

**THE MYTH OF THE GUILTLESS SOCIETY. A SOCIO-ETHICAL
APPRAISAL OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ABORIGINES IN
AUSTRALIA SINCE COLONISATION. TOWARD A THEOLOGY
OF LIBERATION FOR AUSTRALIA**

by

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DECLARATION

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“I declare that ‘The myth of the guiltless society. A socio-ethical appraisal of the experience of the Aborigines in Australia since colonisation. Toward a theology of liberation for Australia’ is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references”.

Andre Nathan Louw.....

SUMMARY:

This study is a focus on a small minority group within Australian society.

This study attempts to explore and expose the inherent injustices experienced by this Aboriginal group since colonization. Its major focus is the loss of their land and their human rights and dignity subsequent to this invasion/ colonization. It also attempts, subsequent to the High Court decision in favour of Aboriginal land ownership, to also theologially support that stance. This study exposes the heretical nature of the traditional theology and religious practices of the dominant white population. It also tries to show the correlation with the experience of the Maori people in New Zealand and how they lost their land to the British Monarch.

It then attempts some directives for reconciliation between these peoples and what could be done to restore the damage done since 1788.

KEYWORDS:

Guilt, Land rights, Injustice, Oppression, Exploitation, Reconciliation, Mabo, and Waitangi unlocking the Kingdom.

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CHAPTER ONE

**‘We turn to God only to obtain the impossible’ - Albert Camus
(The myth of Sisyphus)**

**‘They will turn their ears away from truth and turn aside to myths’
(2 Timothy 4:4)**

STATING OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this socio-ethical study is the evaluation of the effect and impact of the arrival, settlement, life and ongoing history and societal processes of the European colonizer on the psyche, life and behaviour of the Australian indigenous Aboriginal inhabitants. The intention is not only to describe and to evaluate but to analyze and criticize the very complex process to the present.

I do not intend to make my scope too wide and therefore have the accusation leveled at me as being a dilettante. I wish to highlight the levels of awareness in Australian society about the societal oppression that has taken place with regard to current and historical Aboriginal and Australian European experience.

Getting to grips with Australian society in the past and in the present era, I have to draw on global experiences on views and ideas such as myth, guilt, unawareness, liberation, oppression, biblical experience and people’s experience of faith.

Although Australian society has unique characteristics, it is part of the world wide network of power and societal relations. Australian society in the modern period from 1800-2000 did not invent or discover the modern traits that I want to discuss in this dissertation. It is part and parcel of global world-wide experiences during the past hundred years and the present era.

My study focuses on the myth and other experiences of the guiltless Australian society from the perspective and experience of human faith. Many people of the Christian extraction want to call this view theological. My point of departure is to stay within the ambience of human faith and therefore to stay within the

spectrum of socio-ethical experience of Australian society. From the outset, this work is not presented as a theological dissertation in the traditional sense of the word. This dissertation does not want to explain what it means to bring traditional theological resources to bear upon the problems of oppression and liberation, and thus to show how ideas such as sin, salvation, or redemption, and the doctrines of God, Christ and the Spirit are illumined or enriched by the process of contextual analysis and critical reflection. Fortunately what is called theology today all over the world has many faces. The traditional idea that theology has solely to do with God and the many doctrines of the church in the sense of Karl Barth (d.1968) in his *Church Dogmatics* has passed away.

Similarly the idea that theology is totally concentrated on human consciousness as in the views of the 19th century Schleiermacher (d.1834) has also passed away, except in the modern/post-modern views that are today called New Age, mysticism, pietism and spiritualism. Many other theologies with an emphasis on the cosmos, the world or history have emerged. In Roman Catholic circles the cosmic theology of Teilhard de Chardin (d.1955) came to the fore. In Protestant circles the German Wolfhard Pannenberg emphasised the idea of historical-cosmic history as the object of theology. In modern European-Western history of theology the object of theology was either God as in Barthian theology in the 20th century or a human being as in Schleiermacher in the 19th century or the universal cosmic process as with Teilhard de Chardin (and universal history as with Pannenberg) in the 20th century.

In our view God, human beings and the world, especially in the societal sense are part of the analysis and description of human faith or belief. Therefore, I made a choice for a theology or a theory of faith that captures God, human experience and the societal world in one perspective. Let me say it in other words: I made a choice for a culturally, socially, economically and politically inclined theology or theory of faith that is heavily influenced by Liberation, Black and Feminist theologies of the 20th century.

Therefore, I do not want to analyze and describe the context of Australia in detail and in depth. I want to describe by means of a contextual and historical way of experiencing faith and believe from a standpoint that has been strongly influenced by Liberation, Black and Feminist theological experience from the rest of the world. Although faith or believing is a capacity of every human being's experience through being created by God, just as other human capacities

such as loving, justifying, imagining, economising, socialising, producing, verbalising, thinking, feeling, evolving, physicalising, chemicalising, moving, spatialising and entitising - the way that human beings experience faith or belief is not the same.

It means however that from my theological cum faith experience and standpoint as an African-Australian who have experienced both sides of the oppressor/oppressed scenario in apartheid South Africa I have some empathy and insight into the oppressor/oppressed paradigms in Australian society. This if not everything else makes me worthy of discussing the topic of this dissertation. Fortunately there is a growing awareness amongst the Aboriginal population that they have been cheated by their colonial masters.

This study focuses on the myth of the guiltless Australian society from a theological or to say it in my may, from a theoretical perspective of human faith. The phrase in the title of this dissertation, namely 'a socio-ethical appraisal of the experience of Aborigines in Australia' captures the theoretical perspective of faith which is totally imbedded in people's contextual and historical social experience. The term myth in the title of the dissertation concentrates on the nearly 'ontological' unawareness of oppression, estrangement, and alienation that took place in over 200 years of modern Australian society between European colonizers and conquerors and Aboriginal people in Australia.

When one speaks of oppression for instance, the oppressor and the oppressed share in a strange way the same paradigm: the one oppresses and the other buys into the codes and modes of the oppressor. The oppressed is therefore oppressed in a double way. Frigga Haug (1992) a German feminist activist expressed this clearly by saying that the oppressed buy into the codes and modes of the oppressor.

I do this study, not as an outsider on behalf of people either from European or Aboriginal extraction but as an African-Australian who has experienced - as I said above - both sides of the oppressor/oppressed scenario in apartheid South Africa as well as in Australian society. Australian society claims to be fair and open on the level of human actions and processes. Australian society through its successive governments criticized the apartheid regime in South Africa during the apartheid years. That is a well-known fact. My problem, however, with Australian society lies specifically at this point. The phrase 'the myth of a

guiltless society' in the title of this dissertation has specifically to do with the myth of unawareness that is still rife in Australian society. Many Australians are unaware that what they did in the past and in many respects are still doing with the Aboriginal population have striking resemblances with what happened in the USA in the racist years and in apartheid South Africa.

There have always been lofty claims that Aboriginal needs and claims are increasingly being met, yet, an increasingly disproportional number of new born children die before they are five years old, suffer from diseases and illnesses virtually unheard of in the rest of society, have equally disproportionate school drop-out rates and unemployment rates, poor housing and community facilities compared to the rest of the population. The insightful book of Doris Pilkington, *Follow the rabbit-proof fence* (1996), speaks about the many funerals of Aboriginal youth who hang themselves in jails. To her there is no doubt that the high crime rate and depression amongst the Aboriginal population is the effect of oppression through centuries by colonialists. And what happened simultaneously amongst people of Aboriginal extract was the experience of alienation and estrangement. Through the whole process of over 200 years they have been robbed of their culture, their dignity and self-worth. Even if the latter is to be dismissed as the interest of white people, I want to mention and discuss the work by Aboriginal leaders and thinkers in this dissertation.

Other documents are also to be discussed in this dissertation, namely the High Court Mabo decision and the subsequent Wik decision. After the Mabo and the subsequent Wik decisions frantic cries and actions were raised to extinguish land title achievements reached by these courts. Various claims and accusations were launched that the courts were too prescriptive and intrusive in the 'sacred' societal-political arena. The main objection was that present landowners who over 200 years obtained these land leases - unfairly to say the least - would be disadvantaged. Furthermore, Aboriginal mild offenders would be treated with greater aggression than would be tolerated in the broader Australian society.

In this section the problem what is discussed and captured in this dissertation has to be set out:

In the first chapter the purpose, method and approach of the study is dealt with in a cursory manner. Cursory in this chapter does not mean superficially. It means however that one while stating ones purpose, method and approach

cannot dwell to long on this issue.

In chapter two the concepts of myth and guilt, de-contextualising and unawareness, contextualising and liberation from oppression are dealt with from the perspective of people's experience of faith and discussed within the realm and ambience of biblical themes.

In the third chapter I want to explore one of the basic aspects of Australian society, namely the unawareness of the roles of oppressor and oppressed in this society.

In the fourth chapter the background, contexts and the current status of legal-socio-political documents such as the Mabo and Wik documents are discussed. An extended reference is made to the Waitangi document in the New Zealand context because it historically has a bearing on the Australian context.

In a fifth chapter a number of pointers and strategies towards a theology of change is proposed.

In a sixth concluding chapter a number of strategies, historical paradigms and considerations for change are proposed followed by some summarizing concluding comments.

1.2 The problem of method

The first part of the hypothesis of the dissertation entails the approach or method one applies to the analysis and evaluation of the impact and effect of the complex processes of myth, guilt, unawareness, oppression, biblical experience and people's experience of faith within the ambience of the arrival, settlement, life and ongoing history of the European colonizer on the psyche, life and behaviour of Australian indigenous Aboriginal inhabitants.

Initially my choice was to use an approach solely of a mixture of impulses from Liberation, Black and Feminist theologies in the global setting from the USA, Latin America and Africa, especially Southern Africa. I chose however to opt for a contextual-historical theological approach, method or perspective in which theology or a theory of faith is to be understood in the radical and differentiated sense as dealing with the socio-ethical experiences of human life and society. I came to the conclusion during my research that the problem I want to address is

so vast that I had to define it in a way that is manageable in terms of the scope of this dissertation.

Liberation theology as it has been expounded in Latin America, Black theology expounded in the USA and Southern Africa and Feminist theology in various parts of the world set the scene too narrowly. While I admit that the latter is too narrow I do not want to revert to the traditional mainline theological paradigm that God is the 'object' of theology. The traditional mainline theological paradigm in the world is in a crisis whether it may be of the traditional, orthodox, white, black or liberation theological sort. The main problems of these theologies are multiple.

First they could never answer the question of the name: theology. A theory of faith as I have stated in the first section deals with God, human life and the cosmic world. Theology through history struggled with the question whether theology has to do with God or human beings or the physical and societal environment. In theological enterprises this question has never been answered adequately.

The terms *theologia*, *theologos*, *theologein* and *theologikos* do not appear in the Greek New Testament. The classic Greek philosophers used the word *theologia* to indicate the views of the gods of the poets in their description of myths. A theoretical discipline named theology did not form part of the classical Greek and Roman societal codes, modes and way of life. In the era of early Christianity, the term 'theology' was used by Greek and Roman classical philosophers to indicate the views of the gods on the mythology of the poets and the cults of the *Caesars* (kings) as gods in Asia Minor which were known as *theologoi* or gods (Kattenbusch 1930:161-205). This explains the reluctance of the early Christians to use the word 'theology'. They could not speak about something such 'theology' when the *Caesars* and kings were called gods.

From the third century AD, the term 'theology' was used by Christians within the realm of the church to describe something like a 'doctrine of God' as a Christian church doctrine alongside other societal views of that time (Kattenbusch 1930:39). I am certainly not against the use of the term 'theology'. I do not want to return to the reluctance of the early Christians to use the term theology, since the subsequent history of nearly eighteen centuries of Church and Christian history play a significant role in our experience. Hundreds of types

of theologies have emerged and developed over the centuries, and in this dissertation I acknowledge the many types of theologies as part of an overarching paradigm of the theological business in the world.

The second problem I incur with the mainline and other theological views of reality is that ‘theologians’ analyze and evaluate a societal context and then add God to the analysis and evaluation as if God is an appendix to that context. This is then what is called a theological perspective. The traditional idea of adding God to a socio-ethical analysis and evaluation of something is unacceptable in the approach, method and perspective I am taking in this dissertation.

The problem of theology as an enterprise that has mainly to do with God, has been reverted in the modern period with the idea that a person can describe academically and objectively how other people can believe in God, or a god or something great as an ‘objective, neutral and unbiased’ ‘being’ of this world. In Religious Studies, Science of Religion or what the Unisa theoreticians of faith call Religiology many academics usually arrange their academic experiences of other people’s faith, beliefs, religions and religious experiences into ‘neutral, objective and scientific’ views of religion and religions. My view of the scientific approach to religions and religious experience boils down to an academic debate and discussion between academics, mainly reading learned papers to one another mainly to advance their own cause of being ‘neutral, objective and scientific’ about religions and religious experience.

Theology in history espouses the idea of faith and religious ‘commitment’ and Religious Studies in the many forms that it take during modernity expresses the idea of a ‘neutral, objective and scientific’ stance towards religions and religious experience.

In my stance of a contextual-historical approach that is making an attempt to go beyond the ‘theological’ and the ‘religious studies’ paradigm I do not pretend to solve the problem at hand. What I want to solve is, if that is however possible, is to create an awareness of the so called Australian Aboriginal problem.

1.3 The Australian context

In my approach towards the description, evaluation and criticism of the Australian Aboriginal problem I chose concrete and direct impulses from

Liberation theology in Latin America, Black theology from Southern Africa and worldwide Feminist theology as well as from the continuing debate and discussion of African theology.

While some theologians, scientists of religion and theorists of faith may argue that black and white theology is currently in a crisis, I am positing the notion that all theology is globally in a crisis. The question is why? Theology tends to present itself in a super-fashion, namely in a supernatural and super-historical fashion. It means that theology presents itself either in a supra-natural or supra-historical way. What I try to do is attempting a theology or a theory of faith that goes beyond the many supra-natural and the supra-historical theological approaches.

What has to be developed is a theory of faith or a theology that radically and differentially expresses people's everyday beliefs in their historical and contextual belief in a specific and particular social setting and context. The human condition of faith or belief as an access point towards the many fields of human experiences of thinking, feelings, imagination, loving, verbalising, etc. is from my perspective of faith and the patterns of faith or a theory of faith in Australian society strongly carried by Liberation, Black and Feminist theologies.

What I present in this dissertation is not a form of apologetics in the mould of a study of theological methodology but an attempt to come to grips with the Australian context in the perspective of faith and belief that has a societal and experiential basis.

1.4 The cultural approach

The second problem concerns the type of cultural studies I am using in this dissertation. Cultural studies or the historical problem can be formulated in three ways.

Firstly, it is not possible to go beyond the layers of present cultural mixtures of the Australian society to a situation where the pure Aboriginal culture and mindset presents itself as pristine without the baggage of European colonization. One cannot go back in time beyond the cultural colonization and oppression by Europeans. What we have of Aboriginal culture is mixed into the history of Australian society of the past 200 years. A cultural approach that wants to go

back in time to unearth the real and genuine Aboriginal culture and experience seems to me antiquarian. Such an approach pretends to have direct access to the real roots or pristine archetypal positions of a culture which is no longer part of us and to which we have only indirect access. Indirect access of archetypes of any culture is all that we have in the sense of the well-known Swiss thinker and psychologist Carl Jung (1970).

Secondly, it is not possible to make random statements about Aboriginal culture and experience and European colonization and oppression in Australia with the sole purpose of expressing fragmented statements of propagandistic value. This may be an option but my responsibility and accountability towards the academic community, the present Aboriginal community and the European community in Australia rules this out as not being responsible and accountable.

Thirdly, it seems possible to evaluate and analyze the problem of the myth of a guiltless (white) society from a perspective of faith and belief that is contextually and historically grounded in the Australian society and is culturally, socially and ethically relevant to this society.

My decision to make use of such an approach has certain qualifications:

In this approach I tackle, firstly, Australian society within the ambience of global history and experience on the idea of a myth of a guiltless society on Aboriginal history and experience from a perspective of non-traditional theology or a theory of faith. My approach of theology or theory of faith is heavily loaded with clues, cues and hues from Liberation, Black and Feminist theologies all over the world. The basic reason for inserting global clues, cues and hues into Australian society is that Australian society and its history is part of the global experiences and history of myth, guilt, unawareness, liberation, oppression, experience of the Bible and people's experience of faith and belief.

Secondly, I want to expound how the historical and the contextual dimensions come together in a theology of liberation or theoretical faith patterning of liberation. In the modern era (1600-2000) a huge division has been made between the historical and the contextual present or to say it in similar terms, between the 'historical' past and the 'phenomenological' (contextual) present. This division boils down to the well-known distinction of 'time' and 'space' that took up many hours of philosophical and theological thinking and many

pages of philosophical and theological writings in the modern era. Another way of stating this division is to say that modern people make a strong distinction between statements of the ‘now and the then’ and the ‘here and the there’ of texts, theories, events and human doings.

In the approach in use here the historical and contextual dimensions are intermingled and they intersperse each other. On the one hand the approach is in search of archetypal past, stereotypical present and telo-typical future clues, cues and hues of both Australian Aboriginal and European culture. On the other hand the contextual cum ‘phenomenological’ aspect of my approach means a criss-cross portrayal of present Aboriginal and Australian European experiences.

The emphasis on the axis of the ideas of historical and contextual may sound complicated and even mysterious to many modern readers. I however intend throughout the study to adhere closely to the point of departure of the intermingling and interspersing of the ‘historical’ and the ‘contextual’ on what I want to call the Australian problem of the myth of a guiltless society.

1.5 Contextual theologies

In this section I want to recap the clues, cues and hues or impulses drawn from different theologies or theories of faith from all over the world that are intermingling and interspersing Australian society. The approach in this study is of a contextual-historical nature. Briefly defined, it incorporates socio-ethical and contextual-historical perspectives on people’s existential experiences of oppression. What this entails are the following.

1.5.1 Liberation, Black and Feminist theologies as contextual theologies

Liberation, Black and Feminist theologies are those streams or trends in the broad field of theology that seek to apply the liberating dimensions of the Gospel to society and attempt to highlight the inequities in the past and the present within a society.

While there are some differences between liberation and black theologies, because of the different contexts in which they emerged, there are sufficient overlapping to justify the approach used in this study. One can therefore also ask what is the common ground between these theologies?

First, these theologies are contextual theologies that may not be considered to be a-contextual and seen to be out of touch or even out of harmony with the existential or experiential existence of people in any society, especially oppressive societies in which people are operating with mindsets in which they claim to be unaware of the damage done by their oppression. Societal liberation and the knowledge there-of is another common feature of these theologies. Furthermore, the knowledge produced in these theologies is knowledge produced in the context of application. This is the micro-context. This does not preclude the use of impulses from other experiential macro-contexts globally in the Australian scenario. The term ‘overlapping’ I used above is precisely the guiding idea which carries this study. I want to extract from Liberation, Black and Feminist Theologies a differential approach towards the oppressor/oppressed continuum.

Being an oppressor and being oppressed does not have one face in society. Hopkins in his comparative study of various liberative, black and feminist theologies in his book *Black Theology- USA and South Africa* provides insightful comment when he quotes Ron Karenga who says “The fact that we are Black is our ultimate reality. We were Black before we were born” and therefore our task “...was to pursue blackness- “to Think Black, Talk Black, Act Black, Create Black, Buy Black, Vote Black, and live Black”(1990:14) In this book Karenga therefore says “...to go back to tradition, is the first step forward” (ibid:14)

In this same continuum, a feminist view is expressed by Elizabeth Fiorenza in *Bread not Stone* when she says in the Introduction “Feminist theology begins with the experiences of women, of women church. In our struggle for self-identity, survival and liberation in a patriarchal society and church, Christian women have found that the Bible has been used as a weapon against us but at the same time it has been a source for courage, hope, and commitment in this struggle”(1984:x)

Such a view reveals that male and female or men and women experience oppression in their own and different ways that needs to be taken into account in understanding oppression.

This is necessary since oppression takes on various forms or disguises in its quest for dominance so that a broad awareness is needed to combat its

multifarious existence. Liberation Theology presents me with a good theological analysis of class domination, while black theology provides me with a good analysis of racist oppression in a specific society. Feminist/womanist theology's challenges towards sexism gives me access to the micro(Australian) and macro(global) contexts on the oppression of women.

These contextual theologies seek to think through thoroughly the relevance of the gospel for people disadvantaged in a society and whom that society has marginalized in its class (economic) race and sex dominated structures. The fact that the victims of oppression almost always live a deprived and powerless existence in the midst or alongside the affluence and prosperity of the oppressor who exercises his power to develop and maintain such disparity, feeds and affirms my notion of the oppressors' guilt.

1.5.2 Liberation, Black and Feminist theologies as historical theologies

Briefly defined, these respective theologies use their particular perspectives to define their peculiar locum in historical context. One may not come to the conclusion that Liberation, Black and Feminist theologies are a-historical. In some instances the accusation has been launched that these theologies do not take the historical development of the past 200 years into account. Those who have slight information of these theologies know that the historical progress or regress of past centuries were taken up by these theologies in their analysis as a matter of urgency. They took the time to describe and evaluate past contexts specifically with the intention of producing reliable analysis of the types of oppression and oppressed people in societies.

In the book *We are one Voice*, Dwight Hopkins refers to Cornel West in his Introduction, who discusses social analysis when he says "West responds to three levels – the normative, social analysis, and praxis. But it is on the second level, social analysis, that he unravels the complexities and multi-layered reality of black oppression. West weaves together various social evils of exploitation(i.e., capitalist economics), domination(i.e, bureaucracies), repression(i.e., violence of the state), and subjugation(i.e., racism and sexism) Drawing on Marx, Weber, Foucault, Garvey (as well as Malcolm X) West continues to press black theology to take seriously the theoretical and practical import of prophetic analytical tools" (1989: xiv)

This indicates some of the various perspectives that often come into focus for analysis in these theologies.

Another example used by Hopkins in the same book, is Cecil Ngcokovane whom he says "...calls for a turn to and deepening of content, methodology and conceptual tools of analysis. Emphasizing the centrality of black labour in a constructive black theology," (ibid : xiii)

This displays a common view among liberation, black and feminist theologians to use social analysis as a tool for doing theology in an oppressive society.

Different liberation theologians may emphasize different aspects of oppression but all have the goal of the liberation of oppressed communities in common.

The Black African perspective comes from Jean-Marc Ela who in *My Faith as an African* says "We must deal with down to earth questions, and get back to ground level where the Kingdom of God is built day by day" for the heart of the Christian message is justice, peace and freedom.(1990: 91).

Ela then also says "We must get involved in this experience and use it as our starting-point for a radical critique of all that is happening before our eyes"(1990: 91)The poor are reclaiming the Word of God to change those structures that are inconsistent and incompatible with God's will. This he also states is happening "...in the midst of the plundering of the Third World,(and) the destruction of its cultures..."(ibid:91) Oppression takes on different forms and faces in different places but its analysis and destruction has the liberation of its victims as its goal.

These theologies take history seriously because, to use the words of Gustavo Gutierrez "God reveals himself in the history of the people that believed and hoped in him – and this leads us to rethink his word from the viewpoint of our own history" (1983: 4). And because our faith historical reflection includes the Christ of faith and history, our approach will also be Christological as it will be Christo-centric. Again Gutierrez says this "...faith does not arise out of the affirmation of a pre-historical (and therefore a-historical) mythical occurrence" but "Biblical faith means knowing history and believing in the God who reveals himself in it" (1983: 5)

1.5.3 Liberation, Black and Feminist Theologies as Theologies concerned with People's Existential Experience in the Societal sense of the word.

Briefly defined, these theologies drawing directly on people's societal experience are better adept and able to analyse this experience and understand the intricacies operating within it and are thus in a better position to respond to it. Gutierrez therefore says the meaning Yahweh's intervention in history "is not to demonstrate his power, but to liberate and make justice reign" (1983:7) The intervention of Yahweh in the existential experience of people is what these theologies take seriously and also to influence and formulate their own involvement and understanding of the situation of poverty and oppression.

When God's liberating acts are salvific, then we cannot devise theologies that formulate salvation that is not liberating. Furthermore, when Yahweh's intervention in the affairs of humanity is in such profound ways that it has an effect in social, political, economic, cultural, religious and other dimensions, then we cannot simply and simplistically reduce that to individualistic, pietistic and extreme spiritual views on salvation. Salvation is not as Karl Marx has had us believe a promise for the next life or "That religion (is) the opiate of the people or the "sigh of the oppressed creature" as Cone quotes Marx in *Speaking the Truth* (1986:33).

The overlapping of Liberation, Black and Feminist theologies with the method of social analysis of Karl Marx (1986:100.Cone, *My Soul Looks Back*) brought me to the idea that when one presses the 'class button' in an analysis, one has to take the 'race button' into account. The same is true when one presses the 'gender button' the other two plays a significant role. I also acknowledge that such an approach is very difficult to execute, my differential mind on the different ways of oppression and being oppressed are the best way out for this study though. Martyn Newman says "Western academic theology has been criticized by liberation theology for its abstractness – its tendency to engage in theological reflection without any reference to concrete situations and problems" (1990: 72)

Liberation, Black and Feminist theologies can be said to be engaging theologies. Engaging here entails involvement in the socio-political-economic field of human experience through the process of analysis, prophetic speech and active engagement. This perspective is different to what Newman calls 'Western Academic Theology' (ibid: 72). In a sense one can say that Western Academic Theology is dispassionate, concerned mainly with tradition.

In dealing with this religious (church) and theological involvement with the existential experience of people, Lewis Baldwin in *There is a Balm in Gilead* quotes Martin Luther King who says “Religion deals with both earth and heaven, time and eternity. Religion operates not only on the vertical plain but also on the horizontal. It seeks not only to integrate men with God but to integrate men with men and each man with himself. This means at bottom, that the Christian Gospel is a two-way road. On the one hand it seeks to change the souls of men, and thereby unite them with God; on the other hand it seeks to change the environmental conditions of men so that the soul will have a chance after it is changed. Any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of men and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social conditions that cripple them is a dry as dust religion. This kind of religion is seen by Marxists as an opiate of the people” (1991: 181).

This view expressed by Martin Luther King captures the essence of most Liberation theologies that seek to become engaged in and also grows out of a situation of participation, reflection and response with the intent of changing the conditions of oppression. Liberation theologies by its very approach and method of engagement can make it controversial, suspicious and contentious. It cannot remain dispassionate or only concerned with tradition but creates new perspectives on a traditional status quo that wants to keep things in the grip of unchangeable yokes.

1.5.4 Liberation, Black and Feminist Theologies and the Gospel.

In many instances in the past the phrase ‘the Gospel’ was used as a colonialist composite term which camouflaged the multifarious intentions of the colonizer. On the one hand it was used to subdue the colonized, while it elevated the status and positions of the colonizer. While it may have been used and presented as bringing the light of ‘the Gospel’ to the new world, it interpreted and presented that light as obedience and subservience to the colonizer, as being equal to being obedient and subservient to God. In many ways the old saying that ‘the missionary paved the way for the merchant and the military, the police and the politician’ is true.

The phrase ‘the Gospel’ is to my mind a package of a multifarious nature. Because Liberation, Black and Feminist theologies sees ‘the Gospel’ as

liberating from class and sexual oppression which is an emphasis on only part of the multifarious problem of being an oppressor and being oppressed.

I therefore draw only partially on these theologies for the analysis in this study.

1.5.5 A multifarious approach

Briefly stated this is a contextual-historical approach with multiple perspectives that is uppermost in my mind with contributions from Black, Feminist and Liberation Theologies to expose, analyze and understand the problem of unawareness of race, gender and class oppression in the Australian society.

The multifarious approach with significant impulses from other contextual theologies would contribute towards our understanding and insights of our contextual and existential situation and thereby assisting through our analysis of finding and contributing towards better outcomes in our social situation for this and future generations. The impact and input of these theologies should not be underestimated, yet in a modest way, they can also contribute towards altering the course of history in a nation from conflict to resolution and from injustice to the bright plains of justice for all.

As this never comes easy, incisive thinking and fearless analysis is required to ensure a post revolutionary process which contains the seeds of justice for subsequent generations to grow in a society that ensures and guarantees respect and acceptance of the dignity and worth of all people as creatures created in the image of God.

Pious lip-service to these only entrenches suspicion and injustice which belongs to the old order and is often hard to shed by people who are not only set in their old ways, but are often unwilling or unable to embrace the new simply out of fear for the new. Hard and harsh as this may sound, Pharaoh and his men could not face or embrace a new future and their corpses were seen on the sea shore.

This brings us to contextual theology's process of analysis that will be examined in the next section.

1.5.6 Provisional discussion of the problems of myth, guilt, unawareness, oppression and alienation

The fact of the myth, which will be expanded upon in chapter three, exists because people in this country refuses to acknowledge their behaviour towards Aborigines have been so atrocious, demeaning and violent, that the national psyche of Australia seems unable or unwilling to admit to its responsibility towards Aborigines in this regard.

Since myth is an untrue or fictional story, this mythical approach to the country's bloody past has been developed and maintained by successive generations to present an image of the past that appears less violent, aggressive and inhumane, and where that is not possible, to justify white action against Aborigines in language that present whites as heroes and blacks as villains.

The truth is often suppressed and withheld in an attempt to present as being innocent, loving and caring and blacks as being vulgar, bloodthirsty and violent. Henry Reynolds in his book entitled *Why Weren't We Told?* describes such events taking place when he says in the early years a senior Brisbane official said "...the Aborigines were: a race of bloodthirsty miscreants who believed in no God, in any spiritual power, who cannot even trust each other in their domestic intercourse and who are enemies to all men until fear enforces submission" (1999: 86).

Whites have the habit of always seeing themselves as victims and therefore their action and behaviour toward Aborigines, no matter what that action was, was seen as necessary and justified action. Having stolen the land of the Aborigines, whites always felt that they now had to defend that stolen land, even if that meant killing, maiming, hunting Aborigines like animals, and eliminating them. Reynolds gives another description of such events which creates guilt when he says about whites "The pioneer squatters adopted a course of action known as 'keeping them out', which involved never allowing the Aborigines on their stations: 'consequently they were hunted by anyone if seen in open country, and driven away or shot down when caught out of the scrub and broken ground'. This policy...was unavoidable, and quite necessary under the existing circumstances" (1999:87) Such action, and worse behaviour, was quite common, and this creates guilt in everyone involved. The Bible says in Exodus 20 verse 15 "You shall not steal" and those who do, individuals or nations, shall carry the consequences and pay the price in guilt as the same chapter verse 5 says "... for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for

the sin of the fathers to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me...”.

This punishment extends for four generations after each successive generation that persists with this sin. Furthermore, the sin of land theft, and in the Australian context, continent theft, was done in the name of God, king and for Britain. This is a grave abuse and misuse of God’s Name who says in Exodus 20 verse 7 “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name”. This practice of the misuse of God’s name in this process has been persistent and most people thought it was quite right and that it made white behaviour toward the land and Aborigines quite acceptable and justified. Such behaviour is then denied or described in glowing justifiable terms as if the reality is just a myth.

Another chilling account of white atrocities against blacks are provided by Reynolds who says “...One mob of fourteen he rounded up, another mob of nine, and a last mob of eight, he succeeded with his troopers in shooting. In the latter lot there was one black who would not die after receiving eighteen or twenty bullets, but a trooper speedily put an end to his existence by smashing his skull...Everybody in the district is delighted with the wholesale slaughter dealt out by the native police, and thank Mr Uhr for his energy in ridding the district of fifty nine (59) my alls” (1999: 87)(pronounce males).As if this event was not enough it was then further said by a resident of the area “... We know that our town at least had its foundations cemented in blood” (ibid: 87).

Such arrogant, senseless and mindless behaviour appears to have been commonplace in that area and that behaviour was done by Christians who hold the bible dear which says “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20 v 13). This and similar behaviour throughout the country by whites against blacks, which are discussed in chapter three, are denied by many and therefore creates the myth of innocence and unawareness, establishes guilt and responsibility and persists in oppression, alienation and unawareness.

Of this unawareness Reynolds laments “I ...wondered how it was that I didn’t know, why I hadn’t been told in my schooling, why nothing I had read in the general histories had prepared me for the realities of pioneer settlement. Could this be how the frontier was everywhere?” (1999: 88).

This affirmation by Reynolds that this brutal and violent behaviour by the white settlers towards the black indigenes were suppressed, withheld or in some way distorted is indicative of the more widespread unawareness in the white community of their barbaric treatment of blacks.

Of this guiltlessness, pseudo-innocence or unawareness Allan Boesak says “It effectively blocks all awareness and therefore the sense of responsibility necessary to confront the other as a human being. This leads to an inability to repent which in its turn makes genuine reconciliation impossible” (1976: 4).

This attitude of guiltlessness pretends that nothing is wrong and that there is no need to make confession of any guilt, wrongdoing or error.

The general attitude is that one should just embrace in ‘brotherly love’ and continue life and embrace the future as if the past and its horrors either did not happen, has no effect and is therefore of no consequence. Such cheap reconciliation becomes superficial, ineffective and meaningless. It tries to sooth over the guilt of the perpetrator while attracting the approval of the victim and creates a façade of reconciliation that does not address or remedy the problems of both parties.

White guilt will therefore still remain. This ever present guilt among white people sadly still continues to guide and influence their behaviour towards blacks. Continuing to deny that they stole this continent will mean that their guilt will remain and continue and this in turn feeds their oppression of and alienation from black people in Australia. This denial by the whites that they are and has historically been killers, liars and destroyers of a people, a black people will therefore continue to feed their guilt on this matter until there is a willingness, an honesty and a desire to make a total admission of guilt in these matters, as did Zacchaeus in his encounter with Jesus.(Luke 19).

Failing to do this, their continued oppression of blacks as well as their alienation from them will remain as a sad and tragic hallmark of their invasion of this continent, and their dreadful treatment of its people. Because of their continued disregard of Aborigines, this situation is likely to continue for some time yet. Again Reynolds observes “Writing in 1970, Charles Rowley observed that there were still historians who regarded Aboriginal affairs ‘as not very important in the development of the Australian nation’. In some university departments there were scholars who thought there was ‘something vaguely disreputable about

such studies” (ibid: 90).

Such honest admissions by a historian affirms the common view that Australian history reflects poorly on white behaviour towards Aborigines and the best way of dealing with it, was to ignore it, deny it or distort it. Pursuing the high moral ground in this matter by admitting their guilt was seemingly never seen as an option. Their dreadful and violent role in the past must never therefore be considered in this light. The past must be forgotten and so provide a ‘clean slate’ for the future.

Therefore, for white people moving into the future almost always meant their future, their needs, their security, they must be consulted, they must participate, they must share and receive and benefit. The future is always talked about in white terms, white expectations, white needs and white benefits. Rarely if ever there is any serious talk of including any blacks in any such future talk.

Even the Commission for the Future report ‘Our Common Future-Australian Edition’ says “Principle 1 of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration said that ‘Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and wellbeing’ (1990: 374).

This recognition is that humans are dependent on the environment as they are on one another and therefore have the right to share and participate in the decision-making which has an effect on them and their environment. While this report considers mainly the future of the environment and how it affects everybody, it acknowledges people have been adversely affected in the past through lack of consultation. It states “... progress will also be facilitated by recognition of, for example, the right of individuals to know and have access to current information on the state of the environment and natural resources, the right to be consulted and to participate in decision making on activities likely to have a significant effect on the environment and the right to legal remedies and redress for those whose health or environment has been or may be seriously affected” (ibid: 374). This Australian Edition science report acknowledges that many people dependent on the land may have been adversely affected by land grabbing, manipulation, greed etc. in the past and may have to be compensated if a sustainable future is to be had by all.

In the Australian context, such compensation for past errors, inclusion for consultation and participation for the future and consideration of land and environmental needs would certainly go a long way to contributing towards the easing of the guilt of the whites in this regard.

Lessons must be learnt from the past so as not to repeat them in the future and that would require mountains of courage, divine honesty and generous portions of faith, hope and love. A willingness to build a truly common future inclusive of all people and considerate of their needs would certainly be a great asset in undoing the myth of terra nullius, the guilt of theft and murder, the unawareness or ignoring of these events and the continuation of oppression and alienation. The faith required to liberate the nation of a lingering and nagging conscience would be considered next albeit very briefly.

1.5.7 Liberation Theology and a liberative theory of faith

To have faith in God, is to believe in the Liberator God who wants to liberate his people from oppression. Jesus' message of salvation is one of liberation in the same way as Moses liberated the Hebrews from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 14 v 8). This means they marched out boldly from Egypt as God liberated them. This is the message of the Gospel. This is why Allan Boesak says in *Farewell to Innocence* "...that liberation is not only "part of" the gospel, or "consistent with" the gospel; it is the content and framework of the gospel of Jesus Christ". (1976: 9).

This clear description by Boesak makes it obvious that the gospel cannot simply be reduced or limited to only individual, pietistic or otherworldly categories of salvation. This becomes more self evident when Moses who was the liberator first, before he was the law-giver, says "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him". (Deut: 18v 15) This is affirmed by both Jesus and Peter in the Gospels.

Jesus says the Scriptures testifies about him and that Moses wrote about him saying "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me" (Jn 5 v 39, 46). Peter states this just as clearly in Acts 3 v 22 when he says "For Moses said: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people: you must listen to everything he tells you".

It is therefore self-evident that Jesus would be the liberator of the oppressed in this world in the same way as Moses was the liberator of the poor slave Hebrews

in Egypt.

Not to see the liberating effect of the Gospels is therefore to ignore the essence of the Gospels. To preach the message of the gospels is therefore then to preach liberation to oppressed people. To preach liberation is to use prophetic speech. To be prophetic means to side with the victims of society and to speak/bring Gods word of liberation to them. This also means that such prophetic speech would be Gods' word against the oppressor. This word may even be expressed in anger and in disgust. James Cone says in *Black Theology and Black Power* "The prophets certainly spoke in anger, and there is some evidence that Jesus got angry.

It may be that the importance of any study in the area of morality or religion is determined in part by the emotion expressed. It seems that one weakness of most theological works is their "coolness" in the investigation of an idea" (1989:3).

This liberative word of God often expressed in anger and in disgust is to encourage oppressed people to struggle with God for their liberation. This is why Cone says that preachers must make it "...clear that the God of Moses and of Jesus makes an unqualified solidarity with the victims, empowering them to fight against injustice" (1989: ix). To have faith in God is to have faith in the liberation of the oppressed.

Since God worked for the liberation of the Hebrews through Moses, so it must be clear that God's salvation plan is the liberation of people through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus liberating oppressed people in the same way as Moses liberated oppressed people, is the message of the Gospels. To oppress people is to reduce them to non-beings. To oppress them is also to keep them in subjugation and in subservience. This becomes problematic when the person who oppresses you claims to serve the same God as the oppressed person. The oppressed person finds themselves in a world that wants to reduce their personhood and wants to annihilate them. This is particularly complex when one's oppressor confesses allegiance to the same God, whom the oppressed person considers as a liberator God.

This is why Cone also asks "How should I respond to a world which defines me as a non-person?" (1989: 11). To affirm one's dignity and to assert one's

freedom means to wage a struggle against the oppressor. Freedom is never freely given by the oppressor. It must be demanded by the oppressed. Freedom therefore comes only in struggle. The response of a person that is defined as a non-person in this world is to struggle against it. That struggle may lead to freedom or it may lead to death. Therefore no neutrality should be tolerated. Jesus is also very clear on this matter when he says ‘He who is not with me, is against me...’ (Luke 11 v 23).

To achieve human dignity, a struggle must be waged against those who denies one’s dignity and personhood. Passive acceptance or a neutral blasé approach to indignity should therefore also not be tolerated. Engagement on the side of the victim of indignity must be waged. This engagement would be expressing one’s faith in a liberator God and displays engagement against a world that denies one’s personhood and human worth. This is why Gustavo Gutierrez can say “... to love Yahweh is to do justice to the poor and oppressed” (1988: 110). This also means that not to do justice to the poor is not to know Yahweh. The confirmation of one’s love for Yahweh is to do justice to the poor and therefore failing to do justice also affirms that one does not love or know God, irrespective of how many times or how loud one may want to say it. This is why Gutierrez can add saying “The God of Biblical revelation is known through inter-human justice. When justice does not exist, God is not known; God is absent” (ibid: 111).

The knowledge of God and doing justice therefore goes hand in glove. To claim knowledge or love of God and not to do justice is to be a liar (1 Jn.4v20). It is often more convenient to claim a love of God than it is to do justice and to engage in struggle for justice for the poor. To express love for God often leave one feeling content, comfortable and caring but to engage in struggle for justice can become extremely disconcerting, disruptive and demeaning. Not to engage in such struggle means not to know God.

Again Gutierrez says “We find the Lord in our encounters with others, especially the poor, marginalised and exploited ones. An act of love towards them is an act of love towards God”(1988:115). Our love for God therefore finds its concrete meaning in our love for one another. Those therefore who oppress others, even if they claim a faith in God, are liars. Oppressive behaviour towards others is incompatible with love for God or for one’s neighbour. In fact Gutierrez states categorically “...to oppress the poor is to offend God; to know

God is to work justice among human beings” (ibid: 168).

When we talk about God in this study we are referring to the Liberator God of Jesus and of Moses who seeks to liberate oppressed people. When we talk about oppression and oppressed people we refer to those people who are poor because of their oppression by others in that society and are the victims of such injustices that deprive them of any meaningful and humane existence.

Such poverty and oppression makes it inconsistent with the Christian faith and with the Gospels and are to be denounced and stood against with the intent of dismantling and eliminating it.

It is necessary to do this, because to use the words of John De Gruchy in the introduction to his book *Cry Justice* when he says “If the Christian life is understood from the perspective of the Kingdom of God, then it embraces the whole of life and reality. Life can no longer be conceived as split into the sacred and profane as though part of life belonged to God and the rest to some other realm or power” (1986: 27). One cannot separate spirituality from concrete reality as if living in two separate worlds that has no relation to one another or has nothing to say to each other. Instead both such worlds are indeed one world that is intimately intertwined and interrelated. Therefore De Gruchy says “The separation of piety from life in the world no longer becomes tenable. For the Christian, all life is under the reign of God in Christ, whether this is acknowledged or not” (Ibid: 27).

This is the theory of faith we are talking about in this study. A faith that sees no dualism in life, and that does not separate the physical from the spiritual in the sense of it maintaining an almost hostile existence towards one another.

The change and renewal we have in mind here therefore includes all of one’s existence, experience and existential life. This experience Boganjalo Goba describes in *Cry Justice* as “The conversion experience...that...is a change that brings about healing and liberation because it involves the freeing of soul, body and mind from the oppressive structures of guilt and alienation...therefore...Healing thus means undergoing deep social and spiritual conversion”(ibid: 103).

To achieve such change through conversion of the spiritual and social order requires suffering, sacrifice and sorrowful experiences to gain the goals of

democracy, freedom and humanity. This is also the road of the Cross of Christ. To achieve such noble goals for a community requires initiative and sacrifice as Albert Luthuli says “It is inevitable that in working for Freedom some individuals and some families must take the lead and suffer: the Road to Freedom is via the Cross. Mayibuye! Afrika!” (1986:140)

Such sacrificial suffering that Albert Luthuli is talking about has always been the hallmark of struggle against injustice in an attempt to achieve wholeness. The road of the Cross of Christ has never been an easy road and indeed it was never meant to be easy.

When we talk about suffering in this study we are referring to the type of suffering that includes the body and the spirit. Often emotional suffering can be much more severe, painful and traumatizing than physical scars one may experience. Of course physical pain and suffering is hard to endure and can be equally disruptive of one’s life. Loss of comfort, possessions, security, income, loved one’s etc. can leave painful and lasting scars in a person.

All this and much more causes suffering. Christians are therefore also not immune to suffering.

At times it may appear that Christians are targeted for suffering precisely because they are Christians. This can be because of the stand many take against the powers and principalities of injustice and oppression. One such example is given by Trevor Huddleston in his book *Naught for your comfort* when he describes the experiences of a young Oliver Tambo who as a student in South Africa was required by the university authorities to act (i.e. sign a pledge) against his faith . He (Tambo) says “I *knew* I could not sign that pledge. It demanded something from me that I could not give. It would have killed my religion stone dead – an agreement with God, written and signed? I could not do it!” Oliver told the Warden of his decision and was immediately expelled. His expulsion meant... the end of his ambitions” (1974:106).

Such traumatic experiences constitute suffering since it can and does defeat one’s goal of carving a professional career for oneself. This type of suffering can cause life long trauma and it does not sidestep Christians. In fact Huddleston says “It would be hard to find a more devoted churchman than Oliver Tambo” (1974: 107). Oppressors often select Christians to oppress more severely because some Christians tend to speak out more vocally against oppression. Of

course it is not just Christians who suffer oppression. Similar experiences to that of Tambo and many others would be referred to and cited in this study to illustrate suffering, oppression, faith, deprivation, guilt and especially in the last two chapters suggestions and paradigms would be presented as guidelines towards finding solutions to these and other problems.

The last two chapters would also point towards the future and how a collective effort by all parties concerned could carve out a brighter and better future that includes and represents more the values, expectations, hopes and dreams of all people who occupy this continent. These clues, views, hues and cues will display the general sentiment that exists within the Australian society.

These contributions would also be drawn from a broad spectrum of contextual and other sources to enrich and feed the possibilities that can be pursued towards a Theology of Liberation.

This now brings us to examine Liberation Theology and its contextuality in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LIBERATION, CONTEXTUALITY, ALIENATION, OPPRESSION AND THE BIBLE

2.1 Introduction

Allan Boesak says in *Farewell to Innocence* “Black Theology as a contextual theology is black people’s attempt to come to terms with their situation”. (1976: 124). In the same way Liberation Theology is the type of theology that seeks to understand the black situation of deprivation, oppression and need, and wants to interpret the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in the light of that need.

Boesak says further “The problem with traditional Christian Ethics is not only that the black situation has never been taken into account, but that the ethic arrived at, was based on a theology that did not in any way recognize the God of the oppressed. As a result, it was to say the least, inadequately equipped to deal with the realities of oppression and liberation”. (1976: 124).

The search for new ways of doing theology in an oppressive society means new and different paradigms, new and fresh perspectives must be sought, albeit difficult, radical and revolutionary. New meanings must be sought in the liberating work of Christ for the oppressed. Some of these matters are being discussed by Jose Bonino. In his book *Doing theology in a Revolutionary Situation* Jose Bonino quotes Segundo who says “Our language is so new”... “that to some it looks a travesty of the gospel”.(1975 :86). Bonino then says “While the new Latin American theology is deeply polemical, it is not isolationist”. (ibid: 86). In this new language new paradigms and perspectives are mentioned and as he says “...hopefully it will be possible to suggest their correspondence with old and fundamental theological questions and motifs”. (ibid :86). A new and fresh perspective means doing theology in an oppressive or revolutionary society would mean “...we cannot receive the theological interpretation coming from the rich world without suspecting it and, therefore, asking what kind of praxis it supports, reflects, or legitimizes” says Bonino. (ibid: 91). This perspective is self evidently clear in the parable of Jesus of the Rich man and Lazarus. While this is being referred to later, the parable does reveal that the Rich man did ignore Lazarus in his life as if Lazarus did not exist

or mattered to him at all (Luke 16). This attitude of the rich man is what Bonino has in mind when he talks of being suspicious of theology that comes from the rich world.

When new paradigms are being conceived or created, it happens says Bonino "...with analyzing a historical praxis which claims to be Christian. This critical analysis includes a number of operations, which are totally unknown to classical theology". (1975: 93). To understand an oppressive or revolutionary society that requires new paradigms its inherent structures and systems needs to be analyzed and classical theology does not provide the analyst with the necessary tools or means to do this.

Therefore Bonino says "It is in this sense that we incorporate the Marxist analysis of society". (ibid: 95). This approach becomes polemical and a source of criticism but Bonino continues saying "Our assumption of Marxism has nothing to do with a supposedly abstract or eternal theory or with dogmatic formulae"...but with a scientific analysis and a number of verifiable hypothesis" which "provide an adequate means to grasp our own historical situation".(ibid: 96).

In being true to the authentic Word of God therefore, it also has to be prophetic in its exclamation against prevailing inhumanity as were the Old Testament Prophets as Boesak quotes Labuschagne:

"The prophets were not confronted with individual sinners, but with the ideology of the nation whereby they were brought into conflict, not with individuals, but with a whole nation. The generality and radicality of their judgment must be understood not only to originate in a profound consciousness of sin, but also in the realization that they were fighting an ideology which, like all ideologies, can never be reformed, but has to be radically and totally destroyed" (1976 :122).

In doing this, old forms of worship have to be reformed, old structures have to be discarded and old systems have to be destroyed.

Many systems, structures and societies have been designed by whites, for whites and never intended to take into account the presence, needs, or participation of blacks who have always been left outside those processes. It is this exclusion that leads to the separation and alienation of Aborigines from the mainstream society in Australia that contributed to their oppression.

Because the mainstream white Australian society established a separate,

distinctive and peculiar society for themselves it was also intended and designed not only to exclude non-Europeans, but it was also intended to exterminate the indigenous people, albeit in a covert and subtle manner.

Doris Pilkington in her book *Follow the Rabbit – Proof fence* says regarding this systemic process of separation, exploitation and extermination “...all Aboriginal people were affected by the growth of the rural industry, either by expulsion from traditional lands, sexual exploitation of the women or by the criminal acts of murder and violence committed against them”. (1996: 19).

In another way Doris Pilkington, describing the experiences of some people in this systemic process, in this same book says “But what none of these girls realized was that their fate had already been decided by their new guardians, the Commissioners of the Native affairs Department. Sadly, in only a couple of weeks from then, Nora and Eva would find that instead of returning north as they hoped, they would be sent further south to work as domestics on dairy farms. This would also be their introduction to exploitation and deception;”...“As for returning home to their loved ones that would not happen for many, many years”. (ibid: 60). Such young people who were forcibly removed from their families and used as cheap labour or rather slaves, often died of such exploitation or of longing to see their family, which in many instances, were never to happen. The exploitation started, the oppression continued and the extermination persisted. While these two young girls are mentioned here by name, many others disappeared or died anonymously.

In a similar vein, Boory (Monty) Pryor tells of his brothers’ suffering as an Aboriginal person at the hands of white people when in his book *Maybe Tomorrow* he says “In the back of his mind, somehow he always knew that he too would have to endure the atrocities that happened to our people in the past” since “A lot of the white people he worked with in the film industry never knew of the harassment he had to face, being black. It became too much for him. And he hanged himself”. (1998: 3). Similar experiences of individuals or clans can be multiplied throughout the Aboriginal community since colonization. The separation of Aboriginal people from the European community was often designed to keep them out of sight and this added to their suffering and eventual extermination in many areas.

In her own way Peggy Brock in her book *Outback Ghettos* describe similar situations in her Introduction when she says “We battle ourselves we don’t want to be chased about from place to place...The minister don’t want us on the Mission station & from there he hunt us away...And when we are in Ceduna, they get the Policeman to hunt us away from there. We don’t know where to go they chase us like wild dingoes...”. (1993: 1). Then she cries out in despair

saying “Could you please come up here and see how we are kicked around. I am likely to be kicked off the [Copley] Common at any time. I am not the only aborigine receiving this treatment”. (1993: 1). This quote from a previous era reveals that poor treatment were the experience of Aborigines since very early days, even on mission stations. One could almost say especially on mission stations.

Every effort was being made to exclude Aborigines from white society. This exclusion was on every front of society i.e. social, political, academic, economic, sport, religious, cultural, legal etc. Despite having many talents many Aborigine sportspersons still experienced much opposition in practicing their chosen sport and advancing in it.

Colin Tatz is therefore right when he says in his book *Obstacle Race* “For Aborigines, most of these sports -, including the football codes – only became ‘available’ in the so-called civil rights period, in the era of liberation from special legislation and geographic confinement”. (1995: 18). He explains in great detail the struggle Aboriginal sportspersons had to endure to gain access to, recognition and acceptance in their chosen sport.

2.2 Alienation and denial

This type of treatment is true in many other areas of life for Aborigines even after the 1967 referendum which necessitated Aborigines being included on the national voters’ roll. The only reason there was such wide and strong support for the inclusion of Aborigines on the voters roll, was not that whites had suddenly fallen in love with Aborigines or had a strong sense of justice or altruism, but that the extension of the universal franchise to Aborigines would not make a difference to the outcome of elections and therefore significantly alter the lifestyle, politics or expectations of white society. Even after this inclusion, Aborigines had not felt any less alienated as they did before because it was merely a minor correction, almost two hundred years too late.

In referring to these matters, Peggy Brock states “Governmental policies and legislation towards Aborigines, influenced by similar attitudes, have controlled the lives of Aborigines since colonization. These policies and legislation have varied from colony to colony and State to State, but their impact on Aborigines has been very similar” (1993: 11). This separation and alienation was not just psychological but also legal or legislated separation or apartheid.

This Australian separation or apartheid was implemented by the church on the mission stations and the state in the broader community. Brock therefore says this legislation implementation before the 1967 referendum was always

designed to keep Aborigines separate from the white colonizers because of "... the refusal of Europeans to accept Aborigines as equals". (1993: 12). The whites often had a superior attitude towards collared persons considering themselves to be better than such people. Such an attitude added to the alienation of the races and made meaningful interpersonal relations between persons virtually impossible. Alienation between the races was therefore not only legal but also psychological. Brock also says "In Queensland a deliberate policy of 'dispersal' was adopted, which aimed to break up or disperse groups of Aborigines, but became an official euphemism for attacking and killing Aborigines"(1993:12). Such callous treatment of Aborigines at the hands of whites which was aided and abetted by legislation also significantly contributed towards the alienation of the races. Such attitudes could not nurture mutual respect and acceptance of people simply because they look different.

Proper and general development of Aborigines was denied (to) them and Brock says "Aborigines were segregated on reserves, their economic, social and sexual lives were strictly regulated and they were denied freedoms taken for granted by other Australians" (ibid: 12). These were common practices almost everywhere in the country and did not significantly improve until the 1970's. Even at that time the improvements were rather peace-meal and largely monetary rather than attitudinal improvements, important as that may have been.

Finally Brock says "The 1967 referendum also enabled Aborigines to be counted in the national census, acknowledging that they were part of the Australian population. These new federal powers were not fully utilized until the Whitlam Labor government came to office in 1972 and dramatically increased the budget for Aboriginal affairs" (ibid:12).

While this change of government improved certain circumstances for Aborigines, no significant change in public attitudes towards Aborigines occurred. While the Whitlam government may have had a vision to improve the lot of the Aborigines that view was not necessarily shared by the broader population since they did not remain in office very long.

Another vision was expressed by Sir Ronald Wilson who in the foreword of the book *Being Whitefella* describes a vision that some people expressed when he says "That vision is of:

A united Australia which values this land of ours, respects its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and which provides justice and equity for all". (1994:12).

While the expression of this vision is to be commended, it did little to crystallize the vision in society as Wilson says further "... (c) to date, there has

been no formal process of reconciliation between Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and other Australians; and (d) by the year 2001, the centenary of Federation, it is most desirable that there be such a reconciliation; and "...to address progressively Aboriginal disadvantage and aspirations in relation to land, housing, law and justice, cultural heritage, education, employment, health, infrastructure, economic development and any other relevant matters..." (1994:12,13).

Although similar lofty visions have been expressed by various persons in this country regarding the future of Australia in context of Aborigines, rarely have those visions been implemented or given life blood to and so alter the life circumstances of Aborigines or alter the course of the nation. Similarly, neither did the inclusion of Aborigines in the national census as human beings, necessarily guarantee better treatment for them as human beings, by non-Aborigines. It may be that it was done due to the spirit of civil rights that was sweeping the world at the time or the persistent demands from Aborigines and others or even the desire to soothe their own conscience and ease their guilt about the plight of the poor and oppressed in this country. The fact that Aborigines continue to demand their rights in this country to this day affirms that it is still being denied them.

This denial and alienation Wilson affirms continued to his day and has never seriously been corrected in any significant way. This alienation remains entrenched in Australian society, as Sir Ronald Wilson, President of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission as well as Deputy Chairperson of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation states "I believe that an important way to promote understanding, probably the best way, is to encourage the telling of stories. In the case of many Aboriginal people the stories are of a recent history largely concerned with suffering, humiliation and disadvantage". (1994: 15).

Storytelling within the Aboriginal custom and culture is intended to preserve and perpetuate their customs and culture. This includes their relationship with the land, from which they have been largely alienated and denied access to, to practice their customs and culture. This denial is designed to 'force' Aborigines to forget their past, their practices as well as their painful experiences with the white settlers.

The present Aboriginal population is "about 270,000 in all" and "There are almost as many members of the Returned Services League than there are Aboriginal people" and "That powerful lobby has a grand slogan: Lest We Forget. Curiously it's a maxim not allowed Aboriginal people who are forever urged to forget their past" says Graham Duncan in *Being Whitefella* (1994: 18).

This (RSL) league consists of present and former white soldiers who are by their slogan urged to never forget their fallen comrades, yet the Aborigines are constantly being tormented to forget their past.

This contradiction happens to this day, and this denial to the Aborigines perpetuates this contradiction. Whites always object when Blacks make certain advances for their rights. There seems to be the suspicion among whites that it reduces their own rights as Graham explains “The High Court’s 1992 decision to recognize native title released an ugly flood of invective myths mouldy with age, ancient hates springing from old-brain fears. It was a them-and-us response” so that “‘Native title’ became a ‘bundle of rights’ ”(1994:20).

Whenever Aborigines make some gains in various areas of their life, it always seems to be derided by the white population. Whites often want to stop black progress thinking that it reduces their own rights. This fear among whites that black progress impedes on their own rights will always feed their own guilt as it will maintain black disadvantage and rage.

Black alienation persisted, as did white guilt, with the perpetuation of the white Australia policy.

Again Colin Tatz states “In 1910 the Anglican bishops concluded that ‘if they are to make a real advance upon the path of civilization[they] must at the earliest stages of their development be kept apart from the white man’ , ‘even against their will’ was the view of the Protector Dr. W.E. Roth a few years earlier” (1995:45).

The church and particularly missionaries to the indigenous people did a great deal to discredit the Gospel and defeat the purpose of liberation by the treatment they meted out to blacks in the name of religion. It was clear that there was no intention of advancing the liberation of the people with statements like these.

Tatz, who does not lay claim to being a theologian, displays greater Christian insight and understanding than Samuel Marsden when he says “Samuel Marsden, chaplain of the New South Wales colony in 1825, saw Aborigines as ‘degraded tribes’, seeming, ‘to have all they wished for, Idleness and Independence’. The much admired Lord Abbot Dom Salvado, a founding father of New Norcia mission in Western Australia described them as “these poor natives, so hideous to look at...”. His successor, Abbot Fulgentius Torres, saw their ‘virgin state’ as one of savagery’. The following virulent phrases came from Christian lips and Christian pens: ‘children of Satan’ , ‘vice-hardened’ , ‘loathsome’ , ‘degraded’ , ‘depraved’ , ‘wicked’ , ‘repulsive-looking’ , ‘treacherous’ , ‘cruel’ , and ‘miserable’.

Pastor Kaibel defended the dormitory system at Hermannsburg because of the

- low intellectual status of the natives[and]...his utter
- rottenness in things sexual...no white man has any conception, not even the most wicked white, what depths of infamy these blacks are stooped in". (1995: 45).

These descriptions do not display a desire by 'Christians' to bring the liberating power of the gospel to a people who needed it, but they also reveal that the so-called missionaries has neither understood nor experienced the liberating effect of the power of the Gospel of which Jesus spoke at the outset of his ministry when he said,

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me, to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

(Luke 4v 18 + 19. NIV).

This passage taken from Isaiah(61 v 1+2) reveals not only the focus of the ministry of Jesus as preached by Isaiah but also as it was preached by Moses, after whom a prophet(Jesus) was raised(Deut 18 v 15-18 ; John 5 v 39,40,46 ; Acts 3 v 22) as the Year of the Jubilee(Lev.25).

The theme of the release of the poor and the oppressed as proclaimed by Moses (Lev.25) is continued by Isaiah (61) and then re-affirmed and implemented by Jesus (Luke 4) appears to be the most consistent theme in the Bible.

James Cone says in *Speaking the Truth* that “There can be no comprehension of the gospel apart from God's solidarity with the liberation struggles of the poor, because the freedom of the victims on the earth is the eschatological sign of God's intention to redeem the whole creation”(1986:vii).Cone elaborates here saying “As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, Christians have no choice but to join the movement of liberation on the side of the poor, fighting against the structures of injustice (ibid: vii).This Cone claims is the essence of the gospel and has been maintained by others when he says “From the time of slavery, black reflections on the Christian faith have emphasized the idea of liberation as the heart of the gospel of Jesus (ibid: 1)

Gutierrez also says in *We drink from our own wells* that “Scholars have endeavored to determine the total meaning of the term “poor” in the Bible, in order to show the necessity of a fruitful relationship between material poverty, as it is often called, and spiritual poverty in the following of Jesus, as well as to bring out the ecclesial witness that such a relationship gives” (1984:122).

This awareness of and commitment to the cause of the poor has many objectors as Gutierrez also observes “Solidarity with the poor in present day Latin America is a sure-quick-way to win the dislike of the privileged and the wealthy” but he adds “...those who renounce their possessions gain a new realization of the Lord’s fidelity”(1984:123). However Gutierrez persists with this theme quoting Romero who says “The world of the poor teaches us the form Christian love must take...that it must indeed be gratuitous but that it must also seek to be effective in history” (1984: 108).

The continuation of this theme therefore has biblical and historical roots as can be seen in the perspectives of both Cone and Gutierrez. The Biblical liberation theme therefore ought to be the central theme of modern preaching. The mission of the church as well as the preaching of the church should be defined by the liberative needs and demands of the oppressed in society. To ignore this is to ignore the essence of the Gospel.

However, in Australia, on the mission stations the religious practices were determined by the local managers and other settlers. In the book *Being Black* Diane Barwick observes “Religious beliefs and community organization were shaped by the institutional atmosphere of the Aboriginal stations, where the early managers were typically puritanical and authoritarian missionaries, representatives of fundamentalist sects who tried to inculcate their own sub- cultural values”. (1988: 29).

This indicates a tendency to subordinate through personal views that does not reflect a desire to liberate Aborigines with the gospel but rather the imposing of personal, puritanical and other views on the people. This approach in doing missions evidently adds to the alienation and the denial of black independence and development. In many instances this did not provide consistency from both civil and religious institutions to advance the cause of Aborigines. To this Diane Barwick then adds “The dark people have been conditioned by their own experience and by the tales of their elders, to believe that government policy decisions are both arbitrary and unpredictable and that their only lasting security lies in a continuing allegiance to their own community”. (1988:31).

A commitment to the community would provide solace and comfort to the weary individual who always seems to be harassed by the missionaries who were not interested in their liberation. This theme of the release of the poor and the oppressed clearly seems to have been overlooked or ignored by the missionaries among blacks in Australia but also in traditional theology both in Australia and beyond.

This is therefore the theme that is addressed with urgency and a sense of

immediacy by Black and Liberation Theology as well as Feminist/Womanist Theology.

2.3 The Church and Liberation Theology

Now in the 21st century, black theology of liberation must be brought to bear afresh in the present day Australian situation, to speak to situations long overlooked and ignored, to bring the true meaning of the Gospel to a society longing for justice and for peace, righteousness and reconciliation and liberation (freedom) which is the light of the world.

This is why James Cone says “Black Theology is a theology of and for black people, an examination of their stories, tales, and sayings. It is an investigation of the mind into the raw materials of our pilgrimage, telling the story of “how we got over”. For theology to be black, it must reflect upon what it means to be black. Black Theology must uncover the structures and forms of the black experience, because the categories of interpretation must arise out of the thought forms of the black experience itself” (1975:18). In a sense it is to rephrase Cone’s thinking that black thought forms and structures, experiences and tales, dreaming and dancing, must be understood and analyzed in terms of their liberation value, while white thought forms and structures, experience and tales, must be understood and analyzed in terms of their oppressive nature and purpose as well as opposition to the liberation intent of the Gospel which is different to the way it is normally preached.

Martyn Newman states in his book *Liberation Theology is Evangelical* “The work of theology cannot be regarded as a purely academic exercise, but rather ought to be conceived of as an hermeneutical exercise directed towards the churches’ contemporary witness. Theology therefore, should not begin with an intellectual discussion about Christian doctrine or propositional truth which is then applied to contemporary problems. Rather it ought to begin with a commitment to change an unjust society into a just one”. (1990: 74). He then argues that for one to do credible theology, the first step is in fact to have a personal commitment to the liberation of the oppressed. After this commitment one is in a more credible position to do theology.

This being the stance of most liberation theologians, that orthopraxis precedes orthodoxy because knowing and understanding the situation of oppression and exploitation provides the basis and framework in which to develop and do theology.

“Theology” says Newman “is the end product of a process of biblical reflection on human action taken in the social, political and economic arenas” (1990: 75). This is theology that grows from among the community of the oppressed and

can therefore be considered as theology from below.

This is in contrast to theology that is the product of reflection and contemplation first, then seeking its application in a human situation. This is a theology from above. It places orthodoxy before orthopraxis, while liberation theology does the reverse of placing orthopraxis first, then orthodoxy in its methodology. This approach invariably leads to the existential situation of the poor and the oppressed being used as the frame and content for doing theology.

Because traditional theology does not always address people's living conditions, it has a tendency to be abstract and even detached from the human social arena.

This abstract and detached stance from the human existential situation has often contributed to the unawareness among the community regarding the liberation struggles that take place among the poor and oppressed. This detachment has often also led the church to operate against the poor and oppressed.

In his book mentioned earlier, Colin Tatz says "The Reverend F.A. Hagenauer, a Moravian missionary, was the law-and-order founder on this site alongside the Avon River. In the early 1860's Hagenauer was determined to destroy Aboriginal culture: he burned Aboriginal artefacts and forced marriages that were contrary to Aboriginal law" (1995: 52).

This attitude of destruction of both people and property continued as can be seen by the views of a German visiting professor of Anatomy, Dr Hermann Klaatsch who stated "It is useless to attempt to Christianise the Aborigines, as I consider the only difference between shooting them and Christianising them is that one is a quick death and the other a slow one" (1995: 57). Aborigines continued to be treated with suspicion, lack of respect and acceptance bar in a minority of instances especially in sport. This attitude has continued for many decades and was practiced by ordinary whites as well as those in authority.

Tatz refers to Sydney's Cardinal Moran saying "The bishops' policy was not only to fire white staff who 'visited' the Aborigines on the mission, but to expel the visited as well" (1995: 58).

These actions evidently reveals an attitude of total disregard for the dignity and worth of human beings, created in the image of God and thereby having been endowed by his indwelling spirit to being image bearers of God, simply because of their different physical appearance. Those actions are also a denial of the dictum of Jesus, 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you' (Luke 6v31).

Another description comes from Bruce Elder who in his book *Blood on the Wattle* says 'plundering and killing Aborigines and their lifestyle started almost

immediately after the arrival of the first fleet in 1788'. He then says "In six months the British had destroyed a lifestyle which outlasted British history by tens of thousands of years. And the British dared to claim that they were civilized" (1988:7). He adds "In less than a year over half the Aboriginal population living in the Sydney basin died from smallpox. No-one knows exactly how it started and the British in their guilt, were eager to blame everyone except themselves" (ibid: 7).

While many battles between black and white raged, it became evident that "...Aboriginal people were unwilling to give up their land which was vital to their existence" but this was never understood nor accepted by whites (1988:13). These and a multitude of evidence by the authors mentioned above and many others such as the historians Manning Clark, Henry Reynolds, Geoffrey Bolton etc also mentioned elsewhere in this study, confirm a violent, bloody and ignoble relationship between early settlers and blacks.

The Australian historian Manning Clark says in *Manning Clark – a discovery of Australia* "...that without Christ men would kill each other down to the last two men on earth?" (1976: 7). This observation by Clark seems to be symptomatic of human relations in Australian history with whites doing much of the killing and almost eliminating the blacks from this country. His inclusion 'without Christ' seems to me clear who are the people 'without Christ' who did most of the killing. It therefore seems to me that the people who brought the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to this country never really had or new that Lord Jesus Christ of the Gospels themselves, judging from their treatment of the indigenous people in Australia.

This attitude of wanting to eliminate the other person for various reasons was to be a factor "...of later slogans such as 'Australia for the Australians', 'Australia for the white man'" as Clark mentions in his other book *A Short History of Australia* (1963: 52).

Similar attitudes has set the stage for conflict and confrontation between indigenous people and the early settlers which was to continue and last for a long time. Sometimes contact between the two groups were sporadic but hostile and at other times it was friendly but brief.

It is clear that a lasting and continuous peaceful co-existence between black and white in Australia never existed in part because of this attitude of wanting to eliminate the other person. It is of this attitude that Clark say in *A Short History of Australia* "In the up-country districts the aborigines (known as the blacks) remained the most formidable enemy the settlers had to encounter" then he also adds "The blacks, they believed, must be treated as an open enemy ..." (1963: 76).

This attitude was no less evident on the Island of Tasmania, which perhaps because of its separation from the mainland, seemed more brutal towards the Aborigines. On this Island violence towards the Aborigines seemed exceedingly brutal and unending. In discussing the establishment and development of early Australia, Norman Lowe states in his book *Mastering Modern British History* that “The free settlers distinguished themselves by their brutal treatment of the native aborigines who were eventually placed on Flinders Island in the Bass Straits. By 1869 all the Aborigines of Tasmania had died”(1984: 272). Seemingly reluctant to provide a more descriptive or extensive discussion of these events in Tasmania, the end result speaks for itself, the extermination of a race that inhabited and existed on that Island for centuries, was hated and exterminated in just a short few years. This conflict between black and white in Australia is also described by Geoffrey Bolton in his book *Spoils and Spoilers* in which he says “During the nineteenth century the two races were in mortal combat for the possession of the land, and during the first forty years of the twentieth century the Aborigines were seen by most as a dying race...” (1981: 4).

This is a significant observation about a people who has survived on a continent for several thousand years and then became a ‘dying race’ shortly after coming into contact with white people. It is therefore important to my mind, to note also the earlier remark made by Bolton regarding the engagement ‘in mortal combat’ between these groups. This is significant since the white people claimed to have brought the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the people.

However, the Aborigines were not just suddenly becoming ‘a dying race’ but it is probably more correct to say in the light of Bolton’s remarks, that they were gradually and systematically being eliminated. This reveals that the initial bearers of the gospel had no liberation intent in their ‘mission’ endeavors because they never understood the liberation content of the Gospel. This analysis indicates also that the gospel was merely used as a cover and a façade to plunder the land, kill the people and destroy the culture, language and lifestyle of the people living there. This gruesome and blatant abuse of the gospel indicate that the bearers of it could not possibly have been Christians in the Biblical sense of the word that would have the desire to liberate people from poverty and oppression rather than add to their misery. Any Gospel therefore that does not liberate people cannot be the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ but must therefore be seen as anti-liberation, anti-Gospel and anti-Christ. A Gospel that is working for the liberation of the oppressed is a Gospel that is in accordance with the message of the Bible. In Australia this has never happened since the churches here had never endeavoured to liberate Aborigines from white oppression and exploitation.

The predominant attitude of a larger part of the white Australian church has reflected this apathy, arrogance and appalling paternalism towards Aborigines even into the twenty first century. There may have been pockets of awareness or even concern that their plight needs to be attended to or possibly corrected with committees and interest groups studying or even operating as pressure and lobbying parties. Often this approach in doing things for Aborigines were more designed to soothe their guilt and be seen to be doing something rather than a desire to liberate Aborigines from white oppression.

Roland Croucher briefly discusses the role of the church in Australian context when he refers to a World Council of Churches document ‘Towards a Church in Solidarity with the Poor’ in his book *Recent Trends Among Evangelicals* saying “The Bible is a book of hope, concern and solidarity with the poor...Unfortunately when the poor were given low priority in the life of the churches...ecclesiastical institutions frequently became part of the oppressive systems” (1986: 42). This low priority to the poor, particularly the black poor in Australia, has been a hallmark of the churches here and remains so, compared to the time and effort allocated to other church activities.

While Croucher discusses the broader church, he also has the Australian Evangelical Church in mind when he says “Evangelicals are tending to become ‘culture affirming’ rather than ‘culture denying’. That is, they are moving towards engagement and away from escapism” (1986: 28). This would reveal a shift from issuing statements and declarations regarding Aboriginal matters towards engagement and participation and from a peripheral spectator role to central participant or activist. It would indicate that traditionally the church in Australia rarely had an engaged social responsibility program towards Aborigines.

The Australian Bishop Peter Hollingworth, presently Governor General and previously the person responsible for public justice for the Anglican Church in Australia, is quoted by Croucher as saying “The causes of poverty are precipitated more by problems in the organization and structures of society than by individuals themselves” (1986:48).

If Hollingworth is correct, it indicates that the structures of society if they are unjust, may sin against people by disadvantaging them and not affording them all the opportunities and resources that they require and if those resources are allocated according to criteria that disadvantage the poor even more. If the liberation of the poor and oppressed are not the priority of the church as the central message of the Gospel, then its focus for public justice would invariably amount to the mere provision of band-aid remedies to such victims.

The organized church in Australia has traditionally seen its social responsibility in society to be largely limited to the immediate involved local community and that community has largely been white.

At the early stages of Australian occupation, the ‘churches’ consisted of overseas missions who merely wanted to see blacks behave like whites by Christianising them instead of promoting their liberation. The harassment, brutalizing, exploitation, humiliation, paternalism and other forms of inhumanity meted out by these foreign missions is evidence that liberation of people was not in the least on their minds or on their agendas, prayer lists or other programs. An Australian theologian Gordon Dicker says in the book *O! Freedom O! Freedom!* that “Right at home, the oppression of Aborigines in Australia over almost two centuries is too obvious and too well documented...” (1976:14). In his paper entitled ‘Liberation Theology in an Australian context’ published in the aforementioned book he says “Because we belong to the oppressor group rather than the oppressed, Liberation Theology cannot be easily assimilated in Australia” because “It not only resists us but points an accusing finger at us as the enemy it has in view” (1976: 14). This honest view of Dicker indicates that the church considered itself as part of the oppressor group with regard to Aboriginal oppression, yet did nothing to change that situation. Therefore he says “It might be easier for us if we could discreetly ignore the Liberation Theologians and hope they will go away”. (ibid: 14).

This desire by the church for Liberation Theology to go away, may well have been the overwhelming attitude of the white church in Australia that accounts for its apathy toward Aboriginal liberation. However, to be fair, Dicker did sound a note of warning to the Australian church when he added that “...their voice is becoming too loud to be ignored and there is the uncomfortable feeling that with their voice God himself is speaking to us”. (ibid: 14).

Unfortunately, considering the largely apathetic stance of the organized white church in Australia toward the Aboriginal plight, it appears rather obvious that this warning from Dicker may have been largely ignored. This expedient stance of the white church to so ignore and neglect its moral and ethical responsibility in this country toward the Aborigines in the light of the demands of the Gospel, makes it not only disobedient to its calling and its Master but sets itself against the gospel and its Author and so present itself as being anti-liberation, anti-Gospel and anti-Christ.

The Australian Sociologist Peter Dwyer in a paper entitled *The Third World, Australia and Liberation Theology – A Sociologist view* explains that “The fate of the Third World is no mere hard luck story. The harsh sober truth is that ours is a world that is cruelly and unjustly divided between a minority of human beings like our selves who share in the benefits of super abundance and the vast

majority who are denied basic human rights. It is this truth which provides the starting-point for the “Theology of Liberation”. (1976: 33). He then says the affluence of the West is not shared by people in many poverty stricken Third World countries and people in these poor countries are becoming increasingly aware that they are also being exploited by many affluent Western countries. He then adds “Confronted with this kind of reality, more and more Third World Christians have become critical of the theology of the West, with its distinctions between the “spiritual” and the “physical” and its convenient emphasis on the non-political nature of the gospel”. (ibid: 34). This splitting or dual view of the gospel has only been used to their advantage and the disadvantage of the poor countries. Therefore Dwyer says “They doubt whether that kind of theology makes much sense of the life and death experience of the mass of mankind and then adds “They are also critical of the church for actually siding with the powers-that-be, or for remaining silent on issues of justice for reasons of prudence and self-preservation”. (1976: 34). Albeit that Dwyer talks about the attitude in the West towards the poor in the Third World, he also has the church in Australia in mind and their similar treatment of Aborigines in Australia.

While the mainstream ‘high’ churches organized emergency accommodation, meals, clothing and other support services, it was largely directed at the fringe dwellers in the cities and larger towns. Their concerns regarding the Aborigines in the rest of the country were not considered to be their responsibility, either socially, theologically or morally, so that expressions of concern for their well-being were largely limited to the issuing of statements and resolutions. Theologically, the church has never seen its role, as Liberation Theology would define it, as the central theme of the Gospel with all its resources, energy, focus and concerns directed at fulfilling this responsibility with a sense of immediacy and urgency.

A variety of arguments may be advanced for the defence of this attitude, i.e. a lack of black presence in the church, a lack of awareness about the problem, thinking it does not exist or is not as bad as some make it out to be.

The gravity of this unawareness can in a sense be equalled to that of the German Christians during Nazi Germany when asked after the liberation why they did not oppose Hitler, said, ‘they did not know of the problem’. Similarly whites in Apartheid South Africa were asked after liberation why they continued their support for the system said ‘they did not know the gravity of the problem’.

The truthfulness of their responses remains a point for debate.

Others today would probably say, ‘maybe you did not want to know’. Maybe it was convenient for the church to turn a blind eye and pretend it did not know rather than involve itself in a very unpopular, painful, guilt-ridden and unwinnable struggle and so begrudgingly pit itself against a civil authority that

would criticize it for involving itself in the political arena where it doesn't belong.

However, the church in Australia as in South Africa cannot claim innocence in this matter at all. J. Francois Bill quotes Allan Boesak in the foreword of the book *Black and Reformed* when he says "it is reformed people who have spent years working out the details of Apartheid not only as a church policy but as a political policy...It is they who have devised also the theology of apartheid...presenting this policy as a soteriologically loaded pseudo-gospel that could be the salvation of all South African people...". (1984: ix).

In Australia it is the silence of the churches in the face of such appalling atrocities that makes it complicit, guilty and responsible for all the suffering endured by Aborigines in this and every previous generation. This process of non- or limited involvement, especially by the high churches of Australia with the Aboriginal struggle for liberation, continues to this day, albeit that many would be satisfied with the extent of its involvement. Many Christians in Australia would even today probably not support or subscribe to a theology of liberation in the form Boesak would say "...it is the content and framework of the gospel of Jesus Christ". (1976: 9).

We shall now examine this view much closer.

2.4 Liberation – the content of the Gospel

James Cone remains probably the most important, certainly one of the first theologians who clearly and consistently stated that 'liberation is the central theme of the gospel'.

The first and most dramatic event in which God displays his involvement in the affairs of humanity that is largely accepted by liberation theologians, is the exodus event in which Moses plays a pivotal role. All the events leading up to, as well as the events following the exodus of the Hebrew slaves from oppression in Egypt, clearly displays God's concern for the liberation of oppressed people from cultural, political, social, economic, psychological and other forms of deprivation and inhumanity. This concern displays a powerful and dramatic involvement on the side of the slaves and unashamedly against the powerful and intransigent oppressor. This siding of God with the poor and disadvantaged in society is also affirmed by the prophets and the Psalms. David who has reflected much on the Exodus says in Psalm 72 v 4 that 'he will crush the oppressor'.

The salvation plan of God for his people and indeed for his whole creation is given its most amazing impetus, concrete momentum and clear meaning with

his calling of Moses and his calling of his Hebrew people from a situation of humiliation, indignity and non-being and set on a path of humanity, dignity and freedom. The ruthless and shrewd nature of oppressors are starkly described in Exodus where it says ‘come we must deal shrewdly with them..’ (1v10) ‘So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour...’ (1v11) ‘so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly’ (1v14). The Pharaoh then ‘gave his order to all his people: “Every boy that is born you must throw into the river, but let every girl live” (1v22).

The desire by the oppressor not only to oppress the poor, but also to lead them to total destruction, has been evident throughout history. But Yahweh, who is fighting in the midst of and on the side of the victim of oppression, of him says Moses ‘The Lord is a warrior, the Lord is his name’. (Ex.15v3).

Moses goes on in this chapter saying;

Pharaohs chariots and his army
He has hurled into the sea.
The best of Pharaoh’s officers
are drowned in the Red Sea (v4).

Moses continues in his song of victory and praise when he says;

“Your right hand O Lord,
was majestic in power.
Your right hand O Lord,
Shattered the enemy.
In the greatness of your majesty
you threw down those who oppressed you,
you unleashed your burning anger;
it consumed them like stubble.
By the blast of your nostrils
the waters piled up.
The surging waters stood
firm like a wall,
the deep waters congealed
in the heart of the sea.
“The enemy boasted,
‘I will pursue, I will overtake them.
I will divide the spoils;
I will gorge myself on them,
I will draw my sword
and my hand will destroy them’
But you blew with your breath,
And the sea covered them.
They sank like lead
in the mighty waters” (Ex.15v6-10)

This victory song of liberation of Moses has inspired many a liberation movement particularly in modern day history. This song reveals not only the firm and strong acts of God to save the oppressed but also God's strong resolve to utterly destroy the rich, powerful and arrogant oppressor who thinks they can confidently oppose God to pursue their right to rule over others.

In some sense the authors of *The Road to Damascus* states their view in this way "We no longer believe in the God of the powerful and we want no gods except the God who was in Jesus. "I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no gods except me" and then they continue saying "With this new faith in Jesus, we can now begin to read the signs of the times, discerning the presence of the risen Jesus in our midst, appreciate the action of the Holy Spirit and see our present conflict with new eyes"... "Now we can hear God's voice, especially in the cry of the poor, in the cry of pain and protest, of despair and hope. God is on the side of the poor, the oppressed, the persecuted. When this faith is proclaimed and lived in a situation of political conflict between the rich and the poor...we can read the signs and discern something more than a crisis". (1989: 9).

This in their own way expresses a theology of liberation that is defined by the exodus paradigm but also a Christo-centric paradigm that is understood in people's contextual and existential experience of suffering and their struggle against it that is now motivated by these paradigms. This reveals increasingly the liberative intent and content of the gospel and God's siding with the victims of injustice throughout history, with the intent of liberating them.

This perspective on the gospel reveals the rich and powerful as the oppressor, like the Pharaoh, and must therefore be opposed. This is necessary as part of the process in which God would ultimately destroy the oppressor. The Hebrews' experience in the exodus remains a towering influence in many liberation struggles. To oppose this process, is to oppose the work of God as *The Road To Damascus* states "Satanisation refuses to see the God of life in the liberation of the people. It sees the work of liberation as the work of Satan and accuses the people of being possessed by evil spirits. In his time, Jesus was being accused of being under the power of Beelzebul precisely when he freed people from evil spirits and healed them". (1989:18).

Just as Jesus' ministry was misunderstood and opposed by the Pharisees etc, so too the liberating work of the gospel in liberation theology is misunderstood and opposed by 'modern pharisees'. These are people who do not understand the gospel as God's liberating message to the world and who believes that in opposing the liberation struggles of people they are in fact upholding the

message of the gospel. Many have the misguided belief that the Gospel provides only for the inner spiritual salvation of individuals.

Such an individualistic view of salvation is challenged by MPumlwana and many others. In the Foreword to Albert Nolan's book *God in South Africa*. Mulasi MPumlwana says Nolan tries "...to establish once and for all, that the classical battle of 'Christian soldiers' against sin and this world is the battle against a sinful situation for the creation of a new world anticipated in a new and more just society". (1988: viii).

Here he indicates that Nolan also tries to show how the liberation of the oppressed is the guiding principle of the gospel and of a theology of liberation. An unjust society is a sinful society that needs renewal as much as an individual may need renewal through the gospel. These prophetic words should not be seen as being relevant to South Africa only but that it has a larger more universal relevance as well.

This liberative intent was evident, Nolan says even in Jesus' ministry as he says "Jesus clashed not only with the Pharisees but with the whole Jewish establishment of that time: the scribes, the chief priests, the elders, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the Essenes and the Zealots. They had some very serious differences amongst themselves but fundamentally they all belonged to and endorsed the same religious and political system" but may have considered various degrees of reform but as Nolan points out "...they never questioned the system itself. Jesus did. And that was why he disagreed with them so radically about sin". (1988: 34).

Jesus' questioning of the system, according to Nolan is similar to that pursued by liberation theology. That is why liberation theology also see Jesus as the perfect New Testament paradigm to do social analysis in its attempt to bring the Gospel to bear on its existentialist situation.

This method of social analysis to understand its own social situation is being used by most liberation theologians. This focus on the ministry of Jesus and Moses provides both the impetus, content and intent for doing a theology of liberation in an oppressive society.

James Cone provides further clarity on what the meaning of liberation theology is as the content of the Gospel. Cone argues that since 'human liberation is God's work of Salvation in Jesus Christ' he 'therefore, in his humanity and divinity, is the point of departure for a black theologian's analysis of the meaning of liberation. There is no liberation independent of Jesus' past, present and future coming". (1975: 138).

Jesus is therefore the pivotal figure in an authentic black theology of liberation. He also says that "...liberation is not a human possession but a divine gift of freedom to those who struggle in faith against violence and oppression". (1975:138). However the freedom to hope for a new future is grounded and based in God's freedom whose salvation is freedom, therefore "...the pain of the cross was God's suffering for and with us so that our humanity can be liberated for freedom in the divine struggle against oppression". (1975:139). 'Because Christ is the ground of the struggle for liberation, black people can fight for freedom and justice'. Christ remains the centre, the reason and the goal of freedom with prayer being the "beginning of the Christian practice of liberation". (1975: 144)

Black worship is to celebrate freedom with 'moments of ecstasy and joy'. (ibid: 144). These are spontaneous expressions of religious fervor that may appear irrational and difficult to understand to the observer.

2.5 The community of the oppressed

Cone maintains that authentic liberation of self takes place in the context of an oppressed community because "...no freedom for God" can occur "unless the hungry are fed, the sick are healed, and justice is given to the poor". (1975: 147).

This, he says, takes place only within the community of the oppressed because God is present and active within such communities and that to liberate them. To be free in Christ is therefore to be "among those who are in chains". (1975:147) In answering the question 'Who are the oppressed?' he asserts "...the oppressed are the only true Christians". (1975:148).

He also says that "Those whose consciousness is defined by the oppressors cannot understand what liberation is. For the oppressors to understand liberation, they must be liberated from being political oppressors". (1975: 149). This in a sense means that oppressors must be willing to give up their role as oppressors and work alongside the oppressed to be liberated themselves. Because this process does not happen easily, the struggle for liberation of both the oppressed and the oppressor will continue. For oppressors to shift from this role to be in struggle with the poor and oppressed requires a liberating experience and this event can only take place in and alongside the existential situation of the oppressed in history.

Cone says "In the Old Testament salvation is grounded in history and is identical with God's righteousness in delivering the oppressed from political bondage. Salvation is a historical event of rescue" which "...means that spiritual

aims are inseparably connected with the transformation of society”. (ibid: 152) Salvation is therefore not some personal, inner, pietistic experience separate from concrete, socio-historical transformation to liberate the whole human existence. Furthermore, “any analysis that fails to deal with racism, that demon embedded in the white folks’ being” says Cone, is inadequate”. (1975: 156). In the humble beginnings of Jesus and his healing ministry ending in his own death, God was making it clear, says Cone, “...that his kingdom is not simply a heavenly reality; it is an earthly reality as well”. (1975: 156). God identifies with the oppressed as living breathing human beings, takes up their cause, making it his own and engaging the divine being to restore dignity, self worth, faith, hope and humanity.

This is being done through the contextualized approach of black and liberation theology as well as Feminist and Womanist theologies. Theo Witvliet in the preface to his book *The Way of The Black Messiah* says “The insight into the contextuality of theology rules out an abstract approach, i.e. one which omits the specific context of the black experience. In other words, no dogmatic conversation with black theology is possible without a thorough knowledge of the history of black slavery and the opposition to it”. (1987: xii)

In the World Council of Churches document *Urban Rural Mission Reflections* it briefly provides a discussion on the participation of mission in the lives of people’s existential experience when it quotes John 10 v 10 which says in part “I have come in order that they may have life- life in all its fullness” and then it asks the question ‘what does this mean?’. (WCC-1986: 14).

This is the question anybody would ask if confronted with such a phrase as the document continues to state “What does it mean, now, for example, for the enslaved women workers in the sweatshops of Asian cities, for the migrant workers living in barbaric conditions in South Africa, for the exploited sugarcane workers of Brazil, for marginalized Surinamese immigrants in Holland, for the fish workers of Goa, for the indigenous workers of Canada?”. (ibid: 14) or Australia for that matter. This fullness of life for all people, particularly for oppressed people is what Liberation Theologians seek, therefore similar questions are being asked by them. This document then also adds “The Pharisees failed to start with people; instead they began with a set of theological certitudes and ‘forced’ them into the human situation, with tragic results.

Jesus started with the human condition and asks what will bring, restore life. People come first”. (ibid: 15)

To seek justice is to provide life and to provide life is to seek justice for the oppressed. Jesus has offered his life to so provide life to those who seek it in Him and therefore to have justice. To deny justice to people is to deny them the

life that Jesus is offering and has laid down his own life to achieve. To do justice is to offer people the life that Jesus has come to offer all people and so to experience the fullness of life.

The need for Christians and the church to seek justice is also expressed in the World Evangelical Fellowship Lusanne Occasional Papers on Evangelism and Social Responsibility # 21 which says "...it is indisputable what kind of people we should be, seeking justice, freedom and dignity for all, especially the powerless who cannot seek it for themselves". (1982:18 – Lusanne Committee for World Evangelism World Evangelical Fellowship). All too often though one finds that soteriologically loaded statements like these, well intended as they often are, rarely filter down to the local congregations to implement these august principles and so contribute towards justice and life that is so desperately needed among the poor and the oppressed.

This is equally true in Australian context where knowledge of the dreadful and oppressive experiences of the blacks is necessary and important to do an authentic liberation theology. Much of the religious utterances mentioned earlier, stems from an unawareness of the pain of people's suffering, but also from the historically abstract way of doing theology which in many ways continues to this day.

This abstract approach to doing theology has certainly helped establish, entrench and promote racism in Australia as it was held in Britain during the eighteenth century forward, as well as it was transplanted by church people from the United States of America and elsewhere to this infant nation. This abstract way of doing theology has been convenient to the white perpetrators of racism and oppression because it entrenched their own privileged positions of power as it also kept, with an heretical sway, the victim in a permanent grip of powerlessness in the mistaken belief that the status quo is really the will of God. When persuasion did not achieve this goal, unjust, discriminatory and oppressive rules, regulations, decisions, agreements and laws were resorted to, to achieve it. Violence, injury, suffering (physical and emotional) as well as death would follow as a consequence, but it was often seen as a necessary path to be endured with painful forbearance to maintain white privilege, superiority and power.

Black life was valueless and they were seen and treated as 'things to be used and expended rather than people to be respected'. Physical control was also enforced through beatings, chaining people together, geographical limitations in movement and accommodation, intimidation, ignorance and subversion.

In Australia, the community of the oppressed has traditionally been those who have been marginalized, disadvantaged and placed out of sight to hopefully be

out of mind. The worst affected in this category has been the indigenous black people. Life for this community consisted largely of poor housing and health care, poor infrastructure and education, family neglect and being at risk of alcoholism, incarceration, violence, uncertainty and instability and constantly living at tip-toe stance not knowing exactly what to expect next, being relegated to non-being, non-existence or a non-person, condescension, paternalism, dependency, deprivation and in a word, powerlessness.

This lack of self affirmation and assertiveness, organization and direction has been as a result of continuous oppression and injustice inflicted on this and every previous generation since the first fleet and Captain Cook arrived.

In one sense Doris Pilkington eloquently describe this situation in her book *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* when she says “The Nyungar people, and indeed the entire Aboriginal population grew to realize what the arrival of the European settlers meant for them: it was the destruction of their traditional society and the dispossession of their lands”. (1996: 13) While most whites would argue they brought civilization to Australia by clothing the previously naked indigenous tribes, most blacks would consider that view as a contradiction since they lost their languages, culture, land, lifestyle and lives. Such destruction could hardly be considered as being civilized. Their free access to water and food were also limited as one of the tribes people said “We can’t go along our hunting trails,”...“They are blocked by fences”. (1996: 14). This lack of freedom of choice and movement added to starvation, suffering, confusion and tension. Pilkington says “Cut off from their natural food source, the Nyungar people expected these white settlers to share some of their food with them”. (1996: 14). This was not to be since these settlers did not have the habit of sharing (anything) with other people therefore the Aborigines said “We will take a sheep, they have plenty, they won’t miss one”... “If there isn’t going to be any sharing of food, we’ll help ourselves”. (1996: 14).

This confusion and tension stems from the fact that when Aborigines had abundance of food they would share with those who needed, yet now they found themselves being without and the whites having plenty of food yet would not share it with Aborigines. Because of circumstances like these Pilkington says “There were unending conflicts between the traditional owners and the white invaders, with reports of merciless killings on both sides”. (1996: 15). This disruptive ‘relationship’ contributed towards a breakdown of traditional black life and the subsequent suffering in the midst of growing white affluence and abundance. Pilkington therefore also correctly observes when she says “It became apparent then, that the Aboriginal social structure was not only crumbling, but it was being totally destroyed”. (1996: 15).

In similar vein, this tendency and trend is testified to by Gillian Cowlishaw in

Love against the Law when she says “The white men tried to shoot the Aboriginal people out. Because they were in good country I suppose, because they wanted it for themselves” and then she says “We’d hear the bang, bang going on everywhere, poor things”. (2000: 2)

This testimony of an Aborigine reported in her book is symptomatic of the experience of many Aborigines in this and previous generations. It affirms the view that they were not considered worthy of humane treatment and can be eliminated almost at will and with impunity. She also records “The exchange of sexual favors for food, tobacco, and other material goods was a common trading practice on Australia’s racial frontiers”. (ibid: 3).

If people are deprived of access to their normal sources of survival, it then seems highly likely that such ‘sexual favour’ practices could become ‘normal’ practice but would also be used by whites to keep blacks in their place, subordinate and dependent on the goodwill of white people. It then becomes just a matter of time before such dependence is extended to other areas such as housing, health and free movement etc.

By the same token, many children were forcibly taken from their parents because their appearance were fairer than others and they were therefore raised separately in orphanages or missions. Of this practice Iris Burgoyne writes in *The Mirning- we are the whalers*. Saying “I shed tears when I remember how those children were ripped from their families, shoved into that car and driven away. The distraught mothers would be powerless and screaming “Don’t take my baby!” The mother struggled with the policeman”. (2000: 66). This was the type of treatment meted out and experienced by many Aborigines almost everywhere in Australia during the early years of white settlement but it continued until the modern era in many communities.

Black people were traumatized in many ways by whites who considered it normal or necessary to ensure they gained and maintained a large measure of control over them. Such control deteriorated into oppression and even extermination of many groups of Aborigines.

Eva Mumewa D. Fest in her book *Conned* gives some insight into the experience of Aborigines at the hands of missionaries whom she describes in various ways saying “...missionaries generally were characterized by...a conviction that Koories were barbarians, ...an innate belief in the superiority of their own race and religion...a belief that the superior people spoke a superior language” , “paternalistic attitudes aided by (a) desire for power and control over the lives of Koori people...and their“...inability or lack of desire to learn Australian languages...”. (1993: 76).

This attitude by whites convoluted relations with blacks that was never to be erased as Fest indicates “In Australia innocent people were murdered or harmed by criminals” and “The Christian church was involved either directly or indirectly, both actively and passively” and then she says some “...of these Christian people were worse than their convicted criminal compatriots, stealing Koori land as they did, and adding hypocritical rhetoric to dodge, hide or condone the crimes of the invaders”. (ibid: 77).

Such comment is difficult to ignore regarding the role of Christians in the suffering of Aborigines and this perspective is hard to find in church reports. Their suffering and pain and trauma can hardly be overstated and evidently are not erased from white consciousness merely by ignoring or minimizing it.

2.6 Further impulses from Black Liberation Theology

On this James Cone says in *A Black Theology of Liberation* “A community that does not analyze its existence theologically is a community that does not care what it says or does. It is a community with no identity”. (1991: 8) This simply means that a community of faith that does not define its existence contextually i.e. in context of the *Sitz im Leben* of its existence, has no identity. This awareness would make its existence meaningful to itself as well as the community around it which it is supposed to serve.

This contextuality gives it meaning, purpose and direction in its involvement to respond responsibly to the needs of its members and the community at large. Cone then says “By defining the problems of Christianity in isolation from the black condition, white theology becomes the theology of white oppressors, serving as a divine sanction from criminal acts committed against blacks”. (1991:9)

In the main, traditional white Christian theology has served white oppressors well by either turning a blind eye to their oppressive and discriminating practices or even aiding and abetting such practices in the misguided belief that it is in their best interest, it is necessary for a cohesive, safe and progressive society and is therefore advancing Christian values and principles.

This attitude would normally reveal white arrogance in believing they alone know what is good for blacks, but even more seriously, that they alone know and understand the Gospel to be able to preach and translate its meaning to blacks who are always seen as the object of Christian missions.

However, if “...the gospel is the proclamation of God’s liberating activity’ and

theology arises 'within the Christian community as it seeks to develop adequate language for its relationships to God's liberation, then black theology is Christian theology'.(1991: 9).This Christian community seeking to do Black Theology would be a much misunderstood community that would be looked upon with deep suspicion and even malice by those outside it. In their struggle and desire to liberate themselves and other selves from the yoke of oppression, the oppressor being the enemy may react or even retaliate in a destructive way to their well-being, as white hypocrisy, maliciousness and thin veneer of religiosity are exposed.

Such white response would be expected, even predictable, since they do not want to be exposed and made to feel vulnerable in life in the same way they make blacks feel vulnerable through threats of destruction, intimidation and stand-over tactics. They want to 'keep blacks in their place' and crush their spirit not to rise up against oppression and the oppressor. White oppressors want to control the life, thought and actions (movements) of the oppressed to ensure nothing happens they know nothing of or cannot control and therefore have no surprises that may pose a threat or risk to their own existence or security. Willing to control others and even willing to subordinate others (brutally if need be) yet would violently resist those who attempts to subordinate them. Therefore to attempt to subordinate whites would effectively mean to enter a period of tribulation. The oppressed and the oppressor therefore never can have the same face in society and we shall now proceed to examine this view.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ROLES OF OPPRESSOR AND OPPRESSED AND THE UNWARENESS THEREOF IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

3.1 Introduction

The reading of Australian history, particularly the early times relating to the violent encounters between black and white people in Australia, are not popular reading for white people. There is almost always the desire to suppress or deny the reality and existence of the violent and bloody encounters.

Because much of the early Australian history can in a sense be said to be written in blood, filled with guilt, oppression and injustice, little of it is talked about or taught in most educational institutions.

While history can still be studied at tertiary level, history as an academic subject is increasingly being removed from university curricula as an available option to be considered for formal study. While many reasons for this may be provided, one of the most enduring and painful, is the guilt it raises within the conscience of whites and an inability to cope and deal with such a searing conscience matter either individually or collectively.

This inability or unwillingness to openly and honestly confront this inherited collective guilt committed since colonization in 1788, adversely affects white behaviour, morality and sense of reality. This unwillingness or inability to deal with the racism and oppression in Australia is symptomatic of whites in other countries as well where this problem exists. Many may even be unaware of their racism until confronted by it.

In the United States of America, for instance, where racism and racial oppression has been a problem for many centuries, Malcolm X says, "...here in America, the seeds of racism are so deeply rooted in the white people collectively, their belief that they are 'superior' in some way is so deeply rooted, that these things are in the national white sub-consciousness". (1964: 396). Racism and racial oppression is evidently not limited or unique to Australia but is spread beyond the borders of this country. It becomes a way of life that seems normal and natural to many who may even be unaware of it and therefore surprised when confronted or accused of it.

Malcolm X says of this “Many whites are even actually unaware of their own racism, until they face some test, and then their racism emerges in one form or another” and therefore he says “And the non-white peoples of the world are sick of the condescending white man”.(ibid: 396). This condescending attitude of white people toward blacks is one feature of their racism but many appear or pretends to be totally unaware of it, particularly here in Australia. At times this attitude of unawareness or guiltlessness appears to be genuine but at times it seems to be a means and a method of hiding or covering their guilt. This false sense of ‘superiority’ in white people may also be a reason why white people are often slow and lethargic, if interested at all to make penance or apologize to blacks for their racist, oppressive, destructive and hateful behaviour towards them. This is why Malcolm X says again “I am certain that we will be forced to agree that it takes *God Himself* to solve this grave racial dilemma”.(1964: 268). While Malcolm X was speaking to the racial problems in America, his words may be equally true, if not prophetic for the same racial problems in Australia. The continued and entrenched unjust and oppressive position of whites towards blacks in Australia would invariably lead to feelings of increased resistance, animosity or even hatred. Such responses on the part of blacks would be quite understandable if not justifiable in the face of the long enduring heat of exploitation and misery. This misery is often perpetuated by Christians. Again Malcolm X says “Christianity is the white man’s religion. The Holy Bible in the white man’s hands and his interpretation of it has been the greatest single ideological weapon for enslaving millions of non-white human beings” therefore he adds “The white man is in no moral *position* to accuse anyone of hate!”(ibid: 263).

This type of heretical abuse of the Bible by whites to justify and/or promote their position in society has long since been condemned. In Australia, Henry Reynolds in the introduction to his book *The Law of the Land* says succinctly “The inability of Australian law to retreat from historical injustice has had major implications for relations between white Australians and Aborigines. No matter what governments have done or said over the last two-hundred years they have not been able to convince Aboriginal communities of their bona fides or to expunge that deeply ingrained sense of injustice. This is scarcely surprising. Many Europeans- though probably always a minority- have been equally unconvinced. So too have most outsiders who have looked at the Australian scene and their critical scrutiny may increase in importance in years to come. Outwardly a majority of white Australians has the rejected the claims of historic

injustice. But there has always been a sense of uneasiness, a lurking shadow of guilt, a ‘whisper in the heart’ which encouraged a tendency to explain the problem away by blaming the Aborigines themselves and to argue that they lost their land because they were too primitive, or too passive or too savage or too unproductive. It eased the conscience but did nothing for the moral health of the nation”. (1987: 4). Reynolds also rightly says, unlike here in Australia, in other countries they ‘did not deny that the indigenes were the original owners of the soil...’ (Ibid: 4).

This denial of who the original owners and inhabitants of the land were, led to the belief that it was uninhabited land, vacant and un-owned, therefore whites should feel no guilt or shame for possessing the land or the treatment given to those owners and this in itself was a contradiction by denying prior ownership by Aborigines yet treating them harshly as uncivil owners who do not deserve to own the land.

The argument of ‘Terra Nullius’ was a convenient line of thought to ease the conscience and silence a nagging conviction that many whites were not as bad as many, including Aborigines claim they were. It is this history that is not being offered as an academic subject as widely as before at tertiary institutions. The terra nullius argument however was brought under scrutiny in the courts.

Edward Koiki Mabo in the book *Edward Koiki Mabo-His life and struggle for land rights* discusses his experience with white people in Australia with his co-author of the book who says “Mabo clearly believed that the attention given to Torres Strait Islander concerns was at best superficial window-dressing and at worst hypocritical and destructive”.(1996: 57). It is always difficult if not impossible to silence a nagging conscience about such a major deception such as Terra Nullius which is the claim that Australia was uninhabited at the time of colonization. The claim of terra nullius was contested in court however by Eddie Mabo of which he then says “The High Court acknowledged that native title had existed on Murray Island and throughout Australia since time immemorial. The concept of terra nullius on which Australia was founded had been rejected”. (1996: 142) This major deception and fraud has at last been exposed.

However that achievement by Aborigines in the High Court was not to sit very comfortably with the Federal government or the broader community. Opposition to these achievements came in the form of legislation from the federal

government to in an attempt to minimize its impact or to extinguish it altogether. These white people were not happy with the achievements and progress Aborigines had made through the courts. The role of the settler was established from the outset, conspicuously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally, to manage, inhabit or rule this new society, not only for the benefit of whites, but to the exclusion of blacks. It was never seriously envisioned to include Aborigines in any established, organized, structured society as equals, co-rulers or partners collectively determining a common future, sharing equally the rights, benefits, struggles, difficulties, anxieties or victories, achievements, milestones, satisfactions, decisions, mistakes, hopes and expectations, dreams and promises.

Instead, white settlers set out to establish a society, by whites, for whites and that attitude, approach and intention was maintained to this day. Changes and inclusions, constitutional or otherwise were more as a result of international, external or foreign forces at work and also only if whites; survival are at stake and secured and their benefit are optimal. The myth of their ownership of the land had to be maintained.

3.2 The problem of myth

Albert Camus in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus* says “Myths are made for the imagination to breathe life into them”. (1991: 120).

In Australia, through the manipulation of politics, education, culture and history etc., **the myth was created that the country was not only uninhabited at settlement, thereby justifying the doctrine of Terra Nullius,** but this myth has to a large extent to be justified and supported, vocally or in a subtle fashion by the church and its theology to have the strong staying power that it exudes in Australian society. So often has this myth been repeated and upheld, it was accepted by many as truthful and credible. This myth was breathed life into, not only because it was convenient to justify the occupation, but also because it was expedient to nullify opposition.

This ‘living myth’ was a cloak used to cover atrocities too unspeakable to defend and therefore ignoring it, or worse, pretending it never happened, no apology, explanation or compensation would be required. This myth continues to sway influence in many parts of the country, causing many to persist with

irreconcilable attitudes and views of sole ownership, guiltlessness and right of occupancy. A number of people therefore hold the view described by Reynolds who says “Many of those who were troubled about the exact legal basis of Australian settlement assumed that while the original expropriation may have been wrong, it could not be reversed and had attained a measure of acceptability through the mere passage of time”.(1987: 39).

To add to this view Geoffrey Partington discusses the views of Hasluck in his book *Hasluck verses Coombs- White Politics and Australia's Aborigines* when he says “Hasluck observed that, although some white Australians might say broadly that the whites had taken the land from the Aborigines, the majority had the conception that the immigrants had simply occupied waste land...” and then he adds “He did not suggest that this simplistic view was historically true...”. (1996: 69).

‘Expropriation’, ‘settlement’ or ‘theft’ are some of the words used to describe white colonization of Australia and this may depend on one’s view of the process. The choice of such descriptive terminology may also be influenced by among other things such as how severe one’s own conscience speaks to you regarding the justness and one’s honesty towards the process of colonization. The wide use and belief in the myth of ‘terra nullius’ or vacant land in Australia spoke volumes.

Before the Mabo decision there has always been the attempt to keep the mythical concept of terra nullius alive.

This myth has been breathed new life into it also with the continued argument “that title by prescription depends on the acquiescence of the original owner”. (1987: 39).

If acquiescence means acceptance without resistance or approval without duress or quiet or willing approval, the Australian occupation by whites is both illegal, immoral, indefensible and blatant robbery, since the occupation certainly did not occur with black acquiescence. Again Reynolds is right when he says “Given the importance of acquiescence, Aboriginal resistance assumed major legal significance. Although Aborigines reacted in a variety of ways to European incursion, they manifestly did not acquiesce”. (1987: 40).

Difficult as it was, Aborigines always resisted the white invaders.

It has been common in the past for invaders of other countries in the world e.g. South Africa, Canada, U.S.A., and New Zealand to subdue the occupants of such territories to such inhumane levels that physical resistance to such occupation occurs at the expense of one's life. When such resistance and strategies change, the occupier tends to interpret such a change as acquiescence and quiet acceptance of their presence. This then becomes a convenient stance for later writers of such historical events, to describe it as a 'gradual integration', 'mutual co-operation', 'acceptance under protest', 'striking a happy medium' or similar such descriptive phrases. The construction and development of such views are often designed to create the impression of a less violent, less destructive and even a friendly contact between the groups from an early stage. A violent or destructive occupier often wants to create the impression or the mythical perception that they were not as violent or inhumane towards the indigenes at the time of their initial arrival.

In a brief discussion of the role of myths and its use by powerful groups Peter Sutton in the book *Being Black* indicates that Malinowski emphasized the social change brought about by means of myths. It is often used to cover inconsistencies in certain historical events, "rather than to record these events exactly" (1991: 254)

He also says "The myths associated with the spread of powerful sub-clans show on certain points a fidelity to life in that they record facts inconsistent with one another". (ibid: 254). This indicates that myths can be used to alter the facts in an attempt to create a different, often more humane or friendly impression of historical events and so make it more 'palatable' or acceptable to more people. The creation of such myths as the 'doctrine of terra nullius' in Australia, was part of a deceptive approach to create the impression of a guiltless or 'sinless' society of white settlers.

The sinful nature of the inhumane treatment meted out to the illiterate and poorly armed indigenes by the early settlers with their superior weapons, multiplied their guilt with subsequent generations continuing the practices with intensity and severity. Such methods have often been used to force and maintain a socio-cultural-economic advantage to the settler. In modern times though more subtle or sociologically sensitive albeit no more just methods are still being used to suppress black demands and aspirations. Blacks, however continue to press their demands for change and improvements to their circumstances.

Furthermore, the Mabo, Wik and Waitangi documents, socio-politico-legal documents have and will continue to contribute towards the altering of the course of history in both Australia and New Zealand. The former two being High Court of Australia decisions which effectively nullify the long held doctrine of Terra Nullius which maintained the view that the initial settlers occupied an ‘uninhabited, unpopulated or unoccupied continent other than by animals.

This myth of terra nullius must be shattered theologically as it was legally by the High Court of Australia. While the Mabo and Wik High Court of Australia decisions confirmed that the land belonged to the indigenous people, the powers that be, has ever since attempted to have these decisions overturned and extinguished and thereby defeat these milestone achievements by the indigenous people.

3.2 The problem of myth, guilt and sin

In the ‘A Concise Dictionary of Theological Terms’ (1984), one of the definitions of the term myth is ‘Anything occurring within a Myth and helping to constitute its ultimate meaning’. The Collins Australian School Dictionary (1992) says ‘A myth is an untrue belief or explanation; and ‘ A myth is also a story which was made up, long ago to explain natural events and religious beliefs’ and the adjective is ‘imaginary, untrue, or existing only in myths,...’ . An additional explanation is taken from The Colliers Dictionary which describes ‘myth’ as “opinion, belief, or ideal that has no basis in truth or fact, esp. one uncritically held by members of a group”. (1986). For the purpose of this study, the meaning of the latter definition suffice a belief that has no basis in truth or fact and uncritically held by members of a group and this will be considered more closely.

Because some of Australian history was described in myth and believed for so long, it is necessary and important that this myth be shattered and destroyed and a new reality established on which mutual trust, acceptance, confidence and respect can be built. This is necessary so that a common basis can be found on which a brighter, just, harmonious and peaceful future can be hammered out. It must also be shattered because it becomes an obstacle and a barrier towards meaningful reconciliation. This constant desire of whites to want to have the

upper hand and controlling power over others, especially blacks, in this country, is not only unethical but defeats the purpose of promoting mutual respect, increased humanity and dignified co-existence. While life must be celebrated and enjoyed and shared with everybody creating opportunity for meaningful interpersonal relations, acceptance and support, many wish to do that only for their own group or nationality to the exclusion of others who look differently. Differences should also be celebrated and encouraged as features of a whole humanity seeking to be whole within our differences.

Myths and lies including the myth of terra nullius were created as truths in an attempt to explain away those realities of human experiences that are difficult to accept or explain in truthful terms. It develops with additions being made over time and it being repeated as truths to following generations who may uncritically accept such untruths or half-truths out of mere expediency. It takes hold in a community through shameless repetition, uncritical acceptance as well as by crushing social, moral, legal, religious or other opposition to it.

From a woman's perspective Colette Dowling discusses in her book *The Frailty Myth* the prejudices used mainly by men to develop a myth regarding female frailty. She argues that they say "Women owed it to the next generation, and the generations thereafter, to cultivate nothing but their fertility..." to enhance their womanhood and to develop femininity and looks rather than their mind, artistry etc. (2000: 4) Such and similar attitudes are cultivated among mainly men and it is repeated and entrenched over many years even generations that women are frail and not equal to men in every respect. Such myths, she says were often advanced by 'Educators, psychologists, churchmen, and physicians- particularly obstetricians and gynaecologists – (who) were its chief proponents'. (ibid: 4).

Similar prejudices were evidently harboured towards black people as well, by white people regarding their 'frailty' as a race or a people. Colour prejudice are often much harsher, merciless and violent. Changing such habits, prejudices and practices does not happen easily or overnight because as Dowling says "Old habits die hard". (2000:5). Persistence or perseverance on many fronts are necessary. Again Dowling says "The myth of women's frailty has been so systematically entrenched that it could fairly be called a hoax. But a hoax is a conscious deceit, while myths are believed in as truth". (ibid: 6). There appears therefore to be a similarity in the reason why the 'terra nullius myth' and the 'frailty myth' are created and perpetuated by men. Dowling argues that "The

frailty myth was driven by men's repressed wish to preserve dominion". (ibid: 6) Whites evidently have this similar wish to always want to gain and maintain dominion over black people since many whites believe in the myth of their superiority against black people. This wish becomes one of their driving forces to want to dominate others at all costs, even if that includes eliminating blacks. These myths were created to subjugate people and keep them in positions of disadvantage, poverty, powerlessness and perpetual silence which is a vicious cycles of misery and endless pain and dependence. Oppressed people who have seen through these myths, do not believe in them any longer and do not passively and innocently accept history as presented or as it is viewed to happen from a white perspective.

Oppressed people will no longer suffer in the mistaken, outdated, medieval belief of the divine ordering of humanity, that God wills their suffering or would take responsibility for human failure and neglect or that only others could or should intervene on their behalf. Oppressed people now want to and should act in their own behalf, altering the course of history in their favour and determining how it shall be as masters of their own destiny.

Everywhere oppressed people are discarding the shackles of oppression, colonization and poverty and with a growing discontent with ignorance, disease, urban dislocation and marginalization. An enthusiasm is pervading oppressed communities with a sense of urgency to achieve full humanity and dignity and in terms that says we shall no longer be content with lies and deceit, fear and wickedness, inertia and delays. There is a growing urgency in those communities that does not want to wait for the next generation to solve the problems of the previous generations. This too-hard basket must be removed, that was used as a decoy to do nothing, with the argument that the time is not right. Everybody everywhere knows that the time is always right to do right which brings advantages to all of God's children to attain full humanity.

Achieving full humanity here would include experiencing wholeness of person, fullness and freedom of life in religious, secular and other facets of life, dignified living in harmonious co-existence with other persons and communities with equal and generous expectations in all that life and society may offer. This must happen without artificial, malicious or degenerative limitations and where personal advancing choices e.g. Marital partner, career, faith expression, associations etc, are nor inhibiting prohibitions regulated by legislation,

intimidation or other authoritarian and crippling behaviour to promote sectional or sectarian interests. But there is more than this. To achieve full humanity also means to experience the presence of God in living, experiencing justice in everything from which there will flow peace, to experience a reconciling existence with fellow humans in which animosity, hatred, contempt for human dignity is expelled to make room for harmony, acceptance, love, caring altruism and mutual concern that does not consider those ulterior factors of race, nationality, sex, age, social standing or economic and academic achievements etc. as determining criteria.

In a sense the South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu described this process in the booklet *The Divine Intention* to the Eloff Commission of Inquiry in 1982 when he said that God "...was and is the Lord of all life" and therefore he healed the sick, fed the hungry, cleansed the lepers, drove out demons, which ushered in the presence of Gods' Kingdom. (1982: 18) This then is what all believers in Christ must do to promote and achieve human dignity. But more than this says Tutu, God "...revealed Himself in helping them escape from bondage, and what could be more political than helping captives escape?. And it is this political event of the exodus which becomes the founding event of the people of God. It becomes the paradigmatic event of the Bible..." (1982: 19).

This gigantic event and similar actions are the task of all to bring about human dignity and full humanity for all. Therefore Tutu again says in that same document "All life belongs to God" because "The whole of life is important; political, economic and social and none of these aspects is untouched by religion as we understand it". (ibid:25). There can therefore no dualism between one's religion(faith) and secular life because all of life is interrelated and when God liberates people the whole being is being liberated. The one relates to the other and therefore influences each other. The one cannot stand isolated from the other as if it has no bearing or relation to it. This unity and wholeness becomes a very liberating experience. Tutu continues saying God

"...showed himself as a liberator God" who is "...the God of the Exodus who takes the side of the poor, the weak, the oppressed" then he says "God can't help it. He always takes sides. He is not (a) neutral God". (ibid: 26).

To have full humanity therefore means inter alia to have full liberation, total liberation, i.e. complete freedom. Oppressed communities everywhere now wants to grasp this as something within reach and this hope continues to

motivate both liberation theologians as well as oppressed communities to continue the struggle against their oppressors. The myth that oppressed people are content with their lot must therefore be shattered. Furthermore, the unity of the church and the people advances and strengthens human dignity, freedom and the witness of the church against oppression. The enormous deception of this myth of the contentment of the poor with their situation must be exposed and shattered.

In the accompanying letter to the Belhar Confession (1982), formulated in Reformed circles in South Africa, the authors state their concern of the good intentions of many who have been deceived and hold to a false oppressive doctrine of separation when they say “We are deeply aware of the deceiving nature of such a false doctrine and do not doubt the Christian faith of many such people, their sincerity, honour, integrity and good intentions...”. But they add “...it is precisely because we know the power of deception that we know we are not liberated by the seriousness of our certainties, but only by the truth in the Son”.(N.G.Sendingkerk – Konsepbelydenis 1982).

In addition to this, to achieve full humanity and dignity and unity among oppressed people the Belhar Confession states under the heading ‘A Confession of Faith’

“- that this unity of the people of God must be made manifest and active in a variety of ways, in that we: experience, practice and pursue community with one another; ... together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together we know and bear one another’s burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ; ...that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; ... and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity”.(Belhar Confession: 1982)

It becomes evident that true and full humanity is achieved in the unity of people and the church as well as justice and righteousness among all people. This brings glory to God and affirms the liberation work of Our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. Denying such unity, justice and righteousness among people would therefore be tantamount to denying the salvific work of the Lord Jesus Christ and such a stance when defended on a distorted view of the Gospel would amount to heresy. This is why this document says “_ that God has revealed himself as the One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among men; that in a world full of injustice and enmity he is in a special way the God

of the destitute, the poor and the wronged and that he calls his church to follow him in this...". (ibid: 1982).

This clear affirmation of the calling of the church in promoting dignity, unity and humanity both in the church and society is reflected also in the body of the document 'Status Confessionis'.

It says in "Die Belydenis 1982"

" dat die eenheid van die Kerk van Jesus Christus daarom gawe en opdrag is"...dat hierdie eenheid sigbaar moet word sodat die wereld kan glo"...dat hierdie eenheid van die kerk van God op n verskeidenheid van maniere sigbare gestalte moet kry en werksaam moet wees"...dat hierdie eenheid slegs in vryheid gestalte kan vind en nie onder dwang nie" en "dat die kerk as eiendom van God moet staan waar Hy staan naamlik teen die ongeregtigheid en by die verontregtes".(Die Belydenis: 1982).

[Freely translated it is "that the unity of the church of Jesus Christ is both gift and command"...that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe"...that this unity of the people (nation) of God must be made visible and operative in many different ways"... "that this unity can only be (displayed and) achieved in freedom and not under duress" and "that the church as possession of God must stand where God stands i.e against injustice and with the disadvantaged".(ibid: 1982)]

Here in unequivocal and clear language it is stated what the church can do and how it must act to be true to its call as the body of Christ and so to crystallize the Gospel to achieve full humanity for people where it is proclaiming that Gospel. In a much more concise document, the Covenant Document of the Calvinist Protestant Church of South Africa it expresses similar sentiments regarding the liberation of people, their faith and their unity. In this regard it expresses its commitment to "...die opheffing van ons medemens"...en... "...om eendragtlik saam te staan" en "In die geloof reik ons mekaar die hand van broederskap".(Covenant Document Calvin Protestant Church of South Africa - 1950).[Freely translated it says "the upliftment of our neighbors"..."to maintain the unity" and "in faith to reach the hand of brotherhood to others".]

These two documents clearly have the liberation of people in mind, their unity in Christ and their role in society. There is evidently also a universal element in these documents that makes it appealing and even relevant for the church beyond the borders of its South African origin. It must be clear also that

whoever may identify with or even wish to 'own' the letter and spirit of these documents, would have a strong theological justification to defend the victims of injustice everywhere and to take a stand against the tyranny of oppression, division and inhumanity. This would also indeed be a strong and solid theological argument and basis to shatter any myth that continues to persist that Aborigines here in Australia have no rights, legal, theological or otherwise that the settlers are obliged to respect.

Defending and teaching people to respect other's dignity, is to promote the Gospel and therefore also to help people achieve full humanity. This is evidence of a myth being shattered with an intemperance which reveals an ignored importunity by a society bent on preserving the status quo. Failing to do that, the church would in fact be neglecting its prophetic responsibility but also inadvertently be aiding in people's oppression, defeating the Cross of Jesus Christ and causing people's rage and anger to grow.

That is why Willa Boesak in his very perceptive study *God's Wrathful Children* is able to say "The rage of the oppressed stands in direct proportion to the depth of their grief". (1995: xv). There is a limit to what the human spirit can endure in terms of unjust suffering. While long suffering can often be counselled and the endurance of injustice be encouraged, it must also be borne in mind that the limits of the spirit cannot be stretched beyond reasonable human expectations and that eventually, when the human cup of endurance overflows, people's demand for justice, must be met, whatever means they may use to achieve that. God's involvement in the affairs of man i.e. "Divine omnipotence..", as Willa Boesak says

"...is portrayed through the liberating acts of God in human history" but he also skillfully articulates various thoughts together saying "God's powerful acts of liberation" with God's vengeance...and...the anger of God has become "visible for all to see in the anger of the people". (1995: 4).

The echo of God's Word must be heard in the demands of the oppressed, disadvantaged, marginalized and dispossessed of the land for that which is just and fair, right and rightfully theirs. The echo of God's Word as heard in the demands of the oppressed would be 'displayed' when those demands are met through God's intervention for their vindication and liberation. God's Word reveals his wrath towards injustice therefore human demands for liberation can

echo God's Word therefore W Boesak says "In the same vein Leon Morris suggests: "There is an anger we speak of as 'righteous indignation'...which is perfectly compatible with pure love". (1995: xv). W Boesak treats 'anger' and 'wrath' as synonyms and says "Anger is a mode of connectedness to others and it is always a vivid way of caring". (1995: xv). To this he then adds "...a lack of wrath in the face of injustice is in fact a failure to care". (ibid: xv).

Caring about another's wellbeing in the face of injustice can extract anger or wrath in such a way as to achieve justice for others and therefore in this context Willa Boesak also says "...vengeance cannot simply be dismissed as a destructive force, for it can be a valid form of resistance" and to this he adds "This manifestation of anger is devoid of hatred and malice" because "...love is equated with God in such a way that it is the personification of the Divine Being(1 John 4: 7 -12). (ibid: xiv). "God's powerful acts of liberation", he says, "become visible for all to see in the anger of the people". (1995: 4). This he says is because "God's wrath results in divine acts of vengeance in favour of the powerless and the oppressed". (ibid: xiv). When the poor and the oppressed cry for help therefore, it is the echo of God's Word that must be heard in that cry and the response should be to help the poor in their need but also to respond against injustice that causes poverty and oppression. The type of theology that does not address injustice that causes oppression, to liberate people from such oppression is false and futile.

To enhance this view, Simon Maimela says in the *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa* "...salvation should be understood as a comprehensive and ongoing divine activity whose goal is to free men and women from all spiritual (psychological) and socio-political and cultural powers that enslave them".(1990: 49). Not to do this in theology stems from a long tradition as Maimela again says "This misuse of religion has had a long history in the church and was made possible by a legacy of a defective theological view point which, beginning in the Medieval period and continuing during the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, laid a greater emphasis was on the salvation of the soul than on the body".(1990: 50.-Vol 4#1).

Such a spiritual view of religion would invariably result in a theology that would be 'other worldly' rather than 'this worldly' since life on earth is seen as a preparation for the next life. Maimela then continues "Not surprisingly even the Reformers like Luther and Calvin taught that the main purpose of social

institutions was to further the religious (spiritual) life of Christians and not the satisfaction of people's bodily needs".(ibid: 50). Such a view of the Gospel would therefore ignore the cries of the poor and the oppressed which is what Luther did as Maimela records "It is therefore logical that Luther would flatly reject the demands of the Peasants for equality, freedom and self-fulfilment as illegitimate misuse of the gospel for worldly, socio-political and economic gains". (Ibid: 50).

Sadly, today all too many people, including many well meaning theologians, still hold such views. Such narrow religious and theological views proved to be great allies of the oppressors and oppressive rich classes. The church therefore, also has a long history of being part and parcel of oppressive systems, that has created poverty and suffering e.g. The white church in Apartheid South Africa, the white church in most countries where colonialism and slavery were practiced, the white church in Australia that sided with the rich oppressive colonizer against the oppressed and impoverished indigenous people in Australia. Such false theological views that sees its role as propping up the powers that be against the poor and therefore against the God of the poor, must be discarded in favor of a more authentic theological and more biblical view of God, revealed as James Cone says "In the Exodus event, God is revealed by means of his acts on behalf of a weak and defenseless people. He is the God of power and of strength, able to destroy the enslaving power of the mighty Pharaoh". (1975: 63) In Australia these echo's of God must be heard in the 'Mabo cries' and the 'Wik cries' and the Black deaths in custody cries' and the 'Bringing them home cries' of children separated from their families. It is in these cries that the echo of God's word must be heard. Failing to heed these cries is to ignore the echo of God's Word and therefore to be disobedient to God's Word. To do this could reveal Pharisaic stubbornness and unbelief to maintain a status quo that is in conflict with God's Word.

The connection between maintaining the myth of terra nullius or vacant land, the guilt of the theft of the land and the sin of killing the people of this land in that process, cannot be denied. The experience of this myth and the guilt of these sins are interrelated with one another because it was a closely related process over the decades. To deny the one is to deny all three and to acknowledge one would amount to acknowledging all three.

Nothing would be gained by anyone to deny any one of these three factors or

that they are closely related. Much would be gained though by not only acknowledging these but also by displaying a willingness to address all three these matters as a matter of urgency but also to rescue the witness of the church and the Gospel in the process. This would be important since the credibility of the church and its witness and role in these historical matters has been suspect and under a cloud for a long time in Australia. Failing to rid society of this sin, guilt and myth would continue to make the church complicit to it. Persisting in its support for these evils and errors would also make the church guilty of heresy and a false theology. The collective problem of myth, guilt and sin in the church and society contributes to the continued vexing problem of oppression and poverty in Aboriginal society.

Addressing the one would have an immediate bearing on the others and would go a long way to solving many of its concomitant problems. The problem of myth, guilt and sin in Australia is deeply entrenched in this society and has an impact on almost every facet of Australian life. Restoring the land demands for Aborigines would certainly impact greatly in a positive way on the rest of the nation. Conversely, refusing these demands would lead to the ultimate demise and destruction of this society.

In similar vein, referring to the similar experience of loss of land by the Khoi-Khoi people at the hands of their Dutch invaders in South Africa during the early seventeenth century, Willa Boesak says, "As early as 1655 they declared to Van Riebeeck that they were being robbed of their territory, regarding the occupied country as Khoi land. They also wanted to know whether if they were to come into Holland they would be permitted to act likewise. But the Dutchmen rejected the claim and proceeded to deprive the Peninsula Khoi-Khoi of its grazing lands and traditional water sources". (1995: 12).

Historically and traditionally this reveals different views and perceptions between Aborigines and whites towards land. This is true not only in the South African context, but it is equally true in other contexts, including Australia. Again Willa Boesak says "The whites came with a sense of land ownership which was in contradiction with African traditional views and thus unacceptable because it was "...anti social, and was seen as the denial of the livelihood...of the other groups". The different attitudes toward land were culturally grounded in different perceptions formed by African Communalism and European individualism. This inevitably led to violent misunderstanding". (1995: 14)

He then says “European individualism eroded the African Communal values and formed the basis of a violent, illegal claiming of land”. Ibid: 15)

This meeting of the two different groups of people was also the meeting of two different value systems that collided with disastrous physical and moral results that were to extent far beyond that initial contact. While this description of events took place in the African context, it is an equally accurate reflection of events that took place in Australia. The world views of communalism colliding with individualism also occurred in Australia with white settlement and the effects of these events are still reverberating throughout the country today.

Despite this colliding of the divergent worlds of black and white people in the early stages of settlement, opportunities existed for creating and promoting an environment of peaceful co-existence. While there may have been times of peace and quiet, it was perhaps more a lull in hostilities and calm before the storm. It may even have been for considerable periods, but it would often be interrupted by some form of hostilities of varying degrees. Much of what happened during this time in Australian history was not taught in most educational institutions. Henry Reynolds in his book *Why Weren't We Told* says “I was certainly not taught about any of those things which now seem so important – matters relating to race, ethnicity, indigenous Australia, landrights, self-determination, multiculturalism. These were great gaps in what I was taught. It seems from today’s perspective that I learnt very little about Australia itself, certainly not enough to prepare me to be an adequate citizen, a well informed voter and a participant in public life”. (1999: 2). This phenomenon, described by Reynolds, of the educational and cultural processes in Australia, reverts back to much longer before this time and has continued to a large extent, to the present.

If information and education help people make informed decisions, dispel ignorance and cripple prejudice, then at some stage people have deliberately been left in the dark, ill-informed and often mis-guided. While this may have suited the agendas and purposes of the politicians who’s policies can feed on people’s fears, ignorance and prejudices, there was no need for people to remain in that state.

Often people’s ignorance was because they have turned a blind eye to public events as it suited their prejudices. Events such as the massacres of Aboriginal

people or punitive gang raids against them were either considered as necessary responses or ignored as non-events, too harsh to deal with. Such racist behaviour occurred against Aborigines because many whites considered themselves different, better or superior as Ann Keene states in her book *Racism* that “Racism is based on the belief that human beings can be divided into races and that some races are superior to others. Racists are people who believe that their own race is better than the others either mentally, morally, physically, or culturally and believe that this supposed advantage gives them license to dominate others.”(1995: 15). People therefore intentionally behaved in a condescending and demeaning way towards others. This hurtful behaviour is being perpetuated by whites against blacks in Australia as a means of enforcing unequal class behaviour and practices.

Reynolds again in his book *Aborigines and Settlers* says “... the aborigine was treated only as a foreigner, a slave, and an enemy” and therefore “it was a record of intention.”(1972:96) He also adds”...the government of England... let loose on the shores of Tasmania its outcasts, its robbers, and its homicides... but he shot down the native, and acquires distinction by his butcheries, justice became scrupulous; the laws were silent; and the fallen black, like the uprooted forests, was thought of as an encumbrance removed.”(1972: 96).

This lack of respect for Aborigines by the government of England and its released convicts in Tasmania was a microcosm of events in the rest of the mainland. When a government displays contempt for a people or a portion of its population, it follows as a matter of course that the rest of the population will do the same. Such contempt by a government, unless they are exposed to a corrective by the church, courts or other agency, would have disastrous results for the people who would not benefit from government programs for that society.

This leads to alienation and deprivation which will be considered next.

3.3 The problem of alienation, unawareness and deprivation

The double tragedy of alienation and deprivation for Aborigines is that as a result of European settlement and the introduction and spread of European custom, culture and religion, Aborigines were deprived of practicing their own custom, culture and spirituality they became alienated from those traditions and

yet were not fully accepted by the white society.

Continuous to this Richard Broome states in a rather candid manner in *Aboriginal Australians* that “If we as Australians are to face the future confidently, we must be fully aware of the forces that have shaped the Australian experience. We must know ourselves. The study of Aboriginal history is an important part of that self-knowledge.”(1994:4) It is indeed rare to find such a brutally candid comment coming from a white Australian who would be willing to publicly acknowledge the lack of knowledge and the unawareness of Aboriginal history and that an awareness thereof would help whites know themselves.

This is indeed a refreshing perspective that needs to filter throughout all Australian communities to help combat ignorance and unawareness on this matter. Such honesty is hard to find even among church or religious people. Broome says further “Through it we can hope to understand not only the actions and attitudes of Aboriginal Australians but something of the nature of European Australians as well” and then he also says “Race relations in Australia have often been a raw history of European dominance over Aborigines due to superior numbers, resources and firepower”

Therefore Broome continues saying “The Aborigines have been denigrated and oppressed, while the Europeans have generally assumed the dehumanized role of oppressors, and have had a false sense of their own superiority.”(1994:4).Such an uninhibited look at the black-white human scenario in Australia will also meet with some white resistance since such an approach towards their history has often been shunned by whites. It was more convenient for whites to harbour and nurture their prejudices since that approach would not demand too much from them. Therefore Broome states “...natural justice for Aborigines can only be achieved...when Australians are honest about their past.”(1994:4)

Whether it occurs on an individual or collective basis, people are often hesitant to want to face and talk about their past, if that is perceived to be too painful and filled with grief, agony and guilt. Much of the suffering of the blacks in Australia has often been denied or ignored in an attempt to present a guiltless white nation and perpetuate the myth of terra nullius but Broome says “...in June 1992 the High Court of Australia changed the moral stance of the nation...

as Australians came to terms with the fiction of ‘terra nullius’ and the fact of native title. If the 1967 Referendum brought Aboriginal people into the census, the Mabo Judgment brought them into the common law. Reconciliation may yet bring them into the nation.”(1994:7).

Such concise and frank expressions and admissions of unawareness and visionary expectations by whites regarding Aboriginal oppression and liberation would contribute significantly towards achieving greater justice and harmony between these races in Australia. A reluctance to do same however would invariably add to the continuation of the status quo and an increase in tension and conflict in the future as oppressed people seek to shake off the shackles of such oppression. Deprivation of one group in the midst of overwhelming abundance for another group in the same society is a perfect recipe for social unrest which if kept unchecked has the potential of leading to a downward spiral of total annihilation or to the precipice of oblivion for all involved.

With regard to deprivation Pat Keating said that on some of the mission stations, the emphasis of the ministry was almost exclusively on the spiritual rather than the material as well. Most would ignore the physical needs of people or at least do little or nothing about it and focus more on the preaching and evangelizing of the people. This view was expressed by Pat Keating clearly when she said “While the churches were eager to supply spiritual succour to the Mission dwellers, no-one seemed anxious to improve their physical conditions. It took us some time to realize that these were even worse than we had first thought” (1994:86).

This lob-sided approach to mission by some missionary societies added to the physical distress and need of Aborigines who could barely eke out a decent living after being deprived of their traditional lifestyle and freedoms. They were expected to live the lifestyle and standard of living of the invaders without being given the necessary support to achieve that. These invading missionaries seemed to have thought that if Aborigines positively responded to their gospel, all these would fall into place or that their lives would steadily reflect Western standards without other material support.

Their alienation from their custom and practices deprived them of any meaning in their lives so that their spiritual values, medicine men, and leaders were rejected or marginalized.

This narrow, false and one-sided view of mission, the growing poverty and the increasing marginalization of these mission dwellers significantly contributed to their oppression which has various images as James Cowan says "...the karadji or medicine man "... was looked upon by many observers, including a number who were ostensibly sympathetic to the Aborigines, as at best an eccentric figure capable of beneficent acts of medicine, and at worst, a trickster or charlatan. This opinion lingered on for a long time into the twentieth century, so that the karadji himself found his position within his tribe undermined by the community's encounter with modern medicine, the Church missionary system and the corrupting influence of its own society living under the threat of extinction. His importance of the guardian of traditional culture and sacred lore was progressively eroded by contact with European civilization to the point where he was regarded as no more than an impostor and tribal scamp" (1989:5) This development contributed to the problem of oppression.

3.5 The problem of oppression

Oppression of people take on various images and faces and to find some clues on this we shall also consider the view of Anthropologist Pat Shipman who in her book *The Evolution of Racism* discusses Madison Grant's view who laments the American melting pot approach for all mixed immigrants when he says "We Americans must realize that the altruistic ideals which have controlled our social development during the past century... are sweeping the nation toward a racial abyss. If the Melting Pot is allowed to boil without control and we continue to follow our national motto and deliberately blind ourselves to all "distinction of races, creed and colour", the type of native American of Colonial descent will become as extinct as the Athenian."(1994: 124).

Such racist and inflammatory views, were needless to say, very popular with his readers, particularly in Germany, and would probably still have some quiet and private support today, although it was expressed early in the twentieth century. Such views were invariably popular among many Colonial invaders everywhere and influenced both their social and religious views and behaviour towards the indigenes as in America, so too in Australia. Having such attitudes among colonizers the growth of the oppression of other racial groups, seems just a matter of course. These attitudes were 'exported' mainly from Britain to the U.S.A. as well as to Australia. In the U.S.A., the gradual elimination of the indigenes and the oppression of the black slaves seems also a natural

consequence. Such developments also occurred here in Australia by the white colonizers towards the Black indigenes. Black oppression had taken root.

The problem of Black oppression has another face and another clue towards understanding this is taken from John Stratton who describes it in his book *Race Daze* when he says “In Australia there has been a persistent myth since the ending of the White Australia policy in the early 1970’s, and since the advent of the policy of multiculturalism around the same time, that race has not only been expelled from the political vocabulary, but that it no longer plays a part in everyday Australian life.”(1998:9)

Dominant groups often have a way of making terms and phrases appear or disappear as they see necessary, especially if that change suits a particular or popular policy. Race is one among several such words that because of a perceived stigma attached to its use and meaning, may be dropped from popular usage but not always or easily from people’s mental constructs. Stratton says “While race has remained central to the formation of the Australian nation its meaning has changed” and then asserts “...culture is now the more privileged term...” (Ibid: 11) While this linguistic shift occurred in the official national vocabulary regarding the immigration policy, entrenched attitudes regarding the black people remained. Unfortunately long entrenched traditions and habits do not always change with policies. Stratton states “There is a high level of naivety in thinking that because you stop talking about race, race will go away. Of course it will not and it has not.”(ibid: 12) Also the shift from a predominantly mono cultural (white dominated) to a multicultural society did not necessarily mean it was no longer white dominated, and it remained that way to this day. Limited or no Black participation in these ‘changes’ makes it appear as merely cosmetic to the Black persons’ understanding and therefore Black oppression continues.

The Black person has by and large come to accept that most changes in white party political policies, does not always translate into improved conditions for Blacks and that despite much political rhetoric, black circumstances seldom change drastically.

In the church and religious realm, oppression has always been significantly present with its own features and image. One of the more articulate and sophisticated Aboriginal Theologians is Anne Pattell Gray, Director of the

Aboriginal and Islander Commission of the Australian Council of Churches and author of *Through Aboriginal Eyes*(1991) says in an article in the *Journal International Review in Mission*(Vol. 82(326) entitled ‘Styles of Australian Aboriginal and Melanesian Theology’ which she co-authored with Garry Trompf that “Indigenous Theological activity among the Australian Aboriginals and the Melanesian Islanders should not go unnoticed by the international community. Black peoples of Australia and the Southwest Pacific have produced the most variegated cultural situation on earth.”(1993:167)

Oppression took on a starkly religious face in this region when Christianity arrived with the settlers and missionaries. It seemed to have been used as a cloak to cover or justify white actions and behaviour towards the indigenes. Pattell-Gray says “Christianity was experienced in conjunction with European Colonialism. The Australian Aboriginals suffered under a massive invasion and the decimation of populations, the modern ‘first-world’ and western nation of Australia emerging on their bloodied backs.”(1993:167)

This painful mode of ‘evangelisation’ by whites among Aborigines that started, justified and continued their oppression, instead created much suspicion and distrust against missionary paternalism and their common failure to understand black life.

“Traditional Aboriginal religion begins with the “Dreaming” says, Pattell -Gray “When the Creator made everything that is today and imbued it with peace and harmony.”(ibid: 170) This was the essence of harmonious co-existence between people and their environment and the ‘dreaming’ constituted a large part of their thinking. However with the advent of the colonizers, all this changed significantly and indeed was destroyed. Again Pattell-Gray says “The history of contact between Aboriginal and western cultures is full of racism, classism, sexism and other forms of colonial, expansionist oppression – with the Aboriginal people bearing the brunt of the violence. The church was very much a part of this assault, drawing its personnel from the same society, and its theology from the same lines of thought and analysis, as the European invaders who stole the continent by force of arms and legal hocus pocus.”(1993: 170) This hand in glove operation between settler and missionary against black resistance to (assist in) their own expansionism, had made the church as guilty as the state, the missionary as the settler, to black oppression and therefore to argue today for a guiltless society would amount to creating a myth. Pattell-Gray

affirms this view when she says “The church preached the language of love, yet enforced mission “policies” based upon hate, fear, violence, division and denominationalism. Church and state worked together and the results of this two-pronged onslaught have been nothing short of genocidal.”(ibid: 170)

Such descriptions of white behaviour towards blacks by both State and Church make not only a myth but a mockery of any argument of a guiltless society in Australia. Through such behaviour black oppression became entrenched and also continues. A distorted and misguided theology that was preached by the church reveals more a desire for colonial expansionism rather than kingdom expansionism as Pattell-Gray explains “It betrayed the church doctrine of “love your neighbour” because “some of the neighbours” were black” and therefore “...the Australian church’s exegesis was racist – and heretical – and it passed this on to the indigenous people as “gospel truth.”(ibid: 172)

Such deception of the gospel has been widespread and entrenched and defended by the church for a long time. A largely theoretical shift from this theological stance has taken place very slowly and only very recently. Again Pattell-Gray states “This style of thought, which is a way of doing theology, remains self-righteous, judgmental, oppressive, and full of institutionalized racism.”(ibid: 172)

When such influential institutions such as the church and the State, co-operate to so thoroughly mislead people and entrench racial oppression almost unchecked, it virtually goes without saying that the rest of the community would follow such practices and behaviour, as the accepted practice for that society. Any outsider who then want to talk about oppression in that society, would almost certainly meet with cynicism, criticism and resistance as well as possible threats to life and limb. This made dealing with the problem of oppression in this society, unattractive, unpopular and almost unwinnable. The problem of oppression has a long history and cannot be dealt with in all its dimensions within the ambit and limitations of this study.

For another hue against oppression, we shall seek the view of Jacques Ellul who is discussed by Thomas Hanks in an article in the journal *Cross Currents* who referring to the Hebrews says “... The deliverance from Egypt... is not just political. It is also liberation from the kingdom of evil. It is a liberation which symbolizes all liberation” and “...this first liberation guarantees the final and

definitive liberation which will complete world history and which the people awaits. When, therefore Paul says that Jesus Christ is the Liberator...he is...taking up the whole thought of scripture...and...he is aligning himself with the whole of the Old Testament”.(1985:18) He then explains “...the authentic freedom which springs out of the Cross of Christ represents the *leitmotif* and the goal of the whole.”(ibid: 22).

As Pattell-Gray, so also Ellul is clear that oppression cannot be justified in Scripture and that both Old and New Testament writing testifies to the liberating motif of God’s involvement with human affairs and that it ultimately points to the final liberation of God’s people from oppression.

This point and focus of the liberating effect of the Gospel seems to have been lost on the missionaries and early church in Australia hence their oppressive practices towards Aborigines. This loss appears to have a much earlier origin according to Jose Miguez Bonino who says in *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary situation* “There is no doubt that the ardent expectation of the total transformation of the world and the advent of the Kingdom of God was soon replaced in Christianity by a spiritualized and individualistic hope for immortal celestial life.”(1975:133)

This shift on focus by the early church, Bonino argues has corrupted the dynamic biblical concept of the Kingdom of God. This could mean that the liberative motif or intent of the Gospel has already been lost during the early stages of the church’s preaching. Hanks in his article about Ellul, asserts “Catholic theologians of liberation have developed in a form uniquely suited to the socio-economic context of the Third World, the implications of the biblical teaching about the Kingdom of God. Faced with the historical distortions of the Reformers, “apolitical” pietism, and dispensationalist fantasies...have likewise discovered in the Kingdom of God a hermeneutical key for Biblical interpretation...” (Cross Currents-1985: 23).

The emphasis by liberation theologians on the liberative focus and intent of the gospel is in a sense a counter to this lost focus of historical theology. It is this lost focus, pointed out by Bonino and Ellul, that has contributed to the problem of oppression in Australia and has been perpetrated, particularly by the church in Australia. By the same token the State has used the instrument of propaganda to advocate and promote the myth of its guiltlessness as well as the myth of ‘terra

nullius' as discussed elsewhere.

These two institutions has effectively circumvented justice in Australia through State propaganda and a corrupted heretical church theology to create and perpetuate poverty and oppression among Aborigines and so entrench white power and privilege.

Ellul therefore says Christians should now "...liberate themselves from – the tyranny of propaganda as an instrument of the state."(Cross Currents 1985:29) When Christians have liberated themselves of the tyranny of propaganda, they will be able to better understand the mysticism and the dreaming of the Aboriginal religion.

3.6 The problem of mysticism and dreaming

The alienation and deprivation experienced in the black community caused some serious social, cultural and psychological dislocation. Members of a community would disappear for some time without anybody knowing and would appear to aimlessly walkabout as if having lost something or constantly in search of some lost dimension of their being. Often this has been seen by whites as one who wants to avoid working and be idle only. One needs to be aware of this alienation and deprivation, as James Cowan in his perceptive book *Mysteries of the Dream-Time* says "...we are to understand the true nature of the Dream Journey as a cultural affirmation in the face of the inevitable destruction of Aboriginal society today by Western cultural imperialism."(1992: 44). One of the sad realities of modern Australian society is that white Australians almost always evaluate Aboriginal law, custom, culture and tradition by their own understanding, law, custom and culture. This then invariably leads to a clash of these values since white Australians do not understand or even attempt to understand indigenous Australians existence. This antagonism also erodes any goodwill that exists and defeats a mutual respect that is necessary for greater mutual understanding.

The Dream Journey says James Cowan, exists on two levels, which "...is largely a social activity in which participation is encouraged by all the members of a family group. The other is a more personal activity embarked upon alone in order that the individual might experience a close understanding of his sacred nature."(1992:45) Some of these rituals are designed to promote greater

awareness of the environment and nature.

The social activity is also considered as being exoteric or outward while the personal activity is seen as an esoteric or inward journey. While they may be described as being different, their significance overlap. This adds to making them "...acute observers of natural phenomena" who are also attuned to the cyclic nature of the seasons and how it breaks down."(1992: 46) One can therefore also say that "The Dream Journey on the ritual level, is a way of renewing contact with themselves, since they and the land are inseparable."(1992: 48) This connectedness with the environment and nature is of great import and significance to the Aborigine. Being disconnected from this part of their existence can lead to alienation and a sense of being disoriented. This reality is not always understood in white society and its spiritual value underrated or ignored. Whites being not very spiritually aware tend to be more materialistically inclined and tend to ridicule such relationships and lifestyles. This reveals two different world views and value systems moving in opposite directions, and it was not moving away from each other but on a collision course towards each other.

Leonardo Boff says "Socialism grows from a profound rejection of deprivation and suffering."(1995: 141) Speaking from a Latin American perspective he says "This process involves what we may term the mysticism of commitment and struggle. The number is constantly growing of those who locate themselves within a holistic and integral philosophy of human existence. In so doing, they try to disclose the various dimensions of the mystery of life and the various levels of human commitment. They identify themselves with the great dreams and visions of a new world and of human and social relations imbued more thoroughly with compassion and love that spark the imagination to stir the heart. In this context spirituality and God become truly meaningful in everyday events, in major decisions, in achievements and in setbacks – in short, in the great drama of human kind and human history."(ibid: 141)

Boff makes the relation between ecology or our environment and our liberation very clear and affirms the interdependence between humanity and our environment. This mystical relation he says is what sustains and support people in their struggle and not "to mystify reality"(1995: 142).

In Australian western society this mysticism has been largely ignored or viewed

with cynicism and overlooked as being irrelevant at best or pagan at worst. Boff declares though that “spirituality and mysticism form part of life in its wholeness and in its sacredness. They support the thrust of resistance and the persistent longing for liberation.”(1995: 142). This awareness of one’s spirituality increases one’s desire for better things, nobler goals and the liberation of both the oppressed and oppressor.

This self awareness of the spiritual dimension in one-self, will increase the awareness of same in the oppressor. This awareness would increase the oppressor’s knowledge, understanding and willingness to participate in the liberation of the oppressed. Every person is a mystery and no one can fully explain the meaning of a person. Boff then says “It is the part of the nature of mystery that it should be known. This is the very paradox of mystery.”(1995: 144). “This understanding” he says “is existential” and adds “Einstein said that perceiving mystery was of fundamental importance for the creative scientist, for it brought to awareness all those dimensions that were inaccessible to scientific formulas and enabled the scientist to remain basically humble.”(1995: 145)

He then makes this very perceptive remark “If we are open to mystery at the beginning and at the end of our enquiries we shall eventually discover a more replete, human personal form of truth.” (ibid: 146)

Modern human beings with a scientific mindset that always wants to empirically explain and understand things leaves very little or no room for the contribution of mystery. If the Dream Journey is a social and personal activity to understand one’s own and environment’s sacred nature, Boff is right when he says “ an experience of mystery is at the root of all religions” and “It can be expressed neither with words nor with silence” because “all of us, at a certain level, are mystics.”(1995:147)

While James Cowan and Leonardo Boff are describing different experiences taking place on different continents, the similarities are so striking that the dreaming and the experience of mystery can almost be summed up in the words of Hill, Knitter and Madges who in their book *Faith, Religion and Theology* says “For many of us, personal experience is the standard by which we judge the reality, truth and value of events and ideas. If some thing fits our experience, we might say, That’s right, That’s the way things are”. If something doesn’t fit our experience, we find ourselves saying, “That’s not right, I don’t believe it.”(1997:365). Often times our experiences shape our theological views and we

are keen to accept traditional views handed down to us more readily and without query, question or analytical criticism if it suits or fits our experiential mindset. Hill, Knitter and Madges then says “The products of theological reflection regularly tended to be the work of the powerful. The voices of the powerless-women, racial minorities, and poor people – were rarely heard.”(1997: 366). This approach to theology has invariably led to the production of a one-sided view of theology. Those who produced such theology were often products of the privileged group i.e. white, male, middle-class, well-fed, arrogant and in a non-threatened role or position.

Their theology has nothing to say to the poor, therefore Cone says in his preface to *A Black Theology of Liberation* “Any message that is not related to the liberation of the poor in a society is not Christ’s message” (1986:vii). All this is simply saying that the human experience in our religion and theology often reveals our position in life as well as our views on life. However, Hill, Knitter and Madges says “Increasingly today the voices of those who have been ignored or silenced in the past are being heard”(1997: 266) While this new inclination to listen to the poor is true, it also needs to be done regarding those practicing mysticism and the Dream Journey. At the beginning of this section it was said that Aborigines would go ‘walkabout’ and this term would be used by whites as a derogatory term regarding Aboriginal religious life. However “...for the Australian Aborigine the idea of quitting the tribal community in order to seek out solitude is entirely alien to his thinking.”(1989: 117).

Cowan, in discussing the ‘walkabout’ practice of the Aborigine also suggest that “...he had long ago decided that his spiritual life was more important to him than his physical life” and “He does not need to withdraw from the tribal community in order to work out his salvation. This is taken care of in the context of tribal belief, custom and law. He is beholden to these before he is beholden to himself. The law of the community takes precedence over, and largely subsumes any individual volition of his own. The Aborigine sees himself as a member of a tribe first before they see himself as an individual. This is not to say that his social identity eliminates all sense of individual persona – far from it” (1989:118)

This is part of the connectedness that Aborigines feel towards the tribe as well as the land, country or environment. This is in stark contrast to the individualism, materialism, use and abuse attitude of whites towards themselves,

others and the environment. This approach also makes it difficult to find common ground for mutual understanding, respect and acceptance between black and white Australians. While the ascetic does not feature largely in the activity of the Aborigine and they understand the benefits of it, it is rarely detached from ritual since ritual is the instrument by which they explore the Dreaming. To abandon his birthright or Dreaming would lead to his spiritual and even physical death.

Harvey Arden in his book *Dreamkeepers* dialogues with various members of different communities who often prefer to remain anonymous, says “When Aborigines go Walkabout – their version of American Indian’s vision-quest or spirit-journey – they aren’t wandering randomly through the bush but are rigorously following pre-ordained routes through their family’s own particular inherited portion of Dreaming country along the track of ancestors.”(1994: 4). To the novice or outsider this may appear to be idle wandering or meaningless walkabout through the country but as Arden says, it teaches them “...how to travel safely through it and how to relate to the other living creatures and plants with whom they share it” and this promotes a connectedness with others and the environment.(ibid: 5) While this practice is still being accepted by many Aboriginal groups, others are less committed and seek different modes of spirituality.

However, since “Aborigines accept that most landscapes actually live” it therefore goes without saying, that people alone do not constitute a community, but a community includes the land. (1989:125) Therefore “It is virtually impossible for him to deny his relationship with earth, with his Dreaming, with his totem. This triad conditions his intellectual and emotional outlook. It also conditions his attitude towards his community” says Cowan .(1989:126) This is why he says “He is content to live in this world and does not crave after another.”(1989: 127)

The Dreaming is therefore in essence, his life. Deny him this, and he dies, yet encourage this, and he lives and blossoms. The dreaming brings fulfilment and connectedness. It brings contentment and satisfaction. It brings courage and continuation. It is the lifeline to the past and the path forward. It brings harmony in the community, the individual and with the land, the environment, the country. This the white western society lacks, do not understand, that makes it shortsighted, deprived, arrogant that leads them to resist the Aborigine rather

than understand to oppress rather than uplift, to deprive rather than nourish, to annihilate rather than multiply and to defeat rather than celebrate life together. To understand the process of Dreaming within the Aboriginal community, a sharing and participation in the community life is important. This would foster an understanding, acceptance and appreciation of the mindset, attitude and meaning of the event. This dreaming is so an important part of the life, practice and existence of the Aborigine, participation would require one to completely submit to the routine and process.

This is the similar process recommended by liberation theology practitioners with regard to the poor and the oppressed in other communities. The Dreaming encourages a harmonious existence with oneself, with the neighbor or community and with the environment. This is a spirituality sorely needed in a western context that is more individualistic, wasteful and disharmonious with the environment.

Since the Dreaming is such a coherent force or process for the individual and community, it seems to depend on the fact that those who do not practice its precepts may eventually self-destruct through lack of coherence, mutual or communal harmony, dignity and self respect. However, this Dreaming, just like the Christian religion and theology, still need the tools, mechanisms or method to do social analysis, to understand and deal with or resist the forces that would oppress and exploit its adherents or community and so help it resist exploitation and oppression by stronger and perhaps more sophisticated forces. These forces may include western culture, imperialism, science, technology and political and religious influences. Unlike the Christian religion that has the Bible and thousands of years of theology and other documents to assist it to do further reflective work, the dreaming seems more dependent largely on story telling (or parables) and similar oral traditions for its continuation. Important as that may be, in the face of western science, technology and other similar influences, it runs the very real and serious risk of being diminished and relegated to a peripheral activity.

However, with the giant strides being made in certain areas of Christian theology to understand its socio-economic and cultural-political context with a view to liberating people disadvantaged and oppressed within those processes, other religions (e.g. Hinduism–Ghandi) are also developing similar processes of social analysis and/or benefiting from these Christian insights gained through

social analysis. Thereby they liberate their people who are being oppressed by others in their community. Dreaming is evidently very practical and useful to its adherents and devotees. Its ability to resist and survive a long term external onslaught and challenge that is inconsiderate, brutal and hostile towards it, may well prove too overwhelming. Additional modern methods and tools to help it analyze and understand its opponents may be equally useful in the same way as the tools of social analysis is being employed by particular liberation theologians.

This analysis is being done by these theologians to ensure that Christianity does not continue to be used by unscrupulous oppressors to oppress them more.

Admittedly this analysis is already being done, albeit in its initial stages, by certain individuals in the Aboriginal community. It is also being done by Aboriginal theologians and referred to in the last chapter. Other colonial influences has also made Aboriginals angry and in this regard Harvey Arden again says in his book *Dreamkeepers* when he quotes an Aboriginal male who says “We Aboriginals make up barely one percent of the people in Australia, mate. You think we are going to pick up guns and start a revolution to overthrow the government? No it’s not violence against white (Gadia) people I’m talking about. It’s the violence inside us, the violence Gadia planted inside us and left growin’ there...” (1994:7) This violence that affects black dignity is what concerns some black people rather than their concern about the Dreamtime stories. This reflective comment indicates that some people within the Aboriginal community are doing their own analysis of their circumstances. This is being done to understand the processes inherent in it and how to deal with them.

Arden continues the quote which says “When I was a boy in the fifties, the coppers around Wyndham here used to shoot black fellas for ten bob a head. So that’s where we got the violence.” (ibid: 7) This comment reveals that some of the violence in the black communities has been introduced by white people. This approach to dealing with social oppression would assist with its alienation and address Aboriginal dignity and self respect. This is why Arden was told “Lets talk about Aboriginal dignity, not Dreamtime stories.”(ibid: 7) Communal discipline among Aboriginal communities rarely if ever included killing; rather piercing a persons’ thigh with a spear was one of the worst methods of discipline. Another method of discipline was isolating a person from the group or clan which for most people was probably worse than being killed.

The shooting and killing of Aborigines by whites was a more severe and vicious form of violence that sometimes nurtured feelings of retributive violence in Aborigines against whites (or Gadia). This also led to violence among blacks in a way and on a scale unknown before.

But by the same token A.W. Reed says in *Aboriginal Stories* various stories has different meanings among different groups and in different locations saying in the Introduction “Coming from widely divergent sources, it is natural that there should be inconsistencies and contradictory elements.”(1994:8) This means it may have different meanings but it is used to help “...men walk the path with fidelity, which leads into the sacred dreamtime, the source of life.”(ibid: 8) Stories may therefore be understood or named differently because “With hundreds of tribes and hundreds of languages, there was no homogeneity of nomenclature...” or system of names (ibid: 9) Reed then says there were different creation myths as there are different legends of sun, moon and stars as well as of animals, birds, rivers, lakes as well as hero stories, but many remain diverse, complex or even inconsistent.

Some of these stories also assisted the elders in training the young people living skills as well as maintaining discipline, law and order, and passing on other cultural, religious and other practices, skills and information. These longstanding customs and practices though did little or anything to help the community survive the white onslaught and which has changed black life in Australia forever.

3.7 Black life and suffering in Australia

Since before the time of colonization in 1788, black life in Australia consisted of communal living with the whole corporate need being met. Education of the young were done by the elders who also managed ‘law and order’ through disciplines that kept the clan coherent and together. This type of living was not necessarily geographically static, but was more nomadic in search of food according to the seasons. This is also described by Russell Ward in *A Nation for a Continent* when he says “Indeed almost every aspect of Aboriginal life was governed by tradition or immemorial custom” (1977: 2) He also adds “The peaceful nature of the Aboriginal race did nothing to protect them from the white invaders: rather the reverse” (ibid: 2) This clash of peoples took on

various forms and gravity. Of this Ward says “In all the Aboriginal inhabitants were detribalized, dispossessed and destroyed by the white invaders. Even and other philanthropists among the latter found it impossibly difficult to understand a people who had no concept of private, as opposed to tribal or collective property. Sometimes Aborigines were shot or poisoned like troublesome animal pests; more often they succumbed to European diseases and to spiritual sickness caused by separation from their tribal lands” (1977:4)

The destabilizing of the Aboriginal communities has occurred since the early times and continues till today. In Aboriginal communities “The individual was subordinated to the good of the community” and therefore “The concept of land as private property which might be cultivated, possessed, inherited and transformed was unknown to Aboriginal Australia” says Bolton.(1981:9). This change in the concept of ownership was not the only change brought about by white settlement. Geoffrey Bolton says “Trees were not the only victims of the spread of European settlement across Australia” (1981: 49) Many animal species were victims and some were even wiped out altogether, a phenomenon that was extended even to certain Aboriginal tribes. Bolton then adds “The new disturbing factor was the white man, the relentless white man, before whom disappear all obstacles that came in his way, whether black men, opossums, or eucalyptus forests” (1981:56). It is evident from this that the white Australian was viciously relentless in his desire to advance himself at any cost to others or the environment. This selfish approach to self preservation at all costs would prove not only to be unethical, immoral, irresponsible and indefensible, but would have long term disastrous effects for the land as well as for relations between the colonial and indigenous inhabitants of the land. This approach has affected black life in Australia.

It led people to act in a disrespectful and callous way toward black culture, black rights and property, black life and existence, black values and beliefs. A total disregard of black existence also contributed to the absolute powerlessness of black people. This absence of respect for the black person contributed to their social, economic, political, educational and psychological poverty. The indigenous people were consequently seen as objects to be used, abused and discarded at will and not as people to be respected. They were treated as chattel and counted as (among the) cattle of the nation and seen as a nuisance in the presence of whites, if they were able to come that close. Families were not seen and treated as families in the western or Christian sense. They were therefore

not seen or treated as westerners or civilized or Christian. They were not considered as Western (or Eastern for that matter or even Australian, certainly not British). If by any remote chance they were considered as British subjects, they were certainly not extended the same courtesy, privileges and rights as extended to ordinary British subjects or even to (the) subsequently released convicts. This disregard of black existence and denial of their rights continues to this day.

Being black in Australia means one can be poorly treated by almost anybody and it being considered doing you a favour and that one actually prefers it that way. In the previous century, but no less during this century Aborigine family life was not recognized as also divinely instituted, albeit that they were probably more cohesive and mutually committed than white families, even without the sophisticated support – systems such as child care, regular employment and income, communication systems, accommodation and transport, health and education, laws and regulations. Black family life was still considered the basic unit in the clan and was the support base for children to grow up in and taught their basic survival skills as well as cultural and spiritual values.

The black person was also subjected to an assimilation program that attempted to make them similar to whites. The assimilation system is an Australian refusal to accept the black as they are. The policy would lead to the perpetual domination of the black person. H.C. Coombs states in his book *Aboriginal Autonomy* that “The physical changes themselves may well have been less damaging to the Aboriginal lifestyle and therefore to Aboriginal health than the enormously different social, economic and spiritual character of the total environment which Aborigines had to confront after colonization” and he says “A comparison of the total environment which Aboriginal Australians now confront with that to which they and their ancestors had been physically adapted makes clear the enormity of their difficulties.(1994: 58)

They were confronted with changes and were obliged to adjust long held practices over several thousand years, within brief periods of a few generations of which Coombs also says “...for which nothing in the experience or wisdom of their elders has prepared them, or can offer any rational explanation.”(1994: 59). He then goes on saying “All this meant that Aborigines in these settlements were undergoing a life experience utterly inconsistent and incompatible with their own patterns of belief about the nature and operation of the universe.”

(ibid: 61) This type of disorientation and the speed at which it takes place is extremely disruptive particularly if one has no say in the process. This is why Coombs says “In such circumstances the investment of white knowledge, skills and resources in attempts to ‘solve the problems’ of Aboriginal health was bound to yield little return” (1994: 61).

He then explains “...few medical workers showed much interest in the Aboriginal view of health and biology” and “However well intentioned, scientifically planned or generously humanely administered, they rarely achieved their purposes” (ibid: 62) He then makes the relation between improved Aboriginal health and land rights when he says “...altering effectively the direction of change in the health of Aborigines...is the land rights campaign and the beginnings of its success. Where ...Aborigines have had land restored to them and are in effective control of it, there is already evidence that they are coping more successfully with the problems of contemporary life. To be in their own territory, to be able to restore their relationship with it, to hunt and to gather, to renew their ceremonial life, to instruct their young in the traditional law; these things are the source of renewed strength and confidence.”(ibid: 62)

A return, even in part to traditional Aboriginal lifestyles, would certainly prove progressive to the people and the land as it would be salvific to relations between all concerned, even if this has to be done through existing or new agreements and religio-socio-political documents.

3.7 An initial formulation of a theology of liberation based on Australian experience

Boff argues the crises in the church is because of the “absence of a profound experience of God” because many “... are not interested so much in the truth of God as in the security of their religious systems” therefore Boff says “The truly religious individual, ...possesses a mystical form of knowledge. This is experiential knowledge imbued with the evidence of encounters with God”(1995: 149). This then invariably strengthens the person to continue in struggle and pursue a course of greater justice. Pursuing this Christian mysticism, Boff says would lead to “a commitment to solidarity with the poor... a commitment to personal and social change” and this ultimately “creates conflict” (1995: 151) Solidarity with the suffering people” he says is solidarity “with the suffering servant of Jesus” and this is necessary for “the establishment of justice and the promotion of life” (ibid: 151)

The mystical existential communion of the Father, Son and spirit is “The interrelationship of life and love among them (perichoresis in theological terminology) is so profound and radical that it is the means by which they are, so the speak, unified and constitute one God” (1995: 153) This communion among themselves is also the communion and solidarity that we are instilled with to show solidarity with the poor and marginalized, rejected and outcasts. This is necessary he says because “Judaeo – Christian mysticism... does not accept the world as it is” and “This means that the Kingdom will be inaugurated always and only where justice triumphs, collaboration is affirmed, the spirit of enmity is overcome, love is practiced and everything proceeds, sweetly moving, sweetly singing toward the supreme integration of all things, all creatures, through God and in God” (ibid: 154)

Celebrating the Christian communion Table of the Lord is a symbol also of one’s communion with the Crucified One and solidarity with the suffering community everywhere. In a certain sense G.D. Cloete in his book *Hemelse Solidariteit (translated is Heavenly Solidarity)* says “Jesus openbaar hier dus sy innige verbondenheid en solidariteit met die kudde. So ontstaan n wedersydse and onderlinge relasie van kennis waarin Hy en die Kudde met mekaar leef. Dit is geen kennis wat gebaseer is op intellek nie, maar op liefdesgemeenskap en op grond van die opofferende dade van die herder. En dit gaan buite die grense van en bo die gevoelens van nasionalisme, want ook diegene buite die stal, word tot en kudde gemaak” (Hemelse Solidariteit: Doctoral Thesis...G.D.Cloete. p56)(translated is; Jesus reveals here his intimate attachment to and solidarity with the sheep. So exist a reciprocal and mutual exchange of knowledge where He and the sheep live together. This knowledge is not based on intellect, but on a love relationship and on the grounds of the sacrificial deeds of the shepherd. This goes beyond the boundaries and feelings of nationalism since also those outside the camp are allowed and made part of the fold)

This solidarity leads to fruitfulness and suffering. This solidarity, fruitfulness and suffering have great meaning and significance in the struggle of oppressed communities for liberation from oppressive structures. People are inspired to persevere in their struggle for justice and freedom and this solidarity is advanced not only among one another but also with their Liberator God and their Liberator Jesus Messiah. Such struggles continue because oppressed people believe that the Liberator God is on their side and wills and works along side

them, and that to free them from their shackles of oppression. This people do, not only because they know God is in their midst, but also because they God loves them, as Cloete says, but also the vision oppressed people have, is of a new reality of meaningful communion rather than meaningless poverty and separation. This struggle that generates solidarity inspires generations to want to transform their society. This vision includes wholeness and justice and freedom and love and community. Among certain Aboriginal communities God is known as 'Wandjina' and there is a belief that Wandjina is always their. Even after the missionaries came with their religion, the Aborigines still believe in 'Wandjina'. As a person said to Harvey Arden after hearing the Christian religion "But we still worship Wandjina. Just like we worship the God of heaven" (1994:24)

To them the Wandjina is the Creator therefore many would say "The God in heaven and the Wandjina in the cave are the same. Jesus was a Wandjina. But the white people, they call him God...and Jesus too. They all Wandjina, they all made the world" (ibid: 25) Many Aborigines had adapted by merging their original beliefs with the new one's in their own unique ways. This they often do without contradiction. The right attitude and pure intentions, i.e. a pure of heart seems all that is needed. Many may not be able to clearly explain everything they believe but the heart is pure. The white people can explain what they believe, but their heart is not always pure. They teach us right, but treat us wrong, some would say. Arden again quotes one person saying "Not many white people come here you know. They just pass by. They don't see us. We don't exist for them. They never say hello". (ibid: 26). This type of experience seems common between black and white people in Australia. Black people often feel negated and ignored by whites yet blacks are often required by white people to abandon their religion or spirituality and lifestyle and to adopt the white person's ways. Many Aborigines find such contradictions in the white person's ways, hard to accept.

Somehow it appears Aborigines were required, to rephrase Guitierrez' term 'drink from the white man's wells but not their own religious wells'. Aborigines seem to have adjusted much easier to both religious traditions than the white people were able or willing to adjust. Boff therefore argues "They are inspired by dreams of a new reality, which remove the sense of fatality from history and do not restore as a historical necessity the unjust situation imposed and maintained by the force of oppression. It is always there in a subversive form... to ensure that the transformation of society never ceases" and "refuses to accept the tatus quo" (1995:155) The status quo has always inflicted suffering and pain

on the weak and vulnerable therefore “...the humiliated and the injured are successors of the suffering servant in Jesus Christ. This ‘Heavenly Solidarity’ of Cloete allows people to “...sing of the victorious revolution, we already rejoice ritually at the achievement of liberation, and we already feel that we are sitting down to a banquet with God as quests or as sons and daughters in our Father’s house” (1995: 160) This solidarity gives encouragement, strength, guidance, a sense of victory, “joyful living and meaningful accomplishment”(1995:162)

In the same vein, Gustavo Gutierrez says in *We Drink from our own well* that “A conversion is the starting point of every spiritual journey” (1984: 95) He then explains this more when he says “To believe in God is more than simply to profess God’s existence; it is to enter into communion with God and – the two being inseparable- with our fellow human beings as well. And all this adds up to a process” (1984: 96)

This process is a long and arduous one which stretches into a long and winding road that ultimately leads to a relationship of solidarity and support. Despite all the hardships people often endure as oppressed communities, there is always an element of togetherness and mutual support that surpasses explanation. Gutierrez describes this thus “Solidarity is as a concrete expression of Christian love today, which seeks roots in the cultural traditions of the indigenous people of Latin America. A hasty and simplistic interpretation of the liberationist perspective has led some to affirm that its dominant, if not exclusive, themes are commitment, the social dimension of faith, the denunciation of injustices, and others of a similar nature. It is said that the liberationist impulse leaves little room for grasping the necessity of personal conversion as a condition for Christian life and for being aware of the place that sin and repentance have in our lives”(1984: 96)

More liberationists are of the view that breaking with sin is not only personal, but also collective. The change in our lives should also take place as a change in society. This broader view of conversion is necessary to avoid a personal pietism growing at the expense of national justice. In one sense a personal liberation should also reflect a social liberation. These two processes should become a process of mutual solidarity towards the goal of creating a just and fair society that is whole and free with equal opportunity and respect for dignity and human personality for all. A Gospel therefore that is not liberative in both the personal and collective or social sense of people and in both its content and intent, is futile and false. If it does not have the total liberation of the individual

and the society as its goal which should also ultimately include the liberation of the whole creation, it would be deceptive and misleading by concerning itself only with the soul and spirit. This desire for personal, societal and creational wholeness among oppressed communities, promotes connectedness with all these dimensions in human existence. This is a similar connectedness that is present perhaps even in a stronger and more central way, in the Aboriginal Dreaming and the walkabout dimension thereof. This desire for wholeness within the Christian faith particularly as expressed in the different liberative theologies and the Aboriginal dreaming, seeks to liberate the whole being, the whole society and the whole creation ultimately. This liberative intent and content of the Gospel is clearly stated by Allan Boesak in *Farewell to Innocence* “Black Theology believes that liberation is not only ‘part of’ the gospel or ‘consistent with’ the gospel; it is the content and framework of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (1977: 9) In a somewhat different way both Martin Luther King and Malcolm X expresses similar concerns regarding the liberative intent of the Gospel. Martin Luther King said “Any religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of [people] and is not concerned about the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them and the social conditions that cripple them is a spiritually moribund religion awaiting burial” (1990: 35).

Dwight Hopkins expresses the same concerns of Malcolm X in his book *Black Theology U.S.A and South Africa* who says “I believe in a religion that believes in freedom. Anytime I have to accept a religion that won’t let me fight a battle for my people, I say to hell with that religion.”(ibid: 35) These last three quotations are from people who were not only concerned about injustice, but through their methods of social analysis and the application of the Gospel in those social situations, were able to change their respective societies towards greater justice and the liberation of the people. This focus of theology on both the individual and the society they live in has increased in recent decades and thereby made Christian liberation theology more relevant to oppressed people. The solidarity or unity of these two processes (personal and collective) is also present in Aboriginal dreaming as it also includes a solidarity or unity with the environment. The more recent developments in Christian ecological theology have seriously attempted to create similar Christian awareness and solidarity with its ecology or environment. In brief, Boff describes this when he says “Ecology stands for the relations, interaction and dialogue of all existing creatures (whether alive or not) among themselves and with all that exists” (1995: 9).

This interrelationship between all living creatures then displays a mutual solidarity for mutual advantage. The acknowledgement of such a broader view of existence and therefore the need for such a view to a salvation or liberation theology is needed. This evidently is emerging in some liberative, feminist or ecological theologies. Such social transforming and communally cohesive processes may include various socio-historical documents and we shall now in the next chapter examine some of these documents in the Australasian context.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STATUS OF CERTAIN LEGAL, SOCIO-POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS IN AUSTRALASIA

4.1 Introduction

Other than the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia which serves as a binding and guiding document for the country, other influential socio-politico-legal documents have been produced that have the potential to alter the course of history in this country.

Some of these documents have seen the light in recent years, that we will in a cursory fashion consider, would be the Mabo High Court of Australia decision and to a lesser degree, the Wik High Court of Australia decision and in a New Zealand context, the Treaty of Waitangi. In the main, constitutions do not change that often and then only if it is considered to the greater benefit of the people. One of the enduring myths held in this country was the belief in the doctrine of 'Terra Nullius', which according to Henry Reynolds means "...a land belonging to no-one". (1987:12).

4.2 Mabo

With the High Court Mabo decision of 1992, this long held myth was shattered. Since so many people found their security in this long held myth, now found it in tatters, they also discovered that for once they also felt at risk, vulnerable and exposed. Back in 1893 Captain Wharton as editor of the Endeavours' logbook said "the coarser order of colonialists" treated the Aborigines "as wild beasts to be extirpated"(High Court of Australia Mabo Decision 1992:27) This document goes on to say "What the extract makes plain is that the expression and, in some areas of the continent, the obliteration or near obliteration of the Aborigines were the inevitable consequences of their being dispossessed of their traditional lands"(High Court of Australia Mabo Decision 1992:97)

This obliteration of Aborigines the High Court Judges affirm is as a result of their dispossession of their land. To be fair though, seven years later

however, “the Australian Aborigines were, at least as a matter of legal theory, included among the people who, “relying on the blessing of Almighty God”, agreed to unite in an indissoluble commonwealth of Australia(ibid:28) The constitution contained but two references to them. Both were dismissive and have now been removed. The first(284) excluded them from the reach of the power of the Commonwealth Parliament to make laws with respect to the people of any race, ...the second(285)” said “in reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a state or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted”(ibid:98) These early events were both startling as they were disgraceful yet influenced many actions by white settlers towards black indigenous people for many years to come. However the decision of the High Court regarding dispossession is therefore significant as it is far reaching. It says “The acts and events by which that dispossession in legal theory was carried into practical effect constitute the darkest aspect of the history of this nation. The nation as a whole must remain diminished unless and until there is an acknowledgement of, and a retreat from, those past injustices. In these circumstances, the court is under a clear duty to re-examine the two propositions. The reasons that we have explained, that re-examination compels their rejection. The lands of this continent were not terra nullius or “practically unoccupied” in 1788” (High Court of Australia Mabo Decision- 1992: 100) This leads us now to consider the status of the status quo.

4.3 Status quo theology as heresy

Since the Australian society has been influenced by the long held mythical doctrine of Terra Nullius which has been shattered by the High Court in this country, it now also has to be shattered theologically. Albeit that many politicians, miners, pastoralists and others have since attempted to have legislation passed that would extinguish Native Title and thereby defeat these milestone achievements by the indigenous people.

The theological shattering of the myth of the doctrine of Terra Nullius occurs when the church, as also discussed in chapter three, affirms the presence, worth and dignity as well as the right and rights of the indigenes in Australia to be in Australia as its original inhabitants, owners of land and waters and custodians of its rich culture, heritage and traditions. This is a necessary process that would affirm that the Aborigines as black human beings must be respected as such. The

Aborigines are created in the image of God and therefore the church must in its preaching, theology and witness otherwise, jealously defend and uphold that dignity if the church is to remain prophetic, authentic, credible and the body and witness of its Lord and Head Jesus Christ. Failing to do that, the church would be supporting a heretical status quo theology that on the basis of a distorted view of the Gospel, wants to defend the right of the settlers to defend their own selfish existence to the detriment of the freedom and an equal right to existence of Aborigines.

John Harris in his book *One Blood* describes the thinking of many that undergirds a heretical theological view of the superiority of whites against the inferiority of blacks in Australia when he quotes James Dawson who said "...the Aborigines were nearest of all to the monkey or orang-otang" or Peter Cunningham who "...placed them at the zero of civilisation..."(1990:24) A somewhat similar view is expressed by the congregational missionary Lancelot Threlkeld saying "It was maintained by many of the colony that the blacks had no language at all but were only a race of the monkey tribe" so that "there could be no guilt attributed to those who shot them off or poisoned them"(ibid:25)

Such views are still alive today and in some way or another influences the dominant heretical status quo theology.

Harris also observes that the "Darwinian evolution lent scientific respectability to the belief of European superiority" and often in either covert or overt fashion, this view is still being nurtured. (ibid: 25). In most instances the religious and theological views of the church were influenced and informed by other people rather than by the Bible as Harris again indicates "...most missionaries' views on Aborigines were not clearly distinguishable from those of the rest of the community" (1990:29). As is so often the case, black races are often seen by white races as being the recipients and descendants of Noah's curse on his son Ham. To avoid that this discussion become extensive and as always polemical, its presence and influence in Australia only shall be briefly indicated. John Harris points out "According to Archbishop Ussher's chronology there were fewer than 6000 years to account for the vast differences between Aborigines and European peoples" (1990: 29)

It appears that a convenient stance on the difference between Black and white development naturally goes back to Noah's utterance regarding Ham. This curse is normally and naturally extended to all black persons everywhere and in all

time. White attitudes in Australia towards blacks is therefore no different. Harris argues “Instead of seeing the fulfilment of the curse of Canaan in the Hebrew conquest of the Canaanites, the curse was seen to apply to Ham and all his descendants: Cush (Ethiopia) Mizraim (Egypt) and Phut (Libya) These were African nations and included black races. By extension, the curse was given universal application, not only to the black peoples of Africa, but to all black races of the southern hemisphere” (ibid: 30). This extension seems to have no limit both in time and geographically. It seems that the presence and proclamation of the liberative Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the universal application of his sacrificial death is also ignored when the curse of Noah is applied. This is why Joseph Orton as a Wesleyan Clergyman could say “...the Aborigines were degraded far below the brute creation” (ibid: 30). To many whites a dark skin often symbolizes inferiority, slavery or evil and therefore “It was easy to justify such a view by a theology based on the extension of Hams’ curse to the African nations.”(ibid: 31) It must be stated though that while the above mentioned views were strong and widespread in Australia, some whites albeit always a minority (also) held the view that Aborigines were human. .What is almost always overlooked in this debate is that God placed a curse and a mark on Cain for killing his brother Abel (Genesis 4) and that this curse remains on him as Jesus said to the Pharisees that they will be held responsible for the deaths since Abel of all the prophets, apostles and saints i.e. to this present day.(Luke 11 v 50+51 & Rev 18V24) Of this the Dutch Theologian Abraham Kuyper expresses his concern regarding black people as Allan Boesak quotes him in *Farewell to Innocence* when he probably accurately says “For them, Abel was black and the curse of God on Cain was surely this: He made him *white*” (1977:39). Almost never does white people consider the fact that they could be the recipients of the curse as possible descendants(according to Kuyper) of the killer Cain who will receive his punishment into eternity since the whites particularly in Australia, have been callous killers of Aborigines.

For some centuries now the conservative forces working in this country under the guise of religion, the law, community values, stability, growth(economic and otherwise) decency, sensibility, wealth creation, ownership and anything they can muster up, tried to defeat the forces of justice and those who wanted to advance the Aboriginal cause and struggle for humanity in this country. The gains achieved by the Mabo and Wik decisions which represented justice and that which is right and fair, were being eroded by State and Federal legislation and threats of loss of investment, growth and prosperity, confidence and stability.

Whites are jittery when blacks make advances and gains. For them it always amounts to losses and they see themselves as victims.

A. Davidson & RD Spegele say in *Rights, justice and democracy in Australia* that “All justice comes from God, who is its sole source; but if we knew how to receive so high an aspiration, we should need neither government nor laws. Doubtless, there is a universal justice emanating from reason alone; but this justice, to be admitted among us, must be mutual.”(1991:358) They go on saying though that “Among us, the Kings of England have made themselves head of the church, and the Tzars have done the same: but this title have made them less its masters than its ministers; they have gained not so much the right to change it, as the power to maintain it:”(ibid:368) This desire to acquire power has almost always been to retain the balance of power in their favor if not to retain absolute power. This quest for power permeates throughout the church and other social and civil structures. In the following expression they reveal the traditional conservative view about Christianity held by so many for so long, yet misguided and cherished by many as being true and accurate when he says “Christianity as a religion is entirely spiritual, occupied solely with heavenly things; the country of the Christian is not of this world. He does his duty, indeed, but does it with profound indifference to the good or ill success of his cares. Provided he has nothing to reproach himself with, it matters little to him whether things go well or ill here on earth” and then he goes on saying that “The essential thing is to get to heaven, and resignation is only an additional means of doing so.”(ibid: 370) This escapist and pietist view of the world and religion as being an interim period on the road to heaven has permeated the actions and behaviours of many people throughout history. However, for many whites, justice means only white advantage, white privilege, benefits and gains. In his book *White Nation* Ghassan Hage states “...that many of those (whites) who position themselves as ‘multicultural’ and ‘antiracists’ are merely deploying a more sophisticated fantasy of White supremacy”. Hage suggests that even such people may be racists and may even display such attitudes publicly. After having interviewed several people as part of his research some comments made by these Australians regarding the presence of Muslims and or Arabs in Australia “Muslims are dirty, ‘Arabs are savages’, ‘They smell’, ‘There’s no point reasoning with them; they’re too dumb to understand’, ‘They have too many kids’, ‘I hate them’, ‘I don’t see why we have to have them here’, Everywhere they go they’re a problem...’. Such harsh and degrading views were expressed about people merely upon visual contact and observation of women wearing a scarf because

they are Muslim or of Arab origin. Again Hage says when asking these people why they do such things to the Muslim and Arab women, one commented “This is a Christian country... Soon there’ll be too many of them...How would you like it if we end up having to put a veil on, too?”. (1998: 36-7) With the display of such racial or religious bias in public towards other civilians who does not normally demand greater land or civil or human rights, expressions of racial bias towards Aborigines as the indigenes of Australia by non-aboriginals are often worse.

On the broad national scale the historical development of similar religious and racial bias toward Aborigines persist and as Hage says it emerges from “...a socially and historically grounded fantasy of White dominance, which emerged from the history of the white colonization of Australia...”. (1998: 209) This desire of the whites to dominate others is also their way of keeping the status quo largely unchanged and therefore always in their favour. Often white people believe justice to be their *right* only with a kind of idolatrous conviction from which they will not move. Even white Christians think that extending or sharing civil and human rights with Aborigines would amount to them losing privileges themselves.

This view is borne out by Joyce Clague who in a paper entitled *Good News to the Poor* delivered to the World Council of Churches and published in *Racism in Australia in the 1980's* says “...the Churches in Australia have in their dealings with aboriginal communities only ever been the servants of the political system. The missions were institutions in which we were political prisoners denied all human rights” (2000: 15) This stinging indictment by an Aborigine on the white church in Australia is symptomatic of the Black plight against the white society as a whole. All too often this white society has ignored the demands of blacks for justice. Therefore Clague says of the churches in Australia that they were “Utterly blinded by the sin of racism (therefore) the churches in Australia... only (had) a message of hypocrisy to deliver to Aboriginal Australians.”(2000:15) Such idolatrous views held with religious conviction amounts to heresy. Many believe that the status quo in Australia is God-ordained and should really remain unaltered in the main, except in areas where they alone can gain more. Such caustic racial bias is seen by many as normal and necessary to maintain the status quo, or at least not to have it altered in any significant way.

The treatment meted out to blacks by whites was seen by blacks as contrary to

the Christian message they were preaching. The orthodoxy (teaching) of the church was quite contrary to the orthopraxis (practice) of the church. Even when some rights were advanced by certain governments in Australia, the churches by and large would either oppose or would be loath to endorse it. Of this Clague says “The breath of fresh air enlivened my people in the initiatives of the Whitlam Government has turned to a chilling wind fanned by the complicity of the Australian Churches with forces that have since smothered the freedoms, the rights and the opportunities that we were briefly allowed to taste.”(ibid: 16)

Many Aborigines believe and maintain that their land was stolen from them by the white invading settlers and that it should be given back to them. Since the High Court Mabo decision effectively amounts to blacks being able to regain much and with the High Court Wik decision, regain most of their land, most whites are opposed to these decisions and the conservative forces at various government levels have legislated against these court decisions. It is in this sense that many Aborigines argue that the action of the settlers amount to a thief who has come to steal their land, to kill them and destroy their lifestyle as stated in John 10 v 10 where we read ‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full’. (Thompsons Chain Reference Bible. NIV)

The Mabo decision confirms also that the settlement, occupation or invasion really amounts to theft of the land of the indigenous people. Not only were the land stolen, but the people occupying it, were killed as if they were expendable animals. As if that were not enough, their language, culture, environment, lifestyle (personal and communal) were destroyed. Their life was taken and yet it was done under the guise and cloak of the Christian religion by people having the bible in the one hand and the gun in the other. We have inherited a society that has grown from such actions and yet many consider it as divinely ordained and in no need of correction.

When people insist on keeping/maintaining the status quo in the heretical grip of sameness for generations in the face of societal pressures for change, then those who are the underdogs and victims of such intransigence have little option but to create a mood and a movement that will necessitate change at a speed society may be ill-prepared for.

The extent of such change may also be far beyond that society has hoped for and

the aftermath of such change could have a much more far reaching impact than we can now even think or imagine. To have to be sensitive to, as well as timely responsive to societal or communal calls for justice, instead of remaining blindly committed to the status quo for the sake of continuity, order or ulterior and selfish intentions, may be a recipe for losing even that which oppressors want to preserve at all costs. What is needed is an honest sincere desire to look at and assess the demands for justice and put processes in place to implement such, with all deliberate speed. Failing to meet such demands timely and conscientiously, would only shift the community to the precipice of its patience, with fall-outs that no army on earth, no amount of goodwill and good intentions, half-hearted action, legislation or ill-intended promises will stem and lead to a downward spiral of total destruction.

This will leave unborn generations crippled with a burden of social wrecks that will require only miracles to correct in the short term and or costly programs in the long term. This race dominion is often as hurtful as sex dominion is and is as destructive as class dominion. People are not only discriminated against because they are black but because they are black female as well but also because blacks are often considered to be on the bottom rung of the social and economic ladder. Sex and class domination and discrimination is as real and painful as race discrimination. While chauvinistic males are often the main perpetrators but then particularly white middle class people are equally discriminating in their attitudes and dealings with black people. If society is ordered in such a way where people consider each other according to their race, class, economic or other status, is not only inherently flawed, but is drastically in need of reform.

It ignores the inherent dignity and worth that every person is endowed with by God as a creature created in His image, and as the bearer of the divine nature, should be respected as the crown of God's creation. When this relationship is disturbed, it distorts the normal interpersonal self-views of individuals that leads to suspicion, mistrust and tension.

If this is left to continue unchecked, possibly for generations, the process for reconciliation as contained in the Zacchaeus and Jesus encounter (Luke 19v1-10) and discussed in greater detail in the last chapter, can become extremely costly, complex and convoluted. However Christians are called to a ministry of reconciliation, and would be equipped to fulfil such a calling, however demanding it may be (2 Cor. 5 v19).

This process of reconciliation between black and white people in Australia can and must be initiated by authentic church leaders instead of it being a state initiated process in the past has placed certain limits on groups seeking reconciliation as well as placing their own representatives in key roles in such a process with obstructive rather than constructive attitudes. While state initiated programs can easily be funded by the state, their member representatives tend to follow prescribed ideological and political agendas rather than a course of action that flows from grassroots people contributions.

Often pre-conceived anticipated outcomes are expected which rules out a product born of broad negotiation, consultation and reflection. The Zacchaeus paradigm in this regard provides a biblical framework to construct theological and moral-ethical principles within which a contextual liberation theology can proceed. Concise analysis and sharp thinking in context of the Aboriginal experience is presented and may even produce fresh insights and initiatives. A primary requirement would be for whites to acknowledge that the whole country, coast to coast, belongs to the Aborigines. Such an acknowledgement has never come from official representatives and leaders of the nation out of fear that they would be required to hand over the land to its rightful owners. They are more inclined to deceive, lie and deny these historical realities to ensure a continuation of the status quo. Such an approach to distort or deny such realities only serve to delay meaningful reconciliation to a later generation and making it more costly and complex. It also affirms the common view that oppressors rarely willingly give up their privileged positions of power or give freedom to the oppressed, but that freedom must be demanded by the oppressed. Failing to do this could invariably lead to more tension, conflicts, and even violence which can escalate into revolution.

Often it can be the young people who can become impatient with needless suffering and disadvantage and a sense that their lives may already follow a dead-end path leading no-where before it has really begun. Young people often have a greater expectancy for opportunity in society and with their greater vigor and zeal of optimism for the future, may question and examine traditional ways and methods that are still operating in society. Of such vigour Steve Biko says that they would challenge the "...orthodox situation which seems to be fast becoming obsolete in the minds of young people". (1978:54) While tradition and orthodoxy may have its place in society, its relevance may be more time related

than timeless and should be reviewed and updated regularly.

The Zacchaeus attitude of confession or 'mea culpa'(I am/we are guilty) on the part of the whites are critically important and that such an admission of guilt or sin would arrest and even reverse the internecine experience of so many generations in this country. An acknowledgment that much of the problems within the Black communities such as poverty, disadvantage, alcoholism, violence etc are not of their own doing but the result of oppression, deceit, disadvantage, religious bigotry etc.

The church must therefore do some serious introspection regarding its orthopraxis(practices) and its orthodoxy(teaching) regarding mission, attitude towards black people (i.e different behaviour toward different races).

The Christian church has related its message too closely to its own culture and in preaching its message, expected people also to accept the white person's culture. Therefore Biko says "It is still a known fact that white people don't know black people, and in most cases do not have the interest of black people at heart" (1978: 57)

This reality is very widespread in Australia and the concomitant truth is that very few white people really want to know black people. More and more young black people are becoming increasingly restless and impatient with the church and society at large that are not opening up enough doors of opportunity to enable them to develop and nurture their full potential. Young people also develop and interpret their faith in more practical and contextual terms relevant to their existential situation. Again Biko is right when he says "Young people nowadays would like to feel that they can interpret Christianity and extract from it messages relevant to them and their situation without being stopped by orthodox limitations" (ibid: 58). Young people want a greater say in their own lives as well as a greater control and contribution in their own future. This self-determinism is spreading within the community with a persistent speed and expectancy that society should also remove archaic obstacles with urgency and a deliberate speed that betrays impatience with injustice.

A church theology therefore that only defines sin to personal and inward experiences and does not relate it to concrete social structures and systems will find itself out of harmony with the community of the oppressed as well as out of harmony with Scripture. All the Prophets from Moses condemned social injustice

as well as Jesus, at the outset of his ministry (Luke 4v 18-19) proclaiming the Year of the Lord which announces the liberation of oppressed people. Not to follow in this trend is to ignore the Biblical guidelines and therefore fall foul of heresy and a false theology.

Not to follow these clear liberative paradigms is to preach and worship a false god. A god that does not seek the liberation of the oppressed is a false god. A god that does not inspire people to seek liberation is not the god of the Bible. A theology or Christian message that does not teach people to be free is not the message of Jesus. The Liberator Jesus of the Bible has laid down His life for humanity so that all who seek him would be free from all that would oppress, demean and exploit them. A message that does not proclaim this is a false message, unbiblical message and therefore heresy. In Australia while we still have people who live in un-freedom and are shackled by inhuman conditions little if anything is being said or done by the churches. The churches are rarely if ever outraged by these conditions since their theology and message have little to say about it.

In Moses, God assisted slaves to escape from the idolatrous Egyptian oppression. This was one of the most momentous experiences of the Hebrews in the Bible and displayed God's abhorrence with idolatrous slavery and oppression. It revealed God's siding with the victim, underdog and outcast in society and being against the perpetrators of such inhumanity, oppression and exploitation. God unashamedly and utterly destroyed the mindless perpetrators of such ghastly systems. When Jesus in Luke(4v 18-19) states His mission as Liberator –as indicated by Moses(Deut 18 v15-18) and affirmed by Peter (Acts 3 v 22) of all oppressed people and laid down His life on the Cross to achieve full humanity for all oppressed people, Jesus was also stating God's opposition to Pharisaic practices of oppression.

To oppose liberation therefore is to oppose Jesus.

To cause oppression is to oppose Jesus.

To refuse to heed the calls for liberation is to refuse to heed the call of the Gospel.

It is to refuse to heed the call of God to let the oppressed people go free.

To refuse the liberation of the oppressed is to side with the oppressor Pharaoh. It is to be against God. It is therefore to be with the Pharisees who sent Jesus to his death.

To refuse liberation to the oppressed is to send the oppressed people to their death. To oppose the cause for liberation is to oppose God's cause. A Liberation Theology in Australia demands the Liberation of Aborigines from white imperial enslavement and oppression. It also insists that the continued white occupation of the land perpetuate this oppression and is therefore contrary to the demands of the Gospel.

In this regard, in Australia the church and society must declare 'mea culpa' (I am guilty) if it is to receive and experience God's forgiveness, salvation and life-giving power. This will turn the erroneous trend of suffering around in this society and make it a more God glorifying society. Such a Zaccheaus (Luke 19) and Nichodemus (John 3) style 'mea culpa' would avert an Egyptian, Pharaoh, Pharisaic style of destruction in the future for which there would be no other remedy. That would acknowledge Jesus as Lord of all and as liberator of all and it would restore the church as witness and bride and servant and authentic warrior and representative of God's Kingdom on earth. This would inaugurate a new life giving process that is unprecedented in Australian history. This would be the most significant process towards a meaningful reconciliation and the best counter to a heretical status quo.

Such swift and remedial action should flow from a contrite and humble heart and spirit.(Ps 51 v17, Isaiah 66v2). All these factors being considered, the present socio-ethical heretical state of affairs, while it may seem as peaceful, (very) Australian, progressive, harmonious or even civilized or Christian, it is certainly not just or righteous or to the glory of God and is therefore a phantom and heresy since it is claiming what it is not. The South African Kairos Document that was produced to expose the hypocrisy of the white South African churches' attitude towards Apartheid, speaks to this situation in Australia very clearly. In this regard the South African Kairos Theologians as authors of the Kairos Document said "The theology of the prophets does not pretend to be comprehensive and complete, it speaks to the particular circumstances of a particular time and place – the Kairos, consequently a prophetic response and a prophetic theology would include a *reading of the signs of the time*. This is what the great Biblical prophets did in their times and this is what Jesus tells us to do. When the Pharisees and Sadducees ask for a sign from heaven, he tells them to "read the signs of the times" (Matt. 16v3) or to interpret the KAIROS"(Luke 12v 56). A prophetic theology must try to do this. It must know what is happening, analyze what is happening (social analysis) and then interpret what is happening in the light of

the gospel. This means that the starting point for prophetic theology will be our experience of the present KAIROS, our experience of oppression and tyranny, our experience of conflict, crisis and struggle, our experience of trying to be Christians in this situation. It is with this in mind that we must begin to search the scriptures” (Kairos Document 17) This approach is needed in Australia as it is needed everywhere injustice prevails. A new approach to doing theology in the world is necessary.

In Australia a very strong and pervading conservative theology dominates Christian life and thinking. An escapist pietism that makes people think and feel good about themselves. On this matter Ellul is quoted by Thomas Hanks in the journal *Cross Currents* who says “Many Christians regard their principal role in the world as the conserving of traditional values – as much or more in society as in theology” (1985: 28) In his book *One Blood* John Harris says “It is one of the great tragedies of the recent history of Australia that true Christianity was for so long so very difficult to discern in the life of this outpost of a distant nation which called itself Christian” (1990:17).

This to my mind indicates an early presence of an either escapist approach or a superficial commitment to the Christian gospel in Australia and such an approach to the gospel is still present in many areas in the church. Many methods and approaches to bring the Gospel to the indigenous people were tried over a long period of time yet to a large extent that proved fruitless.

Some of the dealings and relationships between black and white people including Christian missionary people are described by Harris yet he says that “...after missionary attempts by many different denominations and organizations, it was widely believed even by the missionaries themselves that these effort had failed” (ibid: 21). While missionaries are often admired and revered for their efforts and sacrifices for the sake of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the extension of his Kingdom, it is not common practice for most to also ensure that justice form a core and central part of their practice. While many words are spoken about justice and liberation very little action is usually applied to achieve it. The salvation of the soul has traditionally been emphasized by many missionaries. A practical approach to people’s liberation eg the encounter of Zacchaeus with Jesus may invariably prove to be more appealing to the people. Such a paradigm or model for mission is not always popular or appealing to missionaries.

Zacchaeus, although discussed in more detail later, was uncomfortably honest, sacrificially altruistic and noticeably different from many of his contemporaries. However, it is of him that Jesus said that ‘today salvation has come to his home’. It may well be that many missionaries and other Christians who has ignored the Zacchaeus paradigm may themselves not have salvation. The reference of Harris earlier “...these efforts had failed” may well be a true testimony to an ignored Zacchaeus paradigm.(ibid:21)Luke 19 v1-10). While these early pioneers laboured much and encountered much problems Harris “...acknowledged the immense failure of the Christian church to bring the gospel to Aboriginal Australians” was in part because “...their theology was inadequate and they failed to distinguish properly between the gospel and what they called ‘civilization’, European culture”.(ibid: 22)

To some missionaries there were hardly if any distinction between faith and culture so that to some the gospel and European culture were almost interchangeable. A Christian focus on the liberation of the people, to some people appears to be outside the realm of the gospel so that an ‘inner feel good’ rather than an ‘outer live justly’ approach in every respect was the dominant factor and emphasis of most missionaries. The “Evangelical Witness in South Africa” addresses this situation which is equally relevant to Australia when it says “Their living for Christ in this world is an interim measure that prepares them for heaven. Real life here is meaningless trying to bring about changes in this world is occupying oneself with earthly things. This view of evangelicals differs radically with the approach of Christ and most of the Jewish tradition during the time of Christ (Sadducees, Pharisees and the Zealots. It is actually closer to the Essenes who withdrew from public life to keep true to their ancestors’ faith. They had the ascetic tendency calling all others “children of darkness” (Evangelical Witness in South Africa- Page 7).

4.4 Evangelicalism and conservatism

Evangelicalism and conservatism in Australia is the hallmark of the religious and political life in this country. There is a tendency to equate evangelicalism and conservatism with correct living. In the book *Evangelical Christianity in Australia* Stuart Piggin makes the comment in his Preface that “Evangelicalism has been the commonest expression of Protestantism in Australian history”. (1996: vii) He also says “Evangelicalism was the official Christianity brought to Australia with the first fleet.”(ibid: viii) This expression is revealing since it sets

the pace and groundwork and the perspective of the early settlers for this infant nation.

While Piggin Says that this approach provides for a broad view and a three pronged perspective of Word, Spirit and activism or mission, it was also very pietistic. Piggin praises to a large extent the work done in this area by these gallant early pioneers as he says “It was a warm, practical, humanitarian movement which focused on commitment to the world with Word and Spirit to energize that commitment. The Evangelical presence with the First Fleet was an early expression of that commitment” (1996: viii). For all his praises for the work done by missionaries and the church since settlement in Australia, he does acknowledge that it was only early during the twentieth century that “...Aboriginal missions began to work for the first time since white settlement” (ibid: ix)

For Evangelicals in Australia the emphasis was on individual commitment rather than justice in the social context that has caused so much resentment in Aboriginal communities since the preachers often also perpetuated injustice towards Aboriginals. It is to his credit though that Piggin also acknowledges that history has been neglected for study or reflection among evangelicals. This neglect invariably influences one’s view of the world and the spread of the justice dimension of the gospel. He says “It is a concern that hitherto evangelical Christians have not reflected more on Australia’s history. Most have believed that they did not need to do that. That we need only the Bible, history...” (ibid: xi). This he ascribes to the Reformist view that emphasises the Bible (*sola scriptura*) to tradition in evangelism.

The growing view of these Christians was to reach un-reached areas of the world with the word of God. By itself that would be a noble goal and it would even be seen as a fulfilment of the ‘Great Commission’ to spread the gospel throughout the world. In pursuing this goal Piggin Quotes Jonathan Edwards who said “...the Gospel would triumph in those areas where hitherto Satan ‘had reigned quietly from the beginning of the world’ including Terra Australis Incognita and Hollandia Nova” (1996: 2). While such a vision and zeal cannot necessarily be criticized, it is the method that is employed to reach that goal that becomes suspect. In Australia, in their zeal to evangelize the people, the settlers ‘walked into the territory’, systematically killed the inhabitants and destroyed their languages, spirituality, culture and lifestyle. In doing so, the settlers have in

fact been doing the work of Satan the thief as is stated in John 10 v 10 which says “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10 v 10. NIV) This approach of doing evangelism among Aborigines in Australia was never successful, as Piggin and Harris mentioned earlier, since it never would have occurred to these settler Christians, that they had in fact operated like thieves and killers and destroyers of people under the guise of the gospel. With little or no interest in justice for Aborigines, these evangelicals were equally guilty of ill-treating the indigenes through harsh punishment, prison-like missions, shooting and killing and poisoning, separation of families, deprivation of food and water and shelter, land and freedoms.

With such a track record and history, evangelicals seemed equally interested with the civil authorities to turn Aborigines into ‘white civilians’ rather than ‘believing Christians’ through love and compassion, justice and righteousness. It was clear through such actions that the white evangelicals hated the blacks more than loving them, if at all. These well meaning evangelicals seemed to have overlooked what is written in 1John 3 v 14 – 15 which says “...anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him”(NIV) To love one’s brother and do justice makes one righteous as stated in 1 John 3 v 7b “He that does what is right is righteous”.

It must be abundantly clear that evangelicals with all their good intentions have not acted in the right and righteous way in relation to the Aborigines. This is not only the truth that does not only set us free (John 8 v 32) but distinguishes the Christian from the anti-Christ. Stealing the land, killing the people and destroying almost all else (Jn 10v10) is denying the Lord Jesus Christ as Liberator and therefore makes one a liar. (1.Jn 2v 22)

To destroy people under the guise and auspices of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is an extremely serious matter. This also amounts to being heresy, a false gospel, anti-Christ, a false prophetic stance and indeed as 1 John 2 v 22 says “...such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son” (NIV). To kill your brother anywhere as people did in Australia is the equivalent of what Cain did to his brother because of hate and evil.(1 John 3 v12; Gen 4). Not doing what is right makes one the child of the devil and therefore not a child of God. No amount of theological argument, moralising or any other religious talk

can justify killing one's brother in such crude, cruel and blatant terms as has happened in Australia. It stands to good reason why the spread of the gospel among Aborigines in Australia was never extensive and widespread. The brief argument for that phenomenon is that it was never really the liberating power of the gospel that was being preached and spread, but a white cultural view of the gospel to which the Aborigines could not identify and respond.

The type of liberating gospel as explained and contained in the 'Evangelical Witness' document which represents a liberating message, was neither understood nor proclaimed by evangelicals in Australia. Although this is a very recent document, its message is already present in the Gospels that arrived with the First Fleet in Australia. In the main, most of these earlier mentioned crimes against Aborigines went unpunished, largely unchecked in many areas and virtually not criticized by the church.

The 'Evangelical Witness' also states "Somehow because of this attitude about the world and this cock-eyed theological perception evangelicals tend to be conservative...with...the tendency to legalism which leads to pride, and an inadequate theology about Christian living. Legalism as a support for a conservative and exclusive lifestyle is in contrast to the lifestyle of Jesus. In fact, evangelicals go to great lengths claiming Jesus did not teach what he actually did. We have to because to admit that he taught what he did, would require us either to change (repent) or to criticize him"(Evangelical Witness- 7) There is a tendency among Evangelicals to be more abstract in their theological thinking and this is also criticized by James Cone who says in *A Black Theology of Liberation* "...American theology discusses sin in the abstract debating it in relation to universal humankind. In white theology, sin is a theoretical idea, not a concrete reality. No white theologian has been able to relate sin to the black-white encounter in America" (1986: 106) Such an attitude in doing theology is evident in Australia as well as a theology which reflect white values. Again Cone says "it is human existence in community that defines the meaning of sin" to which he adds "Sin then is the failure of Israel to recognize the liberating work of God" (1986: 104)

Whites do not want to know the need for blacks to be liberated since that would require them to change as well as changing society. This James Cone says will not happen so that "We wait in vain because oppressors do not wish to know what is wrong with the world. Only the oppressed know what is wrong, because

they are both the victims of evil and the recipients of God's liberating activity"(1986: 107) A theology that ignores the plight of the poor and oppressed in society but makes soothing statements about abstract facets of society, should be seen as heresy, some may say.

Cone quotes Jurgen Moltmann in *A Black Theology of Liberation* who says "To hear God's promise means that the church cannot accept the present reality of things as God's intention for humanity" then adds "Hence it [revelation] does not give rise to powers of accommodation, but sets loose powers that are critical of being" and this will help us "guard against abstractions" (1986: 139). Relevant theology will therefore reflect and grow emerge from the existential experiential situation of the oppressed capturing the anger and the anguish, fear and anxiety, pain and problems, hope and expectations of the oppressed. Cone in *God of the Oppressed* says "The preaching of the Word must itself be the embodiment of freedom" (1975: 19) Since "Truth cannot be separated from the people's struggle and the hopes and dreams that arise from that struggle. Truth is that transcendent reality, disclosed in the people's historical struggle for liberation, which enables them to know that their fight for freedom is not futile" (ibid: 17)

This existentialist approach affirms that "Black theology is a theology of and for black people, an examination of their stories, tales and sayings. It is an investigation of the mind into the raw materials of our pilgrimage, telling the story of "how we got over". For theology to be black it must reflect upon what it means to be black" (ibid: 18) 'How we got over' therefore means how the people were taken from their homeland in Africa and taken over to America to become slaves in a foreign land. It essentially wants to capture all the aspects of that dreadful experience and it influences their present existence. This approach to doing theology does not only make it contextualized to its *Sitz im Leben* but its existentialist focus would make it consistent to Jesus' call to read the signs of the times (Matt 16 v 3) Not only will this method of doing theology help the church to be pure, holy and relevant but it will make it subversive, revolutionary and true to its call.

Some impulses from Australian Christians would contribute towards clarifying our understanding of the relevance of the church in Australia. In the book *Racism in Australia in the 1980's* the editor, Russell Rollason says in the introduction "The failure of white Australians to recognize Aboriginal Land

Rights and to pay compensation for land taken from the Aborigines lies at the heart of poor relations between black and white Australians” (2000: 3). Theft is clearly denounced in the Bible and blatant theft such as continent stealing is of the most gross and vile type humanity can commit. This has happened in Australia and every conceivable argument by both the church and the state eg. the terra nullius argument presented earlier, to deny such theft.

Paying compensation for evils committed against others is also an accepted principle. When the prophet Nathan confronts King David about his killing of Uriah with the ‘rich man poor man’ analogy, (the rich) David immediately in his anger says that man must die and compensate the poor man four times.(2 Sam. 12 v 1-6) Even Zacchaeus, discussed in the last chapter, offers to compensate the deceived people up to four times the amount he has taken from them. (Luke 19) It can be argued that Zacchaeus (and David) may have wanted to repay people for four generations of ill-gotten gain he has had the advantage of. Theft disrupts the victim, person or society in a very serious way and for a very long time. An apology is therefore not enough but comprehensive and adequate compensation must accompany it as well. This is an important pre-requisite, that liberation theology must insist on, for reconciliation to be meaningful in Australia. This approach must carry any liberation theology in this country. This is why Russell Rollason says again “Racism harms people at virtually every level of their being. It denies to some individuals and groups the rights and privileges afforded to others. It destroys communities, plunges nations into chaos, threatens continents with war” (2000: 3). When theft has a racial factor into it as in the situation of Australia, such racism can be extremely devastating. The Blood of Jesus is the only real remedy for such obnoxious behaviour but it becomes seriously complex when those who commit such racial behaviour to already claim to be Christians and cleansed by the Blood of Christ. Some very serious questions therefore arise because to claim to being a Christian and then still continuing to pursue vile racial crimes against others simply because they are racially different, makes such a claim suspect. Such behaviour against Aborigines persists in Australia today which brings a serious cloud of credibility over the Christian faith. It is necessary to regain the credibility of the Christian faith that such white racially behaviour be made public and exposed and that Christians who persist with such behaviour, be denounced. Rollason therefore also says “Racism is contrary to the Gospel and incompatible with the nature of the church of Christ” (2000: 3) Persisting with racist policies, practices and attitudes in the church discredits the Gospel and witness of the church and

crucifies Christ afresh.

Christ has sacrificed his life so that the church through its witness should uphold the dignity of the downtrodden in society. Failing to do that and persisting in deceiving the Australian community is keeping the Kingdom of God locked to both Aborigines who is seeking to unlock it for themselves by achieving justice, but it will remain locked also to those who have withheld the key to knowledge, as Jesus said to the Pharisees (Luke 11 v 52) to those who wish to enter.

Furthermore, instead of proclaiming a prophetic message to this nation regarding the treatment of Aborigines, the church will be pursuing a false prophetic stance on this matter. This very serious matter therefore needs extremely urgent attention if the church is to recapture its prophetic and authentic responsibility in this country but also if the church and indeed the nation is to avoid God's wrathful display of anger to avenge the injustices perpetrated towards Aborigines in Australia.

Whatever whites want to claim for themselves in Australia, they must first offer and provide on an equal basis to the indigenes of the country as well and then only will meaningful reconciliation be placed on the proper Christian path.

By liberating the blacks in this way in this country, the whites would be liberating themselves as well. In doing justice for all the church would be doing liberating theology and unlocking the kingdom and be fulfilling its proper prophetic task and responsibility.

The church should therefore not just be content with mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. While issuing well considered statements can be informative but it is never sufficiently transformative for a society urgently in need of transformative action rather than soothing information. Another liberating impulse in Australian context would be to institute a clear and deliberate program to bring long separated and alienated Aboriginal families and children (now adults) together again. Along with the pain and anguish of the loss of land, is the pain and anguish and anxiety of the loss of family and loved one's through deliberate programs of separation. This is necessary since the church (missionaries) and state worked in tandem to perpetrate this vicious and inhumane system of separating (so called) half-caste children from their parents and in so doing tortured their innocence, their youth, their future, their humanity, their dignity, their spirituality, their culture and language, their

identity, their community and their trust and probably their forgiveness as well. This type of pain languishes in this community for generations now and the pain with the suppressed anger is never difficult to surface when family matters are being discussed.

Since the Christian church sees the family as the pillar and cornerstone of society, it is therefore critically imperative that acknowledge its responsibility along with the state in violating this most sacred of institutions of the church and the Aboriginal community. The church and state ought to have jealously defended the family as an institution and principle entity in society, yet in Australia, these two most powerful and influential institutions combined an onslaught against the smallest and most fragile unit, the Aboriginal family, and devastated it for the most rotten and ulterior motives ie to annihilate it and promote white society. This vile and rotten blot on (the name of) the church and the state in Australia stains it with guilt and shame for conspiring so militantly, maliciously and violently in destroying this fragile unit with little or no remorse. A theology that was silent at best or consorting at worst, in the face of such mean and brutish and hostile behaviour in the name of civilization and or conservative Christianity, is both false and heretic, demeaning and abominable.

It is of gravest shame that the church engaging in such behaviour can consider itself Christian, a state can consider itself responsible and civil and a society see itself as humane and caring. To remedy such atrocities and heal such raw and exposing agony, all available church and state resources must be made available and mobilized to assist families so adversely affected over several generations. All safeguards must also be put into place, to ensure that people's dignity are protected and that such crude and demeaning actions are never ever repeated. For this to happen, the church must constantly do introspection and examine itself(1 Cor. 11 v 28) to ensure that it does not sink into a state of lethargy regarding the treatment of people and heresy regarding its own theology and teaching to levels of idolatry.(1 Cor. 10 v 7-10).

A further impulse in our regional context that has a bearing on both the land and family matters and would promote and advance reconciliation between black and white people is restitution and compensation. While this matter has been referred to before and will be considered more closely in the final chapter, it must be said here that the church and state has always been reluctant to talk or act on restitution or compensating families and communities for harm done to

them.

The white communities have enriched themselves off the land by forced occupation and then cheap and even slave labour of Aborigines. This violent start and existence of the Australian society refuses to acknowledge that compensation to the victims is a necessary step in restoring confidence, trust and mutual acceptance. As in the instance of Zacchaeus, the perpetrator must take the initiative by willingly displaying remorse and sharing his wealth and so create the basis and possibility for meaningful co-existence. This would be salvific for the whole nation as it was for Zacchaeus and as David acknowledged to Nathan that such theft is wrong (Luke 19; 2 Sam 12 v 1 – 6). Such an ethical hermeneutic authenticating black life, evolves out of a particular experience of oppression. This is what BC Goba when quoting Dr Oglesby says “One of the obligations of a black Christian social ethicist or the social scientist for that matter, is to look beneath the surface of things” (T E Study Guide 2 TEB 200:45) He adds “...a black Christian social ethics must authenticate black life” and “It must be an ethic that unravels the contradictions of an oppressive society”(ibid:45). To do this we shall now consider the Waitangi agreement and its impact on black life in New Zealand.

4.5 A contextual-historical analysis of the Waitangi (N Z) document

An evaluation of this document would be in a very brief and cursory fashion, more for the purpose of awareness-raising regarding its existence and role. Since its inception, it has been shrouded in controversy, the degree of which would vary from time to time and from one geographical location to another. Even to the present time, not too many New Zealanders or Australians would either know of its existence or its content. It is a document that has influenced to some degree the national and international character (trade, human relations, the flag, constitutional development etc) of New Zealand.

Because of its various versions and early translations, people interpret the document differently. While some may have seen it as a divisive document, it has certainly contributed to the cohesiveness of this society. The Waitangi agreement is important because it is a central document in New Zealand and could serve as a guiding example for a similar agreement in Australia. Australia and New Zealand have significant influences on one another in trade, immigration, labour, diplomatic, health, security and other areas including the

demands of the indigenous people for land, liberation, power sharing, justice etc. The Waitangi agreement is often referred to in New Zealand and in Australia the Aborigines have also in the past asked for a treaty. It is therefore useful in the Australian context to know how a treaty is being applied in its nearest neighbour with a similar history. It is also useful to know how a treaty may be applied in Australia and if a New Zealand example would be applicable in Australia. It is useful to know is protecting and advancing the interests of the indigenous people of New Zealand (NZ) and how they are dealing with its weaknesses and shortcomings to see if a similar document can be created and be useful in Australia.

The Treaty of Waitangi also referred to as the Treaty was signed in 1840 by a representative of the British Crown and more than 500 chiefs, which makes it a central document in New Zealand.

4.5.1 The early years

In the introduction to her book *The Treaty of Waitangi*, Claudia Orange says “Confusion surrounded the treaty from the first. The treaty in English ceded to Britain the sovereignty of New Zealand and gave the Crown an exclusive right of pre-emption of such lands as the Maori people wished to sell. In return the Maori were guaranteed full rights of ownership of their lands, forests, fisheries and other prized possessions. The ‘treaty’ also promised them the rights and privileges of British subjects, together with assurances of Crown protection. Only thirty nine chiefs signed this treaty in the English language, however. Most signed a treaty in the Maori language. The text failed to convey the meaning of the English version, and the treaty negotiations did not clarify the difference. Each party to the treaty was left with expectations about the power they would exercise. Difficulties of interpretation and implementation dogged the colony’s early years and were to continue” (1987:1)

While the treaty served as a cohesive document yet it “contained the seeds of continuing conflict, particularly over land, power and authority” (Ibid:1) It appeared also, as seemingly it often happens, in nation building that the greater power, as in this instance, the European “ have shifted their position on the treaty to suit their purposes” (1987:2)

Such expedient moves, which often happen unilaterally, creates suspicion and

mistrust, that does not only linger longer than desired, but mars relations between people. This method of dealing with people in New Zealand was no less significant as it was Australia. It then becomes the undercurrent of most interpersonal and inter-group dialogue and dealings. All good intentions and concessions are then often dogged by concerns of deception. This could invariably drag out longer than is necessary, in the reaching of agreements that could be of benefit and advantage to a nation. Since in 1835 Britain recognized a Maori Declaration of Independence, this was considered as being able to govern themselves, albeit limited authority, as being more civilized than most indigenous people as well as having “a claim to territorial sovereignty or land ownership superior to most other indigenous people” (ibid:23).

However, despite this bold step in self organization or self assertion “If Britain chose to intervene formally, the independent status of the country would have to be either qualified or nullified” (1987:21). Because of the real or perceived threat of French intervention, the diminishing Maori population, intermittent Maori requests for British intervention or protection under British law, occasional social chaos and a growing trade, British intervention longer became a matter of ‘if’ but ‘when’ and to ‘what extent’. What had become important was “No longer were they considering a Maori New Zealand in which a place had to be found for British intruders, but a settler New Zealand in which a place had to be found for the Maori”(ibid:31) This had revealed a new perspective on British intentions.

Because of the rapid increase in the British population in New Zealand gaining parity with the Maori population by 1860, the guarantees of the treaty has been effectively nullified through constitutional change. This led to conflict and the eventual deaths of countless Maori’s. With the passage of time the signing of the treaty in 1840 a political awareness and militancy among Maori’s grew and was influenced and accelerated to some extent by the USA civil rights movement and other world trends. Local issues such as land and language was placed on the agenda and seen as a source of racial inequality. As with the Australian Aborigine, Paul Spoonley says “Land had a particular cultural and emotional significance for Maori...” (1989:179) An additional factor for confrontation between Maori and whites (Pakeha) was the increasing use of the English language at the expense of the Maori language.

4.5.2 The treaty at Waitangi

When William Hobson, the former commander of the British warship HMS Rattlesnake became the consul to New Zealand from February 1839, his primary task was to secure sovereignty for Britain, by treaty if possible, but above all in a peaceful manner” (1987:32) To achieve this, he had to consider three factors namely “The legal status of the country, humanitarian concern for Maori welfare, and the need to convince the Maori population that further British intrusion should be accepted”(ibid:32) This was to be achieved through negotiation, subtle coercion, co-option, promises, expediency etc. with the emphasis on the benefits and the downplay of restrictions that would invariably follow.

For the signing ceremony of the treaty to take place, a formal assembly of chiefs were to take place at James Bushby’s Waitangi home where he was the Resident since 1833. Such a meeting and treaty was important because “the British government required- a cession of sovereignty, absolute control over all land matters, and authority to impose law and order on both Maori and non-Maori”(1987: 36) Some of the conflict and confusion that existed regarding the agreement, was contained in the difference in meaning some saw between the original English version and the Maori translation.

The British appeared rather keen to entrench their foothold and position in New Zealand with the treaty, but also by raising fears among the local people of a possible foreign invasion. With the advantage of more advanced military and legal and organizational skills, the British was able through bribery and exchange of gifts, secure the agreement and approval of many of the leaders. However, differences remained. Very soon suspicions of deception grew and concerns regarding land possession were raised. The British never intended that the authority of the chiefs would also be over white settlers.

Of this Alan Ward in his paper “Historical claims under the Treaty of Waitangi” in the *Journal of Pacific History* says “They did not envisage a chiefly territorial authority which would constrain settlers” (1993: 182). There were increasing demands for land which sometimes led to bitter warfare and the Crown getting caught up in breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi. A greater and growing sense of

loss of land was sensed among Maori which was to linger and create more tension. As a result confusion reigned for some time. Claudia Orange says "...it was the guarantee of *te tino rangatiratanga*(chieftainship) that was to lead to confusion, for Maori understood the word to mean far more than 'possession' as in the English text...Kawaratanga on the other hand, derived from *kawana*(governor) and had associations with Pontius Pilate, Roman governor in the Bible, or with governors in New South Wales. It tended to imply authority in the abstract rather than a concrete sense" (1987:42). This exchange of words in different settings carrying different meanings are perceived to mean different things to different people.

This includes "Rangatiratanga", for instance, "had been used in the 1835 Declaration of Independence to refer to New Zealand's 'Independence' which Britain acknowledged. Maori might well have assumed, therefore, that their sovereign rights were actually being confirmed in return for a limited concession of power in Kawanatanga"(ibid:41) In guaranteeing rangatiratanga it was safeguarding Maori land and possessions as well as "reinforcing the Authority of the Chiefs by building into the treaty a right to exercise some control"(1987:41) Other factors that led to difficulties with the treaty was what one Waikare chief, Whai, described as "...the lying, cheating and stealing of Pakeha, and also mentioned the Pakeha habit of cursing which Maori found particularly offensive and threatening"(ibid:48)

To Maori Pakeha meant European and was treated with suspicion. Such attitudes were not helpful to establishing the treaty or implementing it. In discussing this Orange says for Maori, the treaty left much to be desired since it also required the controlling of troublesome Pakeha. An amazing obvious difficulty and contradiction of this process was the desire of Britain to want to enter another country, establishing sovereign rule and government with the argument "...that the Queen did not want the land, but merely the sovereignty, that she, by her officers, might be able more effectually to govern her subjects who had already settled...or might...arrive, and punish those of them who might be guilty of crime"(ibid:64) This to me seems to be an amazing attitude since Britain would not allow another government from another country to set up another government in Britain just because citizens of another country chose to settle in Britain. Those settled citizens in Britain would be required to subject themselves to and live by the laws and customs of their adopted country. This approach was seemingly not acceptable for British subjects who freely chose to

settle in another country or were either not willing to acknowledge the new country's laws and customs or their method of government. The British government would seemingly use those resettled citizens more as an excuse to want to govern them as British subjects in their newly adopted country and then eventually rule the whole country. While in the New Zealand scenario, unlike in the Australian situation, some chiefs may have requested British intervention and support. The "Waitangi Treaty" affirms however, in the minds of the chiefs, as well as the lingering perceptions subsequent to the original signing, that they would remain in authority, in charge, in control and would not become slaves to the Crown, and that the chiefs would never give up their land or chieftainship. Hobbs, as negotiator of the Crown, would often say "...that if the chiefs signed the treaty, 'truth and justice would always characterize the proceedings of the Queens government'" (1987: 65).

A sense of discontent pervaded most subsequent proceedings and total harmony never really existed among the chiefs and the representatives of the Crown. Again Alan Ward says "Some limited efforts to redress historic grievances, such as the payment to tribal trust boards of monetary compensation for land confiscated in the 1860's, or unfulfilled terms of purchase in the South Island deeds, did not seriously modify the Maori sense of having lost control of their lands, forests and fisheries."(1993:184). It must be noted also though, that in October 1835 thirty five northern New Zealand chiefs met with some protestant ministers. They then made a declaration of independence.

Dom Felice Vaggioli says in his book *History of New Zealand and its inhabitants* "these chiefs "...called themselves 'the United Tribes of New Zealand' and announced that they would meet annually to make laws for the administration of justice and preservation peace"(2000:74) He adds this significant comment "...Britain listened, studied the proposal, said nothing and quietly planned to disillusion them"(ibid:75) If this comment reflect any resemblance of Britains' plans and intentions, it reveals that they had their own plans and agenda of ruling New Zealand in which they would be the dominant party and that they were willing to defeat any local attempts at self government. They were clearly not interested in advancing the people of New Zealand but advancing British Nationalism at the expense of New Zealand. The political powers that be, in concert with the religious power conspired to prevent other political or religious groups from settling in New Zealand and to run the risk for "England to lose a colony" (ibid:79)

This seemed more evident that England was determined to singularly gain and maintain (absolute) power in New Zealand under the guise of protecting the Maori and maintaining law and order. Such action would be evidence of nationalist nepotism under the pretence of protectionism and justice but with a cynical and dubious private agenda of British hypocrisy to steal, kill and destroy through unspeakable inhumanity and barbarity against a defenceless people. Considering all the events that happened subsequent to the signing of the treaty, one is inclined to ask ‘what is meant by truth and justice’ since the perceptions of truth and justice could vary from one person to another. Amazingly too, some of the ‘success’ were due to “missionary persuasion” (1987:65). Most of the time the chiefs who signed were either persuaded or rewarded with gifts of two blankets and tobacco, but these gifts, which often included money, were also at times returned. Throughout the process of every signing ceremony though, a lack of the full understanding of the nature of the contract persisted.

Geoffrey Rice in his *The Oxford History of New Zealand* says the “...Maori commonly had a highly developed sense of correct procedure in social relationships. This derived from a respect for the proper balance in all social situations that had to be restored if disturbed”(1992:46) While there were some conflict between Maori and Europeans, they looked to missionaries and the Bible for guidance as well as certain legal and social institutions. Rice says further though that “Maori and European ways had yet to blend, but they began to influence each other and new situations brought new solutions”(1992:48). Of the Treaty of Waitangi itself, Rice says “The Treaty of Waitangi has been described as ‘hastily and inexpertly drawn up, ambiguous and contradictory in content, chaotic in its execution”(1992:51) By this Rice seems to indicate that there was a desire to have an agreement in place. He also says “Maori literacy in 1840 was limited and the Maori were not acquainted with the legal and literary traditions of Europe that would have enabled them to negotiate the Treaty” then he adds “The text in English cannot be easily reconciled with the text in Maori”(ibid:51) Rice then observes “The blunders of Hobson and his band of do-it-yourself diplomats can more probably be attributed to haste and inexperience than to deliberate deception”(ibid:52) Be that as it may, it is always possible that ‘haste and inexperience’ can be used as a ploy for deliberate or subtle deception. What is then described next about events taking place seems to be actions of people, as it were, waiting in the wings, to act ‘judiciously after the signing formalities’. Rice says “...news came that the New Zealand company

settlers at Port Nicholson had formed themselves into a government, enacted laws, and appointed magistrates. Hobson... 'yielded to the emergency of the case' and claimed the Southern Islands on the grounds of discovery and the Northern Island on the ground of cession. These proclamations later received royal approval and were published in the *London Gazette*. Such proceedings left plenty of scope for argument over when and how Britain acquired sovereignty over New Zealand, by cession, proclamation or occupation" (1992:52).

The fact that nothing was done to counter this self appointed government indicate "The central government which Cook and Marsden and Bushby had thought so desirable, had come at last" (ibid: 52) This type of action on the part of the self appointed government and the inaction of Cook and others, indicate not so much haste and inexperience only, but deliberate deception. It becomes clear therefore that in whichever words one wishes to couch these events, a significant amount of co-coercion, enticing, subtle blackmail and deception, haste and an overriding silent subtle intention was present, used and operating to want to rule and eventually lord it over the land and people.

The morality of such action then becomes dubious and it stains the future and loads the conscience heavy with guilt. The longer this continues the more complex it becomes and the more difficult it becomes to correct. People also become more loath to be involved to want to undo and correct such an error in history. These were the inherent contradictions that were the foundations of a nation to be plagued with a constant contest for supremacy that characterized every generation in this and every oppressive society.

Further resentment and action for land redress would follow. By the second half of the twentieth century many Maori were more inclined to consider or even dismiss the Treaty as a fraud. Albeit later that the Treaty of Waitangi Act "...provided that, in future, 'any Maori or group of Maori who considered that they were prejudicially affected by any of the Crown or its agents, in breach of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, could bring a claim to a new tribunal, the Waitangi Tribunal" (1993: 185). While this move appeared to be a step in the right direction at addressing the discontent regarding land, it was not widely approved because the act was neither retrospective nor did the Tribunal have binding powers on its decisions. The trend in New Zealand to constantly obstruct Maori land claims or compensation for land losses suffered is similar in many respects to the land claims made in Australia by Aborigines, particularly

before the High Court Mabo decision, but also subsequent to that landmark decision. It was not just seen in New Zealand as a land issue, but also a race issue. Alan Ward states “The nation certainly had to confront the historic issues if the wounds to race relations were to be healed” (ibid :186). In New Zealand as in Australia the number of land claims for restitution or compensation multiplied as people sought a correction to their historical injustices.

4.6 The unawareness of the importance of these documents in mainstream Australasian society

The unawareness about these documents are not so much that people do not know about its existence, but rather that the average person along with some politicians, media and community leaders would rather wish it did not exist and would therefore would like to ignore them or if possible wish them away. A profound statement is made by Michael Gordon in the Introduction to his book *Reconciliation* as an extract from the Declaration Towards Reconciliation when he says “Our nation must have the courage to own the truth, to heal the wounds of the past so that we can move on together at peace with ourselves” (2001:1). Much of the strife, pain and conflict that exist within both the Australian and New Zealand societies are encapsulated in this brief statement. A great deal has been said and done in both these countries, particularly in recent years, to achieve better race relations and reconciliation between the black and white races in these communities. The fact that it is always the Maoris and Aborigines that have to do the marching and protesting, the suffering and the agony, the calls for justice and reconciliation, indicates that the white dominant ruling class do not have the courage to face and own the truth. There is a slack and loathe approach on the part of the ruling class, who wields almost absolute power, to share that power with the weak and powerless Maori and Aboriginal groups in these respective countries. If meaningful progress towards reconciliation in these communities are to be achieved, then speaking the truth, owning the truth and courageous action for the truth would be required.

Changing the unawareness in society to a greater awareness or to awaken the nation from its sleep that Pat Dodson refers to later, would also require speaking the truth. Since the Mabo decision has dispelled the myth of terra nullius and expressed the truth regarding Aboriginal land rights, this nation has largely ignored it and attempted to neutralize its impact. It has therefore demonstrated that it does not want to hear the truth that it is unjustly occupying this country

and so also persist with an immoral and indefensible oppression of Aboriginal people. Having violently entered this country and brutally suppressed its inhabitants ever since, and having increased its own numbers and decreased Aboriginal numbers and just for being here for more than two-hundred years, does not justify ownership of stolen property. The Bible says ‘You shall not steal’ (Exodus 20 v 15) and then gives false testimony (v 16) to cover up that theft. When Zacchaeus gives back four times what he has stolen from his victims, then only he receives salvation from the Lord. (Luke 19 v 1-10) and this principle applies not only to the individual who does these evils, but also to groups or nations who commit these sins. Australian and New Zealand societies therefore most certainly fall within this latter category. It would therefore become obvious that the aggrieved parties, Maori and Aborigine, would express their grievances as long as these injustices remain.

The truth is that the New Zealand Pakeha (white) and Australian (whitefella) rulers are killers and thieves (John 10v10) and clearly would be the recipients of God’s wrath for these actions against the indigenes of these countries. God being on the side of the oppressed (Ps 72 v13-14), the oppressor must expect the fury of God (Ps 72 v 4). Stealing property from others does not become one’s property after a period of time, as we so often hear in Australia. Theft does not become justified with the passage of time. Zacchaeus discovered that in time to be able to make confession and restitution. The unwillingness of the Australian and New Zealand white rulers to learn that lesson of returning stolen property to its rightful owners, would most certainly cost them dearly now as well as their salvation later. It would be hard for a liberation theology to state it more profoundly and clearer than this. Ignoring this glaring injustice would result in such serious and catastrophic consequences for the nation, that the pain and agony would remain for generations to come.

There always seems to be the tendency to want to hide, ignore, suppress or extinguish those prickly things that occur in society reminding us of our stewardship towards others and affording us those unique opportunities in history to correct those inherited errors. Some of these, handed down by previous unscrupulous generations, should not lead us to also place them in the proverbial ‘too hard basket or bottom shelf’ for later generations to unravel or correct. Failing in living up to these expectations and our stewardship will just delay the inevitable to the fullness of time which the Kairos Theologians in South Africa aptly describe as “...the moment of grace and opportunity, the

favourable time in which God issues a challenge to decisive action. It is a dangerous time because, if this opportunity is missed, and allowed to pass, the loss for the church, for the Gospel, and for the people of South Africa will be immeasurable. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He wept over the tragedy of the destruction of the city and the massacre of the people that was imminent, “and all because you did not recognize your opportunity(Kairos) when God offered it”(Luke 19 v 44)(Kairos Document 1986: 1) Receiving only those things which we perceive to be to our greater benefit and ignoring, delaying, defeating or rejecting that which we perceive to be to our detriment are often shallow and expedient way of easing our conscience and responsibility, but also our way of ignoring the signs and opportunities four times given us to redress, in a less disruptive, painful yet progressive and just way.

Certain events in history that occurs as opportunities for social, religious, political and other re-appraisals are often brushed aside as being frivolous such as Wik, Mabo, Waitangi, riots, dissent, uprisings etc(locally) and internationally The Kairos document, The Belhar confession and Calvin Church Covenant document in South Africa, Civil and Human Rights movements eg. Martin Luther King, Ghandi, Mandela, Xanana Gusmao, Rwanda disaster, World Trade Center disaster(911)etc are seen as being isolated, regional or having no bearing or relevance to the rest of the global community and our global neighbourliness remains local, only.

We need to develop both a universal and local perspective of events and not interpret such earlier mentioned events as being localized. The amazing universalism of The Lords Prayer or call to unity (John 17) could find a local and a universal application. The prayer calls us to take our stewardship of one another seriously and not only on the local level but also on the universal or international level. When any part of the body of Christ hurts, the whole body should feel the pain and respond to remedy it. We often also only see peace as merely the absence of war rather than it being the presence of justice.

Often such momentous events are merely dissected academically, politically, socially even morally or theologically with a rare, if ever, commitment and resolve to act on and implement the demands for justice. The land rights campaign has also been going on for some time and included various strategies such as petitions, demonstrations, visits to foreign lands to raise awareness and support as well as with the United Nations and legal redress.

Because much wrong has been done towards Aborigines, there has always been a desire on the part of the blacks to correct the errors of history towards them. In this spirit Senator Neville Bonner, the first Aboriginal senator, has said "...I believe that you have much to put right" in his address to parliament in 1974.(1999: 273) Eddie Koiki Mabo, arguably the most significant pioneer for land rights in Australia said "...In the Torres Straight, land ownership is the same throughout...The land was inherited always by the male descendants just as male children in white societies always retained the family name"(1999:294-5) He made a strong case for the rights of his clan to self government when he said "Before the father died, or during his life-time, he would make sure that his family and friends knew his wish as to which one of his sons would be the heir to his land. He would also insist that the heir to his land must not deprive the rest of his sons or daughters of the use of his land"(ibid:295)

While land ownership was important and indeed crucial for survival, it is equally crucial for the maintenance of sovereignty. The struggle for sovereignty continued when "When the Aboriginal poet Mr. Kevin Gilbert vowed that his people would not wait another decade for ownership of the land. We will spread dissent, discord and prove that white Australians do not hold a sovereign title. It is a defective title because we never surrendered our land". (1999:330) In the same vein Pat Dodson of the Council for Aboriginal Conciliation said: "The nation has now awoken from two centuries of sleep to become aware that Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander people were owners of the land and were managers of the country long before the Union Jack was raised and rum drunk, here or elsewhere" and then adds "A moment of truth has arrived. The deeds of the past and present require those who have benefited most to take the steps towards those who have suffered most in the last 204 years. They must reconcile themselves with a new reality and then find the path of restitution that will lead to reconciliation" (ibid: 333)

Pat Dodson may have said at the time that awareness was growing, but in the main, the larger Australian population is very unaware of many things relating to the Aboriginal struggle for justice.

The new reality Dodson talks about is that the nation was asleep and has only now become aware. However this awareness of the nation is often event or media driven and they therefore remain somewhat 'drowsy' and are never fully awake or aware of all the Aboriginal pain, struggle and demands. Therefore Dodson says the moment of truth has arrived for the nation to arise from its

slumber and become aware of the movement towards justice for all.

Prominent Aboriginal leaders may from time to time bring the nation's attention to certain pressing matters at the time, and while the media and politicians may respond, it rarely remains a central matter on the national agenda. Awareness raising of the Aboriginal cause is often limited to the media interest but fades again with time. Keeping an unpopular matter such as Aboriginal rights in the media spotlight or the community interest for a long period of time is not always easy.

However, Dodson, Pearson and others affirm that the doctrine of terra nullius is false. If these Aboriginal leaders are the descendants of the earlier people who also encountered and resisted and survived the white onslaught, then certainly the land could not have been uninhabited. That doctrine is therefore a myth. The continued demands of blacks for justice in Australia shatters that myth. The continued marching of Aborigines against oppression make the very idea of terra nullius a myth. The achievement of the High Court Mabo decision makes Terra Nullius a myth. The call of Dodson on the nation to arise from its sleep of unawareness to the awakening demands for justice indicates a widespread discontent with white passivity. Many people in the past have made various calls to the white nation to abandon and shake off its slumbering attitude of gradualism and unawareness towards the black plight and move in step with changing attitudes and practices to afford justice and righteousness to oppressed communities. This is the new reality the Dodson says the nation must become aware of. There is therefore no longer any excuse for anybody, certainly not the leaders of this country to claim any ignorance or innocence since these demands have been made loud and clear and persistent and simple as it has been made with patience and endurance and a united voice.

To this voice another is added which says "Aboriginal culture is inseparable from the land to which Aboriginal title attaches. This loss or impairment of that title is not simply a loss of real estate, it is a loss of culture" but Noel Pearson continues when he says "...Justice Brennan said: Human rights and fundamental freedoms may be nullified or impaired by political, economic, social, cultural or religious influences in a society as well as by formal operation of its laws. Formal equality before the law is an engine of oppression, destructive of human dignity if the law entrenches inequalities" (1999: 336)

When people suffer under injustice their cries for justice must be heeded by both the church and the civil authorities. An appropriate and timely response should be activated to alleviate or eliminate such injustice.

The civil and religious community should never be indifferent or blasé toward people who demand justice for their cause because God's judgment would certainly fall on the rich and powerful who refuse to come to the aid of such people. After more than two hundred years of struggle, fighting, resistance, court cases, protests, conferences and dialogue etc. little was achieved although the idea of *terra nullius* have been shattered in legal and theological terms.

While one can never lose hope in terms of seeking solutions to national social problems, the need for honesty, humility in confession of guilt, a determination to find solutions together and implement such solutions can bring new possibilities to usher in a new future of optimism and justice if such strategies are hammered out together. In the following chapter we shall make some suggestions, strategies and scenarios that may be considered in achieving better outcomes for race relations on all fronts in Australia. This 'mea culpa' approach or as was stated from the 'Declaration Towards Reconciliation' at the outset that "Our nation must have the courage to own the truth, to heal the wounds of the past so that we can move on together at peace with ourselves" (2001:1). This will make the nation open and receptive to the possibilities of new guidelines and pointers that can be drawn from internal and external and other paradigms that can contribute towards a theology of liberation for Australia.

Such contributions can both assist us to learn from the mistakes and insights of others and so not to have to repeat them ourselves, but benefit from wider reflection on finding solutions for similar problems elsewhere. In that way we may make our own outcomes also more broadly acceptable and supportive of the national and international community.

CHAPTER FIVE

A NUMBER OF POINTERS AND STRATEGIES TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION AND CHANGE IN AUSTRALIA

5.1 Introduction

This section is not intended to serve as a Johnine Revelation to the church for all time, but it is contextual as it could be prophetic. It is contextual since it has the Australian scenario in mind. It draws on broader experiences beyond Australia since these could be applicable to the Australian situation. Partly because of Australia's geographically isolated position and partly because in a sense Australia is still relatively a young nation, contributions beyond its geographical confines that has an existential relevance to Australia would be drawn upon. It is because of its relevance to the contextual and existential needs that these broader contributions would be included to enhance the indigenous or local contributions.

Furthermore, some of these broader contributions have great universal appeal and relevance. These contributions have the universal church in mind and can therefore also be applied to the local church. The local church according to Hans Kung, is at the same time the church universal when he says in his book *The Church* "...the local Church and the universal Church...is really and positively one Church" (1976: 351) Each different contribution would therefore also have a certain aspect of the Australian problem of oppression in mind eg heresy, oppression, land return etc. These contributions would therefore not discuss these areas of the problem, as has been mentioned in other chapters, again In attempting to contextualize these contributions, it would invariably include strategies, operations and language that would be, to use the words of Jose Bonino "...are totally unknown to classical theology"(1975:93). Since historical oppression has various and new 'faces' a new theological language to deal with it, may be required. Such contextualization is also necessary because as Albert Nolan says "Contextualization is the process of discovering 'what the Spirit is saying to the Churches and the prophets and Jesus in the past'" (1988: 27) Some of the remarks made here would be simple while others may be more complex. Yet others may appear drastic or far-fetched but it has the complex nature of the problem of oppression in mind. These may certainly not be considered as comprehensive or final since the last word on this matter has certainly not yet

been spoken.

5.2 The Roman Catholic Hans Küng

The Roman Catholic Hans Küng proposes a certain approach and method for the church to deal with heretics as discussed extensively in previous chapters. First he says “The greater number of believers is not automatically a sign of true faith; God is not, after all, on the side of big battalions”(1976: 314) This is significant because the struggle for justice often falls on a minority group therefore many people do not always want to be identified with a pathetically small group devoted to a seemingly unachievable goal. Large numbers of people maintaining a certain stance does not mean that they are right and should maintain an unalterable course for all time. Again Küng says “Inn all ages the church has been partly responsible for the rise of great heresies, and nearly always by neglecting or even by obscuring and distorting the Gospel. Truths can be abandoned by letting them grow dry and dusty as much as by denying them” (1976: 320) We are always challenged to strike a healthy balance between orthodoxy and orthopraxis which may require a contextual approach with a view to our *Sitz im Leben* and dialogue with history. This means that we need to consider our existential or experiential situation and consider the past for its lessons so that we do not perpetuate inherited mistakes or repeat past ones. The neglect in this approach in Australia has made the dictum in John 10 v 10 come true that the thief has come to steal, kill and destroy what was found here. Such a theological view from the start would have had a different impact then and a different outcome now with people having a much more cautious approach in their dealings with one another and the land.

The theological insights we gain from the passage mentioned in the Gospel of John (10 v 10) stands in contrast to what Jesus offers to people in that same passage. It indicates that those people who do not come to Jesus and follow Him in liberating people from oppression which is the mission of Jesus in line with Moses (Deut 18 v 15-18; John 5 v 39,40,46; Acts 3 v22) would invariably fall foul to the dictum to behave like a thief who would steal(the land in Australia) kill(the people who occupy it) and then destroy(whatever remains after the killing) This type of action has characterized the behaviour of the Australian settlers. Had the early settlers understood Jesus’ mission of liberating people, their behaviour and treatment of the indigenes would have been different then and our present unjust situation would have been much less contentious and

deprived of justice. Because of this deception and its widespread acceptance that the Australian society is just and fair, that so many people find it hard if not impossible to display a 'mea culpa' attitude to start a Zacchaeus model of confession process.

Kung says in his book *Theology for the Third Millennium-An Ecumenical View* that "History, admittedly, is not made simply by individuals, but by the structures that determine these individuals"(1988: 37) This could indicate that people inherit situations in which they live but it does not mean that we cannot change such structures if it is determined to be unjust, unworkable or obsolete. This does not mean also that we are all innocent of the evils and errors of our church or society. Therefore it must be necessary at times for a society to declare 'mea culpa' ie I am guilty or as Kung would say that it is necessary "...at the moment of truth (for)a *status confessionis*" (1988: 39) Such a confession or declaration in the face of heresy can be humbling but more importantly can be salvific. Kung draws a lesson from history from which we can learn when he said "Didn't Luther have a share of the guilt of the *Peasants' Revolt* ...with its catastrophic consequences...demanding only the rights that the nearby Swiss had long enjoyed" and left them in the lurch" and therefore he had "driven them into death and misery" (ibid :33) This was possible as Cone says "Luther could not hear God's liberating Word for the oppressed because he was not a victim" (1975: 200) This is an error in judgment on the part of Luther that still reverberates throughout the church in regard to its stance on oppression and poverty. Often the church's theology or orthodoxy leads it to such similar orthopraxis(action) as Luther did and that would make it guilty of heresy. A theology that does not uphold the rights of the poor or the oppressed would be heretical as discussed earlier. Cone therefore asserts that "White theologians and ethicists simply ignore black people by suggesting that the problem of racism and oppression is only one social expression of a larger ethical concern. This error in contemporary ethical discourse is not different from Luther's error" (1975: 201). Therefore not to reflect Gods liberating intent with humanity in theology is to engage in heresy. Cone says Luther and Calvin did not interpret God in the light of the liberation of the oppressed" therefore he adds "...God is not simply the God of politics but the God of the politics of the oppressed, liberating them from bondage" (1975: 202) Black people must understand their own situation, read the Scriptures and apply it to their own situation and so create their own new future in the light of their understanding of the Scriptures as Cone concludes "We cannot afford to let white people interpret the meaning

of Scripture for us” because “...they will interpret the biblical story according to their racial interests “ (1975: 205)Hans Kung’s view gives perspective when he says “...that theology has on the whole failed to meet the challenge of heresy, and fulfil the role which it should so clearly have taken up in the matter : a critical and constructive role” (1976:32).This the church failed to do.

For too long has the Australian Christian Church, which was and probably still is predominantly white Anglo-Saxon, been too concerned with its own interests and confusing that with the interests of the Kingdom of God. Being so involved it failed to be objective and so failed to be a proper steward to the indigenous people and are therefore guilty of not being a good neighbour and Samaritan to the victims of the heinous atrocities committed in the name of religion and civilization. In line with the Zacchaeus encounter with Jesus, Kung is right saying that while the church cannot and should not accept heresy, it should be dealt with through “...a liberating confession of guilt”(1976: 327)

Historically the Australian society and church has been reluctant or even unwilling to make such confessions of for a variety of reasons which may include feeling threatened, vulnerable, humiliated etc. and then to cover it or console themselves may argue there are no convincing reason why they should do it or why this generation should make penance for the sins and errors of previous generations (when they were not even present). All too often the church has failed to live up to the demands of black people, which many see as being beneath them, humiliating and unacceptable despite the fact that confession of guilt is a biblical demand.

Since trust and acceptance is so critically important for meaningful interpersonal relations, the church must always propagate and initiate the process of confession where it is established that an injustice has occurred.

The theft of the land of Aborigines is an injustice that must be confessed.

The destroying of the culture, languages and lifestyles of Aborigines is an injustice that must be confessed.

The destruction of Aborigine families is an injustice that must be confessed.

Restitution for all these crimes must be considered. These and other clearly identifiable matters that are interrelated and that may have been blurred or obscured by society, must be corrected. This is important if we are to create an atmosphere and an environment that is conducive to justice. In a sense The

Dalai Lama is right when he says in his book *An Open Heart* “We must cultivate equanimity in order to transcend any feelings of discrimination and partiality”(2001:110) While this approach is an important start it is evidently not enough since it must be followed by actions of restitution. This process is therefore fundamental of ridding society of the heretical injustices accumulated over generations and create a more equitable and humane society. The church must therefore nurture faith and engagement to make this process for change possible. This is why Cone says in *God of the Oppressed* “Christ’s salvation is liberation; there is no liberation without Christ” (1975:141). This concept of liberation in Christ appears to have been lost on the church in this country so that often the church has even worked against Aborigines, against their liberation and therefore against Christ. Since Christ has continued the liberation work of Moses (Deut 18:15-18; Acts 3:22 ; John 5:39,40,46) and laid down his life for the liberation of the oppressed, the church ought to continue that ministry of liberation.

Failing to do so the church is indeed failing in its prophetic ministry, its pastoral calling and in its responsibility of stewardship towards the oppressed. A ministry outside of doing liberation is therefore outside of Jesus’ ministry. Cone therefore says “Any statement that divorces salvation from liberation or makes human freedom independent of divine freedom must be rejected” (ibid: 141) When a theology therefore preaches salvation without liberation, it is not preaching the work of Christ of divine freedom, this would make theology heresy and must be rejected.

This heretical theology devoid of a liberative intent and content has primarily and consistently been preached in Australia. This is why the white church in Australia has often worked against the liberation of Aborigines. Its non-liberative theology (orthodoxy) could/did not enhance or support a liberative ethic (orthopraxis).

5.3 Revolutionary and reactionary paradigms

Oppressed people everywhere and throughout history have always sought to change their lot through various means. It is true though that history does not indicate that considerable, drastic or meaningful change has ever occurred merely through passivity and faith but through an engaged faith for the process for change that has often lead to conflict, confrontation and catharsis. Often the

extent and degree of engagement for change is measured and influenced by the similar degree to resist change. Revolutionary responses are often an indicator of the intransigent nature of resistance to change. Engagement for change is a Christian obligation. David Bosch, the South African Reformed theologian said in *The Road to Damascus* "...the involvement of believers in the world was not an addition to theology. Social ethics did not belong to a different category, divorced from theology. This is only one of several respects in which Calvinism and Liberation Theology converge...because Calvinists regard politics within which God reveals his glory and should be worshipped, they lift politics into the realm of theology"(1991:131) This must put to rest the well worn but indefensible argument that religion and politics do not mix. In fact, it cannot be separated. Reformed people as well as Liberation Theology understands this and agree that "...the very structures in which we find ourselves are fallen, the entire social order is corrupt...and precisely as fallen structure, society is in need of reform, permanent reform. The corollary of the adage *ecclesia semper reformanda*(the church is always in need of reformation) is *societas semper reformanda*(society is always in need of reformation)(1991:132) This Calvinist view served as a constant reminder that one can never be complacent with society but is encouraged to eternal vigilance. Failing to do this will invariably lead to a lack of witness to the world and the decadence in society. Bosch then goes on saying "...no societal structure was regarded as God-given or inviolable" and "It is only a shared moral vision that can hold society together" (ibid: 132,137-8).

It therefore follows that unless society can share a morally defensible and justifiable vision, equity, fraternity, stewardship, righteousness and salvation, we will become a nation divided against itself and therefore cannot stand. In this country we have a situation where the nation is tragically divided against itself. This division occurs along racial lines and has its origins since settlement in 1788. Because blacks did not acquiesce to the white invasion, whites established themselves through the rapid increase of their numbers, superior firepower, politico-socio-economic and military expansion. To move towards and establish a 'shared moral vision' for this society, frank and fearless discussion with no non-negotiable items should be agenda items with a limited but reasonable time frame to achieve an agreement. Whites must realize that they cannot indefinitely continue to rule and dominate minority groups simply because of their superior numbers, political, economic, military, technological and other strengths but that justice, fairness, fraternity and freedom are greater and weightier matters to

secure a nations' future.

Whites must also acknowledge that they will have to agree to matters they have in the past considered as unthinkable such as land redistribution and sharing of wealth and power with Aborigines. Often we find that revolutionary and or reactionary movements in society are the result of a slumbering discontent and impatience with oppression, repression and injustice. Sometimes it starts with limited, mild and reasonable demands for redress which are scoffed at, ignored or blatantly suppressed. There is of course a limit to how long and how much people can endure under iron fists of oppression. Prophetic resistance to such conditions can often bring concealed and restrained energy to the surface and bring the church and state relations on a path of reckoning in a kairos moment.

The gravity and intensity of this can be influenced by the church depending on its awareness and commitment to its prophetic responsibilities and calling. Paul Lehmann says in his introduction to Charles Villa Vicencio's book *Between Christ and Caesar* that "Given the magnitude of socio-political and economic forces in society, the church has in the course of its history often tilted in favor of the existing system, which at other times segments within the church, influenced by the forces of change, have been on the side of revolutionary change"(1986:xvi). Such a seemingly aroused segment can lead to a renewal within a church and society and a paradigm for refreshing theological action long neglected in a moribund society.

Throughout the Judaeo-Christian tradition, however, there has always been a continuous confrontation and conflict between the 'prophet and the king' and this has often been necessary, not only in a decadent society, but also where affluence and opulence abound. Various paradigms have been considered in the past and may even be considered again in the future, should the church be confronted with similar circumstances in response to God's Word in obedience. Different paradigms may be applied in different circumstances. When a church fails to act when confronted with an unjust, tyrannical and totalitarian regime, it may be disobedient to the Word. Willa Boesak refers to two persons who both wages a struggle against racism in South Africa. They both had developed their philosophy for engagement over a long period of time and has shifted strategy over that period. This shift was necessary to meet the changing situation they were confronted with. While Mohandas Ghandi took time to develop and "establish his philosophy of Truth-force or non-violent resistance "Mandela on the other hand "...felt compelled to wage an armed struggle only after the

organization to which he belonged had been committed to non-violent protest for nearly fifty years. Both men have claimed a just basis for their divergent methods” (1995:35) In any struggle for freedom one have to consider people’s feelings for revenge, freedom and impatience etc. An almost natural response to oppression would be the desire to avenge oneself against the oppressor. The oppressor then tend to entrench themselves by enforcing greater and more draconian measures fearing ‘they will do to us what we are doing to them’. Adjusting and meeting the demands for justice is often seen by the oppressor as giving in, buckling, being weak, submitting to unreasonable demands, going backwards and other rhetorical fears marketed in society and among their constituents.

Often disillusionment with slow or no meaningful achievements can also become the source of bitterness, frustration, anger and a desire to wreak vengeance on the oppressor. That is why Mandela said “The oppressed people and the oppressors are at loggerheads. The day of reckoning between the forces of freedom and those of reaction is not very far off. I have not the slightest doubt that when that day comes truth and justice will prevail” (1986:39). This indicates a desire for freedom rather than for confrontation but will not shy from it, if it is the path to freedom. While martyrdom may be the price to pay by some to achieve one’s liberation from oppression, martyrdom for the sake of martyrdom may lead to spiritual pride and may even defeat the goal and purpose for which one were martyred. However it still reveals a great and noble goal for which people would still be willing to pay the ultimate price.

Armed rebellion against an oppressor as against negotiations, certainly in the Australian black and white scenario, where the white oppressor is armed to the maximum against an unarmed civilian black group ill-equipped for armed combat would be futile and fool-hardy. Others may promote and defend a ghost or guerrilla warfare approach striking at strategic national targets that would embarrass the political process and disrupt civilian life and so make the country ungovernable. Admittedly such a process that affects water, electricity, communication etc supplies has been used very effectively in the past in different countries eg South Africa, Zimbabwe etc. This will simultaneously be unpopular with certain sections of the population as it may attract support from others. The strong sense of resilience and survival among Aborigines in the past has certainly helped them against the invaders. In the book *Listen to the People, Listen to the Land* Johnny tells the author “I mean the missionaries came here

with the belief that we were heathens and children by nature (but)...we have survived over thousands of years...against...acts of genocide: poisoning the water and the arsenic in the flour...syphilis and gonorrhoea...small pox (and) the common cold was devastating; and we have still survived”(1999:181)

It would be presumptuous however, for any theology of liberation to prescribe any one particular paradigm or model that should be followed. It may hold up various mirror images if biblical and other liberation models that may be applicable to the Australian scenario. Different strategies to deal with a changing oppressive situation may even be called for.

Therefore a church can at times be a militant church and at times a suffering church as well as a servant church. Various models of an engaged church for liberation may be appropriate to adjust to an ever changing situation in the process of achieving its liberative objectives. The primary goal should be to liberate oppressed people. The method should be to understand and interpret the signs of the times and act accordingly (Matt 16 v 3). Such an interpretation and application should be in accordance with its contextual existential situation.

In the book *Militant Islam* G H Jansen describes the words of Mohammed who says “I am a mortal like you. In matters revealed to me by God, you must obey my instructions. But you know more about your own worldly affairs than I do. So my advice in these matters is not binding” (1979:19)

Here Jansen indicates that a keen eye on one’s existential situation should lead one into a response that is appropriate to deal with one’s situation adequately. Mohammed therefore seems to also leave room for personal initiative and assessment of one’s circumstances. In this regard, one of the devotees of Mohammed whom some people may have described as a militant Muslim, Malcolm X said “...Get up off your knees and fight your own battles. That’s the way you win back your self respect. That’s the way to make the white man respect you. And if he won’t let you live like a man, he certainly can’t keep you from dying like one”(1964:498) Not only was Malcolm X a person who challenged the status quo, but he was a person who through analysis of it, exposed the inherent contradictions, injustices and hypocrisy of the American society.

Both Martin Luther King and Malcolm X who struggled for civil rights for African Americans in the USA, exposed the inherent injustices in that society

through analyzing it. Ghandi, by re-interpreting the Bhagavad-Gita (Hindu Scriptures) made its principles applicable to the Indian society suffering under the oppressive British rule, to achieve freedom and citizens rights in the land of their birth. The methods employed by Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Ghandi could be seen as political confrontation models for their respective countries.

In Australia however because of the very small Aborigine population numbers and being sparsely spread across this vast continent, a model that advances a Zacchaeus paradigm may be more appropriate. Achieving equality in society through the redistribution of its power and resources must be the goal of any model as Laksiri Jayasuriya says in *Australian Civilization* “Clearly the principle of equality is central because it is the equal status of citizenship that bestows upon individuals equal rights and duties, liberties and constraints, powers and responsibilities” (1994:95) Achieving this equal status as citizens before the law and ownership of their land has been primary goals for Aborigines in all their struggles.

5.4 Diaconia

While we do not have a dominant Eastern Orthodox presence and influence in Australia, we may still learn a great deal from that tradition and their perspective on development, justice and righteousness. This perspective is taken as extracts from a *WCC Commission on the Church's Participation in Development, Kiev, 1982* and published by Charles Villa Vicencio in *Between Christ and Caesar* .

For the sake of brevity only some extracts are taken which says:

“Orthodoxy values life because:

- it is a gift of God to us,
- it is a gift which we, while on this Earth, may commit to God
- it is a gift which we can offer to our fellow Christians and our fellow human beings everyday” (1986:191)

“Because human beings are created in God's image and are stewards of His creation, they are co-workers with God, which means that human beings are agents of their own development and of the development of others” adding “The early church was also aware of the power of injustice. For instance, when the members of the Apostolic community complained of unjust distribution, the

church created a new ministry, the Diaconate, to study the problem. The Triune God, who has already revealed Himself as Agape also reveals Himself as a God who demands justice among His people, showing that Agape and justice are indissolubly linked to each other.”(ibid) It then says “Development begins with meeting the most basic requirements of life, to which every person in every society is justly entitled...and...”The church addresses its message to all. Those who do not believe in God and yet seeking a meaningful life, they have something to offer their fellow human beings”(ibid)

“Addressing those who have much, the church reminds them in words and deeds of Christ’s judgment on the rich. Addressing those who have little or nothing of the world’s riches, the church reminds them of Christ’s blessing of the poor”(1986:192) They go on saying “Tolerating and perpetuating the structures of injustice, not only inhibits development, but also encourages and provokes regress. Justice is a divine demand and we have the duty to seek it for all in our time. The way of the Gospel is not, of course, the violent overturn or change of existing economic, social or political structures.

The church is in the world to be a blessing, a light and an inspiration. While continuing in prayer and thanksgiving, the church has to offer herself, her individual members, but also her structures and corporate life, as an example of justice, participation and flowering of life”(1986:192)

5.4.1 Macrodiaconia

“In reality” it says “there exists only one diaconia in the Church under two different forms: ‘Microdiaconia’ by and to individual members, ‘Macrodiaconia’ as service to societies and their structures. The basis of both forms of service is agape or love for God and humanity. Both express the missionary task of the church”(1986:192) It continues saying “The church can and must contribute to the cultural life of the society”(ibid:193) They then adds “The churches have a special God-given duty to work for the realization of justice and peace, for the development of peoples and nations. The churches should be ready to defend human rights, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, of belief and condemn their violations. One of the noble tasks of the church today is to work for the preservation of peace on Earth. It is important to recognize that in its Christian sense, peace does not mean merely the absence of violence or open conflicts. It means peace within the heart of each human being,

peace with neighbours, peace in society and in the whole creation. The foundation of this kind of peace is to be found in the reconciliation of man with Jesus Christ” (ibid:193) They then continue saying Christians “...seek only that peace which is based on justice and on the realization of human rights. For Orthodox Christians and for Orthodox mission today, it is essential that our faith is expressed in everyday life as ‘Orthopraxia’. It is our duty to participate in all aspects of society, contributing to just development in life” (ibid).

5.4.2 Microdiaconia

Under this heading they say “Fundamental social change, meaning a deep in the relationships among persons, can never be imposed as a system or structure from without. It comes about only through a radical change of heart” (ibid)

“Each parish and each Christian” they say “is to be an imitator of Christ, who came to serve and not to be served”...and Parents must practice ‘Microdiaconia; and justice if children are to emulate Christ through their example” (1986:194)

“As did the early church,” they say...”parishes and Christians should respond to the cries of suffering people in all corners of the world, and in particular to the members to the household of faith Churches must develop resources and train pastors and laity for carrying out the many and varied tasks of ‘Microdiaconia’.”(ibid)Because circumstances can change they add “We live in changing times which challenge the church to continue in new forms its traditional service of love.

Our world is a divided world, and division is real not only among nations, but among Christians as well. ‘Microdiaconia’ in ecumenical form can become an effective element in healing the division among Christians...” (ibid)

These are clearly broad strokes in terms of the task of the church with a growing awareness of its responsibility in the social and public justice sphere. Much of this is of course already familiar with many. It is comforting to note its growing awareness and willingness to participate and lead in some areas previously ignored. It probably provides a model that would be comfortable to oppressors in the main and would not be considered too much of a threat to their status and position in society.

Within the realm of Microdiaconia this ‘deep change’ in the relationships among persons can be meaningful provided it is also lasting and permeates into all areas of life. All too often one finds that whites are only willing to befriend blacks in a

certain area eg at work and then limit the contact to that area. An unwillingness, even an unease pervade many people's attitude to extend interracial contact into all areas of their life eg work, home, recreation, love, politics, religion etc. A deep and meaningful relationship between people would invariably include these and even other areas of their experience.

Often when this inclusion of other people into these areas does happen, it occurs on a token and superficial patronizing level that may precipitate exclusion whenever it is seen as necessary, convenient and desirable. That would reflect prejudice and snobbery on the part of the whites and not a deep change in relationships.

However, Microdiaconia may serve as a very useful paradigm to promote justice, righteousness and understanding at the grassroots level of interpersonal relations. A place of worship may prove to be an ideal place where this can be spawned. It may be the place where a common faith in a common Father God can provide the common ground to promote the generic brotherhood of humanity and the community of faith.

Such common fellowship can advance a deep change in relationships. Unfortunately though, reality indicates that since the church or place of worship is indeed a microcosm of society, people invariably bring their prejudices to church, practice it there and influence church practice instead of allowing the church orthodoxy and praxis to influence and change prejudicial societal norms. In these cases and instances the contribution of Microdiaconia in people's lives are being neutralized. Some churches however are keen to implement Microdiaconia in a meaningful way in Australia to advance a 'deep change' in relationships.

Furthermore, often Microdiaconia is only initiated and driven by the pastor or preacher as they should, but rarely does it find grassroots support. All too often adults find that because they have not been raised in or exposed to deep relationships discover that those old habits die hard. This however should not lead one or the church to give up on nurturing a deep change in relationships. Such relationships can be extremely liberating and fulfilling and can bring great meaning to one's life.

5.5 Some Calvinist views on the state

These views are presented as a paradigm to be considered in developing new views and theologies for Australia. Meeter and Marshall says in *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism* “The best guarantee of the workability of a government lies not in its form (monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy) but in the moral and spiritual fiber of the people. With good people almost any kind of government will work...In later works...Calvin’s utterances are still more strongly in favour of the democratic type of government”(1990:85) Calvin says in his commentary on Acts 4 v 19 “We must obey princes and others who are in authority, but only in so far as they do not deny to God his rightful authority as the supreme King, Father, and Lord” (1965:120)(Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries) Calvin also says “The state may never be an atheistic state, denying God’s law or his sovereignty. Calvin then says: The state may never be an atheistic state denying Gods law or his sovereignty, as the Soviet Union has attempted. Nor may it be a neutral state, as adherents of liberalism in politics have desired. If God is Ruler, no man may ever insist that religion be merely a private matter divorced from any sphere of society, political or otherwise. God must rule everywhere. The state must bow to his ordinances, lust as well as the church or any private individual. The Calvinist, whose fundamental principle, maintains that God shall be Sovereign in all domains of life, is very insistent on having God recognized in the political realm also” (1990:86).

The State as an institution of God has the responsibility to govern for the benefit of all people. It has the responsibility of stewardship and must execute that duty without fear or favour but with justice and equity so as to advance the principles of the Kingdom of God. It is generally accepted that the State do not meddle in church affairs in the sense that it prescribe doctrine or worse legislate doctrine. It is required however to subject itself to the Word of God in the sense that it should not intentionally or frivolously violate God’s Word. The law of the State must also be subject to the Law of God.

The state must also acknowledge that its integrity and security is affirmed through doing justice and seeking peace. This it must pursue for the benefit of all its subjects. Failing in this task of its stewardship responsibility, the state will have become unjust and if in the face of church, court or other responsible means of correction, persist in such unjust action, it will have acted irresponsibly and in contradiction of the Word of God. It must represent and

govern on behalf and for the benefit of all people and failing in that, the people have the right to have it removed or replaced. That would be to recognize God in the political realm.

In Australia we have a system of government that functions at various levels and at almost every level the Aborigine is not adequately represented, if at all. Their express interests as indigenes are often ignored in the enactment of legislation. This invariably occurs against the wishes or interests of Aborigines. Often economic factors eg pastoral, mining and industrial interests take precedence to the interests of Aborigines in the enactment of legislation. Therefore generally in this area, the interests of Aborigines are at best neglected and at worse ignored and they therefore often become the victims of legislation that deprives them of justice.

5.6 The Christian state

In this area Calvin says “A state is Christian in this sense when, with God’s Word as its guide, its government maintains respect for authority, punishes evil according to divine ordinances, does not seek to disregard the guilt and responsibility of government officials or of its citizens, maintains the sanctity of marriage and the human family, guards the Sabbath, promotes philanthropy, honours the church and its mission in the world, and in similar ways reveals that it is permeated with the Christian Spirit insofar as it relates to its own sphere of government (1990: 86) In this sense some may consider it too close to a theocracy having God’s Word as a guide yet this should not necessarily be seen as preaching in a ‘pulpit’ sense. He then also clarifies this saying “The state, which is a creation of God’s common grace, not of special grace, is to be sure, subject to the rule of the Triune God as Creator and therefore subject to the Word of God as a rule of life. But it is not subject to Christ as the Mediator of redemption. In this last sense, therefore the state cannot properly be designated as Christian” but goes on when he says “The state today is a mechanical device, an instrument of God’s common grace which should not work at variance with God’s Kingdom but favor its promotion through the church. (1990:90).

In a certain sense one may say that this view of a Christian state places the church and state in a too close ‘hand in glove’ scenario that would inhibit the ‘arms length’ distance of the church from the state, required to properly and effectively fulfill its prophetic role towards the state. This prophetic function of

the church is also necessary toward a 'Christian State' that could become 'unchristian' in its performance and fulfilling of its governing role. In Australia we have a situation where the church and the state has become strange bedfellows to the extent that the church has become sadly reluctant or unable to fulfil its prophetic function towards the state, particularly with regards to the state's governance of Aboriginal affairs. In this sense the church has been unable to recognize the sins of the state, perhaps since the church has also become guilty, because of its own treatment of Aborigines. The Christian state (as also described by Fred Nile) had long since become unchristian and the Christian Church had also long since lost its prophetic stance on national and justice matters. While it is commendable to have a Christian state in the sense that they may acknowledge God in their deliberations, that in itself is never a guarantee that they will act justly and fairly in all their decision making. The church in Australia over the past decades seemed to have aligned itself too closely with the white people and its government, that it failed to notice the neglect that has occurred by the government towards Aborigines in that time.

5.7 The challenge of post-modernity

Contending Ideologies in Australia may not be very obvious or very visible at this time. There may not be much open conflict or debate between ideologues of significant proportion that could raise both awareness of the level of exchange publicly. This may in part be because by and large people are relatively complacent and accepting of the status quo. As in any society, there are voices of discontent, but certainly not to the level where demands are made for a radical and comprehensive restructuring or re-ordering of this community. Within the national political arena certain ideological misgivings have been expressed by smaller groupings which insist on returning to a previous more domesticated economy. They seem to have in mind a greater white control rather than an all inclusive system where a black lifestyle and ownership of land is acknowledged.

Often society can be swept away by such movements that leave the weak and poor at a greater disadvantage in its wake. The church also finds itself dragged a long and caught up in such great swirls that it is unable to untangle itself or distance itself from such great thrusts, it loses its perspective, its distinct character and its prophetic voice.

Marxism with its social analysis and prophetic pronouncements has become a major challenge if not embarrassment to the church for its silence regarding suffering and injustice in society. Many people have written about Marxism and some brief opinions will be noted here as well as other post modern perspectives.

Of this reality Arthur McGovern says “No one Protestant body or set of writings defines Protestant social thought in the way in which the papal social encyclicals have formed Catholic social teachings” (1990:107) This he says has led many “...to explore all possible alternatives: and “led many of the most prominent Protestant theologians to consider socialism more seriously and to evaluate the truth claims of Marxism more closely. A strong sense that the church itself stands “judged” by God for its failures in respect to social justice also made Protestant thought self-critical in a way that was little evident in papal encyclicals” (1990:107)

Although Marxism exempts the masses from judgment, the theologian Paul Tillich accepts the fall of humanity as universal and therefore it brings them under judgment. He does not therefore necessarily promote socialism as Christian love or as being religious. He acknowledges the limitations of humans and their structures and visualizes a no domination society.

Generally, the American Reinhold Niebuhr would be in support of a social analysis to understand and expose the mechanics of society as a means to bring about meaningful change therefore Niebuhr said” Comfortable classes dream of automatic progress in society” They do not suffer enough from social injustice to recognize its peril to the life of society. (1990:108)

The authors of the document *The Road to Damascus* express their concern about the suffering poor people experience in a wealthy society and world. Attention is directed towards this problem particularly in the nations of the many signatories. To highlight this they say “The reign of God is not simply a way of speaking about the next world. The Reign of God is this world completely transformed in accordance with God’s plan” (1989:8) Our task is therefore not just to ready for the next world, but to reflect the values of the next world, in this one. Therefore it says “It is like the Jubilee Year in Leviticus 25 when all those who are living in slavery will be set free, when all debts will be cancelled and when the land will be restored to those from whom it was stolen.” (1989:8). Stealing of land

and enslaving people seems to be an old problem. However, it is one of those matters we never seem to outgrow or learn lessons from and therefore keep repeating it. However, the Biblical demand in Leviticus 25 requires that such land be returned and that enslaved people be set free. Even in this post-modern society a pre-modern solution is still found in Jesus as these authors of this document says “What we discovered was that Jesus was one of us. He was born in poverty...He took sides with the poor, supported their cause and blessed them. On the other hand He condemned the rich. ‘Blessed are you the poor’ (Luke 6 v 20) ‘Woe to you who are rich’ (Luke 6 v 24) He even described His mission as the Liberation of the downtrodden (Lk. 4v18)” (ibid:8)

For all our articulate theologizing about a wide range of matters, the basic commandment ‘Thou shall not steal’ continues to apply and those who continue to ignore this age old dictum on a personal or national basis, will still one day be required to stand before God’s court of justice.

In Australia the theft of land has been camouflaged with the myth of terra nullius. Leviticus 25 affirms the simplistic analysis of Australian society which is the dispossession of Aborigines of their land. This nation therefore has enriched itself on stolen property. Jesus’ warning therefore applies to Australia ‘Woe to you who are rich’. The theft of this land has also been explained in terms of John 10 v 10 which describes the activities of a thief. The single most enduring ideological demand in Australia today that contend against the prevailing ideologies that may exist and be in operation here, would be that which is contained in what is popularly known as the Mabo and Wik court decisions. Few other events in the annals of recent Australian history have rocked the political, social and economic ‘boat’ of this country more than these two single events that has caused more stir and consternation in almost every aspect of society in every state and at almost every level of government. Despite the seemingly lull in debate in this area of social reform, it still remains the single most controversial matter that needs to be satisfactorily resolved for all parties concerned. It is therefore equally true that for a stable and peaceful future in this country, that adequate attention be given to this matter and a justified and justifiable solution be found.

Failing in doing that, it will most certainly remain the most contentious unresolved matter in this generation to be addressed by the next generation, if we are to ensure that we experience a relatively safe and peaceful co-existence

of indigenous and non-indigenous people in this country. We must not think that indigenous people do not have the people numbers to enforce their demands at the ballot box on an unjust majority, that the hand of God is not over them, or that His eye will miss it, fighting among them and for them until their right and righteous demands are being met and we would be foolhardy to believe that these demands would be suspended and abrogated with the passage of time. We have a clear knowledge and understanding of these demands which will continue to have a mutating effect against our collective conscience to be honestly and urgently addressed if we are to ensure that revolutionary action would be staved off.

Whatever other changes this nation may consider for its constitutional, symbolism and identity changes, to meet its future expectations and its place in the global community of nations, its treatments of its indigenous people would remain the most pressing priority as its most shameful neglect merely to entrench its own security and privilege, yet ignore its own moral health and guilt as a burden that will drag itself down like a millstone, more than it's a ability to honestly and openly correct this skewed condition in our society. Since other ideologies such as Marxism, communism, colonialism et al has come and gone, this is the one demand that would be upheld and maintained by the church community as well as the global community as a moral, ethical and enduring social problem, that can also change the psycho-social self-view of this nation. Indigenous people must also guard against being co-opted into agreements that fall short of their fullest demands and rights and should not be lured into agreements that are weighted against them, fixed and unchangeable and thereby put into further chains future generations' free enjoyment of the land and their stewardship of what is rightfully theirs.

CHAPTER SIX

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHANGE

6.1 Introduction

Talking about the future is never easy if that is to include any inauguration of new visions which demands prophetic, innovative and stimulating change toward the common good. An openness toward the lessons of the past is necessary as is a receptiveness to the future which require a willingness to forgo certain unjust, antiquated and indefensible things as well as to embrace new things.

These suggestions are not included just for the sake of change, but as an honest attempt to contribute towards the debate and search for new meaningful paradigms. They are also intended for reflection not only as separate paradigms but also to be used collectively. Therefore Elizabeth Fiorenza says in her book *Bread Not Stone* that "...different paradigms may be competing for the allegiance of the scientific community until one paradigm replaces the other or gives way to a third" (1984" 24) Paradigms or models are constructed for easier comprehension and as workable frameworks therefore Fiorenza says "...it helps to understand that theological approaches, like all other scientific theories, are not falsified but are often replaced, not because we find new "data", but because we find a new way of looking at old data" (ibid:24) Old paradigms can therefore be very useful for a new era if one can find new ways of looking at them. Revisiting old paradigms can be as problematic as creating new one's though, for the community of faith, often only because people tend to become comfortable and complacent with the present and recent and resist the new. Therefore Fiorenza also says "It is obvious that the tensions and problems in the relationship of the community of faith...are today occasioned by such a shift in theological paradigms" (ibid: 24).

However, it is a fact of life that just about everything changes and that nothing can or must remain the same. In a sense, change is the essence of life. To resist change for the sake of sameness or continuity is not only foolhardy but can be self destructive. Change must therefore not only bring the new but also improvement.

It is intended that these propositions or suggestions would contribute towards an improved future that would celebrate life (as Zacchaeus intended) rather than waste it (as in the Masada example)

6.2 A Masada complex

This extract is taken from the **Archaeological supplement of The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible (NIV)** and is largely reflective of the attitude of many throughout history who wrongly believe that separating and insulating themselves through fortification, they can zealously protect and conceal themselves against others, against change, against the future and so strangely ensure their future survival.

We in Australia may see ourselves in this. This may be reminiscent of our attitude. The white ruling class in Australian political, economic and religious circles has traditionally acted in such a way that they have always ensured that their behaviour, be it through legislation, voting patterns, economic strategies, intimidations, synodical decisions, coercion, covert or overt strategies and other subtle and not so subtle methods tried to ensure the entrenchment of their power and privileged positions against the weak and powerless indigenous people of this nation.

The Masada mentality of the whites must not necessarily be seen for all its detail but rather for its overall attitude of wanting to do anything in an attempt to ensure one's survival, if that means the oppression of others or even their eradication and even if that leads to one's own demise.

“Masada one of the world's most startling natural fortifications, is a majestic twenty three acre flat-top mesa, ten miles south of EN Gedi and two and a half miles off the west shore of the Dead Sea. Shaped like a great ship 2000 feet long and 1000 feet wide in the middle, it tapers to narrow promontories at the northern and the southern tips. Its sides are composed of almost sheer rock cliffs a thousand feet above the barren Judean wilderness and 1,300 feet above the waters of the Dead Sea. Being almost inaccessible, and far removed from the usual travel routes, it was first fortified by “Jonathan the High Priest” as a royal retreat during the second century BC., when it was named Masada.

In 40 BC, Herod fled from Jerusalem to Masada with his family to escape from Mattathian Antigonus, who had been made king by the Parthians. Leaving his family, his brother Joseph, and 800 men to defend it against siege, Herod travelled to Rome to seek help. The rock fortress proved its value on this occasion and, after his return from Rome, Herod chose Masada as his place of retreat and refuge in the event of possible attack by Cleopatra of Egypt, or in the case of Jewish people should try to depose him and restore the former dynasty to power. Between the 36 and 30 BC., Herod encircled the entire top of the plateau with a great white casemate wall 4,590 feet long, twenty feet high, and 13 feet wide, with three gates and thirty defence towers. The wall and the towers were coated with white plaster. As his royal abode, he erected the “Western Palace” a very large and wonderfully fine building with throne room, living and reception quarters with luxurious baths, coloured mosaic floors and sumptuous apartments. About his palace and at other places on the mesa were colonnaded porticos, cloisters, walkways, cisterns, groves, gardens and storerooms for arms and provisions sufficient to supply ten thousand men for many years. And thus was the citadel fortified by nature and the hands of men. Later to make his retreat doubly secure, and more pleasant, he moved his architectural activities to Masada’s northern precipice, where he erected his three tiered hanging palace, an architectural wonder of the ancient world.

Herod was to use Masada only as an occasional winter resort and possibly for a few vacation trips. After Herod’s death in 4B.C., a Roman garrison was stationed at Masada, and this occupation continued until AD 66, when a large scale Jewish revolt broke out all over the land. At this time the Jews made a lightning raid on Masada and displaced the Romans. As fighting continued throughout Palestine, many more zealous Jews came to Masada and strengthened its garrison”.(The Thompsons Chain Reference Bible, NIV, Archaeological Supplement:1674)

After the fall of Jerusalem under Titus in AD 70, the few surviving Jews who had evaded capture made their way across the Judean wilderness to Masada and joined the patriots in their determination to continue the battle for freedom. In the autumn of AD 72, Flavius Silva, the Roman general, took his Tenth Legion, its auxiliary troops, the thousands Jewish prisoners of war, and laid siege to Masada, then defended by Eleazar,

leader of the Zealots. For long months the patriots defended themselves, but when the Romans eventually completed an enormous earthen ramp to the top, placed battering arms against the walls and set fire to the fortification, the defenders saw they could resist no more. Eleazer made a speech in which he set forth the horrors of the fate that awaited them as prisoners of the Romans, and begged them to kill themselves rather than fall into the hands of the enemy. The garrison consented. Embracing their loved ones with sword or dagger they dealt the fatal blows. Collecting all their treasures in plies, they fed them to the flames. Next they chose ten men by lots to slay all the rest. When these ten had done the deed, they again cast lots to determine who shall kill his nine companions and then himself. In silence, so the enemy would suspect nothing, one of the most touching tragedies in human history took place. The next day, April 15, 73, when the Romans at last got into the fortress they had besieged for so long, they found alive only two women and five children who had concealed themselves and a mass of 960 dead bodies. An awful silence took the place of the clamour they had expected.”(NIV. 1676)

“Large collections of coins were found in the public buildings of Masada...The inscription in Hebrew reads, ‘For the freedom of Zion’. The most exciting find was that of fragments of fourteen parchment scrolls, which included parts of the books of Genesis, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Ezekiel which in text and spelling are identical with the traditional Hebrew Bible”.(NIV.1677) On the Masada’s heights the recruits of the armoured units of the defence forces of modern Israel swear the oath of allegiance with the poignant words: Masada shall not fall again”(NIV.1678)

The Masada model of white Australian attitudes to the land rights struggle reveal similar intransigent and entrenched attitudes and a tunnel vision approach to these realities and a denial of the past. This is also symptomatic of a dishonest and Pharisaic liberal mythologizing way of dealing with clear and transparent problems. The myth that has been created and that has developed as part and parcel of Australian society is far from being simplistic because there is in societies not easy iconoclastic mob and gang crashing or revolutionary forces that smatter myths into disappearing fragments and moments that no longer have the mega carrier functions of societal myths. The Australian myth has been created, is maintained and sustained through being the daily impulse giver of

many Australians' lives. It is also far from being insurmountable. This model also teaches us the futility of an unbending and an intractable approach of oppressors in the face of injustice and the desire for self-preservation through isolation and a laager mentality. Isolationism closes one to new experiences and the celebration of life in a world waiting to share a greater unselfish humanity that increases your own humanity, your sense of self worth, of belonging, a sharing and participation, an undiscovered spontaneity and a sense of wanting to seek the good of the other. An isolationism and self-centrism defeats these and diminishes your own being and world-view. It seeks to advance me(white) rather than us(including blacks) and leads to a crippling, narrow and diminishing world unable to sustain itself and ends in a destructive downward spiral of nothingness that does not advance any course. The Masada mentality can also lull one into a false sense of security and the mistaken belief that all is well and will end well. It can make one slumber in all the comforts and pleasures that you can create for yourself, even when corruption and decay unnoticeably encroaches from the inside or the enemy noticeably encroaches from the outside and overruns or overtakes that which you want to preserve for self.

The danger of such a scenario is that the destruction is often comprehensive, irreversible and often leaving no winners. Masada has remained in ruins for nineteen centuries and has never regained its former glory. The Pharaoh and Egypt has remained in ruins ever since its destruction in the Red Sea and has never regained its former glory and by the same token Jerusalem after refusing to respond favourably to Jesus' ministry was destroyed (one generation later) in the year 70AD, never to be restored to its former glory and those lessons always seems to be lost on oppressors throughout history.

The Masada scenario should serve as an eternal reminder to Australia and all other self-centred nations and movements of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to seek first the Kingdom of God. (Matt 6).

6.3 Dreaming and nomadism

In what was said earlier regarding the importance of the Dreaming to indigenous people, the following suggestions should be considered and taken into account in a new dispensation.

Some of the suggestions were taken from James Cowan's book *Mysteries of the Dream time*. He says "What the Aboriginal people are crying out for and no government has had the courage to grant them is full title to their tribal land. This is because economic values in Australia today are a more powerful force than the more fragile nurturing values of Aboriginal sanctity. No white politician, no agriculturalist, no mining magnate in the current political environment has ever had the courage to stand up and state the subservience of economic aspirations to those of the human spirit. In a world of agnosticism, the idea that spiritual values might correctly hold precedence over the demands of material wellbeing is an unthinkable proposition. Modern man is hell-bent on the destruction of all numinosities, whether they are metaphysical, mythic, or totemic, in order that he might pave the way for his own material apotheosis" and then he goes on to ask "What is the answer to this impasse? If Aboriginal culture is to survive at all, then it requires a far more serious examination of the Dreaming as a metaphysical reality than there has been so far. The Dreaming is at the root of Aboriginal heritage, and it is this that must be preserved as a living reality at all costs. Spending money on housing or medical projects, funding artistic communities or economic programs are extremely important, of course, but must remain as secondary to the re-affirmation of the Dreaming...until this is recognized and acted upon by government and bureaucrats alike, Aborigines will continue to survive in a state of fringe ethnicism, at the mercy of more dominant European cultural values that surround them" (1992: 130)

This is necessary and to achieve this unfettered access of the people to their land, will go a long way to restoring contact with his Dreaming and the eventual return of the land to its rightful original owners. Needless to say, they have been the owners of this land, coast to coast.

Nomadism must also be seen and accepted as a basic human right since it is a means of their continued existence and way of life.

6.4 Treaty or constitutional change and guarantees

In recent times much, yet not enough, has been said about these two possibilities as options for change in Australia. Self-evidently constitutional change has predominantly been preferred by white Australians as against a Treaty as a guarantee or promissory note or document between indigenous and non-indigenous people. Obviously the modern trend that influences much

constitutional changes has taken place in the recent century or so, was to include a Bill of Human Rights or a promissory note or guarantee for people. While this approach is very popular and more widespread lately, it does not always acknowledge the pre-modern presence and existence of indigenous people. Their contribution and continued rights to the land, waters and lifestyle as distinct from Western influence, are not clearly and distinctly guaranteed.

A constitutional Bill of Rights or similar document is often seen as the product of constitutional professionals entrenching white privilege and then handed down also for minorities to accept as if it is also in their interest. A Treaty would be seen as the product of action, reflection and agreements arrived at after mutual presentations of expectations, guarantees, hopes, dreams, freedoms etc. between indigenous people and those who has invaded their land. Unlike the Treaty of Waitangi, it should not be drawn up by one party alone with minor alterations allowed by minorities. A Treaty or Bill of Rights should be entrenched and guaranteed by the constitution and upheld by an independent Constitutional Court. Further emphasis is given to a Treaty by Father Frank Brennan the Jesuit Priest who has campaigned much for Aboriginal rights. He is quoted as having said “The Mabo decision changes the Law of the land...Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders may claim more than half of Western Australia and demand payment for the land taken by governments...The decision gave indigenous Australians a bargaining chip for a treaty with white Australians”(1995:250)

A Treaty or constitutional guarantee for Aboriginal people is imperative since they had suffered so much since white settlement, have lost their land since that time and have been given hope of its possible return with the Mabo decision. This is affirmed by Mark Butler in his book *Australia's Best Social Reformers* when he says” Because of *terra nullius*, indigenous people had no basic rights to land--- it was something given to them” (1996:55).The need for such a constitutional guarantee is to ensure and entrench their right to their land and against future dispossession by unborn generations.

The fact that after the High Court Mabo decision, so many people, governments and others, spoke of extinguishment and nullification, is indicative of the fact that if black rights are not guaranteed by the constitution, whites will continue to treat them as less than human who's rights and dignity they are not obliged to respect and uphold.

Such 'Mabo' and 'Wik' achievements by disadvantaged groups are often defeated by a type of combative Pharisaic religious zealotry among whites because a *de facto* colour line remains between black and white in Australia.

This possibility is being described as reality by George Fredrickson in his book *Racism*(a short history) when he gives an American example when he says "The fourteenth Amendment in 1868, wrote equal citizenship for all people born in the United States(except Indians not taxed) into the Constitution"(2002:81). This inclusion through amendment indicates being born in a country or claiming prior ownership of the land is no guarantee that such claims would be honoured by invaders.

6.5 Restitution, Reconciliation or Revolution

Reconciliation and Restitution goes hand in glove. Reconciliation is indeed a biblical concept that tells us that a conciliated condition existed, has been devastated, and that it cannot, and indeed must not be allowed to continue indefinitely. Before man first fell into sin, a condition which we because of sin, cannot fully comprehend, experienced a wholesome, loving intimate and perfect, reconciled relationship with God.

As a result of that sinful act, a condition of alienation resulted between God and humans as well as between humans and God, however has created the opportunity and possibility for humanity to be reconciled with the Divine Being as well as with one another. This has been done by and through the work, crucifixion, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This has made reconciliation possible and indeed necessary, if we are to regain our full humanity as well as any meaningful relationship with ourselves, with one another and with God. Far from this being easy, it is not even possible if we are not to follow the process that God has set in place.

Since reconciliation with God is not possible without restitution, this has been offered by the sacrificial offering of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Reconciliation with one another is also made possible with the death of Jesus. Jesus Himself however also indicates in His encounter with Zacchaeus that restitution, where such disadvantage has occurred is indeed a pre-requisite to reconciliation.

6.6 Zacchaeus and Reconciliation

As a paradigm for reconciliation, the encounter Zacchaeus had with Jesus, serves as a permanent reminder that reconciliation can never come cheaply, using shortcuts or bargaining trade-offs for a quick response to get a neat and tidy outcome.

What is clear in this encounter is that the perpetrator must make an honest admission of guilt. This is never easy, but this admission is not merely before man, but is also before God. There is therefore nothing to be gained than being less than honest. There should therefore also be a confession of guilt of the sins. Confessing our sins to one another is a constituent part of this process. This is also possible if it comes from a humble and contrite heart and attitude. Often this is seen by proud people as being too humiliating. Often these sins are committed because of a lack of humility and honesty.

As if this is not enough, Zacchaeus then states his willingness to compensate the victims of his unscrupulous actions. This he does not only by returning the same or equal amount, but giving four times the amount, probably indicating that he has benefited from four generations of ill-gotten gain because of the sins of his fore-fathers. It is hard to escape the sins of the fore-fathers when the Kairos time for reconciliation has arrived.

Because of his actions being part of a system of systemic exploitation that has created much poverty and many of his victims remain anonymous, he returns half his ill-gotten wealth, to the poor. Exploitation, robbery and oppression is a very serious sin that has to be compensated for and the longer it is being denied, delayed or defended, not only the more complex the web becomes, but the more costly it becomes. The price to those who struggle for justice could often be with their life, yet the price to those who perpetrate injustice and has to pay back that which they have stolen, to them seems a higher price. Failing to follow the eternal precepts of Jesus will certainly lead us closer to the precipice and the abyss of the unspeakable suffering of revolution which no-one should propagate or anticipate.

Moral degradation can indeed be a high price to pay if one refuses to walk the high moral ground that Zacchaeus was willing to walk to receive the recommendation from Jesus: Today salvation has come to this household also, since he is also a son of Abraham.

6.7 The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus

In John 14 verse 6 Jesus says “I am the way...”

In this verse Jesus presents Himself to the world and for all time, all situations and everywhere, to people as the way to follow, the way to proceed, the way to do things and the way everything will be concluded.

When Jesus says ‘I am the Way’ he is also saying that he is ‘the truth’. When people seek to know which way to follow for their lives individually or for the nation collectively, Jesus presents Himself as that truthful way to follow.

Jesus then also says in that same passage that He is ‘the life’. When people seek to find life, he offers himself as that truthful way to find and have/experience life and indeed to have it to the full.

This is indeed unusual in history that somebody would present himself to humanity in such a threefold manner as the way to find meaning, direction and fulfillment. This then would mean that what Jesus said, did, and sacrificed, constitute the sum total of the way, the truth and the life for humanity.

Because of the limitations of time and space, we cannot possibly consider all the aspects of Jesus’ life. We shall therefore only consider a few factors, relevant to the scope of this study. When Jesus was crucified, by that event he made it possible for everybody to seek and find life through faith in Him as Messiah or Christ or liberator of the universe.

That singular person through that event created possibilities hitherto impossible for humans to achieve.

As Liberator in a similar way as Moses(Deut 18v15-18 ;John 5 v 39,40,46: Acts 3v 22) Jesus said that His mission was to liberate oppressed people(Luke 4v 18+19). When Jesus offer Himself as Messiah and Liberator, it is for the oppressed to be set free in the same way as Moses has led the Hebrews to freedom from a total political, economic, religious(idolatrous) cultural, social

oppression in this world.

This liberation in Jesus is the way to achieve life in this world. This liberation should not be limited to this however. It was to start in this world so that faith in Jesus, in what he said, in what he did in both his earthly ministry and sacrificial death and resurrection, that liberation from oppressive structures and systems including personal individual oppression, was to be achieved..

A personal, individual or exclusively inward liberation only was therefore never envisaged or intended since that is not how Moses has achieved liberation for the Hebrew nation. Moses achieved a total liberation for the whole Hebrew nation from the idolatrous Egyptian oppressor. Jesus through his death, stated his intention, purpose or goal (Luke 4 v 18+19) at the outset of his ministry, was to liberate humankind from similar oppression including personal inward liberation. It was therefore never intended to be a liberation for the personal inward individual experience to the exclusion of the collective, group or nation liberation of the oppressed from political, economic, cultural, religious etc. oppression.

This is also a greater purpose than Moses as Hebrews 3 v3 asserts that Jesus has been found worthy of a greater honour than Moses. To emphasize an individual liberation in the Gospel to the exclusion of or as a primary purpose to a secondary collective political liberation is to belie Jesus' emphasis in Luke 4 of a total liberation. That would be to defeat Jesus' crucifixion to achieve such liberation for the politically oppressed. Of this Cone says "...the essence of the Gospel is the liberation of the oppressed from socio-political humiliation for a new freedom in Christ Jesus."(1975:51)

In Australia the need still exists for Aborigines to be liberated from their present oppressive circumstances. The politically liberative intent of the Crucifixion of Jesus, must still be made real in Australia for the benefit of the Aborigines who continue to languish under the old system of white dominant rule. Historically, theology in Australia never had a liberative intent or content and of this type of theology James Cone says in *God of the Oppressed* it would "...run the risk of being at best idle talk or at worst blasphemy?"(1975:52). In this country the church and indeed the nation has failed miserably in making the possibilities achievable in the Cross of Christ, a reality for so small a portion of the nation. The Crucifixion remains the most powerful paradigm available to this nation to

achieving real, meaningful and lasting reconciliation and liberation that would be both salvific to the nation and honouring God.

The healing power of Jesus for the individual is the same liberating power for the oppressed. When the Apostle Peter affirms the events of Acts 3 when he says in Acts 4 v 10 "...then know this, you and everyone in Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you completely healed", it is an affirmation that the same healing process can take place in this nation from the debilitating and crippling effects of oppression for both oppressed and oppressor.

Therefore Allan Boesak says in *Farewell to Innocence* "Liberation and reconciliation presuppose one another. It is the Liberator-Messiah who heals, forgives, restores, and reconciles" (1977:92). This reciprocal function of liberation and reconciliation is being made possible by the sacrifice of the Liberator-Messiah and is therefore able to bring both oppressed and oppressor together in a non-threatening mutually respectful relationship.

Similar and in addition to the Crucifixion, the resurrection power of Jesus Christ also stands as a paradigm for liberation. While these events could be separate, they really should be seen and understood as a single event.

When Paul writes in Philippians 3 v 10 + 11 "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death and so somehow, to attain from the resurrection from the dead".

The suffering and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is to assure oppressed people God's ability to give us victory for the cause of justice for which Jesus died by showing God's power to give us victory over injustice in the same way he has displayed his power over the ultimate enemy, even death, through the resurrection of Jesus.

Therefore Cone says in *God of the Oppressed* "The Bible ...tells the story of God's will to redeem humankind from sin, death and Satan. According to the New Testament witnesses, God's decisive act against these powers happened in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection" (1975: 110)

The resurrection of Jesus is therefore God's power over oppression and injustice. Since the death of Jesus is as the result of the greatest conspiracy and miscarriage of justice in human history to defeat justice, the resurrection of Jesus shows God's power to overcome all forces of darkness, conspiracy, injustice, oppression and deceit for all people who believe in the Liberator Jesus and his cause for justice, righteousness, love and humanity, acceptance and unity, peace and dignity, faith and life and so experience his fullness of life in this word and into eternity.

The resurrection of Jesus is therefore a statement of victory. It is an affirmation of God's commitment to justice, righteousness and freedom for all oppressed people.

It is the denial of the forces of oppression, injustice and indignity. It is the dawning of the Kingdom of God so that justice will reign over injustice, freedom will reign over oppression, honesty will reign over deceit, humanity will reign over inhumanity and where love will reign supreme.

This desire of Paul to experience or share in the resurrection power of Christ is in contrast to his earlier life of a Pharisee(v 5+6) when the meticulous and zealous keeping of the law, personal gain and correctness in behaviour and tribe and origin was of paramount importance.

In Australia all too many people are still too committed in their misguided zeal for personal gain and group interest rather than sharing in the liberating resurrection power of Jesus for the liberation of the oppressed people. For too many people, struggling with the oppressed for their liberation seems a lost cause and a futile activity that neither deserve their time or attention.

A Pharisaic pursuit of self interests and personal gain dominates the lives of countless millions, and like the rich man in the parable with Lazarus, does not even notice or care for the needs and plight of the poor. For Lazarus, in the midst of abundance, the dogs cared more for him (Luke 16v19-31) than the rich man did

In Australia today, we need to recapture the authentic power of the resurrection of Jesus to struggle with the conviction that the power of God works with us to

liberate the oppressed and achieve freedom, life and dignity.

The crucifixion and the resurrection are indeed interrelated but are only here described separately. Separately and collectively these two most momentous events in the life of Jesus empowers the life of the Christian believer to engage with God in the struggle to rid society of undignified poverty, oppression, injustice and unrighteousness. This is why Cone can say again “The meaning of Jesus Christ for us today is not limited to his past and present existence. Jesus Christ is who he will be. He is not only the Crucified and Risen One but also the Lord of the future who is coming again to fully consummate the liberation already happening in our present.”(1975:126).

It enthuses the devotees of Jesus, through faith in him, to continue the faith in struggle against those forces of conspiracy, deceit, unrighteousness and pride that sent Jesus to his Cross, and that (continue to) persist in similar practices today.

These paradigms serve as perfect guidelines and strategies to create new societies in this world including present day Australia. Denying these possibilities that God has created for us as ‘engines’ to drive and mobilize people for a new society, is to deny the faith and to deny the Lord Jesus Christ as Liberator Messiah.

To pursue these strategies and guidelines is to pursue some of the clues needed to visualize and construct a new and better society and to include those things that make for justice and for peace.

This resurrection power enables us to work victoriously against the forces of oppression and with Jesus raise up new societies, a new world and a new humanity.

6.8 Aboriginal Theological Seeds

Mindful of the fact that contextualization is the process of discovering what the Spirit is saying to the churches, the Aboriginal Theologian Ann Pattel-Gray says “Aboriginal theology today is in direct relationship with the past” because many Aborigines in previous generations contributed to contemporary Aboriginal theology” (International Review of Mission-Vol. 82./1993:172) While much has been contributed, no extensive study will be made of all the contributions .Such

early contributors include Rev James Noble who clearly understood, lived and spread the Christian Ethic as preacher, evangelist and pioneer. Translators of the Bible and other Christian literature included Biraban, Mjimandum, Barungga and Woondoonmoi as well as “M. Yunupingu, the Aboriginal woman who translated the New Testament into Gumatj” (1993:173).

Their contributions and that of others helped to contextualize the message of the Bible says Pattel-Gray, into formats and languages that enabled subsequent readers and believers to understand the meaning and application of the Gospel in a more liberative sense. While there are still conservative and liberal influences in Aboriginal religious circles, Pattel-Gray mentions “...Tom Foster, an Aboriginal evangelist from La Perouse, was raising important issues of justice and equality, and criticizing white missionaries as a destructive influence upon the indigenous people and culture”(ibid:175)

P. Gray mentions several other contributors who emphasized a more contextualized view of the Gospel than their missionary predecessors or counterparts.

This was significant since it indicated not only a grasping of the Biblical principles but also an application or contextualization of these for their own peculiar situation.

An example of this is ‘Story-telling theology’. This says Pattel-Gray “...embraces the traditional and cultural teachings of our people, and continues as the nexus between the Dreaming stories and the biblical scriptures” (ibid:175). This approach has a clear correlation or nexus with the narratives of the scriptures that through story telling transmits contextual truths comprehensible to most people. This method therefore brings the biblical message within the experiential domain of people and enables them to relate and respond to the Gospel. This method of unlocking the Kingdom of God to people enables them to comprehend a non-intellectualized model of teaching that can liberate them from enslaving models that advances only western European culture and interests. As an indigenous or contextual method and approach, it is significant that the truths of the bible be revealed in a liberating way to people who have clearly been deceived and oppressed through other means and methods of teaching. This is a radical method because of its impact on the people and because it is being initiated by Aborigines. Pattel-Gray says “Aboriginal Theology is a radical movement in theology, towards the creation

of an indigenous theology, leaning heavily towards biblical justice. It is autonomous...and emphasizes liberation, prophetic obedience, and action. It treasures traditional Aboriginal religion as the divine grounding for contemporary faith and identity. It keeps traditional practices (for example ceremonies) as potent reminders of important cosmic and temporal truths... for active engagement” (ibid: 176).

It clearly flows from an engagement to an engagement of people to empower, liberate and renew people and society. This relationship of Aboriginal Theology with the past is therefore not just with its own culture and tradition but also with the biblical tradition.

This infant theology that is emerging therefore has much potential to continue to unlock the Kingdom of God through its narrative or story telling method. This unlocking potential could lead to greater liberation insights and programs. The potential also exists to reveal biblical concepts on the identity and characteristics of the oppressor.

This may include the revelation in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus with the rich man and his five brothers(adding to 6) representing rich families who did not care about the poor Lazarus(Luke 16 v 19-31) or the parable, when read backward as a single story(in the way the Torah are read from back-rear- to front)referring to the man who married a wife, having bought five yoke of oxen and a farm(adding to 6)(Luke 14 v15-24) or the parable of the ten virgins referring to the church(that should be pure and holy and wholesome) of which five virgins and the oil merchant(adding to 6)(Matt. 25 V1-13) who were foolish and ill-prepared and therefore late for the bridegroom’s wedding. Those in these parables were the one’s who were unconcerned, indifferent, careless, wealthy people who missed the wedding feast of the bride groom who could potentially be those who would constitute the anti-Christ to be revealed at the end of the age.

Such a view and revelation in parable and narrative theology in unlocking the biblical concepts on oppression could reveal the evil oppressors as the rich and powerful people in this world and the five unwise virgins and (oil) merchant(adding to 6) representing the very rich section of the church being complicit in the oppression and exploitation of the poor. All those invited being excluded from God’s banquet.

Such a paradigm revealing the dichotomy between the rich and the poor in the biblical narratives makes for excellent and brilliant liberation theology for Australia. That would reveal and expose the rich ie six brothers, five oxen and farm owner, ie six, and the five virgins together with the merchant, ie six as representatives of a careless, callous and deceptive wealthy society who have grossly neglected its stewardship, care and responsibility towards the sick, poor, oppressed, imprisoned, marginalized, despised, enslaved, pitied and rejected outcasts of the nation and nations who were sidelined, salient, and sold.

An Aboriginal narrative theology with a liberative intent and content, fashioned on the biblical narratives that seeks to liberate oppressed people in Australia would indeed liberate the oppressed of the world to the glory of God and affirm Aboriginal theology as being relevant, contextual, existentialist and enthused and enthralled with a living faith that can inspire, transform and lead the world to higher plains of just communal and peaceful living. Such a theology would expose and reveal the heretics present in society and the church and reveal the small reliable believers who are committed to justice.

6.9 Concluding comments

These thoughts gathered here should by no means be seen as the final word of the Aboriginal struggle for justice in Australia. A great deal can and must still be said in pastoral, prophetic and other voices to arouse the conscience, action and awareness of the church and secular society to its responsibility regarding this matter.

Full agreement will never be achieved on all matters related to this struggle and it can become not only a very heated debate, but a very dividing matter in almost every community.

Radical change in a society often require radical solutions but people in a conservative society such as Australia's, would be more prone to shy away from any talk of radicalism or even revolutionary action. The term revolution often conjures up images of uncontrolled conflict, battles and bloodletting but it need not be. One only need to ask the questions others refuse to ask, take the risks others refuse to take, and challenge those, others refuse to challenge.

History altering action can be very loving, gradual albeit with all deliberate speed, and controlled, but often due to resistance, intransigence and white backlash, the intensity can increase to what some may consider as revolutionary proportions. The time is always right to do right and what is required are people with vision to acknowledge the right time and the commitment to act on a conviction that cannot be suppressed by its sheer importance and moral weight. A broad spectrum of the Aboriginal experience in Australia has been considered.

What has become clear and self-evident is that the Aborigines has suffered significantly in every area of their lives to this present day. The loss experienced by every tribe throughout the country since settlement of white people is not only well documented in research publications, court cases regarding land settlements, enquiries on various aspects of black experience eg black deaths in custody, forced removal of children from families, secret women's business etc, but continues to be highlighted by calls for reconciliation, land settlement and improved race relations. We have also noted that little or nothing is being done to significantly alter this situation that may therefore continue for some time yet. From a Liberation Theological perspective the Aboriginal community remains an oppressed group struggling against oppression and the oppressor.

While some landmark achievements have been made in recent years, much must still be done to re-establish themselves as an independent people equipped for self determination and self sufficiency. Many needless obstacles still remain such as poor employment opportunities, educational opportunities, poor housing and infrastructure, poor health, recreational and other essential services in many communities and the recent rejection by the High Court of the Yorta-Yorta people's claim to their traditional land.

However a great spirit of drive to achieve and of resilience pervades the community amidst much degradation, criticism and defeatism. One can but marvel and admire that resistance to such prolonged and enduring oppression has not escalated to greater expressions of violence and hostility. However, when the *kairos* moment for justice arrives and the nation's cup of endurance overflows and the people are tired of being trampled upon by the iron feet of oppression, there can be no knowing or stopping the flow and movement of a peoples march toward freedom.

The growing and development of a contextual indigenous theology, albeit in its infancy, have shown roots and shoots of growth. Much clues, cues and hues are evident in it having drawn from the broader context from the past and as it also dialogues with the present.

With more exposure to the vibrant debate within theology, particularly liberation and other contextual theologies in the wider context, this new development of theology among indigenes, is bound to produce fruit fitting for its own context in an attempt to bring the Word of God to bear in their particular situation of oppression. Freedom will invariably flow from such existential activity as James Cone says “In an unjust society, freedom for Christ can be found only among those who are in chains” (1975: 147) It is for such freedom that a theology of liberation in Australia would be dynamic, peculiar and growing from its own context, be effective.

A liberation theology in Australia would be effective in the same way as it is in Africa as Gwinyai Muzorewa says in the *Journal of Black Theology in SA* a “...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”. This Muzorewa says “...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”.(1989:55. Vol.3 #2.Nov).

A liberation Theology in Australia would invariably be much criticized by white theologians but it must persist to expose those theologies that is not liberative in its content or intent. Amidst opposition and criticism in this process of developing an indigenous theology, black Australian liberation theologians would be challenges to draw on resources within themselves to carve new paths forward as did Bonganjalo Goba in similar circumstances who said “...I am challenged as a Christian to turn to the resources of the Christian faith and African wisdom, to gain moral insights that may assist us to choose which way to go. That choice I believe constitutes the challenge of developing a liberation ethic” (1992:47). It is therefore self-evident that in the face of much opposition, new and pristine ethical principles may develop and become clearer to those who seek to promote liberation and defeat oppression.

Blazing a trail for liberation theology in Australia would be at the same time challenge and creative activity in self-realization. What it will produce remains a work in progress for its own context as it learns from human history as Ranwedzi Nengwekhulu says “So far human history has produced four major phases or epochs of human society each with its own culture, norms and customs, philosophy, ideology” These may have overlapped or co-existed with another at various times. These he says “...are communal society, slave owning society, feudal society and capitalist society. The fifth” he said at the time was “...the socialist society(and) is still largely under experimentation”.(1990:3 Vol. 4 #2) It appears likely that a product of liberation theology in Australia may take the best of a communal and a socialist society since it has a rich communalist heritage to draw on. However, some of the paradigms presented here may still pose a challenge to develop new and fresh perspectives that contain the seed that may revolutionize Australian society.

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