black people everywhere were victims of white racism. These themes had been reflected upon earlier than 1919 when the first Pan-African Congress was held in Paris, under the auspices of the National Association for the

Advancement of Coloured People (N.A.A.C.P.) Attention must be drawn to the appeal to racial equality or human equality and social justice, which characterized these congresses. The church had also preached spiritual liberation (from sin), and that all human beings are equal in God's eyes. The Black people sought to live out what they believed and preached. (There was a series of these Pan-African congresses — about 6 of them!) Thus, from the very beginning, the spirit of African liberation has emerged from, and united black people who have found themselves in slavery, colonial and racist situations. They were spontaneously united by the similarity of their plight, not just by their racial identity. However, their plight was common due to their race. Today, Third World theologians share a common plight on the basis of their oppressed condition everywhere. 3. The author also cites the 1972 theological consultation held at Makerere University (in Uganda) January 1 to 7. The theme was "Theological consultation on African theology and church life." According to one of the major African theologians, E. E. Mshana, the major purpose of this consultation was to legitimate, justify and define African theology." Yes, it needed to be justified because the Western dominant theological voice would not recognize other voices. Neither does it acknowledge other cultural expressions of the faith!

These activities among others, formally brought theological studies into an academic environment. In fact, since the 1972 consultation which was held at Makerere University, Uganda, there have been many African Universities which actually established the Department of Religious studies and theological education by extension. But the church was still dominated by missionaries and their imported Western theology. Black leadership was scanty, and suppressed,

4. The E.A.T.W.O.T.: The author cites the Ecumenical Association of the Third World Theologians (EATWOT) which first met in Dar es Salaam in 1976, as also marking the official beginnings of written African Theology, done in dialogue with other Third World peoples who also share the same plight with the Africans. A book edited by Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella. *The Emergent Gospel* (1978) was a result of this event. But it was the 1977 theological consultation held in Accra, Ghana, sponsored by the EATWOT, which actually used the term and focused on "African Theology." The substance of this consultation resulted in the publication of a book: *African Theology en route* (1979) co-edited by Kofi Appiah-Kubi of Ghana and Sergio Torres of Chile, Latin America.

This conference was my first international exposure to such theological conferences. I was then in graduate school at Union

Theological Seminary, New York. Prof. James H. Cone, my doctoral supervisor inspired me very much with his commitment to the liberation of black people everywhere. I represented Zimbabwe when it was at the peak of its liberation struggle against the Ian Smith colonial regime. Because of my socio-political context then, I decided that it was appropriate to designate African Theology as a "liberation theology." However, other African theologians tend to designate the term "liberation" for Black Theology in North America and South Africa only.

Setiloane's African Theology (1986) calls for caution when answering the question: "Is African Theology a Theology of Liberation?" Setiloane argues that "The Liberation, African theology strives for, is that of the very 'soul of Africa' from the imprisonment in the vaults of Western conceptualism and discourse, from cerebration and pseudo scientific-ness to human-ness, Botho, Ubuntu, authenticity born out of a living practical experience of Modimo, Qamata, Lesa, Uvelinqangi is the totality of life."¹² (African Theology. 1986, p. 45.) If by saying this Setiloane is indicating that liberation is far more than political we cannot agree with him more. But in South Africa, we demand political liberation first. Furthermore, liberation is not only from colonial oppressors but from any political structures that are oppressive! It is only the free or the oppressors who do not appreciate the need for "liberation," (The healthy has no need of a physician!) Liberation applies wherever people are subjected to dehumanizing conditions, even by fellow blacks.

5. Individual authors. There are books by individuals who have taken it upon themselves to do theology mainly at a regional level. This gives African Theology a particularity and authenticity that justifies its universality because it speaks to several African regions. For instance, although he is an expatriate, following extensive research Aylward Shorter has written African Christian Theology (1977); Farewell to Innocence (1977) was written by a South African church leader Allan Boesak; Toward an African Theology (1979) was written by a Ghanaian Professor of theology John S. Pobee; Kwesi Dickson of Ghana, a biblical scholar has authored Theology in Africa (1984); The Origins and Development of African Theology (1985) was written by a Systematician Zimbabwean, G. H. Muzorewa; Mercy Amba Oduyoye professor of theology in Nigeria has also written Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa (1986) to mention a few. Every year new books on the subject appear. John Mbiti wrote several books on African traditional religion which is an important source of African Theology. His New Testament Eschatology in an African background (1972) is sufficiently biblical. Then there are numerous articles on African Theology, or at least bearing the title "African Theology." Most of these only make a case for African Theology without doing it because the emphasis

has been more “apologetic” than “theologising”. Be that as it may, all these may be regarded today as some of our sources of African Theology — though some are more liberative than others. However, we cannot just lump them together because there are certain trends.

Admittedly we have not developed distinct schools of thought beyond: liberation, cultural, and both. In this essay, I am combining the liberation character and culture character to construct “an African Liberation Theology.” We maintain that theology must be liberative in order to speak to people who are looking up to God to intervene on their behalf, in order to redeem them from the evil of oppression. In my opinion, the two major sources of oppression are politics, civilization or culture.

4. TRENDS IN AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Some of us initially agree with Professor John Mbiti, one of Africa’s theological giants, when he admits that “The theme of liberation has become very popular among African theologians, especially in Southern Africa and in the All Africa Conference of Churches.”¹³ But many more would differ very much with Mbiti when he alleges that although liberation theology is popular it is hardly biblically based. He says “This neglect in Africa of the biblical backing of the theology of liberation is a very alarming omission that calls urgently for correction; otherwise that branch of African Theology will lose its credibility.”¹⁴ It is apparent to this author that Mbiti’s opposition against the term “liberation” is a reflection of his tendency to conform to Western theologians who tend to be negative to the theme of liberation. His allegation that African theology is not biblical is unfounded because most of us do theology which is based on the Christian faith which is biblical although we are not biblical scholars. We are preachers!

For instance, Fashole-Luke of Sierra Leone is in agreement with many African theologians when he says, “There is no Christian theologian in Africa who denies the fact that the Bible is a primary and basic source for any Christian theology.”¹⁵ We are also in harmony with Appiah-Kubi, another African theologian, who adds to what Fashole-Luke says when he asserts that “Biblical teachings are being combined with, and compared with, African traditional religious concepts.”¹⁶ We have to say Mbiti grossly underestimated the extensive use of the Bible in African preaching and politics. The point is, liberation theology has become very popular because there are obvious reasons for the need for liberation and the Bible tells us that God is concerned about our liberation (Luke 4:18, 19; Exodus 3:7- 10; Amos 5:21 -24) There may be various views on what theological method must be employed to deal with the problems most effectively, but there cannot be any doubt that liberation which,

according to James Cone, is the core of the Christian mission is Biblical and is needed in aspects of life including: political, social, theological and economic liberation. There are two major expressions of theology in Africa today: 1. Africanization (culture: within the present African situation) and 2. liberation (politics) We shall now spend the rest of our time and space discussing these expressions as they characterize African Theology.

But just before we do that, it is necessary to state that, with the exception of African traditional theology which refers to theological reflection on traditional religious beliefs uninformed by the Scriptures but by other sources such as general revelation, reason, culture and proverbs, there cannot be any talk of an African liberation theology apart from the Scriptures. The Scriptures inform both a liberation perspective and Africanization. These two are inseparable because the African believer is liberated in order that he or she may be free to maintain humanizing values, and pursue goals of one's choice, influenced by the Word of God. African theology of liberation is based on such scriptures as Luke 4:1 8-20, Exodus 3:1f and other passages as we pointed out earlier. It is however, different from Western theology because it employs a unique hermeneutic which is informed by African presuppositions for the most part. Also it is not formulated in the context of Western philosophical categories. Differences in hermeneutics, epistemology and philosophical values do not necessarily render a theology Christian or non-Christian, or orthodox or non-orthodox. Rather, it is the content which makes a theology Christian. We pointed out earlier that African Theology is liberative when it uses the gospel truth to free us from any dehumanizing aspects of culture which are obviously oppressive and destructive. We use cultural humanizing values to liberate ourselves from an oppressive colonial mentality without rejecting Western technology which we can utilize to enhance our humanity. We can even use our culture to facilitate the planting of the gospel message within us without converting the Word of God into a political ideology. Most of us are aware that the truth we arrive at by the use of secular analytic tools (such as culture, philosophy, and so on) is not synonymous with the gospel truth. The former can only be informative but the latter is not only informative but salvific as well.

4.1 AFRICANIZATION

The one major difference between the emphasis on Liberation Theology both in Black America and South Africa, and Liberation Theology in the remainder of Africa South of the Sahara, is that the former primarily focuses on socio-economic-political liberation while the latter focuses first and foremost on cultural liberation.¹⁷ The bottom line is, because we believe that Jesus Christ is the liberator,

African communities that confess Christ as Lord, are constantly going through a definite form of liberative transformation. While some African theologians think that Black theology and African theology do not have anything in common, there are others who believe that Black Theology and African Theology are not “antagonists” but “soulmates.”¹⁸ Desmond Tutu is a good example. Manas Buthelezi, another prominent black theologian in South Africa, shares this view. Black theologies in North America and South Africa share mutual concern with respect to the socio-economic-political liberation of the blacks everywhere. However, this is not to be perceived as something exclusive of cultural liberation. Setiloane is correct to note that “African theology and Black theology are ‘stable mates,’ each with its peculiar contribution to the Struggle.”¹⁹ In saying this, Setiloane embraces what Desmond Tutu had said. It seems to me that there is wisdom in understanding how black liberation theology (recognizing its full identity and agenda) is “a branch” of African theology, as John Mbiti said.

We agree with Mercy Amba Oduyoye, author of *Hearing and Knowing* (1986), that: “In Africa, . . . it is the experience of liberation from colonialism and the cry for this liberation that have stimulated theologies that struggle to be relevant to the realities of Africa,²⁰ There is also an unquestionable truth in what Oduyoye says that there is a struggle for liberation even in independent states “as the nations struggle to be fully liberated from colonialism and from their internal misgoverning of themselves.”²¹ Turning from colonialism to African culture, Oduyoye remarks that “the traditional ordering of society placed its own burdens on the African people.”²²

Apparently, Oduyoye belongs to the school of thought that understands African Theology as a theology of cultural liberation that can set us free from our cultural limitations and bondage. Liberation from a colonial mentality, and African cultural mentality including a narrow African world-view which would blind us, or hinder the opening of new horizons, is needed in order to create more humanizing socio-economic and political conditions. The new African must emerge from the old because modern technology and the Christian faith necessarily transform our life. This is why we can characterize African Theology as a liberation theology.

Technology can be used to liberate the Africans, or to oppress them, depending on the intention of those who employ it. The same is true of Christianity. Therefore, it is crucial that Africans play a major part in making political and theological decisions that affect their humanity and destiny. So Africanization has positive qualities which enhance African values. However, any aspects of Africanization that do not reflect the dynamic character of the culture must be discouraged.

Kwesi Dickson of Ghana makes an important, though general statement on Third World theologising: "since the 'Third World' has suffered much from exploitation and and domination at the hands of colonialists, liberation theology sees this domination as the key element in 'Third World' theologising."²³ In the foregoing statement, Dickson is sympathetic with the goals of Liberation Theology, namely to create awareness of the need for persons to have dignity,²⁴ and provide the means through which that can be accomplished. He correctly understands that African liberation theology "proceeds on the basis of the conviction that faith divorced from practice is not worth the name of faith." Indeed, one can also add that a faith that does not address our pressing needs is mere window dressing and Africans do not need it. A relevant theology is one that arises from a people's social context.

Buthelezi contends that Black Liberation Theology in South Africa must begin where the people are today, and seek redemption in Christ from that point. The black people in South Africa are under the yoke of oppression and at the mercy of unjust government authorities. Political oppression is the social context in South Africa. Liberation Theology says what God is doing for God's beloved who cry to the divine by day and by night. Obviously it is those who are crying who can readily hear what God is saying in response to their need, and they can readily see what God is doing in their situation of oppression. Consequently, the World must listen to what the black people in South Africa are announcing that the voice of God is decreeing, namely: Let my people be free in their own land! The truth of the matter is that, it is not that the oppressors do not hear what God is saying. They just choose to ignore the voice of God; they choose to ignore God's will because in this case God's will does not happen to coincide with the will of the white racist oppressors.

For Buthelezi, African theology is not merely matching the received Christian teaching and African life and thought with complete justification. We agree with Buthelezi that Western theology is not to be regarded as "the given" or "the norm" for all theological soundness because our social contexts are different. What was "a given" for Western theology does not necessarily become "our given." "Norms" are also contextual. I believe that the most desirous "norm" for Christian theology is one: truth. Unfortunately, there are many theologians who argue that "truth" is relative! Because Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life," he is received as liberating truth by those who are oppressed, and such liberating truth is not relative. Jesus is the good news. He is the saviour, and consequently the Life.

Since our world is shrinking into a global village, both Western and African theologies may need to establish common criteria for theological soundness if there is need for additional shared norms. Without that, no one theology may claim to be itself the norm for soundness for the others. Along with rejecting Western theological arrogance as basis for doing theology in Africa, Buthelezi also rejects African cultural euphoria as a criterion (understood as the good old days) in doing theology and deciding on what is sound theology because, he argues, we must deal with the present African reality in the here and now. Buthelezi is correct to argue that yesterday's pleasure cannot solve today's misery. However, Buthelezi must be interpreted and understood in the context of the apartheid South Africa where the government claims that forcing Africans to live in Bantustans is in keeping with African traditional standards. I do not believe that he condemns his own culture. He just cautions us to the danger of being taken advantage of in the guise of "doing us a favour. An African cannot afford to completely disown his or her own culture.

Understood otherwise, it would be almost impossible to relate Black Liberation Theology and African Liberation Theology whose basic premise is that African culture is the context within which we can intelligibly do African Liberation Theology in the light of our twentieth century socio-political realities. Buthelezi rejects the African religio-cultural tradition as a valid vehicle in the doing of a Theology of Liberation in Africa. More suitable tools have to be employed in order to deal with Africa's present realities.

Other African theologians hold different views from Buthelezi. I am among those who believe that African liberation theology must develop within the framework of the African reality which invariably includes the past, present and future. I fail to understand how any serious African theologian can attempt to isolate the "present realities" from Africa's history and future. Developed in a holistic framework (past, present and future), African Liberation Theology becomes meaningful to the people of Africa. Dickson's judgement on whether or not African Theology is a liberation theology is separatist: African theologians from outside South Africa have tended to keep socio-economic and political matters out of all discussion of theology.'²⁵ The question Dickson must face is: How realistic is this sort of theologizing which excludes vital dimensions of African daily living? One would take Dickson's position only if one either assumes that the independent nations are not experiencing incidents of political oppression to which liberation theology must speak, or one is not in a position to acknowledge and admit the sad fact that there are Africans who are oppressed by fellow Africans! That there are African refugees all over the world is a sign

political oppression at home! A more down-to-earth theologian, Oduyoye, has told us that some independent nations need liberation theology to speak for the oppressed of the land who cannot "sing the Lord's song in their own land." Surely the numbers of African refugees throughout the world ought to be indicative of the continued need for political liberation on the so-called free continent

However, Dickson is correct to caution that we cannot impose a theological perspective on anyone, but he would be wrong to pretend that there is no need for a liberation theology among Africans outside South Africa, because political oppression is rampant on the continent and Dickson would be aware of it.

Another unplausible conclusion Dickson makes is that most of African nations are no longer ruled by white oppressors or colonialists, therefore the question of political liberation is out, except for the white-ruled South Africa and Namibia. In spite of these views held by Dickson, which are not necessarily shared by many, most African theologians agree that there is need to reflect on what God is doing to liberate African people today cross-culturally and transcontinentally. They agree that there are multiple facets of the struggle to be free in Africa.

It seems Dickson believes that political liberation only relates to black and white situations. Such is not the case. We do not agree with Dickson's assumptions because the last two decades have shown us that even in African independent states, there is need for socio-political and economic liberation without which both the neo-colonial oppressors and their political victims will sink below human standards in their own land. The presence of thousands upon thousands of African refugees in various nations today does not send a positive message to Africa's former oppressors or Africa's well-wishers. Without mentioning any particular nations because the degree varies, it suffices to note that these African refugees in African countries and abroad certainly indicate the political strife, not for independence from white rulers this time, but for freedom from a limited world view, nepotism, tribalism, undesirable and oppressive political ideologies which are forced upon the people.

Maybe this is what leads some black South African theologians to reject culture as a basis for a Liberation Theology because culture here is used to oppress and justify the creation of the Bantustans rather than to liberate.

Much of the oppression in independent Africa today is due to certain Africanisms, for example tribalism and a certain mentality developed during the struggle for independence. Women are oppressed by

their husbands because in most regions there is a culture-based male domination. Jesus Christ though a Jew, did not discriminate against women but most churches today for instance, despise women who claim to have been called to the ordained ministry. This attitude comes partly from our African culture that indoctrinates the woman to be inferior to the man, and partly from the Jewish (biblical) attitude against women. So, what does it mean to say the church is the body of Christ yet we do not obey or learn from Jesus Christ the teacher, example and revelation of God's will? Apparently we tend to allow our cultures to give direction to our christian doctrine, in so doing we often "derail" the gospel. On this note, I have to say the church needs to liberate itself from cultural forces, and be in service of Jesus Christ of whom the church is the body.. The Church is called not to conform to this world but, to transform it. But what we often observe is that the church seeks to conform to secular structures, especially oppressive ones, for example the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa has even developed a theology to undergird the evil apartheid social system.²⁶

4.2 LIBERATION

At first, it would appear that any talk about liberation theology should be limited to South Africa (as Kwesi Dickson would suggest), where a few minority foreigners are in control of all political and economic power. Also, initially, it would seem as if Black Liberation Theology has little or nothing to do with culture (as Mans Buthelezi argues), and is totally preoccupied with politics. But that is really not the case. Neither extreme is realistic. Here is what one of the major voices in black theology has said about the situation in South Africa.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu believes that liberation is a major aspect of theology who belongs to the "umbrella theology" known as African Theology. But for Tutu, African Liberation theology is actually a theodicy, except that in the South African situation the theodiceal question is not just philosophical, i.e. why is there suffering in the world? Rather, it is existential: why are we suffering like this at the hands of fellow human beings who just happen to be white.

I agree with Tutu's contention that it is from a suffering, oppressed and exploited people that all liberation theology originates. This explains why free and or oppressive nations cannot understand or even just appreciate the concerns of liberation theology. The lack the experience which would enable them to comprehend the matter. Tutu locates the genesis of all liberation theology (or Black theology of liberation) at the point of abject suffering of the black people of South Africa. He believes that black South Africans have been so dehumanised that most of them have almost come to believe that

they deserve the treatment they are forced to receive from the white racists in South Africa because of their black skin. Here racism is at its worst.

Black Theology in South Africa has to some extent become an expression of and reflection upon the black consciousness movement, whose philosophy aims at sensitising all black people of their intrinsic human worth endowed in them by God who created them black in God's own image. It is simply not true that black people were created to be inferior and to serve the whites. This is a myth that some people have created in order to justify their sin of dehumanising people created in God's image like themselves — if there is any trace of the divine image in them anymore!

Many theologians in South Africa would agree with Tutu that a black theology of liberation in South Africa was partly inspired by its counterpart in North America although the social contexts in respective regions are not the same. All black liberation theologians share Tutu's view that liberation theology takes the socio-political dimension of reality very seriously. It seeks to make sense out of the suffering of the blacks in relation to what God has done, is doing and will do. It teaches the doctrine of God that describes the type of God that Christians worship.

Because Black Theology as a liberation theology is very relevant to a particular situation, it is bound to shift its agenda as the socio-political situation changes. Therefore liberation theology cannot and does not lay claim to universal application because, God's answer for one community does not apply to another although God remains faithful and compassionate to the suffering of the world. The point of consistence is that God answers our prayers, i. e. God intervenes in our respective conditions of need in order to provide us with a humanising spirit. This is why Tutu says: Theology is temporal, the Gospel is eternal.²⁷

5. CONCLUSION

We cannot overemphasise the truism that our understanding of the Gospel is influenced by our social context. However it is true that, because the Gospel is God's Word, it is alive when what it says speaks to our situation, and it is also alive in spite of our lack of response. Therefore, for an oppressed people it is good news to hear that God is a liberator, that God has heard the suffering of the least of these and has come down to help alleviate the pain and the burden. Also they need to hear that God is on their side because they need to get redeemed from their plight, not because they are necessarily more virtuous or better than others. God saves a

people from a dehumanising condition to a life-giving situation, for a creative and productive purpose. Consequently most exponents of liberation theology strive to be obedient and faithful to Christ the liberator because in Him they have life, freedom and truth.

Black Theology of liberation teaches that God has power, and that God hears (cares about) the cries of the oppressed, the poor, the destitute, and takes positive action to deliver them from evil and death. Consequently, there is hope for a brighter future because a compassionate God intervenes into the situation in order to bring justice and freedom to all.

Further more it challenges its adherents to love their enemies as themselves as Jesus Christ would. It challenges the oppressed not to destroy themselves by self-hate, self-pity and a sense of worthlessness. Instead the oppressed are called upon already as victors, not only to forgive and be reconciled but to love as they participate in the divine economy of salvation, where God is sovereign. Third World Theologies in general, and African Liberation Theology in particular is not just one more academic fad, neither is it a theological souvenir. It is the word of God being expressed through the humblest and most despised stock of the human race. Woe unto those who hear it but do not harken, see what God is doing but cannot perceive it. Blessed are the hearers and doers of the word.

REFERENCES

1. It appears that Pan-Africanism took shape permanently following the First and second World Wars. Black Americans and Africans who had been recruited by the Americans and the British fought side by side and lived in the same quarters with the whites. They saw whites bleed blood like their own and concluded that race is only skin deep. Humanity is basically equal-rather, there is no such thing as superior people and inferior races. Moreover the British and the Americans had fought for their national independence, while they (the British) colonised much of Africa. See *The Origins and Development of African Theology*, (1985), Muzorewa, 46-48.
2. The All Africa Conference of Churches was organised and sponsored by the Christian Council of Churches in Nigeria, with some financial help from the International Missionary Council. The first organisational meeting was held in Ibadan in 1958. Two thirds of the delegates were blackAfrican because the intention was to organise a movement that was led by African christians themselves. (See my discussion, Muzorewa 1985, 57-74).
3. According to Basil Moore, the term "Black Theology" spilled over from the United States, but the content of Black Theology in South Africa is unique for that situation. (See Basil Moore's chapter 1: What is Black Theology? in *The Challenge of Black Theology in South*

Africa, 1973,1)

4. We generally divide the continent into two halves — the North which is mainly Arabic and Africa south of the Sahara which is mainly black. However the Organisation of African Unity has other ways of dividing the continent. They simply go by which regions of Africa are self-governing and which are still governed by foreign powers, e.g. South Africa which is still not a member.

5. I personally cannot understand why the majority of Western scholars spent literally centuries arguing over whether or not God exists. The whole development of the proofs of the existence of God demonstrates that the Westerner's way of belief is different from that of the African. A similar debate has been going on since the first century with regard to the person and nature of Jesus Christ.

6. Amos 5:21-24.

7. Prof. Kwesi Dickson of Ghana is one of the top African Old Testament scholars whose writings are widely read because he does creative work.

8. My European colleague at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary argues that the limitation of Liberation Theology lies in its reactionary character. They also argue that it is also not reflective and inclusive. It is unchristian because it says "all for me, and nothing for the oppressor. This is of course not true.

9. If by theology we refer to a reflection on what God is doing, without reference to the christian experience or the Bible, there is a sense in which the beginning of African Theology cannot be established because it is undocumented and those who did theology way back before Christianity was planted in Africa are long gone, of course. In *The Origins and Development of African Theology* (1985), I discuss the origin of the term "African Theology" in chapter 6.

10. Mbiti J.S. has published a whole book on *The Prayers of African Religion*, (1975). Some of the prayers recorded there could easily be mistaken for christian prayers because the Africans worship the same God in traditional life and the church.

11. Mshana E.E. discusses this in his article, "The Challenge of Black Theology and African Theology" in *Africa Theological Journal* 5 (Dec.1972): 19-30.

12. Setiloane G.M. 1986, *African Theology: An Introduction*, Johannesburg, Skotaville.

13. Appiah-Kubi, K and Torres S (eds) 1979 :*African Theology en route* Maryknoll, Orbis.

14. Ibid., p 89

15. Fashole-Luke E.W. 1975 p 263

16. Appiah-Kubi K and Torres S 1979 p 88

17. Cone J 1986 *My Soul Looks Back* p 108

18. Tutu D *Black Theology/African Theology: Soulmates or Antagonists?* in *Journal of Religious Thought* 33 (Fall Winter) p 25-33

19. Setiloane G 1986 p 43

20. Oduyoye M A 1986 Hearing and Knowing p 80f
21. Ibid., p81
22. Ibid., p81
23. Dickson K.1985 Theology in Africa p 125

BOOK REVIEW

Villa-Vicencio, C. (edit.): Theology and Violence: The South African Debate. Johannesburg, Skotaville, 1987, 309pp R12-95 (paperback)

Takatso Mofokeng, University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Dr. Charles Villa-Vicencio, professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town and editor of this book, is a good ethicist, very prolific writer and very vigorous editor who has written and edited several books on various highly topical issues relating to the South African situation of oppression of black people by the white supremacist government and exploitation by white racist capital. In this present publication from his editorial desk, Villa-Vicencio has used his analytical mind very well and correctly identified one of the most debated issues in South Africa today and lifted it up for closer scrutiny and intellectual attention by an impressive panel of highly respected theologians, pastors and church beaurocrats. All of these people are united by many things, the most notable of which is their publicly known abhorrence of apartheid oppression which has issued out in a long history of practical involvement in acts of civil resistance. Some of them have seen the inside of prison several times as a price for their deep commitment to the eradication of apartheid and the liberation of black people. Many of them have relentlessly waged a long ideological war on all forms of theology that legitimize the white apartheid state. This present book represents one such ideological assault.

This very well planned book locates the debate on theology and violence in three contexts. Firstly, in the context of the history of colonization of South Africa and that of the colonial churches (English and afrikaans speaking) in which the use of violence to take the land of African people from them and to subdue them was encouraged, sometimes applauded, always sanctified and never debated. The second context is the contemporary one in which black people have recovered from their long stupor and decided to use whatever means they deem necessary and effective in their fierce attack on the South African racist state and its supporters, without debating the morality of using them. It is within this context that an interesting paradox plays itself out, namely white theologians who are members of the above churches suddenly realize the necessity of placing violence as a political weapon high on the theological agenda, hence this book. The last context of the debate, as you can guess, is that of the biblical traditions and the history of the "early church" as well as that of the European church from c. 312 to the middle of this century.

The topics which are vigorously and intensively debated and which

yield stunning results start with one on the direct and active involvement of the British christian missionaries as conscious agents in the violence of colonization of South Africa in which, as Greg Cuthbertson aptly says: "missionaries no less than anyone else believed that the british empire was the greatest force for good in a world ripe for christianity. And most accepted that because the empire had been won by war, it could legitimately be extended by war" (p22). Logically, the Africans responded by developing "religions of resistance" to accompany and reinforce their armed resistance. A very interesting article that becomes even more relevant for us because it deals with one of the Afrikaner churches namely the Dutch Reformed Church, that has the reputation of being the ruling "Nationalist Party at prayer" reveals the shameful hypocrisy of that church in that it consistently supported violence whenever Afrikaners as an ethnic group resorted to violence as a political weapon, and condemns violence now that their power is challenged.

The second part of the book consists of an inconclusive debate by three black pastors on the legitimacy of the black struggle, the legal status of black people who take up arms i.e. whether there are enough arguments to support their status of freedom fighters, and whether they, by virtue of their being christians, qualify to be called christian soldiers. This section of the book is followed by one in which several biblical scholars and systematic theologians comb through the scriptures and church historical books in search of clarity on how the preceding religious communities, biblical and christian, resolved the problem of the use of violence and made their choices. The results are varied and confusing, thereby leaving contemporary christians, both black and white, to debate the issue again within their present context, determine theological positions for themselves and accept responsibility for their conclusions. This they do in the fourth section of the book in which positions range from a qualified support for armed politics to radical pacifism. The debate ends with an article that has been strategically well chosen to close this book. In it the writer points out the pervasiveness of violence in the South African society and goes on to argue that even the decision to be a pacifist is maintained and defended with violence. What a dilemma!

I recommend this book very highly to lay and trained christians who wish to inform themselves on the above debate and clear their minds on choices that are open to them.

**ENKLAAR, IDO, H.: Life and Work of
Dr. J. Th. Van der Kemp 1747-1811.
Cape Town and Rotterdam: A A Balkema, 1988.
xi+234pp. R55,00**

Simon S. Maimela, University of South Africa, Pretoria

In this very fascinating book, Dr. Enklaar sets for himself the task of writing yet another biography about that most gifted and controversial missionary pioneer of the London Missionary Society in South Africa, Dr. Van der Kemp, hoping thereby to correct some of the biased biographies which have presented him in bad light. Dr. Van der Kemp was a rare personality of strong convictions, and a highly educated man of unusual talents in a variety of fields such as philosophy, theology, medicine, chemistry, military tactics, many classical and modern languages.

The book comprises of nineteen chapters. Chapter I discusses Van der Kemp's family background, his childhood, school years, his moral and spiritual life. Chapter II is devoted to his military career, his unconventional moral behaviour and repeated failures to change his corrupt life-style, his marriage which shocked his friends, and discharge from military service.

Chapter III-VI discuss his journey to England and resolve to complete his medical studies, his philosophical writings, and his spiritual struggles both before and after his return to Holland. His medical practice and skills at the army hospitals are examined. This is also the time that Van der Kemp experienced a conversion and spiritual growth, both of which turned his life-style upside down by transforming him into a missionary fanatic.

Chapters VII-X give an indepth account of Van der Kemp's call to foreign mission, which brought him into contact with the Moravians and London Missionary Society. Then he initiated the awakening of the mission zeal in his native country as founder of the Netherlands Missionary Society. Thereafter, he was called as missionary by the London Missionary Society in the Cape.

Chapters XI-XIX are devoted to his mission work in the Cape colony (1799), Xhosaland (1799-1801), again in the Cape colony and, most importantly, the establishment of the Bethelsdorp mission station among the Khoikhoi (1801-1812).

In his portrayal of the life and work of this staunch critique of Boers and colonial government and the founding father of liberal thought

in South Africa, Dr. Enklaar has succeeded in presenting Dr. Van der Kemp as a man of enormous courage and deep evangelical convictions about the equality of all human beings regardless of race, economic status intellectual and cultural sophistication. Here we are presented with a portrait of a man of brilliant intellectual mind yet one who was overcome by the power of the gospel when he underwent a spectacular conversion which turned him into a person of admirable piety and a radical socio-political econoclast, who shocked the white Cape community by marrying a black slave girl, Sara. Above all, it was in his struggle for social justice for all people and his unbending commitment to the civil liberties of the people of colour among whom he worked, people who were unfairly treated by the labour policies of the day, that Van der Kemp has left an indelible mark in South African history as the fierce opponent of slavery and oppressive colonial governments, the passionate fighter for human rights, and a preacher of the gospel of "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them" to the downtrodden. (p. 178).

In this book, Dr. Enklaar has given us a balanced, well documented and less emotional account of this great missionary, a man of learning and the first preacher who publicly defended the poor and oppressed, which I commend highly to our readers.

**DONDERS J D: PRAYING AND PREACHING
THE SUNDAY GOSPEL
Maryknoll, Orbis Books , New York 1988
L.D.Jafta-Federal Theological Seminary
Pietermaritzburg**

Father Donders' timely book is a must for all those who are interested in relevant preaching. It is one of the best tools for people who want to relate scripture to their contexts. While the title of the book may sound conventional, the content is very stimulating indeed. Each homily has a "catching" title which, like a fishing bait, draws the fish into the bait. Donders uses a grassroot language which is an indication of the kind of readership he envisages. While it is a useful tool for pastors it is equally useful for bible studies on contemporary issues. Perhaps an analysis of one of the homilies will throw light on the exegetical method he uses:

Homily No. 17 is entitled: NOT THE SHOUTERS BUT THE DOERS. The text is Matthew 7:21-27. He begins by saying: "You must all have heard about those martyrs in Uganda about a hundred years ago. There were many of them. They died in different ways."

In his application Donders writes, "The fight between the old and the new is not only a fight between an old god and a new God, or between Christ and anti-Christ, high up in the sky of our ideas and ideals on an apolitical battlefield. It is between the old and new in this world, in this life. When you read reports on South Africa, for example, it seems that many Christians over there refuse to analyse the real situation — the political situation of the oppressed people because their fight is only in the air."

He then concludes by saying:

"It is not those who shout Lord, Lord, Christianity, Christianity, Church, Pope, Bishop, who enter the Kingdom of God but those who do the will of God by refusing a bribe, taking up a child or establishing justice."

While some of us take pride in mentioning the martyrs of the early church like Polycarp etc, Donders mentions martyrs in our own African continent e.g. Mbagwa Tuzinde. This is the relevance the reader cannot escape in reading Donders' homilies. Donders attacks the dichotomy of the temporal and the spiritual worlds which tends to tilt the balance of the scale towards the spiritual. The issues, he says, are economic, "social" and "political". Social analysis is, therefore, a must for preachers. Refusal to analyse your society in your sermons is falling into the trap of being irrelevant. This is a

challenge to many of us who have fallen into this trap. We tend to please our congregations by preaching what they want to hear rather than challenging them with the gospel. Donders makes clear that neither the Pope nor the bishop nor the church matter; What matters is whether we act justly and righteously. This, again is a challenge to those who are obsessed with institutions rather than the gospel.

The other significant element in Donders' homilies is that of affirmation. People, especially the oppressed and the marginalized people need to be affirmed. In homily No. 45 he makes a point for divinity which is in all of us.

"I invite you to stand in front of your mirror, once you are at home again, and, looking at yourself say 'look at her, look at him, charged with God, full of spirit.'"

There is a recognition of the sinfulness of human nature hence the need for the confession of sins. There also is the recognition of the blessedness of human nature which also needs to be confessed. Many Christians often talk of confessing sins to the total neglect of the affirmation of the blessedness in them. But sins are not sins in the abstract — certainly not in isolation from the context; sins are always sins in relation to neighbour. The context has a lot to do with the type of sins people commit. While Donders does not explicitly say this, he implies it in a number of the homilies. In his exegesis of the text: You are the salt of the earth, Donders says that we cannot speak of the salt in isolation. Apart from the earth, salt is useless. Both salt and light are in relation to the earth, apart from which they are both useless.

Referring to the text on the blessedness of Peter where Donders concludes that we must affirm ourselves because we have this blessedness, one is reminded of Steve Biko's dictum: You are black and beautiful. This is the affirmation of personhood which should not be interpreted with any racial slur. We forget the good in us. We forget God in us. We overlook our potentialities, our dignity, our access to life itself. What a relevant message particularly to the marginalized and oppressed people!

It must be re-iterated that these homilies are short and are deliberately meant to be that way. This is why I prefer to use the word homily rather than sermon. One feels that Donders' homilies are deliberately truncated to allow the reader to elaborate them as one wishes. Short as they are, the message is full and challenging. The Old Testament fans will probably be annoyed by the fact that the texts for these homilies are all taken from the gospels. References are, however, made to the Old Testament.