

BLACK THEOLOGY -- CHALLENGE TO MISSION

by

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SUMMARY

This thesis proposes that Christian mission in South Africa should be understood in terms of liberation. To achieve this aim, the author listens attentively to Black Theology, and then responds from a position of solidarity to the double challenge which it poses: a negation of traditional mission and an affirmation of liberating mission. Since black theologians grapple with the concrete implications of their blackness, a white theologian needs to make a consciously white response in order to do justice to it.

Since Black Theology emerged out of the Black Consciousness movement and developed in dialogue with it, the study begins with an examination of the theory and praxis of the Black Consciousness movement. Then follows an overview of the two phases of Black Theology in South Africa, in which the emphasis is placed on the organisations and events which embodied this approach, rather than on individual theologians.

In the systematic analysis of Black Theology, attention is first given to the element of negation. In this section the five inter-related dimensions of South African Christianity which cause black suffering are examined. Then an analysis is made of the element of affirmation: the liberating action proposed by black theologians for the eradication of suffering and the attainment of new human beings in a new South Africa. Since Black Theology has an holistic understanding of mission, attention is given to personal, ecclesial and societal dimensions.

The final section is a white response to this double challenge. First, it develops the notion of liberating mission and conver-

sion in the white community. Secondly it establishes a number of fundamental criteria for liberating mission. This final part draws conclusions from the analysis done in the earlier parts, and asks critical questions about some aspects of Black Theology. In this way the basis is laid for white involvement in liberating mission and for ongoing interaction with Black Theology.

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It is said that all theology is biography. It is another way of saying that we are who we are because of other people. At this juncture I want to register my appreciation to all the people who were instrumental in shaping my life as a human being, a Christian, and a theologian.

I begin with my father and my late mother, who taught me from a young age to ask questions and to look for my own answers. The stimulating learning environment which they created has left an indelible impression on my life.

I owe a debt of gratitude also to many student friends, who helped along my first conscious conversion while I was an engineering student in Pretoria. In an atmosphere of youthful pietistic experience and 'mission work among the Indians', I began to study the Bible seriously, and also saw South Africa for the first time from the other side of the apartheid fence. In those heady days were born my interest in other faiths and my desire to study theology. Without the support and encouragement of Willie Joubert, who made the same move at the time, it may never have happened. I owe a great deal to another student friend, Pieter Maartens, who was not only a daily theological sparring partner, but also introduced me to the Reformed Church in Africa congregations on the East Rand. It was while worshipping weekly in the corrugated iron church of Germiston 'Asiatic Bazaar' with 'slum dwellers' living under the threat of removal, that my theology was formed. The spirituality and humanity of that Christian community has influenced my life like few other factors.

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Advent 1988

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

ABRECSA	Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in South Africa
AICA	African Independent Churches' Association
ANC	African National Congress
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
BCP	Black Community Programmes
BEC	Black Ecumenical Consultation
BK	Belydende Kring
BMC	Black Methodist Consultation
BPC	Black People's Convention
BPSG	Black Priests' Solidarity Group
BRC	Black Renaissance Convention
BTP	Black Theology Project
CI	Christian Institute
CJP	Christians for Justice and Peace
COI	Commission of Inquiry
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CWME	Commission for World Mission and Evangelism
EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
ICT	Institute for Contextual Theology
IDAMASA	Interdenominational African Ministers' Association for South Africa
NGK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk
NGKA	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika
NGSK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk
NHK	Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika
PCR	Programme to Combat Racism
NFC	National Forum Committee
NSMS	National Security Management System
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SASO	South African Students' Organisation
SPOBA	St Peter's Old Boys' Association
SPRO-CAS	Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society.
UCM	University Christian Movement
UDF	United Democratic Front
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches

The Revised Standard Version was used throughout this study for quotations from the Bible.

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CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE, RELEVANCE AND METHOD

The question regarding the theological meaning of liberation is, in truth, a question about the very meaning of Christianity and about the mission of the Church (Gutierrez 1974:xi).

1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to develop the outline of a liberating missiology for South Africa. Three basic convictions are central to this approach. The first is that Christian mission should be understood in terms of liberation. I contend that the biblical notion of liberation enables one to develop an holistic approach to mission which integrates missiological concerns such as conversion, the upbuilding of the church, and action for justice in society. Like few other terms it expresses the dynamism of God's involvement in history, as well as the importance of human deeds for the coming of God's reign on earth. However, my concern is not merely to design a 'genitive theology' in which liberation is the central theme. Liberation is first and foremost something which is done in history. In this study I therefore also reflect on liberating praxis in South Africa, instead of merely theorising about the idea of liberation.

My second basic conviction flows from the first. It is that a liberating theology for South Africa should draw its primary inspiration and methodology from its own context, not from Latin America or elsewhere. In this study I therefore concentrate on Black Theology, a liberating theological initiative which arose within South Africa itself, in order to assess its contribution to an understanding of liberating mission. This does not mean that I regard Black Theology as the only theological initiative

in South Africa which needs to be taken seriously in developing a liberating missiology, but I do see it as one of the most important (1).

My third basic conviction is that a person who studies Black Theology cannot behave like the proverbial 'fly on the wall', which listens and observes without being seen. A study like this demands that one reveals one's own social situation and presuppositions, and openly acknowledges their role in one's theology. This is a consciously white proposal for a liberating missiology, which unfolds in dialogue with Black Theology.

In this way my study is intended to help overcome the oneness of missiology, which is described as follows by Hollenweger (1987:526): 'Political history is written by the victors. Mission history is written by the missionaries'. What he implies is that the view 'from the underside' (2) is seldom heard, and that the missiology of the dominant classes remains the dominant missiology (3). In this study I take up the challenge presented to dominant missiology 'from the underside' by Black Theology. I study and respond to the missiology of black theologians, those Christian 'organic intellectuals' (cf Gramsci 1971:9f) who articulate the anguish of the dominated classes as well as their determination to become subjects of history.

The expression challenge to mission in the title conveys a double meaning. On the one hand Black Theology challenges traditional missiology by launching a frontal attack on its understanding and practice of Christian mission. On the other hand it challenges Christians to action by issuing a call for new, liberating mission. The word 'challenge' in the title of this study therefore expresses the view of prophetic Christianity that 'contradiction and transformation are at the heart of the Christian gospel' (West 1982:17). These two elements of contradiction and transformation determine the structure of the whole study, as I explain later.

1.2 RELEVANCE

When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us 'let us pray'. After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible (in Mofokeng 1988:34)

This oft-quoted anecdote has lost little of its appeal for black people in South Africa. The intimate relationship between colonial dispossession and Christian mission which it expresses is a 'scandal' in the black community, which missiology in South Africa cannot ignore (4). Since the black community has not yet recovered its lost land, many black people have decided that it is humiliating to keep holding on to the Bible. The question whether decolonisation necessitates de-christianisation is therefore a very real one for many black people (Mofokeng 1983:15). Some black Christians, who are consciously retaining the Bible, have responded to the anecdote by using their Christian faith as an instrument in the struggle for their land: 'The task now facing a black theology of liberation is to enable black people to use the Bible to get the land back and to get the land back without losing the Bible' (Mosala, IJ 1987a:194) (5). Since Black Theology responds directly to the missionary 'scandal' referred to above, it is extremely relevant to missiology in South Africa: 'The future of evangelism in South Africa is ... tied to the quest for a theology that grows out of the black man's experience' (Buthelezi 1973c:156). No responsible missiology can ignore the double challenge emerging from Black Theology: the attack on missionary complicity in the causes of black suffering, and the call to Christian involvement in the struggle for liberation.

Another issue of relevance concerns the question whether Black Theology is still a living reality in South Africa, or whether it has been overtaken by recent developments in the black struggle. Mosala & Tlhagale (1986a:viii) admit that the emergence of the

United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which have openly adopted the Freedom Charter, pose a challenge to the strategy of Black Consciousness, and that these developments are 'bound to catch up with Black Theology'. Nolan (1988:4) asks: 'If the majority of the people have now adopted the non-racialism of the Freedom Charter, what does this mean for Black Theology'? For two reasons I contend that it is still relevant to study the challenge of Black Theology. First, the fact that Black Theology is still being articulated by a number of theologians. The recent formation of the Black Theology Project, and the publication of the Journal of Black Theology in South Africa indicate that the movement is far from dead. It may be true that the Black Consciousness approach does not at the moment enjoy majority support in the black community, but that in itself does not make it theologically irrelevant.

My second reason for affirming the continued relevance of Black Theology is the fact that the black theologians who have moved from the Black Consciousness strategy to the 'non-racial democratic' approach still regard themselves as black theologians. The 1984 Black Theology Seminar of the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) concluded that a plurality of liberating theologies is inevitable due to the ideological 'divergences' in the black community (6). The implication of this is that, for some black theologians at least, Black Theology is no longer wedded to the Black Consciousness strategy. However, these black theologians have not retreated from the positions they held before; they have advanced from them, because they believe that the Black Consciousness strategy has served its purpose (7). In other words, they are still holding the 'ground' which they 'captured' when they were part of the Black Consciousness movement. By this 'captured ground' I mean the affirmation of black personhood and dignity, the assumption of black initiative and leadership in the struggle for liberation, and the method of theologising from within this struggle. Their present theological approach can therefore not be understood without a clear grasp of Black Con-

sciousness and the development of Black Theology. Since to my mind white theologians in South Africa have not yet responded adequately to Black Theology (in any of its phases), this study is indeed relevant and necessary.

1.3 METHOD

1.3.1 Terminology

1.3.1.1 Black Theology

At the outset it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the terms 'Black Theology' and 'black theologians' in this study. These expressions will not be used to refer in a general way to all Christian theologians who are black by pigmentation. The terms will be used in a specific sense to refer to theologians influenced by the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa, and who regard themselves as exponents of Black Theology.

The foregoing determines the meaning of the terms in three ways. First, the limitation to South African black theologians. From time to time reference will be made to Black Theology in the United States of America, due to frequent contacts and mutual influences, but the focus of this study will be on South African Black Theology. Second, the limitation to theologians influenced by the Black Consciousness movement. This implies that the sources for this study are limited to the period since 1970, when the first essay dealing with an explicit 'Black Theology' was written in South Africa (Moore 1970). There has been a distinct tradition of black Christian theology in South Africa since the nineteenth century, as will be indicated in chapter two, but the focus of this study is on the more recent theological approach which explicitly calls itself Black Theology (8). Finally, my focus on black theologians influenced by Black Consciousness makes enough room to include those theologians who no longer subscribe to the strategy of the Black Consciousness movement, but still regard

themselves as black theologians. In this respect I have deliberately decided not to set up my own standard of judging who 'qualify' as black theologians, but to accept as black theologians all those who regard themselves as such. It is the prerogative of black theologians to decide whether and how they should 'tighten up theoretical and ideological screws' to prevent 'any theology done by any group of black people' from being called Black Theology (Mosala, IJ 1987d:38).

1.3.1.2 Mission

It is necessary at the outset also to define my understanding of mission, since it determines the way in which I analyse Black Theology in this study.

Christian mission is the activity of people who strive to follow in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth, to continue his ministry for the realisation of God's new world of love, peace and justice in this present age of suffering, sin and death. They see it as their calling from God to change the world, by speaking and living the good news of God's grace. Following the example of Jesus, they strive to contribute in word and deed to the struggle of the poor and oppressed for a just and loving society, in which people may become whole human beings. Mission is therefore the attempt to embody God's liberating presence in every human situation. It never takes place in a vacuum, but is always concerned with specific people in specific situations, and searches to discover the meaning of the Good News in each context.

To explain my approach more fully, let me formulate four basic premises which underlie it. The first is that mission should not be understood merely as the conversion of individuals or the planting of the church. It is the participation by Christians in the missio Dei, that is, the ongoing liberating work of God in history (9). Since God is at work in the world, fostering human freedom and wholeness, Christian mission involves discerning

where and how God is at work, and taking part in such activities. The conversion of individuals and their gathering together into messianic communities find their proper place within this all-encompassing perspective of the mission of God. If this is what mission is, then missiology is critical reflection by Christians (10) on their participation in the missio Dei. The theory of what Christian mission should be, emerges out of the praxis of embodying God's reign in a particular situation. 'Correct ideas' about mission do not 'fall from the skies' (cf Casalis 1984), but come forth from involvement in concrete action for the realisation of the reign of God. Missiology as a theological discipline would affirm the dictum of Marx that what matters is not merely to interpret the world but to change it (Marx 1974:65). There is a constant dialectical interaction between praxis and theory, but in my view the primacy belongs to praxis.

The second premise, flowing from the first, is that the goal of Christian mission is best described by the term liberation. The embodiment of the reign of God in human history is an ongoing experience of being set free from whatever makes life less than human. Christian mission therefore aims to be a humanising force in history. The whole scope of mission, ranging from the conversion of individuals to the change of social structures, can be described in terms of the liberating presence of God, mediated by human agents (11). This full scope of mission always includes a personal, ecclesial and societal dimension. Empowered by the Spirit of God, Christians are sent, like Jesus, to become agents of holistic liberation in society:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-20).

The third premise is that context analysis should be an essential part of missiology (and of all theology). In reflecting on their involvement in God's liberating mission, Christians need to know their context thoroughly. Without understanding the 'bad news' of a particular society, there is no way of knowing what the good news of Jesus Christ is for that situation, no way of knowing how God is at work in it and how Christians should act in it. An essential question here is through whose eyes one analyses the context. At this point the parable of the last judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 takes on central importance. Jesus 'preferential option' for the hungry, thirsty, naked, homeless, sick and imprisoned determines the vantage point from which Christians are called to analyse their context. Making context analysis an inherent part of theology in this way has the implication of saying farewell to the 'innocence' of a supposedly neutral, universal theology (see Boesak 1977b:3ff). The way in which one analyses a particular society will depend largely on one's class position in that society and also on the analytical 'tools' that one uses. In this way at least some of the ideological presuppositions and commitments that precede and accompany a particular theological discourse are revealed by the theologian as an integral part of her/his theology. In my view the revealing of the 'nine tenths of the iceberg' (or at least a part of this) which is normally hidden from view is essential for honest theological thinking and for serious dialogue between theologians.

My fourth premise is that a constant re-reading of the Bible is an indispensable part of missiology. In the light of involvement in missionary praxis and analysis of the context, one needs to grapple unceasingly with the Bible as the foundational document of the Christian church. The stories of God's dealings with Israel and Jesus Christ need to be re-read and re-interpreted in the light of the stories of the oppressed today. Missiology therefore includes an ongoing search to discern the will of God for every specific situation. As was the case in the life of Jesus, this will not be an easy or obvious exercise -- it will

often necessitate agonising prayer and painful decisions.

1.3.2 Basic approach to Black Theology

As have I have said above, my study is a consciously white response to Black Theology (12). It is therefore essential at the outset to locate the kind of response given here within the range of white responses that have been made to Black Theology. These responses will be analysed in more detail in chapter six, and therefore need only to be mentioned at this point.

First, there is the rejection approach, represented by people like Pont (1973) and Commissions of Inquiry (1975a, 1975b, 1983). This approach rejects Black Theology as a foreign, racist and communist-inspired movement, bent on destroying true Christianity and civilisation in South Africa. Secondly, there is the sympathy approach, represented by people like Crafford (1973) and Meiring (1976). This approach listens carefully to Black Theology and takes up some of its concerns, but then points out its one-sidedness and the dangers inherent in it. Thirdly, there is the solidarity approach, represented by people such as Moore (1970) and Kleinschmidt (1972). This approach affirms the liberatory thrust of Black Theology, and in response to it attempts to develop a complementary liberating ministry directed at the white community.

My study follows the third approach, which could be characterised as 'solidarity with victims' (cf Lamb 1982). While affirming the basic thrust of Black Theology, it attempts to develop a liberating white Christian tradition in critical solidarity with it. It is an attempt to respond positively to these words:

The question is no longer whether whites are willing to do something for blacks, but whether whites are willing to identify with what the oppressed are doing to secure their liberation and whether whites are aiding that

liberation in their own communities (Boesak 1977b:5).

I will therefore not put Black Theology through a 'test of approval and acceptability into the fold of legitimate theologies' (Mofokeng 1983:4). As point of departure I accept its existence as an authentic and legitimate theology in its own right. This does not mean that I have no critical questions to ask black theologians. I will do so in chapter seven, but these questions do not concern the right of existence or legitimacy of Black Theology.

Such an approach requires first of all the willingness to listen very attentively to what black theologians are saying. This conviction is shared by both the 'sympathy' and 'solidarity' responses described above. It is vividly expressed in the following poem by Serote (in Gordimer 1973:62):

White people are white people
They are burning the world.
Black people are black people
They are the fuel.
White people are white people
They must learn to listen.
Black people are black people
They must learn to talk.

The first part of this study presents the results of my 'listening my way into' the world of Black Theology. This approach is especially necessary in the light of the fact that black people have so often been ignored, silenced or reduced to 'objects of study' by South African white theologians (13). What my procedure aims to achieve is not merely a quantitative addition of black viewpoints to white theology ('add some blacks and stir'), but a 'qualitative re-vision' (Callaway 1981:465), a new way of doing theology which allows the previously absent and stifled black voices into the heart of theology in order to transform it. The

effect of such a listening to Black Theology and such a seeing of what was formerly invisible is described by Moltmann (1974:2) as an 'eye-opener' experience which he likens to the healing of blindness. It is an experience which forces you to look at yourself through the eyes of those who have been suffering because of your own people. In other words, you are forced to look at yourself through the eyes of your victims. It is therefore not only an experience of seeing, but perhaps primarily an awareness of being seen. In the words of Sartre ([sa]:7) on the Negritude poetry of West Africa: 'The white man has enjoyed for three thousand years the privilege of seeing without being seen'. But now black people have taken the initiative to examine white people and the latter are experiencing 'the sensation of being seen' by 'eyes savage and free which gaze in judgment upon our country' (Sartre [sa]:9). This study proceeds along the road of becoming exposed and vulnerable to the gaze of black people, in an attempt to facilitate a real meeting between the two worlds. It is therefore not a study on Black Theology, nor does it claim to be Black Theology; it is a dialogical encounter with black theologians, as part of my attempt to contribute to a liberating understanding of mission in South Africa today. It understands research not as an 'invasion', a hierarchical imposition of the researcher on the researched, but as a dialogue, that is, a two-way intercommunication, a horizontal relationship between persons engaged in a joint critical search (Freire 1976:45). For this reason I deliberately do not emphasise the differences of opinion among black theologians. I indicate such differences from time to time, but I have chosen to stress the commitments and views that they have in common (14). For the sake of analysing the challenge of Black Theology to mission, I prefer to 'sin' on the side of 'lumping together' black theologians, rather than on the side of dissecting their views and imposing divisive distinctions on them. An 'objective' description of Black Theology is impossible, and I contend that my procedure in this regard reflects my declared solidarity with black theologians.

This implies finally that I do not speak for black theologians when presenting their views, but that I describe the result of my listening to them, thus making the space for them in this study to 'speak for themselves'. No white person writing about Black Theology can evade the sharp edges of the words of James Matthews:

Can the white man speak for me?

can he feel my pain when his laws
tear wife and child from my side
and I am forced to work a thousand miles away?

does he know my anguish
as I walk his streets at night
my hand fearfully clasping my pass?

is he with me in the loneliness
of my bed in the bachelor barracks
with my longing driving me to mount my brother?

will he soothe the despair
as I am driven insane
by scraps of paper permitting me to live?

Can the white man speak for me?

(Matthews & Thomas 1972:9)

1.3.3 Sources

The sources used in this study of Black Theology are primarily the published books and journal articles by South African black theologians, as well as a number of unpublished doctoral dissertations. In this regard it is necessary to mention the obstacles presented to a researcher by the fact that many Black Conscious-

ness and Black Theology publications are banned by the South African government and therefore difficult to obtain. One cannot be unmoved by the fact that so many of South Africa's most creative thinkers and theologians are silenced in this way by government decree.

In addition to the books, articles and theses mentioned above, I have also made use of some drawings and poems by black artists, as well as some 'freedom songs' sung at black Christian gatherings. The reason for this is to portray the 'mood' of Black Consciousness and Black Theology, which is certainly not a cool, detached and neutral one. In order to do justice to the Black Consciousness movement, one has to somehow portray its passionate, angry and introspective character. The black experience, out of which Black Theology emerges, is difficult to transmit on paper, but the inclusion of some poems is an attempt in that direction. It is hoped that the reader will thus be enabled to some extent to feel her or his way into the experience undergirding Black Theology. The word 'feel' is deliberate, because it is my contention that more than merely abstract, rational skills are required to enter into the world of Black Theology. I agree with De Gruchy (1987:104) when he says:

Without denying the importance of rational discussion of the problem, I suggest that theological reflection on human suffering has more in common with the passionate explorations of poets and dramatists than it has with the often dispassionate debates of the philosophers.

In this respect my epistemology has much in common with some 'new paradigm' approaches to the social sciences, that are characterised as follows: 'a Feeling science would not be afraid to display an ever-present, underlying emotional basis beneath an apparently impersonal, logical, and rational surface structure of science ... Science can no longer afford to deny its emotional

foundations' (Reason 1981:51). This approach is contrasted to conventional science, which is 'strongly masculine in its orientation, reflecting traditional stereotypical male values: it is 'hard-nosed', objective, value-free; it eschews the ambiguous, the speculative, the vague, the beautiful, and the good' (Reason 1981:51) (15). It is my contention that a methodology which focusses on experience and consciously recognises and utilises emotion is the only adequate way to study Black Theology. An appropriate study of a theology which is 'passionately involved' rather than 'cool, objective or neutral' (Boesak 1977b:12), can only be itself 'passionate' in character. This means 'doing theology with wide-opened eyes, alert minds, and warm, tender hearts' (Song 1986:118).

Another reason why I use poems is the fact that black poetry and black drama have played an important role in the Black Consciousness movement. In this respect Black Consciousness in South Africa shows similarities with the West African 'Negritude' movement. The words of Sartre ([sa]:63) about that movement can also be applied to South African black poetry: 'Upon this one occasion at least, the most authentic revolutionary program and the purest poetry derive from the same source'. I do not use these poems as some kind of decoration; I include them because they take us to the heart of Black Consciousness.

The final source of this study was personal conversations with various black theologians. These discussions were not recorded and are therefore not acknowledged in references, but they have played an important role in the interpretation of the other sources.

1.3.4 Structure

As I have indicated above, the purpose of this study is to articulate the double challenge to mission contained in Black Theology, and then to respond to this as part of a search for a

liberating missiology. The study as a whole therefore has a dialogical structure, comprising the acts of listening and responding.

It is, however, an oversimplification to describe the first part of this study merely as 'listening' to black theologians. What I call 'letting black theologians speak for themselves' clearly entails a great amount of input from my side, which inevitably bears the imprint of my background and personality, my biases and interests, as well as my special interest in the relevance of Black Theology for the understanding of mission. My approach in this first part has a phenomenological slant, in the sense that I have intended to let the 'phenomenon' that I am studying 'reveal itself' to me. I therefore quote profusely from black authors, as I think and feel my way into their world of discourse and experience. But no such presentation can ever be neutral. As I have explained above, my basic posture towards Black Theology is one of solidarity. I add some further comments on my personal stance in the following section.

The dimension of listening to black theologians and of letting them 'speak for themselves' takes up four chapters:

Chapter two gives an historical overview of the origin and development of the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa.

Chapter three contains an historical overview of the organisational unfolding of Black Theology and a description of its basic character.

In Chapter four I present the black theological critique of South African Christianity, which includes their critique of church and mission. This is 'challenge to mission' in the negative sense.

In chapter five I present the views of black theologians on what Christian mission should be like in South Africa, in other words,

their call to liberating mission. This is 'challenge to mission' in a positive sense.

The dimension of response consists of two chapters:

In chapter six I briefly analyse the different types of white responses to Black Theology, and then develop my solidarity response by proposing the outlines of a theology for white liberation.

In chapter seven I integrate the contribution of Black Theology into an outline of a liberating South African missiology. At the same time I pose some critical questions to black theologians. The central concern of the final chapter is to lay down criteria for a liberating mission in South Africa.

The structure can be visualised as follows:

LISTENING	RESPONDING
<u>Historical dimension</u>	
c.2 The emergence of Black Consciousness	c.6 * White responses to Black Theology
c.3 The development of Black Theology	* A theology for white liberation
<u>The challenge to mission</u>	
c.4 * Context analysis * The role of church/mission	c.7 Criteria for liberating mission
c.5 The call to a liberating mission	

It is necessary to explain the space devoted to the historical dimension (chapters two and three). In my view it is only possible to understand Black Theology as an integral part of the Black Consciousness movement, and it follows therefore that an exposition of Black Consciousness is essential to this study. Secondly, since Black Theology is not a static phenomenon, it is important to describe the developments that have taken place in it, before giving a more systematic presentation of its views pertaining to mission. Furthermore, to avoid creating the impression that Black Theology is just a collection of ideas, I describe the organisations and events that embody Black Theology's vision and praxis. I endorse the view of Witvliet (1987:xii) on the necessity of an historical component in a study of Black Theology (or any contextual theology):

There is a special reason why this historical part ... forms the heart of this systematic or dogmatic study: by giving the black story this central place I am indicating that narrative -- history as narrative -- needs to be the basic material and the basic structure of a theological system. The insight into the contextuality of theology rules out an abstract approach, i.e. one which omits the specific context of the black experience.

It is also necessary to explain why context analysis (chapter four) precedes liberating mission (chapter five). First, context analysis is an integral part of Black Theology. It is not some introduction or 'background material' to it, but an essential dimension of Black Theology itself. Secondly, it is important to note that Black Theology follows a distinct hermeneutical approach. In order to do justice to Black Theology as a form of liberation theology, it is necessary to follow the logic of its hermeneutical method, which has been classically described by Segundo (1976:8ff). According to Segundo, the 'hermeneutical circle' in liberation theology begins with a new experience of

reality which leads to 'ideological suspicion', followed by a new way of experiencing theological reality, leading to 'exegetical suspicion' and a new hermeneutic. The new black interpretation of the Bible flows from ideological suspicion in the minds of black people regarding their 'real situation'. In order to honour the intentions of black theologians I need to start therefore with their analysis of the South African context, that is, at the first point of Segundo's hermeneutical circle. The term 'context analysis' when applied to Black Theology should however not be understood in a cold, clinical sense. It is an analysis which arises out of existential involvement in the suffering of the black community, out of a 'pretheological human commitment to change and improve the world' (Segundo 1976:39). Out of this black experience and praxis there has evolved a black analysis of the South African context which forms the hermeneutical starting point of Black Theology.

In the writings of black theologians one does not find context analysis in isolation from the interpretation of the Biblical message. In this study the two dimensions are distinguished for the purpose of clarity, without suggesting that context analysis in Black Theology is chronologically prior to or more important than the analysis of Scripture. As two essential dimensions of the hermeneutical process, they form part of a circle and are therefore in constant interaction. Nevertheless, methodologically the priority should be given to context analysis. The Ecumenical Dialogue of Third World Theologians, held during 1976 in Dar es Salaam, also began their Final Statement with an analysis of the Third World context before proposing a new theological approach (Torres & Fabella 1978:259-271) (16).

1.3.5 Personal stance

The social-ideological location and commitment of the reader must be accorded methodological priority (Mosala, IJ 1987a:164).

As indicated in this statement, the personal position and stance of a researcher is an important aspect of any research methodology. Since neutrality is impossible in any human endeavour, it is essential at the outset that I indicate my personal 'interests' with reference to the subject matter of the present study. This is particularly important when a person classified as 'white' in South African society makes a study of Black Theology, since the latter is aimed primarily at the black community and excludes as a matter of strategy the participation of white theologians, whether 'liberal' or 'radical'. Some would argue that the principle of academic freedom gives anybody the right to study anything at all. It is my conviction that in a study such as this, which deals with a prophetic message from black people to black people, I as a white student must indicate from the outset an opening created by black theologians themselves on the basis of which my study proceeds. This is essential in order to avoid the typical white arrogance of making black people the objects of 'scientific' research, thereby adding to their oppression. The basis of this study is the opening offered by black theologians when they express the hope that white people will somehow listen to Black Theology, even though it is not primarily addressed to them. This sentiment is expressed, for instance, by Mpunzi (1974:139): 'Black Theology is a theology of liberation. Although it directs its voice to black people, it nonetheless hopes that white people also will hear and be saved', and also by Mosala & Tlhagale (1986a:ix): 'We make no pretense to be writing for a white audience although we hope a reading of this book in the white context could foster something of that metanoia that white missionaries came to Africa to preach to black people'.

My study proceeds on the basis of this indirect call to conversion extended to white people by black theologians. The dialogue entered into with them is therefore not purely academic, but involves hearing their call to conversion and allowing it to influence both the content and the structure of my response.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 1

1. The African Independent Churches, feminist theology, and the other living faiths in South Africa likewise present serious challenges to traditional understandings of mission.

2. This expression has become common since its use as the subtitle of the publication on the Dar es Salaam EATWOT conference (Torres & Fabella 1978). The full title of the book is: The emergent Gospel. Theology from the underside of history.

3. I have adapted this expression from the saying of Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels: 'The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force' (Marx & Engels [1845] 1970:64). I agree with Mofokeng (1987b:25) that this Marxian principle should not be interpreted in a deterministic way, since that allows the dominant ideas to go unchallenged. In fact, my study is an attempt to challenge such dominant ideas by proposing a liberating missiology in dialogue with Black Theology.

4. I use the word 'scandal' both in the sense of public shame and of stumbling block (from the Greek skandalon). A good survey of recent historical research on this scandal of missionary complicity in colonial conquest and dispossession in South Africa is found in Cuthbertson (1987). He comes to the following conclusion regarding the missionaries: 'their activities were in keeping with the official policy of colonial subjugation and consequently they were permitted to be an extension of imperial rule. In other words, missionaries were under the tutelage of the political decision-makers and were important agents of western capitalism' (:28). The most provocative and influential study on the role of missionaries has been the book by Majeke ([1952] 1986), entitled The role of the missionaries in conquest. At its recent reprinting it was revealed that Nosipho Majeke was in fact the pen-name of Dora Taylor, one of the founders and chief ideologues of the Unity Movement.

5. A similar sentiment is expressed by Sithole (1968:86), who quotes the following reply to the anecdote by a black South African: 'When Europeans took our country we fought them with our spears, but they defeated us because they had better weapons and so colonial power was set up much against our wishes. But lo! the missionary came in time and laid explosives under colonialism. The Bible is now doing what we could not do with our spears'. Said (1971:523) has responded as follows: 'Yes, "They took our lands and gave us the Bible". Theology of Decolonization says, they did not give us the Bible, but they dropped it down while that long prayer was going on; and the African took it! We ain't going to give back that Bible. Rather, we are going to use it as the means through which we can humanize our white brothers and sisters; and also as a process by which we can recapture our lost lands'.

In my view this 'reversal' of the anecdote by black Christians is the only way in which the scandal of mission can be removed, and the credibility of the Gospel restored in the black community.

6. In the Preface to the conference report, Chikane & Tsele (1984a:1) say the following: 'What happens in the Black Struggle affects the process of theologising about this Black Struggle and therefore Black Theology itself. As will be seen from the first two resolutions of this conference the participants battled with this issue and while agreeing that Black Theology is a theology of the Black oppressed and exploited black (sic) people, they recognized the "divergences" and "convergences" in the premise from which theologising. The conference members agreed that a way should be opened to allow creative black theological reflection and action irrespective of ideological divergences, to avoid a paralysis in the movement of Black Theological ideas'. I J Mosala (1987a:221) concludes his thesis by saying: 'This study has underscored the importance of recognising that a plurality of black theologies of liberation is a reality of the contemporary South African situation as influenced and shaped by black history and culture in addition to bourgeois society'.

7. By using the word 'advance' I do not imply a value judgement of this move from Black Consciousness to 'non-racialism'. I use it to express the fact that it is not a retreat from the central affirmations of Black Consciousness, since it builds on (and presupposes) those affirmations, as I point out in the text. In this respect I agree with Sebidi (1986a), who sees the differences between the 'non-racial democratic' and 'anti-racist socialist' tendencies in the black struggle not as an ideological split, but as a tactical or strategic one. I come back to this issue in more detail in chapter four.

8. In this respect my terminology differs from that of Kretzschmar (1986). Under Black Theology she includes 'African Theology', 'Black Theology as Black Consciousness' and 'Black Theology as liberation theology' (Kretzschmar 1986:xii). I agree that there has been an underlying continuity between all the nuances of theological struggle by black people in South Africa, but I do not think it wise to make 'Black Theology' the umbrella term to cover them all.

9. I use the term missio Dei in a way similar to that of the World Council of Churches report The church for others (WCC 1968:14, 75, 77f).

10. By this I imply that every Christian involved in the praxis of mission has a missiology, even if this is in a rudimentary form. I have taken this from the view of Gutierrez (1974:3) that every Christian community has a 'rough outline of a theology' which functions as the 'soil into which theological reflection stubbornly and permanently sinks its roots and from which it derives its strength'.

11. Making the term 'liberation' central to my understanding of

mission therefore does not mean that I opt for a 'one-sidedly horizontalist' perception of mission, as is often supposed. But it does mean that I see personal conversion and church growth as the emergence of 'liberated zones' in individual and communal life, which are a part of the broad movement towards a fully liberated cosmos. For more detail, see chapters five and seven.

12. I do not use the term 'white' in the expression 'white response' in a pejorative sense as a symbol of oppressiveness, as has become rather common among some black and white theologians in South Africa. I use it to indicate the particularity of my own position in the South African social formation, and I feel compelled to do so by the fact that Black Theology emerges from the particularity of the black experience. When interacting with a self-conscious black particularity, one's own whiteness is exposed to view, since no 'neutral' vantage point exists from which to study Black Theology. As I point out, however, this does not mean that I place myself at a distance, 'over against' black theologians. This whole issue is developed in chapter six.

13. Justifiably, black intellectuals react vehemently to white scholars (theologians or otherwise) who pose as 'experts on blacks'. Buthelezi (1974a:35) voices this rejection by saying that black people are tired of being 'study-curiosities to adorn the pages of doctoral dissertations'. It is my intention (at least) to avoid this 'incorrigible paternalism' of white scholarship (cf Mazrui, in Bosch 1972a:106).

14. This deliberate choice flows from the specific nature of my study, namely my attempt to hear the challenge of Black Theology for mission, but it also reflects a decision to avoid 'divide and rule' tactics in my approach to Black Theology.

15. I do not agree with the sexist male/female stereotypes expressed in this quotation (male = rational, female = emotional). I use the quote merely to express my conviction that some values traditionally attributed to 'feminine emotionalism' are indispensable elements of a responsible theological approach.

16. The Final Statement of the Dar es Salaam conference consists of three sections, the first of which is 'The Third World political, social, economic, cultural, racial and religious background'. The other two sections focus on the presence and role of the church, and on a new theological approach in the Third World (Torres & Fabella 1978:259-271). This sequence reveals very clearly the distinctive method of Third World liberation theology.

CHAPTER 2

THE EMERGENCE OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Black Theology cannot be understood apart from Black Consciousness. Before studying Black Theology and its views on mission, it is therefore necessary to look at the Black Consciousness movement. It represents the experiential base out of which Black Theology arose, as well as the framework within which it developed. It would not do justice to either of the movements to regard the one as 'secular' and the other as 'religious'; there is an intimate mutual relationship between the two. It is helpful to distinguish them, but it would be false to separate them. The relationship between them is discussed more fully in chapter three.

By focussing on the Black Consciousness movement, I am acknowledging the primacy of the praxis of black liberation in the doing of Black Theology. In this chapter I attempt to unlock the experience and struggle to which black theologians are committed and on which they reflect from the viewpoint of Christian faith. It is therefore an essential part of my study of Black Theology, and not merely some 'background information' to it.

This chapter consists of two major sections. The first describes the factors that shaped Black Consciousness (2.2) and the second focuses on the different dimensions of its liberating praxis (2.3).

2.2 FACTORS THAT SHAPED BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

The first concrete manifestation of Black Consciousness in South Africa was the formation of a black caucus by students attending the University Christian Movement (UCM) national conference at

Stutterheim during 1968. This set in motion a process which led to the establishment of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), the Black People's Convention (BPC) and a number of other Black Consciousness organisations (1). A detailed exposition of these organisations is not relevant to the development of my argument here, but what is necessary is to trace the most important factors that have influenced the the emergence and development of Black Consciousness in South Africa.

2.2.1 The black struggle in South Africa

The students who formed SASO in 1969 did not see themselves as the first to oppose white domination in South Africa. They were deeply aware of the fact that many had gone before them and had even given their lives in that struggle. They had great respect for the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), which had both been banned by the South African government in 1960, but which still embodied the hopes and ideals of many in the black community. It was the awareness of being imbedded in that tradition of resistance which was the most important factor to shape the Black Consciousness movement. The history of black resistance to white rule is long and complex. I only give a short sketch of it here, with the express purpose of pointing out the effect which these earlier phases of the struggle had on Black Consciousness (2).

The beginning of black opposition to white rule can be traced back to the early Khoikhoi-Dutch wars (1659, 1673-1677) and the nine wars between the Xhosa and the white settlers on the 'Eastern Frontier' of the Cape Province (1779 - 1877). The initial form of the struggle was military resistance, but it was crushed by the white settlers as a result of the obvious superiority of their weapons. These wars nevertheless provided a number of figures who became heroes to later generations. Biko (1979:95) mentions the names of Makana, Shaka, Moshoeshoe and Hintsa as heroes whose bravery needs to be remembered by black people in

order to motivate them to continue their struggle.

The subsequent phase of the black nationalist struggle was waged by means of the acceptance of western education and the development of black newspapers, schools, churches and political organisations. The focus shifted from military to political struggle, and it was especially the formation of breakaway black Ethiopian churches which stimulated this new emphasis. It led to the formation in 1912 of the South African National Native Congress, which later changed its name to the African National Congress (ANC). For some decades it remained a moderate and elitist movement which asked for little more than the repeal of discriminatory laws like the Land Act and for the extension of the Cape qualified franchise to all black people in the country. This phase culminated in the radical articulation of African Nationalism by the ANC Youth League in the 1940s and the acceptance of their Programme of Action by the ANC national conference in 1949. It heralded an era of extra-legal tactics, mass action and the principle of non-collaboration, which persisted through the 1950s (Gerhart 1978:83). This tradition of non-violent action was still strong in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as can be seen in the fact that the Black Consciousness leaders did not advocate armed struggle, even though both the ANC and PAC had by then already adopted it as strategy.

The PAC broke away from the ANC in 1959 to propagate consistent 'Africanism' in opposition to the ANC's 'multi-racial' strategy as expressed in the Freedom Charter (adopted in 1955). Two of the fundamental issues at stake were whether blacks should cooperate with progressive whites and Indians in the struggle for freedom and whether South Africa belonged to 'all who lived in it, black and white...' (Freedom Charter) or whether it was African land, stolen from its rightful owners by white intruders. This latter Africanist emphasis had a strong influence on the Black Consciousness movement in the 1970s. Biko (1979:67) evaluated the PAC as follows: 'In a sense one can say that these were the first

real signs that the blacks in South Africa were beginning to realise the need to go it alone and to evolve a philosophy based on, and directed by, blacks. In other words, Black Consciousness was slowly manifesting itself'. The Africanist emphasis which people like Anton Lembede and Robert Sobukwe placed on the psychological liberation of black people as an essential part of their freedom struggle, was revived in the 1970s and became one of the pillars of the Black Consciousness approach.

After the ANC and PAC had been banned by the South African government in 1960 and their leaders effectively silenced through imprisonment, exile or house arrest, an uneasy calm settled on the black community. During this leadership vacuum in the 1960s, some black students joined 'multi-racial' organisations like the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and the UCM, but they became more and more disillusioned with the ineffectiveness and hypocrisy of white liberal students. By the end of the decade they had had enough and formed Black Consciousness organisations.

This brief historical sketch is intended merely to indicate the continuity between Black Consciousness and the earlier phases of the black struggle. This awareness of being heir to a long tradition of African resistance to white domination was without a doubt the strongest influence on the Black Consciousness movement. However, in spite of this basic continuity, it is true that Black Consciousness represented a genuinely new phase in the black struggle. Sebidi (1986a:13) called it a 'hefty attempt at severing ... the psychological umbilical cord that held the black man tied to the slow-moving liberal band-wagon'. Whereas the earlier phases could be characterised by terms such as 'anger', 'emulation', and 'criticism', the Black Consciousness phase has to do with 'identity' and black solidarity (Gwala 1974:170). It is clear that the Black Consciousness leaders saw this last phase as the culmination of earlier efforts, 'the more tested of the latest strategies of resistance' (Motlhabi 1984:277), with the advantage of looking back on them and avoiding their mistakes.

There was a clear awareness of the continuity between the different phases: Black Consciousness was seen as 'one form ... in a chain of revivals which occurred in the Black world in South Africa since Black people were first stripped of their dignity and humanity by white conquest and disinheritance' (:111). But there was also an awareness of discontinuity, and the most significant factor which contributed to the newness of Black Consciousness was the influence of the Black Power movement in the United States of America (USA). It was this 'injection' from the USA which gave the impetus to the emergence of Black Consciousness in South Africa.

2.2.2 Black Power in the USA

There has been close contact between black people in South Africa and the USA since the nineteenth century, with the result that new movements in the USA have always exerted some influence here, and vice versa (3). When the Black Power movement arose in the USA in the mid-1960s, it immediately made an impact on the powerless and leaderless black community in South Africa. It was especially black students who eagerly read and then started propagating the bold ideas of people such as Stokely Carmichael, Eldridge Cleaver, Malcolm X and others (4).

An important part of this influence from the USA was mutual personal visits. During December 1967 three delegates from UCM in South Africa attended the four-yearly assembly of UCM (USA) called 'Process '67'. At that meeting they were exposed to the ideas of Black Power and to the strategy of forming a 'black caucus' to discuss black concerns (Commission of Inquiry = COI 1975a:31). It is significant to note that it was during September 1967 that a conference of the National Council of Churches in the USA on 'The church and the urban crisis' split into separate black and white caucuses at the insistence of the 'younger black clergy present who were angry and frustrated by the compromises necessary for ecumenism and interracial amity

during one of the most riot-torn years in the nation's history' (Wilmore 1979:19). The strategy of black withdrawal into a separate caucus, which was exercised for the first time in South Africa at the annual UCM conference in 1968, therefore seems to have been modelled on the actions of black church ministers and students in the USA during the previous year. This strategy is explained as follows by Carmichael & Hamilton (1967:44): 'The concept of Black Power rests on a fundamental premise: Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks. By this we mean that group solidarity is necessary before a group can operate effectively from a bargaining position of strength in a pluralistic society'.

It is important, however, to point out that there was never a mere mechanical copying of American trends. Before the black students withdrew into a black caucus at the UCM conference in 1968 they had been profoundly shocked at the way in which they were treated as a black group at the NUSAS conference in Grahamstown during 1967. It was primarily their disillusionment with the hypocrisy of liberal white students that made them consider forming a separate black student organisation. The fact that similar things were happening in the USA surely 'helped fan the flames' (Leatt, Kneifel & Nurnberger 1986:105), but the basic motivation for this action came from the South African situation.

The point that I am illustrating here is that there were significant personal contacts between Black Power activists in the USA and Black Consciousness activists in South Africa. The South African organisations often invited speakers from the USA to their conferences, but they were consistently denied visas by the South African government. The papers of the speakers were then read to the conference and printed in the proceedings as if the speaker had been there. This happened, for example, in the case of James Cone, who had been invited to the Black Theology Seminar in 1971 (see Cone 1974) and the Black Renaissance Convention in 1974 (see Cone 1976), and also in the case of Robert Williams,

who had been invited to the SASO Annual Conference in 1972 (see Williams 1973).

Another aspect of American influence which could be pointed out is the use of the term 'black' to denote not colour per se but the 'oppressed condition as the outcasts of affluent white society' (Gerhart 1978:277). The young American militants were looking for an alternative to the terms 'Negro' and 'Coloured' and decided to 're-christen' the term 'black' by filling it with the connotation of positive self-affirmation and beauty. In South Africa, where the humiliating terms 'kaffir', 'native', 'Bantu', and 'non-white' were still common, the term 'black' presented itself as an ideal rallying point: a term chosen by the oppressed people themselves to express their dignity and identity, as opposed to all the dehumanising terms used by whites as tools of oppression. But here again the term 'Black' in South Africa attained its own special connotation: in emphasising that blackness was not constituted merely by colour but by oppression, it became a symbol for uniting all so-called 'non-white' groups (Africans, 'Coloureds' and Indians) in their opposition to white oppression. The term 'Black' therefore got its own special focus in the South African situation.

The use of the clenched-fist Black Power salute by black people in South Africa is another example of American influence. Here it is important to note that Black Consciousness leaders preferred the term Black Consciousness to Black Power (5). The latter was understood as a philosophy through which the black American minority formed itself into a pressure group to bargain with the white power structure for full participation in the already established 'open society', based on a non-discriminatory constitution, which will always remain a white majority society (Motlhabi 1984:115). Black Consciousness spokesmen in South Africa also envisaged some kind of 'ultimate bargaining' with the power structure, but it would be very different from the USA: Black South Africans constitute the majority of the population,

but do not have the franchise, have a whole barrage of laws ranged against them, and are not able to appeal to a non-discriminatory constitution. This difference of emphasis between the USA and South Africa is reflected by a SASO leadership seminar in 1970 which concluded that the Black Power statement, 'before entering the open society, we must first close our ranks', was not applicable to South Africa, since no open society existed and 'as long as whites are in power they shall seek to make it closed in one way or another'. According to SASO the statement should read as follows in South Africa: 'before creating an open society we must first close our ranks' (in Gerhart 1978:276). The goals envisaged by Black Consciousness therefore implied a more fundamental change in the structures of society than those envisaged by Black Power in the USA: black people would have to create an open society through a 'radical dismantling of the South African system' (Leatt et al 1986:105). This aspect prompted Adam (1973:153) to remark that the South African movement had a 'much more political outlook' than the American one.

In the light of the foregoing it is clear that the Black Power movement in the USA exerted a significant influence on the South African Black Consciousness movement. It is equally clear that the South African students did not merely copy American trends -- they wrestled with their own situation of oppression and produced a uniquely South African philosophy and strategy, even though it was influenced by movements elsewhere. The words of Motlhabi (1984:114) are appropriate here : 'Although Black Consciousness ideologues have drawn on the ideas and writings of Black Power, they are more usefully seen as the heirs to a tradition of cultural nationalism in Africa itself'. In these words he echoes the view of Biko (1979:69) : 'The growth of awareness among South African blacks has often been ascribed to influence from the American 'Negro' movement. Yet it seems to me that this is a sequel to the attainment of independence by so many African states within so short a time'. It is the influence of this African tradition of independence and blackness which now

deserves attention.

2.2.3 Independence and Blackness in Africa

By the mid-1960s most of the former European colonies in Africa had been granted independence or had taken it through armed struggle. The only exceptions were Angola and Mozambique, the U.D.I. state of Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa, but in all of them national liberation movements had by then already been launched. This achievement of political liberation in the rest of Africa inevitably had a profound effect on black South Africans, and therefore leading figures in the African struggles captured their imagination. It was especially the independence of Mozambique and Angola from Portugal in 1974 which had a great effect in South Africa. Black Consciousness groups organised Frelimo rallies, which led to a massive crackdown by the South African government. Since African nationalist leaders operated in situations of black majorities (as distinct from the USA situation) and led successful freedom struggles against colonial regimes, they provided more directly relevant models for South Africa than the American Black Power movement.

African political leaders who were often quoted by the early Black Consciousness spokesmen were Leopold Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere. Nyerere's Arusha Declaration on Self-reliance in 1967 was often quoted in support of the Black Consciousness ideal to reject the exploitative kind of society perpetuated by whites and to establish a form of African socialism. With wholehearted agreement Pityana in 1971 quoted the following portion of the Arusha Declaration : 'We have been oppressed a great deal; we have been exploited a great deal; and we have been disregarded a great deal. It is our weakness that has led to our being oppressed, exploited and disregarded. Now we want a revolution -- a revolution which brings to an end our weakness, so that we are never again exploited, oppressed or humiliated' (in Gerhart 1978:274). Biko (1979:69), in stressing

the African rather than American origins of Black Consciousness, referred to the words of Kamuzu Banda regarding Malawi, which he had already heard as a high school student: 'This is a black man's country; any white man who does not like it must pack up and go'. Such views had already been circulating in the early 1960s, long before anyone heard of Black Power, and thus created the actual bedrock on which the Black Consciousness philosophy later developed.

In addition to the influence of these heads of state there were some African writers and philosophers whose works exerted much influence in South Africa. The Negritude poets like Senghor, Cesaire and Diop were read widely in Black Consciousness circles, but pride of place certainly belongs to Frantz Fanon, a black man who was born in the Antilles, studied medicine in France, qualified as a psychiatrist and became involved in the Algerian struggle for independence. His books present an incisive analysis of the dynamics of racism and colonialism, and because of the large influence he had in the South African Black Consciousness movement, I digress briefly to discuss the central thrust of his philosophy.

His most popular book is The wretched of the earth (Fanon 1967b), written originally in French in 1961. Gerhart (1978:275) says about it: 'Among books not written directly about South Africa, it would have been difficult for SASO's ideologues to find one more pertinent to the South African situation, both in analyzing root causes and in suggesting possible scenarios for future change'. Some of the basic emphases of Fanon's analysis of the process of decolonisation which Black Consciousness affirms are : the necessity to destroy all pretense between coloniser and colonised and to polarise racial conflict as a prelude to radical change, the rejection of evolutionary changes designed by the powerful to perpetuate their control, contempt for bourgeois blacks eager to step into the shoes of the exploiters, and the fact that the colonisers are no longer addressed but that the

colonised address the colonised on how to overthrow the colonial system (see Gerhart 1978:275). On a number of occasions the Black Consciousness leaders quoted directly from this work by Fanon, but even when they were not quoting it, its influence can be clearly seen.

Another influential book by Fanon was Black skin, white masks, (Fanon 1967a). Several central ideas of the Black Consciousness movement appear in it. Fanon uses the term 'black consciousness' in an important chapter entitled 'The fact of blackness', and says '...black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes. I am not the potentiality of something, I am wholly what I am' (:135). He cites the crippled white war veteran who says to a black man: 'Resign yourself to your colour the way I got used to my stump; we're both victims' and then replies: '...with all my strength I refuse to accept that amputation....I am a master and I am advised to adopt the humility of the cripple' (:140). This stress on black dignity and self-awareness in spite of and in the midst of white racism is central to Black Consciousness. Another important view of Fanon's which was quoted by Biko (1979:90) deals with his view of history as moving dialectically from the thesis of white supremacy via the antithesis of negritude to the synthesis of a society without racism (Fanon 1967a:133). What is significant about this dialectical interpretation is that black solidarity is not seen as an end in itself, but as the antithesis which carries in itself the roots of its own dissolution, since it is destined to be taken up into the synthesis of a racially harmonious society (see Witvliet 1980:508).

It is clear from these few examples that Fanon's writings influenced Black Consciousness in a decisive way, but one important thing to note is that his outspoken glorification of violence is not found in South African Black Consciousness writings. Views like 'For the native, life can only spring up again out of the rotten corpse of the settler' (Fanon 1967b:73) or 'At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force.

It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect' (:74) are not reflected in South African writings. It probably has to do with the difference in censorship laws between South Africa and France and with the fact that Black Consciousness concentrated first of all on building self-awareness and solidarity through conscientisation rather than on military mobilisation. Since it wanted to appeal to the black masses, it had to reckon with what could be published inside South Africa.

Having examined the three major factors influencing the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa, namely the African nationalist struggle, Black Power in the USA and the movements of negritude and political independence in Africa, I now move on to a systematic exposition of the praxis of Black Consciousness.

2.3 THE LIBERATING PRAXIS OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

The praxis of Black Consciousness aims at holistic liberation. It is concerned not only with liberating black people from personal inferiority feelings, but from the whole system of racist oppression. I have called these two dimensions internal and external liberation, taking my cue from the 'Black Theology Resolution' (1971:25) accepted at the Hammanskraal Black Theology seminar: 'We understand Christ's liberation to be a liberation not only from circumstances of internal bondage but also a liberation from circumstances of external enslavement'.

2.3.1 Internal liberation

2.3.1.1 Self-image

'Ahaa...' the blacks said, and at that moment the radical transformation came into being (Manganyi 1981:169).

The first step therefore is to make the black man come to himself; to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing him to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth. This is what we mean by an inward-looking process. This is the definition of 'Black Consciousness' (Biko 1979:29).

These two quotations express something of the existential reality of the 'discovery' of Black Consciousness by black people in South Africa. It is first and foremost a philosophy of internal or psychological liberation. It aims at the 'liberation of the spirit' (Buthelezi 1976d:7), at the 'Ahaa'-experience which Manganyi (1981:169) describes as a 'radical transformation'. It wants to make black people 'come to themselves', rediscover themselves as human beings in their own right. This can be described as a conversion experience, a change of heart and mind about who one really is, about one's own humanity and dignity. It is an inward-looking process in which black people come to terms with themselves and take the courage to be black in a white racist society. This implies an 'inner liberation' (Baartman 1973a:4), the experience of being 'free at heart' (Biko 1979:92) which leads to a 'committed and self-assured Black intelligence' and an 'unblinking self-confidence in the shaping of our destiny' (Thoahlane 1976:8f).

This psychological liberation implies that black people can now 'snap out of the trance of the false consciousness' of being 'pariahs and victims' (Manganyi 1981:169). It is the 'birth of a new Black subject' which does not react 'according to the stimuli of the masters' but responds from a consciousness which transcends and confronts the situation of oppression (Mofokeng 1983:13). This means, in the words of Stokely Carmichael, that black people must 'struggle for the right to create our own terms

through which to define ourselves This is the first necessity of a free people' (in Williams 1973:9). The SASO Policy Manifesto expressed it as follows: 'The Black man must build up his own value systems, see himself as self-defined and not defined by others' (SASO [1971] 1984:2). This new self-definition is a positive affirmation of the fact of being black, a joyful acceptance of 'the deliberateness of God's plan in creating black people black' (Biko 1979:49). Black Consciousness awakens black people to affirm their own human worth and dignity, to celebrate their God-given humanity: 'Black is beautiful!' Psychological liberation to full humanity is therefore a central concern of Black Consciousness: 'for we cannot be conscious of ourselves and yet remain in bondage. We want to attain the envisioned self which is a free self' (Biko 1979:49).

It is clear from the use of words like 'birth', 'struggle', and 'awaken', however, that Black Consciousness is not merely an affirmation but also a negation. Black Consciousness negates the 'inferiority feelings, distrust of themselves, and self-hate' (Adam 1973:155) inculcated in black people by whites. It vehemently rejects these negative white definitions of black existence which have been internalised by blacks over centuries of colonial domination. The psychological liberation envisioned is therefore a liberation from a 'slave mentality', a move away from the 'colonial pathology of submitting ourselves to white judgement toward recognising our own autonomous and sacrosanct identity' (Thoahlane 1976:8).

2.3.1.2 From 'non-white' to black

One of the salient features of this colonial pathology is the term 'non-white', which became a focal point of attack for Black Consciousness proponents. The following drawing clearly portrays both the affirmation and the negation central to Black Consciousness:



The 'non-white' is a creation of whites, or in the words of Gerwel (1973:120), a 'destruction' by whites, who have imposed their stereotypes and caricatures on blacks. One such stereotype, which is well portrayed in the sketch above, is that of the grinning non-white clown, a caricature which is shed and replaced by an angry and self-assertive black person who means business and is ready to 'do his own thing'. Black Consciousness awakens black people to define and create themselves anew by rejecting all the negative values imposed on them by whites. 'No more is he going to fit into a non-white portrait drawn by the white man' (Baartman 1973c:18). The psychological dynamics of this process is illuminated by Manganyi (1973:28), who shows how the white body has been projected as the standard, the norm of beauty and accomplishment, whereas the black body has been projected as 'bad', by nature inferior, incompetent and unwholesome. As a black clinical psychologist he exclaims: 'We as blacks must now say with all the conviction at our command that a massive and creative campaign is essential to alter the negative sociological schema of the black body' (Manganyi 1973:29). The call to stop emulating everything white and to become positively black is expressed sharply by Matthews (1974:29):

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

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

A striking feature is the reference to 'white civilisation' as 'white syphilization', which 'taints' black people like a venereal disease, and is therefore foolish to imitate. The implication of this is that black people no longer accept white definitions of what is good or valuable, but take the courage to define for themselves who they are. This realisation is poignantly expressed by Small (1974:15): 'We may live by the grace of God, but we do not live by the grace of whites'.

This negation of a 'slave mentality' is a prerequisite for black liberation since 'the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed' (Biko 1979:68). The SASO Policy Manifesto therefore said: 'the basic tenet of Black Consciousness is that the Black man must reject all value systems that seek to make him a foreigner in the country of his birth and reduce his basic human dignity' (SASO [1971] 1984:2). Black Consciousness says a firm NO to all white stereotypes and a firm YES to blackness: 'We refuse any longer to be defined and limited by whites. With glowing pride in our Blackness we oppose the "colonializing" of our humanity' (Boesak 1984a:4). This is described by Buthelezi (1976c:19) as retrieving the image of blackness 'from the dung-heap of colour prejudice and a maze of statutes that make it difficult for the black man to be proud of

his colour'.

One important element of this self-affirmation therefore is pride. This is understood as self-love and self-acceptance, two essential prerequisites for mature and loving relationships to other people. This pride in blackness is not intended to be racist nor is determined in the first place by skin colour. It is 'a certain awareness, a certain insight' which no longer equates whiteness with value, and therefore dares to define itself on its own terms (Small 1974:11f). Black Consciousness therefore embraces people from all the so-called 'non-white' groups in South Africa (African, 'Coloured' and Indian) and attempts to galvanise them into a united opposition to their dehumanisation by whites. The SASO Policy Manifesto defines 'Black' as 'those who are by law or tradition, politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realization of their aspirations' (SASO [1971] 1984:2).

2.3.1.3 Rediscovering black history

A very important element in the self-empowerment of black people is the rediscovery of their history. When people change the way they talk about their past, they literally change their identity. Black people therefore realised the need to rewrite their history, because whites have presented it in such a way that black people feel not pride, but shame (Pityana 1974:58). 'A lot of attention has to be paid to our history if we as blacks want to aid each other in our coming into consciousness. We have to rewrite our history and produce in it the heroes that formed the core of our resistance to the white invaders' (Biko 1979:95). The stifled and distorted history of the oppressed needs to be rediscovered in order to develop a new frame of reference transcending the limits of white concepts and leading to liberation for black people. Sepamla (1984:123) expresses it like this:

I know my history damn well
to begin with it has little to do with 1652
for I cannot see how the avarice of some
and the spirit of adventure of others
ended with silly ceremonies of flag-hoisting
can be the measure of my being

Man, I know my history damn well
of men who lived to tell stories of joy and woe
intrigued by new-age manipulators
who wore dark suits to murder and to weddings
and then waited upon at luncheons
by hawk-eyed demons of power

I know my history damn well
I'd need to have you stand back so I tell it
by God you've breathed down my neck for too long
your ominous shadow cast over all my events
blurring details of it
this same history of bloody wars and bitter tears
whose pain sears through the body of our nation.

In the Black Consciousness movement, black people make white people 'stand back' so that they can tell their own black history without the 'ominous shadow' of whites falling on it and blurring the details.

A significant aspect of this recovery of the past for the sake of liberation is the use of African names. The Black Consciousness movement caused a swing away from European to traditional African names. Since most South African blacks were given two names by their parents, one African and one European, the use of the latter was deliberately dropped in an affirmation of black African identity. The mood inherent in this step is well por-

trayed in the following poem by Sepamla (1984:41):

My Name Is

We are talking of a freedom
Telling it from the molehills
In the dry West
Shouting it on the rumbling mountains
Of the awry East

There's been a promise
Old as 1910
There's a hope
New as tomorrow
They too are fed in phrases
Coloured

Kaffir

Native

Bantu

African

And now a furious Black

Modidi waSeshego

Qaba laseComfimvaba

Say my name is:

Makhonatsohle or

Mayenzwintandoyakhonkosi

Let them know my name

It's been gone too long

Your vacant face unknown

Its number

Munched easily by a computer

Thixo! we want to rejoice

Celebrating the birth of a new age

For gone is Kleinboo

No more Sixpence
John is neither here nor there
Mary lives no more for tea only!

Xoxo elixhaphisa
Amaxhwili aseRawutini.

The deliberate use of the Xhosa language serves to contrast the richness and dignity of African culture and the affirmation of a 'furious' blackness over against the hurtful stereotyping and empty promises of white people. The first two names in the third verse mean 'poor man of...' and 'illiterate of...', whereas the two following names (after 'Say my name is:') mean 'he who is capable' and 'Let your will be done, Lord'. Self-aware black people no longer see themselves as the poor and illiterate servants of whites but as people who are capable and who are prepared to do God's will, but no longer the selfish will of whites. For them a 'new age' has dawned in which the stereotyped names like Kleinbooi, Sixpence, John and Mary no longer express who they are.

The closing words is a figurative expression which is translated by the author as 'Envy of opportunists from Reef areas'. The message of the poem as a whole seems to be that the hope for freedom is not based on the empty promises of the opportunists from the Reef with their molehills (mines?) and 'native' or 'bantu' servants, but on self-conscious black people who are at home on the rumbling mountains of Africa and who affirm their own worth and capabilities under God. Such is the mood of pride and self-love which characterises Black Consciousness.

2.3.1.4 The clenched fist

One more dimension of internal liberation needs to be discussed. It is the most visible symbol of Black Consciousness: the clenched black fist. The two sketches below are the emblems of

SASO and AZAPO respectively.



The clenched fist has become the 'trade mark' of Black Consciousness. It expresses the determination of black people to affirm themselves as human beings in the face of white domination, and to mobilise their collective power in order to overcome it. This clenched fist is a salute to black dignity and humanity, not a threatening fist pointed at someone else. Although some white critics have interpreted it as arrogance, for blacks it portrays self-reliance 'which is the bedrock upon which psychological liberation is founded -- the painful transition from being a victim to being a rebel who understands history' and a sign that they have 'snapped the bonds of psychological collusion with those who would make lesser mortals of them' (Manganyi 1981:170).

It is important to note at the end of this section that the liberation propagated by Black Consciousness is more than just psychological. In the words of the SASO Policy Manifesto, Black Consciousness is not only an 'attitude of mind', but also a 'way of life' and is 'working for the liberation of the Black man first from psychological oppression by themselves through inferiority complex and secondly from the physical one occurring

out of living in a white racist society' (SASO [1971] 1984:2). It is a programme for holistic liberation, which includes both a 'mental liberatory process' and at the same time a 'political-strategic' stance (Nolutshungu 1983:153). In the words of Motlhabi (1984:119f) the immediate goal was 'psychological liberation through the popularization of Black Consciousness' but the long-term goal was the establishment of a 'just, egalitarian society with an equitable economic system based on the principle of equal sharing of the country's wealth'. In this regard Gerwel (1973:120) has pointed out that if Black Consciousness had been merely a cultivation of love for blackness, it would have been a 'sterile form of cultural narcissism'; the element of striving for political liberation is therefore the other essential component of the Black Consciousness movement. As we move to this wider, more explicitly political dimension, a fitting transition is the poem by Ben Langa (1973:67) which clearly expresses the holistic nature of the liberation envisaged by Black Consciousness.

I want freedom,
 Yes freedom from
Starvation
Exploitation
Dehumanisation
 I want a culture
that says I'm
human and
 alive
I want liberation.
I shall give my life
 to the
 people
I'm laying my
 life for the
revolution
liberation
 for freedom ---

2.3.2 External liberation

When one looks at Black Consciousness as a socio-political movement, the first thing that stands out is the strategy of separating from 'multiracial' alliances in order to form exclusively black organisations. Whereas the slogan 'Black is beautiful!' expresses the first (psychological) dimension of Black Consciousness, it is 'Black man, you are on your own!' which best captures its political strategy. This implies both the rejection of white 'liberals' (along with the 'integration' which they propagate) and the affirmation of black solidarity and self-reliance. Let us look first of all at self-reliance and solidarity.

2.3.2.1 Self-reliance and solidarity

The inner liberation from a 'non-white' self-image leads naturally to a way of life which insists that black people 'do their own thing'. At a SASO conference in July 1970 it was stated that blacks should 'do things for themselves and all by themselves' (in Gerhart 1978:262). Pityana (1974:60) stressed that consciousness was more than mere awareness, since it included deeds. Black Consciousness is therefore a lifestyle based on self-reliance and self-sufficiency. This means that black people must begin to speak for themselves and become 'their own authorities' (Baqwa 1973:2). Williams (1973:10f) says that 'Creativity, in the form of a people's self-definition and self-empowerment, forms the basis of all dimensions of social development, political and spiritual liberation, and all facets of communal well-being'. Black people are prepared to assume total responsibility for their future and to be 'the masters of their own destiny' (Baqwa 1973:2). This implies concrete projects of self-help and self-upliftment in which black people take the initiative. A good example of this was the Black Community Programmes (BCP), an initiative which was organised in the early 1970s (6). Rather than wait for charity or handouts from liberal whites, blacks should take the initiative and do things for themselves, not only

to alleviate immediate needs but also to create solidarity in the black community, so that the influences of capitalism and Western individualism may gradually be overcome. Therefore Goba (1974:70) says: 'Black identity ought not to be seen simply in affirming our blackness, but in affirming our total black community'. In order to achieve this, the 'gap between the black elite and the ordinary black man' needs to be bridged (:73). This brings us to the concept of conscientisation.

2.3.2.2 Conscientisation

This term, which was popularised by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, is used frequently by Black Consciousness proponents and direct influence from Freire is unmistakable. The adult literacy projects of both the UCM and the BCP followed his basic approach. The term implies that the level of consciousness of the people must be raised, so that they become aware of the true state of affairs in and around them. 'There can be no conscientization without a radical denunciation of dehumanizing structures, accompanied by the proclamation of a new reality to be created by men' (Freire 1970a:46). As the chief enterprise of 'cultural action for freedom', it helps the people overcome their 'false consciousness' and develop a 'critical consciousness'. This in turn leads them to act in order to create a new reality of justice and freedom. The conscientising process takes place not through the imposition of ideas (indoctrination), but through unceasing dialogue with the people.

The originators of the Black Consciousness philosophy were students, that is, young intellectuals with enough time to read and discuss extensively. From the start, however, they were aware that they had to communicate their discovery of Black Consciousness to the black masses. 'It is the paramount duty of the student or the intellectual to go back to his people. To be with the people. And be one of the people' (Gwala 1973:49). The SASO Policy Manifesto said: 'Black Consciousness will always be

enhanced by the totality of involvement of the oppressed people, hence the message of Black Consciousness has to be spread to reach all sections of the Black community' (SASO [1971] 1984:2). Black students therefore had to avoid being separated from the masses by a Western intellectualism and instead commit themselves to fighting ignorance and illiteracy among their people. In this way they could make their contribution as intellectuals to the liberation of all the oppressed people. Their conscientising of the black masses meant helping the oppressed to 'name their world of oppression, develop critical tools for analysis, and mobilise their resources to change their life-world (Leatt et al 1986:109). That would instil in them 'a sense of self-reliance, initiative, and solidarity'.

2.3.2.3 Mobilisation

I have already referred to Motlhabi's distinction between the immediate and long-term goals of Black Consciousness. The strategy employed by the Black Consciousness movement to achieve the ultimate goal of a non-racial and egalitarian society was that of black solidarity. They anticipated that this would enable black people eventually to bargain with white people from a position of strength and equality rather than from a position of inferiority and weakness. While being engaged in 'the intermediate goal of raising consciousness and creating solidarity', however, white people and their government were 'regarded as irrelevant' (Motlhabi 1984:28). It was therefore understood as a phase of consolidating 'group power' in order to 'feature well in this game of power politics' (Biko 1979:68). The Black Consciousness ideology is thus 'not just a therapy to make us feel good about our blackness it constitutes a serious political programme of action' (Goba 1986:66). On the basis of this Goba (:59) produces a tentative definition of Black Consciousness as 'a kind of political philosophy whose goal is to forge and promote the struggle for black liberation in a world of white domination'. It is clear from the central use of the term 'liberation' by the

Black Consciousness leaders that they were not seeking to reform the political system, because that would imply 'acceptance of the major points around which the system revolves' (Biko 1979:49). They were mobilising black people to 'completely transform the system' (:49) through the exercise of collective pressure.

Since it operated publicly, with the intention of conscientising people, the Black Consciousness movement could not propagate the use of violence in overthrowing the State. Its official position was therefore consistently 'non-violent'. Nolutshungu (1983:178ff) has argued, however, that 'violence was on the minds of all of them' and that it was only during the first conscientising phase that there were no preparations for violence. According to him the phase of sending young people out of the country to join the armed struggle began around 1973 as the movement was 'drawn inexorably to armed force as the final authentication of its commitment to freedom' (:183). Some young people who were part of the Black Consciousness movement did cross the border to join one of the historical liberation movements as they became convinced that internal popular pressure alone would not be sufficient to overthrow the South African government. According to Nolutshungu (:182) the inner core of SASO's leadership had planned this transition to armed struggle and had set up a committee for recruiting and training people inside the country, but nevertheless the movement never openly propagated armed struggle. Biko is quoted as having said in an interview: 'When there is violence, there is messiness. Violence brings too many residues of hate into the reconstruction period. Apart from its obvious horrors, it creates too many post-revolutionary problems. If at all possible, we want the revolution to be peaceful and reconciliatory' (in Motlhabi 1984:134) (7).

To sum up, one could say that the Black Consciousness movement sought to mobilise the whole black community and to consolidate its group power for an all-out confrontation with the prevailing system. This confrontation had as its goal the fundamental trans-

formation of South African society into a non-racial, just and egalitarian community. This is further elaborated in chapter five.

2.3.2.4 'Separatism'

Before leaving the political strategy of the Black Consciousness movement, it is important to focus on the fact that it operated in exclusively black organisations. Since this has been interpreted by many (white and black) as 'racism in reverse' and as a 'rejection of reconciliation', the views of Black Consciousness proponents about this strategy need to be examined carefully.

The strategy of forming exclusively black organisations is described as 'closing ranks', in other words developing black solidarity. In the words of the SASO Policy Manifesto : 'SASO accepts the premise that before the Black people join the open society, they should first close their ranks, to form themselves into a solid group to oppose the definite racism that is meted out by the white society, to work out their direction clearly and bargain from a position of strength. SASO believes that a truly open society can be achieved only by Blacks' (SASO [1971] 1984:2). As pointed out already, this view was taken over from the Black Power movement of the U.S.A. but interpreted for the context of South Africa. Therefore 'joining the open society' is replaced by 'creating the open society'. In any case the strategy of forming separate black organisations is chosen as the means to create solidarity of purpose and clarity of direction among black people. Manganyi (1973:32) calls this 'a posture of positive, creative "isolation"', making possible a 'group introspective analysis' which is mandatory for any attempt at 'restructuring our value system'. It enables black people to 'indulge unhindered on self-reflection, on self-definition' (:24).

Strongest criticism of this approach came from white liberals, who suddenly found themselves without any allies, having been

marginalised by the white power structure and now also rejected by the black majority whose cause they had been championing. They saw in Black Consciousness a blow to their efforts at achieving integration and a victory for the kind of separation which the apartheid government was foisting on the whole of society. The reply of the Black Consciousness movement to this accusation was clear and direct: 'integration is "irrelevant" to a people who are powerless. For them the equitable distribution of decision-making power is far more important than physical proximity to white people' (Khoapa 1972:100). The posture of Black Consciousness was not 'separatist' but 'liberationist'. It rejected integration and separation because 'central to both integration and separation is the white man. Blacks must either move towards or away from him' (:100). Since black people were no longer defining themselves in terms of white people but in their own terms, they needed to 'regroup' in order to advance the cause of their liberation. All else would be judged in the light of that cause. Basic to this view is the analysis of the South African situation as a conflict between oppressors and oppressed: 'It is clear that the oppressor and the oppressed must clash. Some men try to avoid the exigencies of the situation by preaching universal brotherhood. But it is a mystification to preach universal brotherhood in a situation of oppression' (:101). As a philosophy of liberation in a situation of white oppression, Black Consciousness requires black unity and that in turn requires black organisation.

Biko (1979:21) motivates the black withdrawal from 'multi-racial' institutions as follows:

[A]s long as blacks are suffering from inferiority complex -- a result of 300 years of deliberate oppression, denigration and derision -- they will be useless as co-architects of a normal society where man is nothing else but man for his own sake. Hence what is necessary as a prelude to anything else that may come

is a very strong grass-roots build-up of black consciousness such that blacks can learn to assert themselves and stake their rightful claim.

This regroupment is therefore part of a total strategy of liberation which is intended eventually to lead to an integration acceptable to blacks. Such an integration is not 'an assimilation and acceptance of blacks into an already established set of norms and code of behaviour set up and maintained by whites', but 'a free participation by all members of a society, catering for the full expression of the self in a freely changing society as determined by the will of the people' (Biko 1979:24). Since the final goal of the Black Consciousness movement was a genuine unity of all South Africans as equals, it is a misnomer to describe its strategy as separatist. Separation is not an end in itself, but a means towards an end, the 'antithesis' to white racism which should lead to the 'synthesis' of a truly united South Africa. The real intention of Black Consciousness is therefore to bring about a new human consciousness among all people in South Africa (see Witvliet 1980:511).

The message of Black Consciousness to white liberals is therefore that they should work to stamp out racism from their own white community and leave blacks 'to take care of their own business' (Biko 1979:23). The presence of white liberals, especially in leadership positions, was felt to 'dilute the revolutionary fervour of the freedom-lovers' (Black Renaissance Convention 1975:21) and thus seen as 'intentionally delaying Black people in their determination to achieve their goal in the way they find suitable' (Motlhabi 1984:17). 'To us it seems that their role spells out the totality of the white power structure -- the fact that though whites are our problem, it is still other whites who want to tell us how to deal with that problem' (Biko 1979:89). 'These in fact are the greatest racists for they refuse to credit us with any intelligence to know what we want' (:51).

Proponents of Black Consciousness make it very clear, however, that this is not 'anti-whiteism' or black racism. The SASO Policy Manifesto states that this is instead 'a more positive way of attaining a normal situation in South Africa' (SASO [1971] 1984:2). Manganyi (1973:25) calls it a 'positive, creative and defensive racialism', as opposed to the 'traditional negative racialism practised by whites'. This sentiment is expressed as follows by Sepamla (1984:36):

now if i seem to accept
the separation of people
it is simply to work out
in my own good time
the phrases i'll use
to forgive others
for their many promises
turned grey on the sides.

i hate lies
one of which tries
to explain my bitterness
as anti-whiteness.
of course i do hate
some people --
i am in love
with mankind!

Biko (1979:25) says that Black Consciousness is not guilty of racism, since racism is defined as 'discrimination by a group against another for the purposes of subjugation or maintaining subjugation'. He argues that one cannot be a racist unless one has the power to subjugate, and that blacks are merely responding to a situation in which they find themselves the objects of white racism. Adam Small (1974:12) comments: 'We have suffered enough from white racism not to want to be racist in our blackness We are not out to hate whites, but to treat them as people'. But

NOTES ON CHAPTER 2

1. A number of publications analyse the development of the policies and strategies of the Black Consciousness organisations. Prominent among them are Gerhart (1978), Nolutshungu (1983), Lodge (1983), Motlhabi (1984, 1988), and Fatton (1986).

2. There are numerous publications on the history of the black struggle for liberation in South Africa. Black theologians who have given specific attention to this historical dimension are Sebidi (1986a), Mofokeng (1986a), Govender (1987a:82-110), and IJ Mosala (1987a:66-107).

3. For two significant studies on the mutual influence between the USA and South Africa during the last decades of the nineteenth century, see Williams (1982) and Chirenje (1987). They both point out the role of black North American Christians in the development of 'Ethiopianism' in South Africa. Since then regular contact has been maintained between the black communities in the two countries.

4. The major publications of these Black Power figures in the USA were Haley & Malcolm X (1964), Carmichael & Hamilton (1967), and Cleaver (1968).

5. The precise reasons for this preference are unclear. It seems to have centred around the perception that Black Power was inherently violent and anti-white, impressions which the South Africans wanted to avoid. See the discussion on this in chapter five (5.4.5.2).

6. BCP grew out of SPRO-CAS 2 (Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society) to become an independent organisation in 1972. Its publications Black Review and Black Viewpoint give a good insight into the early phase of Black Consciousness. The goals of BCP were stated as (1) to help the black community become aware of its own identity (2) to help the black community to create a sense of its own power (3) to enable the black community to organise itself, to analyse its own needs and problems and to mobilise its resources to meet its needs (4) to develop black leadership capable of guiding the development of the black community (Gwala 1974:165).

7. The original quote is from Woods (1979:101), who indicates that Biko used these words in an interview with Colin Eglin. Nolutshungu (1983:180,185) rejects the impression created by Woods that Biko 'was a "moderate" in a way that conclusively set him apart from the liberation movements based outside the country'.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK THEOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 BLACK THEOLOGY -- A DEFINITION

At the beginning of this chapter on the historical development of Black Theology in South Africa, I first need to give a working definition of Black Theology. Goba (1986:60) defines it as 'a critical reflection on the praxis of Christian Faith, one which participates in the ongoing process of liberation with the black Christian community'. This definition emphasises the fact that, for black theologians, the praxis of Christian faith is inseparable from their commitment to the struggle for liberation. Black Theology is a 'theology of liberation in the situation of blackness' (Boesak 1977b:144). Therefore the hermeneutics of Black Theology is 'intentionally political' (:61). Another dimension is pointed out by Maimela (1984:46), who says that Black Theology interprets the oppression of black people 'in the light of the biblical witness to a God whose justice requires that the poor, the oppressed, the downtrodden be set free'. This grappling with the Bible and its testimony concerning a God of justice is what makes it a theology, as distinguished from a philosophy or sociology of liberation. In this respect the Exodus and the life of Jesus of Nazareth are key foci for Black Theology. A final dimension which needs to be stressed in this working definition is the decisive influence of Black Consciousness on Black Theology. Later in this chapter I will discuss the relationship between the two. It is sufficient here to reiterate that for this study 'Black Theology' means theology deeply influenced by Black Consciousness.

The chapter consists of three major sections. The first (3.2) contains an historical overview of the organisational development of Black Theology in South Africa. In the second (3.3) I describe the underlying commitments which all black theologians have in

common, which means developing further my working definition given above. In the final section (3.4) I give a typology of present trends in Black Theology. These three sections do not give an exhaustive picture, but serve merely as an introduction to the detailed study of the central negation (chapter 4) and affirmation (chapter 5) of Black Theology regarding Christian mission.

3.2 AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BLACK THEOLOGY

3.2.1 The genesis of Black Theology

The history and development of black protest theology before 1970 will not be discussed here, even though it could be argued that there was a Black Theology in existence long before this specific term was used. Boesak (1977b:15) contends that Black Theology is 'as old as the attempts of white Christians to bring the gospel to blacks', while Bosch (1974:1) refers to Kimpa Vita, a Congolese woman who lived around 1700, as the first black theologian. Others regard the rise of independent black churches in the late nineteenth century as the genesis of Black Theology in South Africa: 'in an important sense black theology in South Africa began with the revolt of black Christians at the turn of the century, a revolt which found institutional expression in the African independent churches' (De Gruchy [1979] 1986:156). There is no doubt that many features of Black Theology were present in prophetic black theologies long before 1970. Goba (1986:58) expresses this continuity as follows:

As we participate in this workshop we are actually reaffirming a vision that was born long ago, when some of the early black Christian leaders such as Rev. Dwane and Rev. Mokone decided to break away from the imperial theology that dominated the lives of the black Christians in this country. There is therefore a sense in which we are involved in a theological pilgrimage that

has and will continue to give an expression to our faith within the ongoing struggle for liberation.

However, for the sake of exploring the wealth of material produced by black theologians after 1970, I will not pay special attention to these earlier theologies. As I have stated before, the term Black Theology in this study refers to the period after 1970.

In what follows I describe the history and development of Black Theology organisations in South Africa. It is a limited way in which to describe the development of a theology, but I do so to avoid presenting Black Theology merely as the concern of a few individuals. In the process I trace the major events in the historical unfolding of Black Theology, and also indicate the most important sources that I use in the following chapters.

From an organisational point of view, the history of Black Theology in South Africa can be divided into two distinct phases. The first begins in 1970 with the establishment of a Black Theology Project by the University Christian Movement (UCM), and the second in 1981 with the establishment of the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT), which from its inception included a Black Theology 'task force' (1).

3.2.2 Phase I: 1970 - 1980

3.2.2.1 The UCM Black Theology Project

Black Theology (by that name) appeared on the scene in South Africa with the circulation of a paper entitled 'Towards a Black Theology' by Dr. Basil Moore, director of theological concerns of the UCM. It was a paper which he read during a UCM 'formation school' at Thaba 'Nchu in March 1970 (COI 1975a:59). Moore's intention as the UCM director of theological concerns was to make information available to branches on some major trends in contem-

porary theology by sending out 'summarising essays on major topics, books and theologians' (:131). His paper 'Towards a Black Theology' was the first of these essays and it turned out to be more than a summary, because it consciously applied the Black Theology of the USA to a South African context. The paper contains no references to the works consulted and Moore explains why: 'Since Black Theology is most often the theological counterpart of Black Power, it was feared that this sort of publicity given to the available books might make the works unavailable' (:131). Moore conceded that it was not very satisfactory and possibly over-cautious, but his actions show that from its inception Black Theology operated under the shadow of government disapproval and bannings.

In this seminal essay, Moore clearly articulated the situational character of the Gospel and started with the central question: 'At what crucial point does the human situation of blacks in South Africa fit in with the human situation of Jesus in Roman-occupied Israel?' (Moore 1970:1). According to him, the point which united the two situations was the shared dehumanising experience of poverty, political disinheritance and a revolutionary climate. The message of Jesus for black people in such a situation is one of black self-affirmation, since in him God sided with the wretched of the earth and launched a deliberate offensive against all evil powers that held them captive. Christian discipleship means sharing in the mission of Jesus by working for the liberation of the disinherited poor.

This paper by Moore was widely circulated, and the positive response to it led the UCM executive to establish a Black Theology Project towards the end of 1970. Motlhabi (1986b:44) is correct, then, when he credits the UCM (and Basil Moore in particular) with the 'pioneering effort' in bringing Black Theology as an intellectual discipline to South Africa. The UCM appointed a seminary student, Sabelo Ntwasa, as the director of the project for 1971. It was his task to popularise and spread Black Theology

through seminars, ministers' caucuses and publications. The first seminar was held in Roodepoort during March 1971 and it was followed by regional seminars in Northern Transvaal, Zululand, Eastern Cape and Transkei. Some of the papers delivered at these seminars were published by the UCM in April 1972. The book, Essays in Black Theology, was edited by Ntwasa, but since a banning order under the Suppression of Communism Act was imposed on him by the State in March 1972, Motlhabi hastily took over as editor. Within a month of its publication it was banned, and it took two years before it was published in Britain and the USA, edited by Basil Moore. Motlhabi was appointed acting director of the UCM Black Theology Project for 1972 and continued with the conscientising work which Ntwasa had initiated, but with the emphasis on local seminars (Motlhabi 1972a:3).

During 1972 the UCM decided to dissolve itself as an organisation. This was due firstly to the sharp tension between its black and white members as a result of the rise of Black Consciousness. It was felt that a 'multi-racial' student organisation was no longer viable or fruitful in the light of the polarised situation. Secondly the members feared that the UCM would soon be banned anyway, since the government had appointed a Commission of Inquiry into the affairs of certain organisations, among them the UCM. The dissolution of the UCM raised the question of the continued existence of the different projects which it had initiated, especially Literacy and Black Theology. At a meeting in December 1971 the executive of SASO, the director of Black Theology and the general secretary of UCM had already agreed that Black Theology should become an independent project (Motlhabi 1972a:4). This was ratified at the dissolution conference of the UCM in July 1972, and a national conference to inaugurate an independent Black Theology Agency was planned.

3.2.2.2 Black Theology Agency

The conference to set up the Black Theology Agency took place in

February 1973 in Pietermaritzburg. The need for Black Theology was affirmed, since a relevant theology was essential in order 'to make religion keep abreast with the reawakening of the Black people' and thus aid 'the black man's true understanding of God's revelation, which will liberate him from his present plight' (Motlhabi 1973:12). On a practical level the need for co-ordination between Black Theologians was stressed, since several organisations had indicated interest. In the report of the conference the following groups were mentioned: IDAMASA, AICA, SASO, BCP as well as the theological colleges and seminaries which had held a conference on 'Relevant theology for Africa' at Mapumulo in September 1972 (Motlhabi & Biko 1973:14). The functions of the envisaged Black Theology Agency would be:

1. to co-ordinate all work done in the field of Black Theology in South Africa.
2. to provide all the interested people with background material relating to the field of Black Theology.
3. to conduct whatever research that may be necessary in this field i.e.
 - (a) biblical interpretation by experts
 - (b) ways and means of simplifying the idea for popular mass understanding
 - (c) compilation of courses for incorporation into theological training
4. to plan courses for refresher seminars.
5. to plan publications relevant to the field of Black Theology.
6. to maintain the necessary high academic standards relating to definitions, propagation etc. of Black Theology (Motlhabi & Biko 1973:17).

All these proposals were accepted at the conference, but the different organisations did not come forward with finances to support the Agency. In the words of Motlhabi, who had been the acting director of the project until then : 'This was the

beginning of the end. In fact, after this conference the Black Theology Project as an organization remained in existence only long enough for the conference report to be prepared and submitted' (Motlhabi 1986a:xii). The main cause of this was financial, since the initial support for Black Theology had come from students rather than church leadership or theology lecturers, and there was insufficient moral and financial support to establish it as an independent agency.

The first chapter in the organisational history of Black Theology therefore ended rather soon. It would be very wrong, however, to assume that its influence thereby disappeared. Black ministers continued playing their role within the broader Black Consciousness movement and expressed their Black Theology in sermons and other pastoral activities, as has been said specifically by bishops Desmond Tutu and Manas Buthelezi (in Motlhabi 1986:55 n.3). Black Theology as a communal exercise certainly suffered a setback with the disappearance of its organisational base, but the theological initiatives set in motion by it lived on in a variety of forms, as will be seen below.

3.2.2.3 Black Renaissance Convention (BRC)

One manifestation of the ongoing impact of Black Theology was the Black Renaissance Convention, which was held during December 1974 in Hammanskraal. The central role of Black Theology is clear in the first place from the two prominent black theologians who were invited to read papers: Manas Buthelezi on 'The Christian challenge of Black Theology' (Buthelezi 1976c) and James Cone of the USA on 'Black Theology and the Black Church' (Cone 1976). Cone could not obtain a visa to enter South Africa, but his paper was included in the printed proceedings. In addition to these two speeches, the influence of Black Theology can be seen in the fact that the key people who had initiated and led the Convention were black theologians, for example Fr. S. Mkhathshwa, Revv. A. Boesak, S. Mogoba, S. Buti, M. Ngakane, E. Tema and Mrs. O.

Phakathi. This was Black Theology in action: black Christians not only reflecting on the black struggle for liberation, but playing an active part in the political awakening of the black community at large. The purpose of the Convention was to bring about a renaissance of political awareness to counter the growing apathy in the black community. Since the banning of the ANC and PAC in 1960 there had been a leadership vacuum, and by 1974 the only political choice was 'between Bantustanian politics and the BPC' (Mkhatshwa 1975:8). This created a serious dilemma, since on the one hand urban black people 'will have nothing to do with tribal dummy political movements' and on the other hand 'relatively a small number of blacks will join the BPC' (Mkhatshwa 1975a:8). The political frustrations of millions of black people therefore had no organised outlet, and this bred apathy. Since most blacks believed that 'they dare not organise politically' (:9), the aim of the Convention was to create a political awareness which could lead to meaningful united action. A significant (certainly the most publicised) event of the Convention was the vote to expel the representatives of homeland governments from the meeting. The decision, carried with a large majority, was not directed against the representatives personally, but it was (in the words of one participant) a symbolic ritual expressing 'abhorrence for apartheid, separate development, homelands, South African Indian Council and Coloured Representative Council' (:6). The official minutes stated: 'Its significance lies in the fact that symbolically separate development and its authors were unconditionally and utterly rejected by a representative group of the black community' (:5).

The Black Renaissance Convention is one clear example of the important role played by theologians in the awakening of black political consciousness during the 1970s. It also stimulated the formation of the Belydende Kring (see below).

3.2.2.4 The Mazenod Black Theology conference

One more conference on Black Theology was held, this time in Mazenod, Lesotho. It took place during 1975 and was arranged by Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa (Chikane 1986:xvii). It managed to gather together theologians from other parts of Africa as well, notably Lesotho and Malawi. This gave expression to the fact that black theologians did not see their theology as an exclusively South African issue and certainly not as being in opposition to relevant theology done elsewhere in Africa. It seems as if the papers read at this conference were not published, and I have been unable to obtain any of them.

This was the last conference on Black Theology to be held in Southern Africa during Phase I. The developments in Black Theology during the second half of the 1970s need to be traced in the studies produced by individual theologians and in the emergence of denominational black caucuses.

3.2.2.5 Studies by individual black theologians

A number of theological students who were part of the Black Consciousness movement obtained grants to study overseas during the 1970s. In this way they produced studies which constitute a major source of South African Black Theology. Some of these have been published, but even the unpublished dissertations have exerted an influence among black theologians. These publications will be used extensively in the following chapters, so that I only mention them here. The first, and one of the most influential of these publications, flowing from a period of study in Holland, is Boesak (1977b) (2). Three other important dissertations written in the 1970s, in this case at universities in the USA, are Noko (1977), Motlhabi (1984), and Goba (1988) (3).

3.2.2.6 Black denominational caucuses

One of the most important ways in which Black Theology manifested itself during the 1970s in the absence of any Black Theology organisation, was the emergence of black denominational caucuses. Within the major denominations black ministers grouped themselves together in caucuses that aimed at articulating black concerns and furthering black interests. As a result of the unique problems of individual churches, these caucuses have played slightly different roles, but their underlying visions are the same.

It is significant that Biko (1979:57ff) proposed in 1972 that blacks who form the majority in a certain church, should caucus to gain control of it. He said this at a conference of black ministers organised by the BCP in Pietermaritzburg. He pointed out that the concentration of power in the hands of a white minority increases the irrelevance of the church to its black members, who form the majority. He said : 'It is high time that black people learn the highly tried method of caucusing to put other black people in control of Churches in which black people have something at stake' (:59). He stressed that this did not imply acceptance of the bureaucracy and Western flavour of these church structures, but that the prerequisite for creating new structures was taking over power in the present ones: 'In order to be able therefore to change the Churches, we have to first gain ascendancy over them in that white model, then thereafter turn that model into one we cherish, we love, we understand, and one that is relevant to us' (:59). In chapter five I will give attention to the debate among black theologians whether they should establish a united black church. It is sufficient to note here that the majority view among them has been that of remaining in their respective churches and working to make them relevant to the needs and concerns of black people.

Biko's words about gaining ascendancy over the churches were spoken in the context of the so-called multi-racial churches in

South Africa, where the discrepancy between black majority and white control was most glaring. It is difficult to assess how widely his proposed strategy was applied in local situations, but it is possible to describe the denominational caucuses that emerged. The three important caucuses to emerge during the 1970s are the Black Priests' Solidarity Group, the Belydende Kring (formerly Broederkring) and the Black Methodist Consultation.

a) Black Priests' Solidarity Group (BPSG)

This organisation of Roman Catholic clergy grew out of SPOBA (St. Peter's Old Boys Association), which was formed in 1966 with the purpose of creating a forum for discussion and action in the interests of black Roman Catholics. In the words of Mokoka (1984:151), SPOBA was formed for the sake of the 'struggle for justice within the institutional Roman Catholic Church'. The following resolutions (in Mokoka 1984:152), adopted at a SPOBA conference during July 1966, reflect the early concerns of the Association:

We recommend that translators of biblical and liturgical texts should employ indigenous personnel more fully to help them, for the sake of correct idiomatic expression.

We also recommend that composers should be encouraged to develop and produce indigenous melodies.

Finding that unity among the clergy as desired by the ecumenical council is lacking, it is strongly recommended that conferences, as also desired by the Council, and such as the one we have had here, be extended to the Clergy as a whole, as a beginning of a realisation of unity among them.

It would be futile to expect the desired result of

unity to take effect, unless there is equal treatment of the clergy in such matters as appointments, vacations, monthly allowances and external aid from overseas or elsewhere.

SPOBA as a group of young black priests was therefore concerned about the speedy and thorough implementation of the decisions of the Second Vatican Council (to which they refer in the resolutions above). They conveyed these (and other) resolutions to all Roman Catholic bishops in South Africa, but received no reaction at all (:153). In 1968 the SPOBA convention again decided to send the resolutions to the hierarchy, but when after another year there was still no reaction, the SPOBA executive drafted a memorandum entitled 'Our church has let us down' and had it published in the Rand Daily Mail during January 1970. It read (in part):

The Black clergy have realised that aping Europe is not the answer to Africa's religious needs. Bishops and priests have expressed the need for Africanisation in Southern Africa African priests feel the frustration most, because the whole affair of indigenisation concerns them as spiritual leaders of their people.... The Catholics pretend to condemn apartheid. And yet, in practice, they cherish it. The Church practised segregation in her seminaries, convents, hospitals, schools, monasteries, associations and churches long before the present Government legislated against social integration.... We deplore as well as condemn the baasskap and miesiesskap of the White clergy and religious over their African counterparts... We ask the Hierarchy to expedite Africanisation.... We loathe the unwarranted, self-appointed surveillance of the White priests over their Black colleagues... We prefer to manage or mismanage ourselves, otherwise we shall for ever remain Black Boys under the rectorship of the White boys' (in Mokoka 1984:155).

The anger evident in this memorandum reveals the growing assertiveness of young black Catholic clergy at the beginning of the 1970s. SPOBA was indeed an early manifestation of Black Theology in the Roman Catholic Church. It is important to note the interplay between cultural issues (e.g indigenous hymns and idiomatic translations) and political issues (e.g. segregation in church institutions and white domination of the majority black members) in this memorandum.

In 1974 SPOBA led a 'revolt of black churchmen against white domination' (Mbanjwa 1975:134) by demanding an 80% black representation on the (predominantly white) Priests' Council, so that it could reflect the composition of the church membership. It also pointed out that 700 of the almost 2000 priests were black, but that there were virtually no black bishops. As a group they were 'frustrated by the whole Roman Catholic structure which is obviously maintaining the status quo' (Mbanjwa 1975:135).

In 1976 SPOBA decided to operate on a broader base than only alumni of St. Peter's Seminary, and gave birth to the 'Permanent Black Priests' Solidarity Group' (PBPSG) which aimed at uniting and mobilising all black Roman Catholic clergy in Southern Africa. This move was hastened by the growing radicalising of the whole black community since the events of June 16 1976.

The PBPSG played a central role in the clash which Fr. Lebamang Sebidi, rector of St.Peter's during 1976 and 1977, had with his white staff members as well as the church hierarchy. It concerned the theology being taught to the students and the support of staff and students for the Black Consciousness movement. Matters came to a head in October 1977 when Fr. Sebidi and a fellow-lecturer, Fr. Buti Tlhagale, took part in a march of clergy to John Vorster Square to protest against the banning of 19 Black Consciousness organisations on October 19 1977. The final outcome was that St.Peter's Seminary was closed down by the hierarchy at the end of 1977. The PBPSG called incessantly for the contextual-

ising of seminary training, the Africanisation of church leadership and the dismantling of bureaucratic Western church structures (Hope & Young 1981:164f).

b) Belydende Kring (BK)

The 'Broederkring van N.G. Kerke' was established in 1975 in Bloemfontein by about 60 ministers and evangelists from the N.G. Kerk in Afrika (NGKA) and the N.G. Sendingkerk (NGSK). The initial stimulus for its formation came from an incident at the Black Renaissance Convention (mentioned before). During the Convention a proposal was made that ministers of any of the Dutch Reformed Churches be excluded from the proceedings, along with the homeland leaders. The NGKA and NGSK ministers argued that they should remain in the meeting and this was accepted, but not without a struggle. In the light of this, the ministers present met together and reflected on the fact that they were seen by the Convention as representatives of apartheid in the same light as homeland leaders. They realised the urgent need for a vigorous witness against social injustice and for the unity of the Dutch Reformed Churches. Out of this informal discussion at the Black Renaissance Convention the idea of the BK was conceived. It was born a few months later in Bloemfontein. The aims of the BK are:

To proclaim the Kingship of Jesus Christ over all areas in church and in state, and to witness for his Kingly rule.

To achieve organic church unity and to express it practically in all areas of life.

To take seriously the prophetic task of the church with regard to the oppressive structures and laws in our land and to take seriously the priestly task of the church with respect to the victims and fear-possessed oppressors who suffer as a result of the unchristian

policy and practice in the land.

To let the kingly rule of Christ triumph over the ideology of apartheid or any other ideology, so that a more human way of life may be striven for.

To promote evangelical liberation from unrighteousness, dehumanisation and lovelessness in church and state, and to work for true reconciliation among all people.

To support ecumenical movements that promote the kingship of Christ on all levels of life (Belydende Kring 1988:16).

These aims are summed up admirably in the title of the book published by the BK at its tenth anniversary: Unity and justice (Govender 1984). Whereas the black caucuses of other denominations worked for the Africanisation of their united 'multi-racial' churches, the BK was faced with a situation of four racially separate churches of which the three 'daughter churches' were heavily dependent on the N.G. Kerk (NGK) financially as well as in terms of theological training and the supply of ministers. The struggle against the power of racism in the church therefore took a different form in the 'family' of Dutch Reformed churches than in other denominations.

The BK is a black initiative for unity and justice which arose from the experiences and struggles of black Reformed Christians, but its membership is open also to white Christians who support its aims in word and deed. This openness to white members is due to the theology of church unity underlying the BK, but also to the role of individuals like Beyers Naude and Frikkie Conradie (see Govender 1984:4). The number of white members has always been small, limited almost entirely to some of the white ministers serving in black congregations, but what I want to point out here is that the BK, while identifying with Black Theology, has a

'non-racial' membership policy. In this respect its understanding of the concept 'black' is similar to that of ABRECSA (see below).

c) Black Methodist Consultation (BMC)

The BMC was formed in the late 1970s 'in the midst of white power arrogance, in a church that professes to be ONE and UNDIVIDED' (Mbangula 1985a:6). It was felt that there was something wrong with the way in which the unity of the church was being expressed and the BMC embarked on a programme 'that sought to replace a church of white power decision makers, by a church of equal representation at all levels of power functioning' (:6). It is very important to understand, however, that the BMC was not only concerned with church affairs. It came into being 'as a part of the organized Black Resistance and Struggle' and therefore 'reflects the wider determination of exploited and oppressed Black people, not to submit to the definition and organization of reality as articulated by white oppressive and bourgeois exploitative elite, and their culture, within the Southern African social formation' (:6).

The BMC therefore set itself the task of contributing to 'the people's struggle within the Methodist Church' in three different ways. First, in the area of church leadership. Ten of the twelve Districts of the Methodist Church had white chairmen, even though the vast majority of members were black. This meant that 'white issues were looked upon as the number one item on the agenda of the church' (:7). When it came to transfers, white ministers would be carefully consulted but black ministers would be merely informed of their new parishes. This double standard has produced 'an immense feeling of insecurity among Black ministers' (:7). To counteract this, the BMC has sought to safeguard black interests and to make them a significant part of the church's agenda by encouraging blacks to 'share and participate in all decision-making courts of the church' (:7). One could therefore say that a central emphasis of the BMC is 'the process of Africanization in

the structures of the Methodist Church' (Goba 1983:27).

Secondly the concern of the BMC was to develop well informed and trained local churches, who would be true to their calling and context in South Africa and thus 'challenge the system of Apartheid to the core, as a heresy and denial of the Gospel' (Mbangula 1985a:8). This would be achieved by bringing about in the black local church an awareness of oppression, exploitation and injustice and seeking ways and means to eradicate these in a peaceful way. The question of Africanisation mentioned before is not understood only as a question of leadership. It also concerns the recognition of African customs in the daily life of the church. In 1980, during a BMC seminar on the Africanisation of the church, Rev. Stanley Mogoba urged the church to 'accept African customs and orientate them in relation to the gospel' (in Hope & Young 1981:118). In the eyes of the BMC a local church, true to its Christian calling and its context, has to take seriously both the issues of oppression and of culture.

Thirdly the BMC takes sides on behalf of the victims of society and commits itself to the national struggle for liberation. It is impossible for the church to be uninvolved in the struggle of the people for freedom and justice and to understand itself outside the pain of being black in South Africa. In the footsteps of Jesus himself, the BMC sees its role as that of 'a Peace-Maker in a hostile situation' (Mbangula 1985a:8). According to Goba (1983:28) the influence of the BMC is particularly strong among lay members of the Methodist Church 'because of its emphasis on African values and the struggle for liberation'.

3.2.2.7 Ecumenical forums

One important way in which Black Theology was expressed during the 1970s was through black theologians working in the South African Council of Churches (SACC). Some black theologians were invited to deliver keynote addresses at annual National Con-

ferences, thus exerting a large influence on the decisions taken by the Council. Others were appointed as staff members of the Council and in this way played a major role in developing the Christian response to the ongoing events in South Africa. Probably the most important appointment in this regard was that of Bishop Desmond Tutu, an outspoken black theologian, as the first black General Secretary in 1978. In all these different ways the SACC acted as a vehicle and platform for Black Theology during the time when no Black Theology organisation existed. The SACC was also responsible for launching the Journal of theology for Southern Africa in 1972, which has published a number of important articles on Black Theology over the years. In fact, it is one of the indispensable sources for the study of South African Black Theology (4).

One SACC event which proved especially significant for the development of Black Theology was the consultation on Racism in South Africa, convened by the SACC early in 1980. This was done in response to a call by the WCC Central Committee for a review of the first ten years of its Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) (5). In addition to two keynote addresses by the black theologians Goba and Boesak, the consultation produced an important resolution regarding a black confessing church, which will be discussed in chapter five.

Another ecumenical body within which Black Theology asserted itself was the Christian Institute (CI). Formed in 1963 as an 'ecumenical and inter-racial organisation of concerned Christian individuals' (Randall 1982:28), consisting primarily of white Christians attempting to change fellow whites, the CI gradually shifted to a more specifically black agenda in the late 1960s, and during the 1970s became 'one of the severest critics of the government and social structure of South Africa' (Randall 1982:32). Having co-operated in producing the Message to the people of South Africa in 1968, the SACC and CI jointly initiated The Study Project On Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPROCAS)

in 1969 as an attempt to implement the vision of the Message. This was followed in 1972 by SPROCAS 2 (Special Programme for Christian Action in Society), which included the BCP. The importance of the CI to Black Theology was in the first place that it provided work for some black theologians, thus enabling them to spread their message in the black community. Secondly, the journal Pro Veritate, closely associated with the CI, published a large number of Black Theology articles over the years, in this way allowing black theologians to develop and propagate their insights. This has made Pro Veritate one of the important sources of Black Theology during Phase I. In the light of this it was perhaps not surprising that the government, when banning all Black Consciousness organisations in October 1977, included the CI as well (6). It was eloquent testimony, albeit from an enemy, of the close connection between the CI and Black Theology.

3.2.2.8 Third World contacts

The stimulus to once again convene Black Theology conferences came from contacts with other Third World theologians during the late 1970s. When the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) (7) was established in Dar es Salaam in 1976, two South African black theologians, Dr. Manas Buthelezi and Dr. Allan Boesak, were present and read papers. Subsequent EATWOT conferences were attended by other black theologians (8). At these EATWOT conferences the South African black theologians present were urged to establish an organisation for fostering liberation theology in South Africa. This led to the formation of the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) in 1981, which included a Black Theology task force. It is significant to note here that the organisational revival of Black Theology in South Africa was a direct result of the invitation of individual black theologians to EATWOT conferences. This contact with liberation theologians elsewhere in the world, especially black theologians in the USA, sparked a renewed commitment among black theologians in South Africa to get themselves organised. This brings us to

Phase II of South African Black Theology.

3.2.3 Phase II: From 1981 till today

I have chosen 1981 as the 'terminus a quo' of Phase II solely from an organisational point of view, since it was the year of the establishment of the ICT as well as ABRECSA, two organisations which gave new prominence and impetus to Black Theology. Since the ICT convened its first Black Theology conference in 1983, I first give attention to ABRECSA.

3.2.3.1 Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in South Africa (ABRECSA)

ABRECSA was formed in October 1981 in order to co-ordinate the theological opposition to apartheid in the Reformed and Presbyterian circles in South Africa, i.e. among member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). Prominent in its launching and development were people like Bonganjalo Goba, Allan Boesak (elected as president) and Jean-Francois Bill (elected as general secretary). Its Charter defines it as a 'broad movement of Black Reformed Christians based on church affiliation and open to individual members to join' (ABRECSA 1981:1). It acknowledges the fact that in South Africa the oppressors are white and the oppressed are black, but also 'that there are blacks whose attitude and condition is (sic) such that they have clearly opted to be on the side of the oppressor and that there are whites whose attitude and condition is (sic) such that they have clearly opted to be on the side of the oppressed' (ABRECSA 1981:1). In a way similar to the BK (see above), it therefore espouses a Black Theology which does not in its strategy exclude white Christians who are committed to the cause of liberation and who are willing to work under black leadership.

ABRECSA played a very important role in the South African theological arena through the prominence that it gave to the condem-

nation of apartheid as heresy. The ABRECSA Charter states: 'We, as members of ABRECSA, unequivocally declare that Apartheid is a sin, and that the moral and theological justification of it is a travesty of the Gospel, a betrayal of the Reformed tradition, and a heresy' (ABRECSA 1981:1). This declaration was adopted by the General Assembly of the WARC in 1982 in Ottawa, which led to the suspension of membership of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) and the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk (NHK). The radical repudiation of the South African policy of apartheid and its theological justification has been an integral part of Black Theology from its inception, but at Ottawa this reached the ears of the whole world in an unprecedented way (9).

3.2.3.2 Institute for Contextual Theology

The credit for convening the first Black Theology conference since 1975 must be given to the ICT. It was established in 1981, but it took until August 1983 before its 'task force' on Black Theology could arrange a conference on Black Theology (10). The theme was 'Black Theology Revisited', a title which created the impression in the minds of some that Black Theology was seen as something of the past, and which could therefore be 'revisited'. During the conference some tensions surfaced, which were related to the tensions in the black community regarding the strategy to be adopted in the struggle for liberation. In the official report on the conference the division was characterised as follows by the General Secretary of the ICT:

Although the division on the surface seems to be that of Black Consciousness Movement and the "progressive" democrats and even on the play between the class and race models or the combination of those models in trying to understand the South African society, it seems that the real decisive matter is the attitudes of these groupings to the historic liberation movements banned in the early sixties - the African National

Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)
(Chikane 1983:1).

This tension was a reflection of the context in which black theological thinking and acting was taking place in the 1980s, which was remarkably different from the situation in the early 1970s. This issue is explored in greater detail in chapter four as part of the context analysis of black theologians.

During the 1983 conference a few central issues were identified for further research and study. They include the ideological ferment among the oppressed in South Africa, the relationship between ideology and theology, the link between Black Theology and African Independent Churches as well as African Traditional Religions, the question of the content of Black Theology, the historical materialist approach to Black Theology and the question of biblical hermeneutics in relation to women's oppression (Chikane 1983:4).

A second Black Theology conference was held by the ICT during September 1984 to address some of the issues raised by the previous conference. Even though the divisions within the black struggle had deepened since the previous year, during this conference the participants were 'more than ready to defuse such tensions when they surfaced' and this was seen as a sign of maturity by the ICT staff (Chikane & Tsele 1984a:2). A major contributing factor to this tolerance was the paper read at the conference by Lebamang Sebidi on the history of the black liberation struggle in South Africa and its implications for Black Theology. He made an attempt to defuse the tension by distinguishing between principles (at the level of ideology) on which all black theologians are agreed and strategies (at the level of praxis) where there were differences of opinion among them (Sebidi 1986a:33f).

The papers of these two ICT conferences were first circulated in

cyclostyled format but have subsequently been printed by Skotaville Publishers (Mosala & Tlhagale 1986b). This publication will figure prominently in the following chapters, since it portrays so clearly the present debate within South African Black Theology.

3.2.3.3 More studies by individual black theologians

To continue the approach that I have taken above, I mention briefly the most important publications by black theologians that have appeared during the 1980s. These studies clearly reflect the issues being grappled with in Phase II of Black Theology, and are either dissertations or collections of articles that had appeared before. From the pen of Bishop Desmond Tutu there has appeared a collection of sermons and speeches, entitled Hope and suffering (Tutu 1983) (11). Mosala & Tlhagale (1986c) have edited a collection of essays, entitled Hammering swords into ploughshares, in honour of Tutu, who had by then received the Nobel Peace Prize and become Archbishop of Cape Town. Mofokeng, after a period of study in Holland, wrote a dissertation entitled The crucified among the crossbearers, in which he developed a black Christology (Mofokeng 1983). A collection of speeches by Boesak appeared with the title Black and Reformed (1984a). He also published three collections of sermons (Boesak 1979a, 1984c, 1986b) in which the kerygmatic character of his theology is clearly visible. The latest book from his pen is a series of reflections on the Apocalypse, Comfort and Protest (Boesak 1987). Two other dissertations written in Holland by black theologians are also significant: Ntoane (1983), A cry for life, on the distortion of Calvinism in South African white theology, and Mokoka (1984), Black experience in Black Theology, on the Roman Catholic missionary enterprise in South Africa. Maimela recently published a collection of scholarly articles and speeches under the title Proclaim freedom to my people (Maimela 1987). An important dissertation on Black Theology (at the University of Cape Town) is that of IJ Mosala (1987a): Biblical her-

meneutics and Black Theology in South Africa. It is due to be published soon, and poses searching questions about the hermeneutics of Black Theology. Finally two more dissertations written in Holland: Mazamisa (1987), entitled Beatific Comradeship, dealing with the parable of the 'Good Samaritan', and Govender (1987a), In search of tomorrow, on the dialogue which is necessary between Black Theology and Marxism.

In the light of the foregoing it is clear that an 'explosion' of publications on Black Theology has taken place during the 1980s, and it shows no sign of abating. The above list is not exhaustive, especially regarding dissertations, but it indicates some of the most important sources which I have consulted for this study.

3.2.3.4 The Kairos Document

An important publication on the South African theological scene, which emerged out of ICT circles, was the Kairos Document (12). In an attempt to involve as many theologians as possible it was not published in the name of the ICT, and therefore the initial signatories called themselves simply 'Kairos theologians'. Issued as a 'challenge to the church', the Kairos Document embodies many central insights that are part of Black Theology, and yet it was signed also by a number of white theologians. It also downplays the racial dimension of the South African crisis (see Motlhabi 1987:94, Kritzinger, JNJ 1988:143). This means that if one wants to call it a Black Theology document, this is only possible in the more 'open' or 'inclusive' understanding of blackness as evidenced in the BK or ABRECSA. Perhaps it would be the best to describe it as an expression of liberation theology which both black and white theologians are able to endorse. It may even be seen as an attempt to get beyond the strategic separation of black and white theologians in the struggle for liberation, thereby relegating race to a secondary place as opposed to class in the analysis of the South African context. I discuss this

again in chapter four.

One significant feature of the Kairos Document is the way in which it was drawn up; it was not written by one or two 'experts', but emerged out of a series of group discussions, and drafts were circulated for comment before it was finalised. It grew out of the deepening experience of crisis among black Christians living in beleaguered townships during the State of Emergency. Out of that sense of crisis it first delivered a razor sharp critique on 'State Theology' and 'Church Theology', and then proposed a Prophetic Theology which expresses itself in concrete liberating deeds (13).

3.2.3.5 Black Ecumenical Consultation (BEC)

During November 1985 the first BEC (initially called BECLC : Black Ecumenical Church Leadership Consultation) was held at the Koinonia conference centre near Durban. The origin of the Consultation was in the planning committees of the movement 'Christians for Justice and Peace' (CJP). CJP came into being as a result of the call by Archbishop Denis Hurley in June 1982 for a mass rally (to be held during 1986) of Christians committed to justice and peace. The committees set up to plan the rally consisted of leaders (white and black) of the major SACC member churches as well as the Roman Catholic Church. In September 1984 the decision was made by the black participants at a CJP planning meeting to hold a Black Ecumenical Consultation 'so as to create a forum for Black Christian expression of common ideals and objectives, on the nature of our conflict in South Africa and the response of the church' (Black Ecumenical Consultation = BEC 1985:1). The Consultation met in November 1985 near Durban to discuss the theme 'Conflict in our land'. About 80 black Christians attended, from many different backgrounds, including some African Independent Churches.

The purpose of the Consultation was given as threefold: first, to

create a theological framework for interpreting the intensifying and radicalising struggle of the black people; secondly, to grapple with the social analysis of the South African conflict situation and in the light of this to work out forms of action to help organise black people into a self-conscious social force; thirdly, to examine the adequacy of the church as an agent of the total liberation which her Lord demands (Mbangula 1985b:4f). A significant resolution taken at the BEC was to reject the CJP, since it was seen as a programme imposed on suffering black people 'from the top'. Since CJP did not deal with the agenda of black people, the BEC members felt 'morally bound to dissociate ourselves from this programme ... and to call on all black Christians here and elsewhere to support us in this stand' (BEC 1985:21). This decision effectively ended the existence of CJP, since it would have been meaningless for it to proceed without black participation.

Another important aspect of the BEC is contained in the presence of the word 'ecumenical' in its title. This implied criticism of the SACC, the recognised ecumenical body in South Africa. On two points the BEC was unhappy with the SACC. First, the composition of the SACC delegation to the WCC Harare consultation, which was to take place a month later in December 1985 (14). The Consultation expressed the opinion that, since most of the members of the delegation were white, it was not truly representative of the South African churches. In the light of this, the BEC appointed three ministers to attend the Harare conference on their behalf to ensure that the black voice was heard clearly.

The second point of criticism on the SACC had to do with its structure. The BEC resolved to urge the SACC Executive and Secretariat to:

- a) Examine the administration and control of its finance, which we believe to be largely in the hands of a white bureaucracy;

b) Examine critically its structures, which are claimed to represent the aspirations of its black membership. Such examination must take into consideration the qualitative and quantitative representation of its black membership (BEC 1985:38).

The concern expressed in these resolutions can be described as the desire for the Africanisation of the SACC, so that the structures and policies of the SACC could reflect the interests of the black majority membership of its constituent churches. Attached to these resolutions was a kind of ultimatum which stated that the possibility of setting up a Black Ecumenical Council of Churches would be investigated if the necessary changes were not made in the SACC within twelve months.

What is important for me at this point is not the precise effect which the BEC had (15), but the theology embodied in it. It represents a resolute rejection by black Christians of white church leaders who claim to be speaking and deciding 'on their behalf'. Since the Black Consciousness movement began in the early 1970s to expose the contradictions inherent in the white leadership of churches with black majorities, the momentum of this call for Africanisation has increased. This presents a fundamental challenge not only to the SACC, but to every church in South Africa.

3.2.3.6 Black Theology Project

The most recent organisational development in terms of Black Theology has been the establishment in 1985 of the Black Theology Project (BTP). This grew out of the Black Theology task force of the ICT and the two conferences organised by it in 1983 and 1984. The organisational separation from the ICT seems to have been occasioned by the fact that a number of black theologians were uncomfortable with the term and the praxis of 'contextual the-

ology'. In the words of IJ Mosala (1985:103f), perhaps the severest critic of the term (and the approach which it suggests), contextual theology reveals the class interests of 'white and privileged theologians'. He regards it as ironical that 'in its execution, oppressor and oppressed, rich and poor, are comrades in arms' (:104). In other words, people who choose to identify their theology as 'contextual', make it clear that they wrongly underestimate or overlook the racial component of oppression in South Africa. In this understanding it is therefore necessary for black theologians to affirm Black Theology as something distinct from contextual theology. At the root of this there is therefore a reaffirmation of the Black Consciousness strategy to reject any alliances with whites during the present phase of the struggle for liberation. Black theologians who felt that in the ICT premature alliances with whites were being made under the banner of 'contextual' theology, did not feel comfortable to work under its auspices, and therefore established the independent Black Theology Project (16).

To date the BTP has arranged a conference on the black church during September 1987, and started publishing the bi-annual Journal of Black Theology in South Africa, which promises to become an important vehicle for fostering the Black Theology approach (17). A theological conference was also arranged between South African and North American black theologians in December 1986 on the commonalities and differences between them (18). It is clear, therefore, that Black Theology has not died or disappeared, as some people have thought (cf Setiloane 1980:49), but that it has continued to exist throughout the 1970s in a variety of forms, and has re-established itself organisationally in the 1980s as a distinct theological enterprise.

To conclude this historical section of the chapter, let me reiterate my reason for concentrating on these organisations and events: I regard it as essential in order to avoid the impression that Black Theology is merely a collection of ideas floating in

the air, articulated by a few isolated individuals. However, having given this historical overview, I now move on to a brief exposition of the basic methodology of Black Theology, and to a discussion of its relationship with Black Consciousness. All of this is necessary before I discuss Black Theology's double challenge (as negation and affirmation) to Christian mission in chapters four and five respectively.

3.3 BLACK THEOLOGY -- ITS BASIC APPROACH

3.3.1 Kerygmatic theology

The first characteristic of black theologians is that they are Christian believers, most of them church ministers, and that they are intensely concerned with the relevance and credibility of the Gospel among black people in South Africa. Black Theology is being propagated not by an isolated group of black academics, but by people deeply involved in the life of the black church. It challenges those black ministers who are aloof from their members to 'come down from their ivory towers and to share in the toil and tumble of their charges' everyday experience in order to acquire relevance' (Motlhabi 1984:122). This same concern for authentic communication of the Gospel is evident in the view of Baartman (1973c:20): 'Black Theology ... seeks to inform the preacher in New Brighton, Gugulethu, Chatsworth, Soweto, Garankuwa, Morngat, Dimbaza, Limehill and all other places of deprivation and despair so that he brings the word of God and it becomes "Good News" to these people'. This deep concern that suffering people should hear God's message and be strengthened by it, reveals the kerygmatic character of Black Theology. The basic motivation for Black Theology does not come from a political ideology, but from genuine Christian concern to say and do something which will really be 'good news' to suffering black people. Mofokeng (1983:x) describes how one question kept on haunting him as a church minister when he saw the abject suffering of his people: 'How can faith in Jesus Christ empower black people who

are involved in the struggle for their liberation?'. This question lies at the heart of Black Theology, and reveals the profoundly Christian character of the enterprise. The deepest motivation of black theologians comes from their faith in the Good News that through Jesus Christ God has intervened in history on behalf of the poor and downtrodden.

3.3.2 Theology and black experience

A second fundamental characteristic of Black Theology is the fact that it emerges from the black experience. It is a 'reflection of faith upon the present historical realities of "Blackness"' (Noko 1977:46) and for this reason a black theologian 'must participate fully in the condition of "Blackness" and be sensitive to the community's hopes, fears and anxieties at the collective and individual level' (:56). The inverted commas before and after "Blackness" in these two quotations indicate that something more than mere pigmentation is involved here. Blackness implies the existential experience of being oppressed, as I have indicated earlier in my exposition of Black Consciousness. A black theology of liberation emerges from the actual experience of oppression. It tries to capture the cry of oppressed black people (Mofokeng 1983:19) as it re-thinks the central claims of the Christian faith in the light of this black experience (Mgojo 1977:28). It can be called a 'critical reflection upon the experience of oppression and exploitation from the standpoint of Christianity' (Mokoka 1984:i).

Because of its starting point in black experience, black theologians point out that Black Theology is a situational theology, which follows an inductive approach rather than the deductive one of classical Christian theology. It proceeds from human experience to 'seeking its significance in the Christian sources' (Motlhabi 1984:122). Boesak (1977b:13) describes it as a contextual theology, distinct from the 'indigenisation' approach encouraged by white missionaries, whereas Buthelezi (1973a) calls

its method 'anthropological' as opposed to the 'ethnographic' method of African theology. IJ Mosala (1985:105) rejects 'contextual theology' as a middle class creation, and prefers to speak of a 'Black theology of liberation', but he too affirms that its starting-point is 'the actual, concrete existence and activity of black people within the South African social formation' (:108). Whether black theologians therefore characterise their theology as situational, contextual, anthropological, or liberational, all these terms affirm its rootedness in the black experience of oppression (19).

Another dimension needs to be stressed here. The 'black experience' includes more than suffering. It encompasses also the whole area of African culture and religion, challenged and transformed as it is through three centuries of contact with Western culture. When Black Theology takes black experience as its starting point, then this whole complex reality is meant. In this regard Goba (1980a:25) says that a black theology of the oppressed operates from a frame of reference which 'reflects a religious cosmology that is dynamic, seeking aggressively to establish its own authenticity'. The reclaiming and rewriting of black history and culture, to which I referred in the discussion on Black Consciousness, also leaves a deep imprint on Black Theology. Black theologians strongly reject a view of African culture and religion as static ideals 'dug up' and reconstructed from the past. By culture they mean the 'forms with which human beings produce, reproduce and sustain their lives' (Mosala, IJ 1985:109), that is, the values by which black people live today as they struggle to make life meaningful. As a significant factor shaping contemporary black experience, culture is an important component of black theological reflection. Goba favours a theological hermeneutic which overcomes the dichotomy between Black Theology and African theology and therefore embodies both political and cultural dimensions (Goba 1986:61) (20).

However, the starting point of Black Theology lies not only in

the experience of suffering and contemporary African culture. It is indeed a critical reflection on the black situation of suffering, but at the same time also on the black struggle for justice and humanity. It is to this dimension of struggle that I now turn.

3.3.3 Theology and struggle

Black Theology is the 'critical reflection of black Christians on their involvement in the black liberation struggle' (Boesak 1978:76). This means that its agenda is determined by 'the emancipatory interests of the black community' (Goba 1986:68). The Black Consciousness movement saw Black Theology as dealing with the 'spiritual dimension of its liberation struggle' (Motlhabi 1984:121). Black theologians proceed from the awareness that 'the Black people's struggle for liberation is indeed in accordance with the will of God the Liberator' (Noko 1977:76).

In the light of these statements it is clear that Black Theology is an engaged theology, operating with an epistemology which regards the struggle of the poor and oppressed as the 'locus theologicus' (Mofokeng 1983:49). In this respect black theologians agree with the description of the theological task by Gutierrez (1974:11): 'Theology is reflection, a critical attitude. Theology follows; it is the second step'. The first step is personal involvement in the black struggle for full humanity.

The foregoing implies that Black Theology is intentionally political: 'Black Theology occurs within the context of the black struggle and inescapably will reflect the ideological interests of the black community. If it doesn't it ceases to be Black Theology' (Goba 1986:66). By calling Black Theology political, I mean that it deals openly and directly with 'realities hitherto anxiously ignored by the theology of the western world -- the realities of rich and poor, of white and black, of oppressors and

oppressed, of oppression and liberation from oppression' (Boesak 1977b:3). It reflects theologically on the analysis of structural causes of black suffering and on strategies proposed to eliminate it. In this respect it consciously takes up the tradition of the Old Testament prophets, who never shied away from addressing issues of political and social ethics. Black theologians openly and consciously grapple with political questions from the perspective of the victims of the South African system and in the light of their understanding of the Bible and the Christian tradition.

An important result of this choice is that black theologians do their theology in a situation of severe tension. The South African government has banned all the liberation organisations that have arisen: the ANC, the PAC, the Black Consciousness organisations of the 1970s, and now the UDF and AZAPO have also been virtually banned (21). As a result of this, black theologians have also not escaped the experience of being banned and harrassed. They represent, in the eyes of the State, the 'religious arm' of the 'total onslaught' against South Africa, and therefore need to be combatted. The very first nationwide Black Theology seminar, held in April 1971, was disrupted by the police, and the book containing the papers read there, Essays in Black Theology, was banned soon after publication. Since then numerous black theologians have been detained, accused of treason, and 'restricted' for varying periods of time.

The long shadow of the law hangs over all Black Theology in South Africa, and this has deeply influenced the character of its publications. It is not done with 'academic' detachment, since it operates on an 'ideological battleground' (Mofokeng 1983:1), in which black people struggle for justice and liberation. Black theologians all share in the experience of tension and uncertainty which characterises the black liberation struggle, and they also bear the scars and wounds of this battle. At the same time, however, they have developed a resilience and astuteness

which enables them to survive against all these odds.

3.3.4 'Occasional' theology

Something which flows from the previous dimensions is the fact that Black Theology does not present a systematically worked out 'whole', but could be described as an 'occasional' theology. I use this term like Schreiter (1985:23), to refer to a theology 'dictated by the circumstances and immediate needs rather than the need for system building'. In 1971 Biko described Black Theology as a theology which 'grapples with existential problems and does not claim to be a theology of absolutes' (Biko 1979:94). For this reason some of the most important expressions of South African Black Theology are not available for study. I am referring particularly to sermons and speeches, most of which are not documented or in any case not published. As I have pointed out above, a number of these 'occasional' speeches and sermons have been published as articles in journals or in collected volumes, but most of them are simply not accessible. In the light of the severe censorship laws of the South African State it is also probably unwise to publish many of them. This state of affairs has deeply influenced the development of Black Theology in South Africa. Black theologians work in a situation of extreme tension, with the threat of banning or detention constantly hanging over their heads. In such a situation theology is not a safe academic discipline, but a dangerous enterprise, 'an extremely difficult risky business' (cf Segundo 1976:26, Goba 1988:iv).

Some black theologians have been able to withdraw from this situation for a number of years in order to produce academic studies on Black Theology, but in these publications also one does not find an all-encompassing theological 'system' after the traditional scholastic model. The realities and needs of the black struggle determine their theological priorities and theological methodology. In this regard Noko (1977:52) speaks of the prophetic method of Black Theology, which means that the search

for God is not limited to the Bible and tradition (in which case a neat system could conceivably be devised), but extends to the present historical circumstances. By trying to fathom the underlying causes of black suffering and by responding to it in the light of Christian faith, black theologians opt for a theology of struggle which will always have an 'occasional' character.

3.3.5 'Autonomous' theology

A final characteristic of Black Theology which I want to mention is its 'autonomous' character. By this I refer to the fact that black theologians are not concerned about obtaining the approval of white theologians for what they are doing. The emergence of the creative black subject in the Black Consciousness movement lies at the root of this assertiveness. The words of Baartman (1973c:19) is representative: 'To white theologians who are going to use their criteria for assessing Black Theology, my response is go on, but your white standards are irrelevant. The black man is not seeking your approval'. Black theologians see themselves as accountable to the black community in its struggle for justice, not to an academic 'fraternity' of white theologians.

As a result of this, some theologians have labelled Black Theology 'reactionary', and have interpreted it as being dependent on the white theology which it rejects. Setiloane (1980:49f) is a good example: 'Black Theology cannot do without the White man and his Whiteness'. It is thereby implied that the demise of white rule and white theology in South Africa would make Black Theology redundant. I do not deny that the rejection of white theology is an important aspect of Black Theology, but since I do not regard it as a mere reaction, I prefer the term 'autonomous' at this point. It includes the element of rejection, but it underlines the positive self-affirmation which is inherent in it. Black Theology represents a positive choice for a new way of doing theology which will remain relevant long after white racism has ceased to be a problem in South Africa (see Maimela 1984:49).

Another aspect of this rejection of white theological standards is the strong antipathy to denominationalism among black theologians. Black theologians maintain that these doctrinal importations from Europe and the USA must be laid aside in the interests of black solidarity. Although there are denominational 'black caucuses' in some churches (as I have shown), there are no separate denominational black theologies. When particular denominational traditions are invoked by black theologians, they do so in order to foster the black cause within that denomination in the language it understands best, not in order to create a separate denominational black theology. Makhathini (1973:11) contends that Black Theology should work for the 'de-denominationalization' of black people by 'instilling into them the understanding that they are first Black before they are Christian, and not vice versa'.

3.4 Present trends in Black Theology

In this concluding section of the chapter I want to indicate briefly the major trends or tendencies discernible in South African Black Theology at the present time. As I have explained in chapter one, I do this not with the purpose of imposing rigid categories or of fostering division among black theologians, but in order to make some issues in the following two chapters more understandable. For this reason I propose to draw a 'map' which indicates the interplay between theological method and political strategy in Black Theology at present. I therefore plot the 'field' along the two axes of method and strategy, to indicate the spectrum of different approaches.

To elucidate the following diagram I first need to explain the issues that are at stake in method and strategy respectively. With reference to theological method the debate centres on biblical hermeneutics. The central question can be phrased as follows: What is the most appropriate hermeneutical approach to be fol-

lowed so that Black Theology may become a truly liberating force in the black community? During Phase I, Black Theology, characterised by a strong kerygmatic dimension, used a traditional 'Word of God' hermeneutics. Characteristic of this approach is the view that liberation is the central message of the whole Bible. Typical representatives of this approach are Boesak and Tutu (22). During Phase II, when black theologians began using Marxist analysis in a serious way, a materialist reading of the Bible started taking root, which questions the fundamental assumptions of the hermeneutics of Phase I. Mofokeng (1988:37) expresses the difference between Phases I and II very clearly:

The most commonly held approach has been to accuse oppressor-preachers of misusing the Bible for their oppressive purposes and objectives. This misuse is based, it is argued, on misinterpretations of biblical texts to support or promote oppressive intentions. It is clear that this critique is based on the assumption that the Bible is essentially a book of liberation. This assumption is held in spite of the obvious presence in the Bible of texts, stories and books which can only serve an oppressive cause.... There are numerous texts which have long disqualified themselves in the eyes of oppressed people. We can refer to the well-known Pauline position on slavery and on the social position and behaviour of women. We think that in the light of this textual reality formally-trained hermeneutists and exegetes of the downtrodden should abandon the ideologically-motivated concept of the unity of the Bible as well as the assumption that it is a book of liberation per se.

In their struggle to 'shape the Bible into a formidable weapon in the hands of the oppressed', black theologians use it in a selective and critical way, but often tend to 'slip back to the use of the dominant liberal hermeneutics' (Mofokeng 1988:39). To escape

the paralysis inherent in such a method, some black theologians now argue for a materialist approach which can discover the text behind the text of the Bible, 'the text that has been silenced but one that speaks through this silence about the struggles of the silenced and marginalized people of the Bible' (:41). The hermeneutical spectrum in Black Theology therefore stretches from a selective and critical kerygmatic use of the 'Word of God' which 'sheds its light on our path' to a materialist approach which adopts struggle as its hermeneutical key, searching for affinities and links between struggling black communities today and the struggling communities behind the biblical texts (cf Mosala, IJ 1987a).

With reference to strategy, the central question is whether the Black Consciousness option of not entering into alliances with white 'progressive democrats' should be retained. In the initial phase of Black Theology it was quite clear that Black Theology could not be separated from Black Consciousness: 'For most South African black theologians Black Consciousness is Black Theology (or very closely related) (Boesak 1977b:142). There are some black theologians who insist that this link is non-negotiable for Black Theology. IJ Mosala (1983a:5) is a good example:

Black Theology as a theological expression and theorisation of the black struggle for liberation cannot be understood outside the context of the Black Consciousness movement.

It is for this reason that Goba (1986:63) speaks of them as 'soul mates' or 'parallel movements' and Mofokeng (1983:3) describes them as 'twin sisters'. One clear indication of this intimate relationship is the role of young black Christians in the emergence of Black Consciousness. It was at the 1968 UCM conference that a 'black caucus' decided to form a separate black student organisation (SASO). In other words. 'SASO and thereby the Black Consciousness philosophical approach was born inside Christian

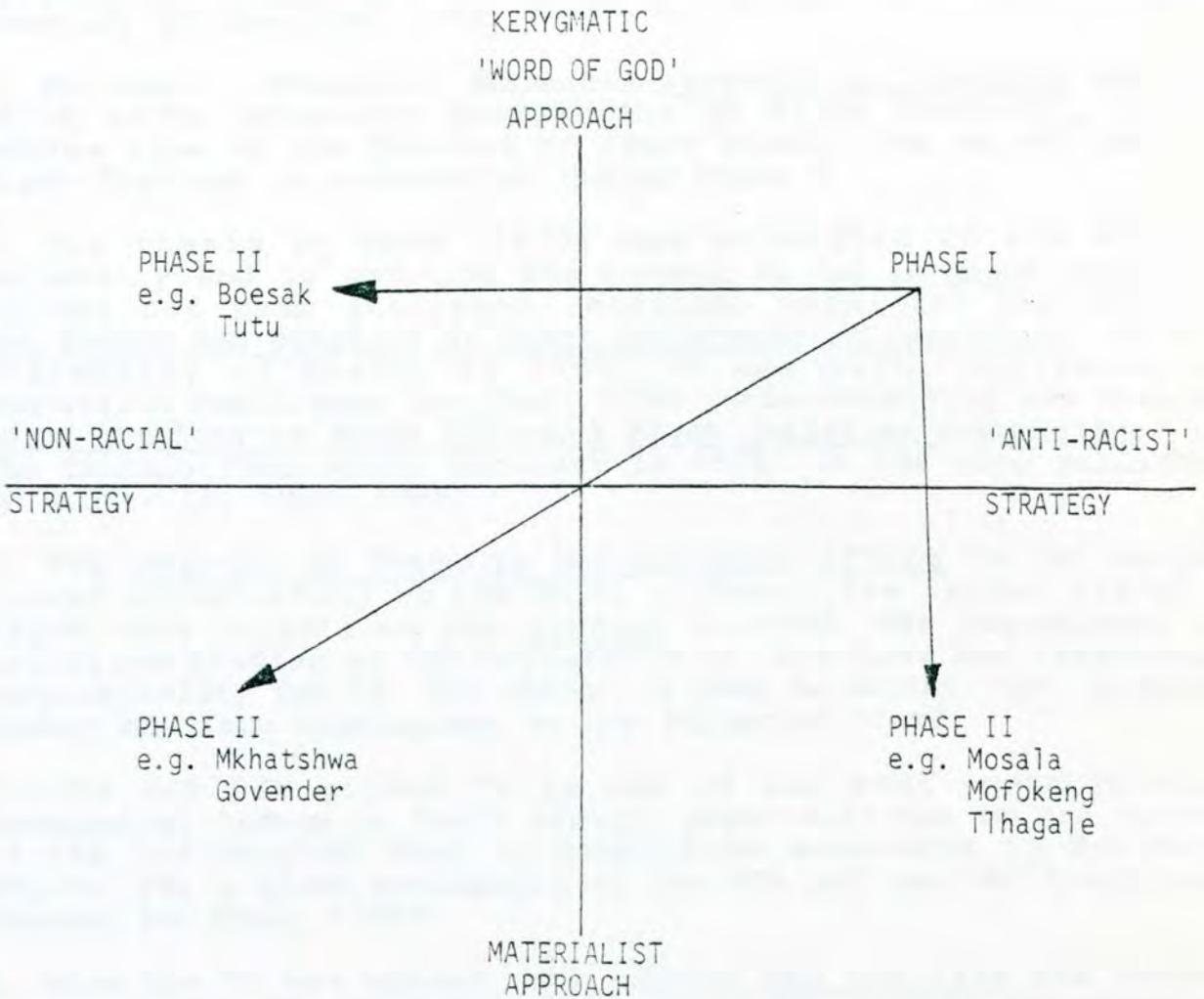
circles' (:9). Conversely, Black Consciousness organisations established Black Theology projects, since they regarded it as the indispensable 'spiritual dimension' of the black liberation struggle (Motlhabi 1984:121). This close mutual relationship makes it possible to call Black Consciousness the 'nerve centre' (Goba 1986:68) or 'ideological framework' (Mosala, IJ 1983a:5) of Black Theology. It is 'inseparably linked to the Black Consciousness philosophy and based on the Black Consciousness political praxis' (Mofokeng 1983:122). This view is representative of Phase I and also of one strong tendency of Phase II, as can be seen in the diagram on page 98.

However, the emergence and strength of the UDF, with its acceptance of the 'non-racial' strategy of the Freedom Charter, put the Black Consciousness approach under pressure, and a number of black theologians moved to the 'non-racial democratic' tendency in the black struggle. In the words of Motlhabi (1984:276), the UDF believes 'that Black Consciousness has served its purpose and that the time has come for all opponents of apartheid, Black and White, to join hands once more against the common foe'. However, as I have pointed out in chapter one, the black theologians in UDF circles still identify themselves as black theologians, which means that for them Black Theology is no longer exclusively defined by adherence to the Black Consciousness strategy. These theologians sometimes prefer the terms 'people's theology', 'critical theology', or 'liberation theology', but to my knowledge not one of them has yet denied being a proponent of Black Theology.

In the light of the above it becomes clear that the spectrum of strategies therefore stretches from the traditional Black Consciousness approach to the racially broadened praxis of the non-racial democratic movement.

When one combines these two variables of method and strategy, it is possible to visualise the 'field' of contemporary Black Theo-

logy (see diagram below). I mention the names of some black theologians merely as representatives of the different tendencies, not to suggest that they are the only ones following that particular approach. Since the boundaries between these approaches are fluid, I do not intend to convey the impression that they are rigid 'boxes'. The purpose of this diagram is to distinguish the most important types of Black Theology according to the twin criteria of theological method and political strategy (23).



Having given an historical overview and a brief systematic introduction in this chapter, I now turn to a detailed consideration of the negative challenge of Black Theology to Christian mission. I study this challenge to mission as an integral part of Black Theology's critique of 'Christian civilisation' in South Africa.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. The terms 'Phase I' and 'Phase II' were first used with reference to South African Black Theology by Motlhabi (1986a:xiii, 1986b:54). If one focuses on content rather than organisational structure, it may be possible to date the beginning of Phase II before 1981, as Motlhabi (1986a:xiii) does. Govender (1987a:9f) contends that Phase II ended in 1984 with the statement of the ICT Black Theology consultation 'that black theology could now be defined variously and that ideological tolerance was necessary and desirable'. He suggests that the time has arrived for Phase III, which entails 'an inter-disciplinary interaction with marxist thought on the one hand and history in terms of the South African political economy on the other hand' (:10). Such an interaction implies a 'radical redefinition of the task and function of theology' (:10).

2. Motlhabi (1986a:xiii) describes Farewell to Innocence as 'the first major scholarly publication on Black Theology', which became (due to the banning of other books) 'the major text on Black Theology in seminaries' during Phase I.

3. The thesis by Noko (1977) was submitted to the McGill University and is entitled The concept of God in Black Theology. It has not been published. Motlhabi submitted his thesis, The theory and practice of black resistance to apartheid, to the University of Boston in 1980. It was later published by Skotaville Publishers (Motlhabi 1984). Goba submitted his thesis, Doing theology in South Africa. A Black Christian perspective, to the Chicago Theological Seminary in 1978. It was also published by Skotaville (Goba 1988).

4. The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa is no longer linked structurally to the SACC, although the latter played a major role in getting the Journal started. The Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town has taken over responsibility for it. Its editor is John de Gruchy, and it has a number of black theologians on the editorial board.

5. The PCR has proved to be one of the most controversial theological issues in South Africa, especially due to the grants of the PCR Special Fund to liberation movements in Southern Africa. For a black assessment of the PCR and related theological issues, see Mbali (1987).

6. When the CI was banned, the journal Pro Veritate was banned along with it. For a good description of the history and development of the CI, consult Walshe (1983).

7. EATWOT was established by Third World theologians to facilitate sharing of their interpretations of the Gospel, promoting the mutual interaction between theological formulation and social analysis, and keeping close contacts with action-oriented movements for social change (see Torres & Fabella 1978:273). The founding conference at Dar es Salaam has been

aptly dubbed 'the Bandung of theology' by Congar (in Casalis 1984:32).

8. The Accra EATWOT conference in 1977 was attended by Boesak and Tutu, where both presented papers (Boesak 1979b) and (Tutu 1979b). The New Delhi conference in 1981 was attended by Goba, who likewise read a paper (Goba 1983). At the EATWOT dialogue between First and Third World theologians in Geneva during 1983 Goba also read a paper (Goba 1985). The most recent EATWOT conference in Mexico City during 1986 was attended by a number of South African black theologians, including Maimela and Mofokeng. These papers have not yet been published.

9. For a detailed discussion of the Ottawa WARC Assembly and the implications of declaring apartheid a heresy, see de Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio (1983).

10. The ICT has a number of other 'task forces' in addition to Black Theology. From its inception it also included some white theologians such as Albert Nolan, Beyers Naude and Francois Bill in its ranks. In some ways it is therefore a continuation of the type of ministry which the CI exercised until its banning in 1977.

11. Skotaville Publishers were established to publish black South African literature for nation-building, and through its books has contributed significantly to the renewed interest in Black Theology in South Africa.

12. The Kairos Document was written during the first (partial) State of Emergency of the 1980s in South Africa, while there were ongoing clashes in black townships between security forces and the black community. For important information on the origins of the Document, see Chikane (1987a) and Kistner (1987).

13. A second edition of the Kairos Document was issued in September 1986, a year after the first. Apart from a rewritten fourth chapter, it contained substantially the same text as the first edition. I quote from this second edition throughout my study.

14. The Harare conference was convened by the General Secretary of the WCC to discuss the crisis in South Africa, and representatives of all the member churches of the SACC were invited to attend.

15. It seems that the BEC disappeared after holding two consultations. Its importance lies not so much in its organisational existence as in the Black Theology expressed during its meetings.

16. The mutual relationship between ICT and BTP is not antagonistic, since black theologians respect the right of existence of different modalities of liberation theology. However, for the sake of developing the Black Theology approach, the BTP was established as an organisationally separate initiative.

17. The first issue of the Journal appeared in May 1987. Its editors are Dr Mofokeng and Prof Maimela.

18. The papers of the South African participants in this conference have been published in the November 1987 edition of the Journal of Black Theology in South Africa.

19. I am not suggesting that the differences between these approaches are unimportant, since they do imply the use of different tools of social analysis as well as different hermeneutical methods. However, at this point I am stressing what all these approaches have in common.

20. The sharp distinction between African Theology and Black Theology, as posited by Buthelezi (1973a), is no longer upheld by black theologians. A consensus has been reached that the two approaches are 'soul mates' (Tutu 1979a), and that Black Theology is a particular form of African theology within the 'racial capitalist' context of South Africa. See also Boesak (1977b:40) and IJ Mosala (1982). For a recent discussion of the backgrounds and implications of these two different approaches to theology in South Africa, see Schoffeleers (1988).

21. In February 1988 both UDF and AZAPO (along with a number of other anti-apartheid organisations) were restricted by the government from performing any functions without prior permission from the Minister of Police. This is in effect a 'banning order', since it prevents the organisations from continuing with their usual activities.

22. Boesak (1977b:17,20) states this clearly: 'Nothing is more central to the Old Testament proclamation than the message of liberation.... Just as in the Old Testament, the message of liberation forms the cantus firmus of the proclamation of the New Testament'. See Tutu (1979b:166) for a similar perspective. However, Tutu acknowledges that there is a rich diversity of theologies in the Bible, and that Christians need to search for the biblical perspective that addresses their particular situation most directly (:165).

23. Other criteria could be used to visualise the different approaches to Black Theology. I have chosen method and strategy since these two categories seem the most useful 'axes' by means of which to portray the present spectrum of views.

CHAPTER 4

BLACK THEOLOGY AS CRITIQUE OF SOUTH AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

4.1 BLACK THEOLOGY AS NEGATION

Black Theology is a negation of traditional 'Northern' Christianity in South Africa (1). Black theologians often use expressions such as 'reject', 'discredit', or 'debunk' when referring to aspects of 'Christian civilisation' in South Africa, thus revealing their moral outrage at the state of affairs. Goba (1988:1) says that black theologians have an obligation 'to debunk all the aspects of Western Christian tradition which have fostered and continue to perpetuate structures that dehumanize black people'. It is this dimension of negation in Black Theology which I examine in the present chapter. As I have pointed out in chapter one, the two dimensions of negation and transformation are at the heart of the Gospel as understood by Black Theology (cf West 1982:17). In this form of prophetic Christian thought the notion of 'struggle' is elevated to the highest priority, and means to 'negate what is and transform prevailing realities' (:19). This chapter deals with the way in which black theologians 'negate what is' in South Africa.

The critique of white missionaries occupies a central place in this negation, since they were intimately involved in the process of colonisation. The unmasking of the 'scandal' of missionary complicity in the dispossession of black people, as expressed by the anecdote mentioned in chapter one, is an integral part of Black Theology. In order to understand the black theological critique of Christian mission one therefore has to study their critique of the whole complex called 'Western Christian civilisation' in South Africa. In terms of their holistic approach, black theologians never discuss 'spiritual' matters in isolation from material ones. They see mission as an integral part of the white

presence in South Africa, and evaluate it as such.

In this chapter I distinguish five dimensions of the black critique of dominant white civilisation, and point out how they see the role of Christianity in it. In other words, I portray the way in which black theologians analyse the South African context. At the outset it is necessary, however, to stress some important features of their context analysis.

4.1.1 Passionate language

Black Theology emerges out of the black experience of suffering and is not done with the 'reasonable detachment' or 'objectivity' loved by academics (Tutu 1979b:162). Since it emerges from the crucible of human suffering and anguish, it is angry and passionate language about God and about human society. This mood is expressed well by the poem of James Matthews:

Freedom's child
you have been denied too long
fill your lungs and cry rage
step forward and take your rightful place
you're not going to grow up
knocking at the back door
for you there will be no travelling
third class enforced by law
with segregated schooling and sitting on the floor
the rivers of our land, mountain tops
and the shore
it is yours, you will not be denied anymore
Cry rage, freedom's child

(Matthews & Thomas 1972:68)

This passionate character of South African Black Theology has certainly been influenced by the theology of James Cone. In his

first book on Black Theology he said that black people are 'disgusted with oppression ... and with the scholarly demand to be "objective" about it' (Cone 1969:2). According to Cone, too many people have died and too many are on the brink of death for theologians to be dispassionate and objective about it; such 'objectivity' simply means the refusal to take sides. In this connection he quotes the words of James Baldwin: 'To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in rage almost all the time' (:13). Echoing this sentiment, Boesak (1981:186) says that Black Theology is an 'indictment of white Christianity in South Africa' and 'a burning flame of legitimate anger at what is being done in the name of God'. It is a 'gut level theology', relating to the life and death issues facing black people (Tutu 1974:74). It takes as its starting point the 'painful reality of black oppression' (Goba 1980a:24).

Black theologians, like feminist theologians, come to an understanding of their oppression not through 'an abstract analysis of exploitation, but through their every day personal perception' (Bourne 1983:2). The feminist slogan, 'The personal is political', certainly applies to black theologians as well. What prevents the context analysis of black theologians from being abstract or sterile is not only their personal experience of black suffering, but also their involvement in the struggle to overcome it. As I have said before, their theological reflection is a 'second step', following on the first step of a 'pretheological human commitment to change and improve the world' (Segundo 1976:39). The passionate language used by black theologians in their context analysis must be understood in the light of their situation of suffering and their resolute commitment to eliminating it.

4.1.2 Rational analysis

The context analysis of black theologians is characterised by an obviousness not supported by elaborate proofs and arguments. This

is due to the fact that it flows from the day-to-day experience of oppression and not from mere academic interest (cf Witvliet 1985:21). Black theologians never attempt to prove that black people are oppressed and exploited; they take it as a self-evident starting point. Their situation does demand careful rational analysis, and they do not shy away from it, but their starting point lies with the reality of black suffering which they see and feel every day: 'Black theologians contend that the experience of racist and class exploitation is not knowable primarily through an adoption of class tools of analysis. Rather it is a reality which is lived by black people and thus comprehended in even better terms than through a perusal of books about it' (Mosala, IJ 1983a:5).

Moved by the obviousness of the injustice to which their community is subjected, black theologians analyse their context rationally and intelligently with tools of social analysis. With incisive clarity they name and describe the different dimensions of black suffering. This is an integral part of their theologising. What West (1982:74) says about the Marxian term 'critique', applies to the way in which South African black theologians go about their task: 'critique is not simply moral criticism of a state of affairs' ... but 'presupposes a sophisticated understanding of the internal dynamics or power relations of a society'. What I examine in this chapter is the indispensable first dimension of a liberating theology, which is described variously by black theologians as the 'identification of inhuman conditions' (Boesak 1978:89), the 'unravelling of the facade of the South African political system' (Goba 1980a:26), or as the discerning of sin as a 'destructive force within the structures and systems of our community ... as a socio-political and historical fact' (Kameeta 1975:277). It is by embarking on critical analysis of their context that black theologians say farewell to the 'innocence' of a purely 'spiritual' Christian faith, and begin to uncover the root causes of black suffering.

4.1.3 Christian character

The context analysis of black theologians is however not a 'secular' exercise, uninformed by Christian values. On the contrary, it is an embodiment of the biblical injunction to identify with those who suffer. As an integral part of theology, context analysis not only influences the way the Bible is read, but the reading of the Bible also supplies the images by means of which the context is analysed and described. That is why Mofokeng (1983) can speak of 'the crucified among the crossbearers' and of the 'long Good Friday' which black people are going through. In similar vein, Gqubule (1974:23) sees 'the crucifixion of Christ as representing the crucifixion of the Black man in shanty towns outside the towns and cities of this land where every slum becomes a Calvary'. Kamho (1981:41) also describes his situation as one 'wo Christus durch unmenschliche Gesetze and durch die Zertretung der Menschenwürde jeden Tage erneut gekreuzigt wird'. In other words, their context analysis is informed by their biblical understanding of God's solidarity with the victims of society. This aspect will be evident throughout the present chapter.

4.1.4 Analysis as liberation

The rejection of pious 'innocence' implied by the fact of consciously doing context analysis is already part of the process of liberation: 'Black Theology seeks to reflect theologically on the nature of black oppression and exploitation in order to arm the new black subject that Black Consciousness creates with an awareness of the theological validity of the struggle for liberation' (Mosala, IJ 1983a:4). It represents a conquest of the sense of the 'inevitability' of social structures (Fatton 1986:40) and is therefore an encouragement to struggle against the evil inherent in them. The words of Albert Memmi about the colonial situation in Algeria is applicable in this regard: 'I saw ... what help to fighting men the simple, ordered decription of their misery and

humiliation could be' (Memmi 1965:x). The first step on the way to freedom is to recognise the evil in society, so that one can know how to combat it (Kameeta 1978:98). Context analysis is therefore an important part of the conscientising function of Black Theology, namely to challenge the black community to start seeing the South African reality differently in the light of the biblical message and then to start acting to transform it. Goba (1980a:26) speaks of the role of Black Theology to 'enable the black Christian community to be fully acquainted with the contradictions of South African society'. Since the 'greatest ally of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed', Black Theology sets out to rid the black community of its 'implanted slave mentality' by helping them to see that their suffering is not inevitable, but the result of social structures created and maintained by people (Boesak 1977b:6). Context analysis therefore has the effect of liberating and empowering black subjects in their struggle for humanity and justice. 'For a people engaged in a liberatory struggle it is necessary to rewrite the history of the past. It is part of the very process of liberation to expose the distortions of history' (Majeke [1952] 1986:vii). The importance of careful context analysis is stressed by IJ Mosala (1987a:132), when he quotes the words of Mafeje: 'identification of the issues is as important as fighting in the streets or in the mountains'. Doing relevant theology demands a 'rigorous analysis of society' (Mofokeng 1987b:26).

4.1.5 Dimensions of oppression

In analysing their oppression, black theologians distinguish a number of different dimensions. From their writings I have isolated the following: cultural alienation, racist oppression, colonialist domination, capitalist exploitation, and sexist oppression. It will become clear in this chapter how intimately these different dimensions are related, forming a single complex system. I begin with cultural alienation since this is the area in which missionaries are most strongly criticised by black

theologians, but no hierarchy of importance is implied in the sequence.

4.2 CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURAL ALIENATION

There is unanimous agreement among black theologians that white Christian missionaries played a major role in undermining the culture of black people in South Africa. They use expressions such as 'suppression', 'erosion', 'impoverishment', and 'betrayal' to describe this negative effect of Christian mission on African culture. I first describe how black theologians see the basic approach of white missionaries to African culture. Thereafter I examine some specific issues which they raise in this connection.

4.2.1 Cultural aggression

The negative attitude of white missionaries to African culture is revealed in the first place by the terms they used to describe it. They regarded African culture as 'barbaric' and 'uncivilised', as can be seen in the following words by Father Joseph Gerard, a Roman Catholic missionary among the Zulu in the nineteenth century:

A missionary here must have a great boldness, a brass-forehead, in order to impose himself upon the Kafirs and even upon their chiefs at times. I do not spare them when they dare do things that are unseemly ... Courage is needed to work among these men who have no idea of decency. No wonder their ancestor Ham was punished by the Almighty' (in Mokoka 1984:117).

A strong paternalistic, even imperialist tone is unmistakable here. The missionary sees his role as that of an authoritarian father figure, who rules his children with the rod and has the

right to impose his will on them. This approach is regarded as necessary, since the African people 'have no idea of decency' and 'do things that are unseemly'. Mokoka (1984:117) comments on this that Father Gerard, and other white missionaries like him, could afford to adopt such a 'bold' approach only because he 'enjoyed sufficient protection -- military as well as civil -- from the colonial powers'. The cultural aggression evident in the approach of Gerard was therefore only possible because of the position of power afforded him by the military might of the British Empire (2).

Boesak (1978:82) sums up the feeling of black theologians when he says that there is 'strong resentment that the African religious heritage was constantly discarded as "barbarism" and "heathenism", while Christianity and western culture were indissolubly linked to one another under one divine cloak'. The terms 'barbaric', 'pagan' and 'heathen' seem to capture the essence of this missionary approach, and have caused deep resentment among black people. One can sense the anger in the words of Goba (1988:3) when he says that missionaries came 'to civilize the so-called primitive tribes of Africa'. Mofokeng (1983:209) says that black culture has been 'negativized, stigmatized and criminalized' in this way, and he quotes the view expressed by a certain A.B. le Roux in 1927: 'We have taken away his barbaric ways of life, his superstition, many wives, beerpots, unbelief and his natural life -- in short, we took everything from him!' The underlying assumption of this view is that whiteness is equated with being Christian, civilised and therefore superior, whereas blackness is equated with being heathen, barbaric and therefore inferior (Maimela 1973:114). This meant that most of the valuable aspects of African ontology were undermined by the missionary effort (Manganyi 1973:40). All of this is summed up by Moore (1973:80) when he says: 'the church's cultural character continues to erode the black man's pride in being black, in being African and thus in being human'.

4.2.2 Conversion

The missionaries saw it as their God-given calling to 'civilise and educate the savages' (Biko 1979:93) by imposing on them what they regarded as 'universal' religious and cultural values, but which were in fact distinctly European in character. Biko (:94) summed up his critique of missionaries as follows: 'Their arrogance and their monopoly on truth, beauty and moral judgment taught them to despise native customs and traditions and to seek to infuse their own new values into these societies'. They therefore preached a conversion which demanded of the black person a 'total and unconditional break with himself and his entire world' (Mofokeng 1983:15). Becoming a Christian meant for most Africans 'becoming a "Black European" ... (by) breaking with one's cultural roots and being grafted onto European culture' (Noko 1977:55). They had to 'renounce, so to speak, their cultural milieu in order to become Christians' (Goba 1979a:4). This brought about an alienation of black people from God and from one another, which led to the disintegration of black society (Mofokeng 1983:14). A black person 'had to become white and accept white values and the capitalist system as the framework of his salvation if he desires to be saved' (:15). All of this led to the erosion, submergence and impoverishment of the authentic indigenous culture, thereby giving rise to 'religio-cultural conflict' (Mokoka 1984:115). Despite their 'enlightening' and 'civilizing' influence, the approach of the missionaries 'resulted partly in the betrayal of the African people' (Motlhabi 1986b:54).

As a result of this understanding of conversion the original wholeness of African culture was broken. Whereas in traditional African culture 'the secular and the religious dimensions of life were inseparable' (Mofokeng 1983:15), this unity was now destroyed and the worship of God took place in isolation from all the various aspects of life (Biko 1979:93). In the words of Buthelezi (1974c:100f), this breaking apart of the wholeness of

African society gave rise to a 'colonised humanity'. Pityana (1974:59) says that the missionaries 'set in motion a process of social change involving rapid disintegration of the tribal set-up and the framework of social norms and values by which people used to order their lives and their relationships'. The missionaries are accused of a 'demonization of black culture', and of having brought about 'the prevailing alienation of the black man and his activity from God' (Mofokeng 1983:14f). For this reason he concludes that the history of the Christian church in South Africa is the 'history of a faith betrayed' (:15).

4.2.3 Specific customs

Black theologians mention certain specific African customs in their criticism of the role of missionaries. The first is the issue of dress. Gqubule (1974:19) says: 'What was wrong with the White missionary was to force on the Black man, together with the gospel, European dress, customs and culture'. Western clothing thus became the distinguishing mark of a 'civilised' and 'Christian' person.

Another cultural imposition rejected by black theologians is the requirement that black people 'had to acquire new names, "Christian" names' (Pityana 1972:179) at baptism. These 'Christian' names were mostly taken from the Bible, but since they were pronounced in English or Afrikaans, this in fact amounted to the imposition of European names. The common practice adopted by black families since then has been to give their children two names, one African and one European. As I have pointed out earlier, it was only with the development of the Black Consciousness movement in the 1970s that a definite move away from the use of European names took place. When this happened, it was a conscious rejection of the missionary and colonial past, and an affirmation of African identity.

A third problem area has to do with marriage. Black theologians

regard the attack of missionaries on the African custom of polygamy as unwarranted. Mokoka (1984:121) quotes Father Gerard as saying that polygamy is one of the 'very strong fortresses of the devil among the Kaffirs'. The vast majority of missionaries shared this conviction and required of polygamous men to send away all but their first wife before being accepted for baptism. According to Mokoka (:123) the attempts by missionaries to erode the custom of polygamy confirms not only their view of Euro-Christianity as the paramount culture but also their inability to grasp the dynamics of African social organisation.

A fourth missionary imposition rejected by some black theologians is more specifically religious. It concerns the African custom of ancestor veneration. Respect for the 'living dead' or Badimo has always been a central pillar of African cultural and religious life. According to Mokoka (:53ff), the religious foundation underlying traditional African society is expressed in the three basic interconnected concepts, Motho, Badimo and Modimo, that is, human persons, the living dead and God. From the outset white missionaries condemned all rituals of ancestor veneration as idolatrous and as a denial of Jesus Christ as the sole mediator between God and human beings. They required of black people to renounce this practice when becoming Christians, and this caused serious tensions in black society. Thebehali (1972:43) called the failure of the missionaries to reinterpret this practice and make it part of the new Christian belief a 'serious error'. Buthelezi (1973a:19f) says that when missionaries banned praise poems dedicated to past heroes as 'ancestor worship' and thus as a transgression of the first commandment, they succeeded in making black people forget their past altogether. Mokoka (1984:126) speaks of the religio-cultural conflict that resulted from this missionary approach and Pityana (1974:59) of 'a deep upheaval of African norms and values, a disintegration of families and tribes'.

A fifth cultural imposition singled out by some black theologians is the attack of missionaries on the role of the traditional

diviner ('witchdoctor'). In the quotation given above, Father Gerard mentions this and polygamy as the two 'citadels of Satan' in Africa. In this way missionaries overlooked the 'purely medical' function of the diviners, as well as their role as 'spiritual leaders of the nation' (Mokoka 1984:123ff). Because of the central role of these figures in African life, many black people who accepted the Christian faith continued to consult them, thus giving rise to a 'dual and parallel religious practice' (:125). Due to this, missionaries regarded most black members as 'only partially converted' (Ngubane 1986:75). This 'parallel religious practice' still exists, and reveals an underlying tension between the European Christianity brought by missionaries and the African religio-cultural experience.

In conclusion I refer to the view of IJ Mosala (1987a:203) that cultural values and symbols were stolen from black people by the dominant white community in this 'civilising' process, ostensibly to promote the interests of black people: 'The ideology of Apartheid in South Africa, for instance, was inaugurated under the guise of enabling black people not to lose their "culture"' (:199).

4.2.4 Alienation

I have used the concept 'cultural alienation' in the heading of this section, and have tried to indicate in the foregoing paragraphs the different aspects of the alienating influence of the Christian church as experienced by black theologians. One result of this is that the church has remained 'foreign to the soul of the black man', and has become the greatest cause of the present misshapen state of South Africa (Pityana 1974:62). Houtart (1976:186) has pointed out that cultural alienation is not only the most visible but in a certain sense also the most dehumanising of all forms of alienation. It robs people of the ability to tell themselves who they are and to give meaning to their life, their past as well as their future. Pityana (1974:60)

speaks of the 'great myth designed to rob the black man of his soul and his human dignity, brought about by the the white settlers with the able assistance of their handmaiden the Church'. However, cultural alienation is not the deepest cause of black suffering; in the following sections I examine other dimensions of the South African context to uncover its deeper roots.

4.2.5 Indigenous theology

The critique portrayed thus far focuses on missionaries at their worst. It must now be said that black theologians also reject missionaries at their best, namely when they, in an attempt to take African culture seriously, propose the development of an 'indigenous' theology. It may not seem as openly offensive as the early missionary 'onslaught', but it nevertheless represents an imposition which black theologians resent. Most articulate and influential in this regard has been Manas Buthelezi (1973a, 1974a, 1978b). He draws a sharp distinction between the methodologies of African Theology and Black Theology: he characterises the former as 'ethnographic' and the latter as 'anthropological', by which he means that their points of departure are radically different. African theology, with its ethnographic approach, is a 'pet project of missionaries' (Buthelezi 1978b:60) which romanticises the African past and suggests to black people that they should 'go back' to it. To this he responds:

Who can blame those who have the feeling that missionaries, with their right hands, are diverting our attention to our glorious past so that we may not see what their left hands, as well as those of their fellow whites, are doing to us in the dehumanization of our lives in the present? (:62).

It seems to Buthelezi that once again black people are used by white missionaries, this time to solve their own problems of guilty colonial consciences or nostalgic longings for the 'good

old days' when the church in Europe still controlled society (:63f). In any case, it is clear to him that such an African theology proposed by missionaries romanticises African culture and sees it as something static, since it does not take into account the present-day existential situation of black suffering and does not allow blacks to take the initiative in their own theology. Only when black Christians are allowed to 'participate in the wholeness of life which the contemporary world offers', will they be in a position to decide 'how much of their past they will allow to shape their future' (:64).

A similar approach is taken by Boesak (1977b:13ff), who contrasts Black Theology as a contextual theology with 'indigenous' theology as 'a white, western version of "African Theology"'. He thus favours a Black Theology, which is profoundly African but which 'also takes seriously the processes of the struggle for humanity and justice, of secularity and technology' (:14). Such an authentic contextual theology is 'not merely an exhumation of the corpses of tradition', but attempts to 'make critical use of those traditions from the past which can play a humanizing and revolutionizing role in contemporary society' (:14). Contrasted with this, indigenisation has 'too much of a colonial aura clinging to it and has been used too one-sidedly in the sense of "response to the gospel in terms of traditional culture"' (:14).

Black Theology represents a radical departure from Western missionary theology, both its 'hard' and its 'soft' forms. Its starting point is the daily life situation of black people, who have always been 'at the receiving end' of white designs, whether missionary or political, but who are now no longer prepared to remain there. The act of 'debunking' many of the notions of the white theological establishment, especially the 'white missionary mentality and ecclesiastical paternalism' (Goba 1988:x), as we have encountered in this section, is therefore an essential dimension of Black Theology.

4.2.6 A positive note?

To conclude this section I need to say that black theologians do not only make negative remarks about Western missionaries. Their critique is sometimes tempered with a note of appreciation. Baartman (1973b:3), for example, says that he is grateful to God for the church having come to Africa, and that he 'admires those missionaries who came here with the Gospel'. The one major thing which the missionaries didn't understand, however, was that 'Jesus Christ was already at work in Africa. They were not bringing Jesus on a boat to Africa'. Mokoka (1984:94, 275) also refers to individual missionaries like J.T. van der Kemp, F. Pfanner and C. Desmond who were exceptions to the rule and who 'to the best of their ability, did all they could to defend the rights of the indigenous peoples against violation by the settler regime'. Motlhabi (1986b:45) also recognises that the missionary drive represented an 'enlightening effort through education and other "civilising" activities', but that unfortunately it had managed in the process to distort African culture and to 'make Africans ashamed of themselves and their heritage'. Whenever black theologians express appreciation for the positive role of white missionaries, they qualify it immediately, since the overwhelming feeling towards missionaries is negative. This negative feeling of black theologians will become more understandable as I examine their views of the role of church and mission in the other oppressive dimensions of the South African context.

4.3 CHRISTIANITY AND RACIST OPPRESSION

Had there been no racism, there would have been no Black Theology. The words of Biko (1979:87) are fundamental here: 'the "Black Consciousness" approach would be irrelevant in a colourless and non-exploitative egalitarian society'. In this section I examine Black Theology's analysis of the racist character of South African society.

I must say at the outset that black theologians do not see racism in isolation from the other dimensions of oppression. In fact, the term 'racial capitalism' or 'racist capitalism' is widely accepted among them as an indication of the intimate and inseparable connection between the racist and capitalist dimensions of black suffering in South Africa. Racism may therefore not be treated in isolation. But on the other hand black theologians also insist that racism may not be reduced to other factors like class. Racism lives a life of its own and adds its own special dynamics to the South African dilemma. It therefore deserves separate treatment.

This section consists of three parts. First I discuss the structural or systemic aspects of racism, then its personal or attitudinal side, and finally its theological evaluation by black theologians.

4.3.1 Racism as system of oppression

Black theologians understand racism not merely as an individual or attitudinal problem, but as a social structure. Carmichael and Hamilton (1967:4ff) coined the phrase 'institutional racism' as distinguished from 'individual racism', and this has decisively influenced Black Consciousness in South Africa. As I have pointed out earlier, Biko (1979:25) defined racism as 'discrimination by a group against another for the purposes of subjugation or maintaining subjugation'. In similar vein Pityana (1972:178) defined it as 'decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group'. It is this inherent power dimension, the 'ideological organization of exploitation and dependence' (Witvliet 1985:44f) which is the 'hard core' of racism as seen by black theologians. IJ Mosala (1983a:5) therefore clearly distinguishes between racialism and racism; racialism is 'the attitudes and conceptions that people have about other people especially where differences in skin colour are involved', whereas racism is 'a

much more complex legal and political structure'. Motlhabi (1974b:119) also points out the danger of a shallow analysis of racism, which regards it as mere prejudice. Instead, he contends that one should recognise the process whereby the natural tendency to racial prejudice (or racialism) is 'blown up into a myth' in order to 'support a desired social structure'; it then becomes 'the huge racist myth' which perpetuates the values which 'keep the whites at the tip of the power structure and the blacks at the bottom' (:119). Boesak sums it up well by saying that racism is a 'system of domination, with structures of domination -- social, political and economic' (Boesak 1983a:3).

It is clear then, that black theologians regard racism as an oppressive system which causes suffering in the life of the black community: 'We recognise the existence of one major force in South Africa. This is White Racism. It is the one force against which all of us are pitted' (Biko 1979:50). And this force is seen as shaping the whole South African reality: 'The structures of our society perpetuate the vicious demonic monster called racism. Ours is a society whose foundations are built on racism. Something which touches every aspect of our life' (Goba 1980b:15). To give content to this, I now examine the black experience of 'blackness' in South Africa.

4.3.2 Blackness as suffering

They suffer 'innocently', without having actively provoked anybody. They suffer simply because they are black people (Mofokeng 1983:28).

Blackness is a negative reality that embraces the totality of black existence. Being black determines one's marriage, family life, place of residence, mode of transport, education, franchise (or absence of it), freedom of movement, type of work, quality of medical treatment, in short, the whole of one's life (see Boesak 1977b:26, Buthelezi 1974a:33). It means that black people are

doomed to live the life of second-class citizens (Boesak 1977b:26). This 'destructive obsession' with skin colour causes it to be 'elevated into a critical and decisive principle of social, economic and political order' (Buthelezi 1976e:35). Pityana (1972:176) adds that 'civic status is determined at birth and for life by colour'. Blackness is experienced as 'negative, bad, weak, helpless, i.e. valueless' (Mofokeng 1983:11) and this means that to be black is to be a 'non-person, less than white and therefore less than human' (Boesak 1977b:27). A poem by James Matthews highlights this experience:

Sick to death I am of living
In a land where being alive
I am conscripted to the legion
Of the living dead
Consigned to a restricted area
There to die and rot
In a nameless grave

(Matthews & Thomas 1972:53)

These views are expressed by black theologians with an obviousness and directness which requires no proof, since it proceeds from the day-to-day reality of their own experience and that of their relatives and friends. It is possible to give pages of quotations from the writings of black theologians which describe different dimensions of this painful black reality, but that is not my purpose here. I want to stress that black theologians see their situation of suffering as decisively determined by the fact that they are black people living in a structurally racist society.

Black people are convinced that the real motive of white government policies is not the preservation of cultures or separate-but-equal treatment of all people, but the entrenching of white power and privilege. This is borne out to them by the fact that

'the white race tries to minimise the conflict within and between its ethnic groups in order to maximise its efforts to dominate; it also tries to maximise the conflict within and between the ethnic groups of the oppressed black race in order to minimise the latter's resistance in the racial conflict' (Ndebele 1973:69). Much is done by the government to bolster the unity within the white community, even though it consists of many disparate cultural groups, while black people are assigned very definite separate tribal identities. This is seen as typical 'divide and rule' tactics, resulting in the 'subjugation of one divided "race" by another which is united' (Motlhabi 1984:4). The very fact that black people identify themselves as black and propagate black solidarity is therefore in itself a liberating act. In their refusal to accept the racist definitions imposed on them by whites, black people affirm their human dignity and their determination to be free in the land of their birth. In this way they 'meet white domination with black solidarity' (:4).

4.3.3 The church as racist institution

In their description of the South African context as racist, black theologians emphasise the painful fact that the church is as racist as the rest of society and therefore in a fundamental sense a part of the problem rather than a part of the solution. This aspect has given rise to some of the most impassioned statements made by black theologians. Presenting the critique of the UCM on the established churches, Moore (1973:78f) calls the church 'structurally racist' since all major appointments are filled by whites and since church publications, finances and theological education are in white hands. He concludes that the church 'reflects only a slight modification of the political status quo' and that 'the two establishments in fact feed upon and thus support each other'. Goba (1980b:15) says: 'the Church in this country is just as racist in her structures as our society' and judges that 'to insist that churches must be separated on racial lines for the sake of cultural expediency is

not just outright sinful but it is also profoundly demonic' (Goba 1984:101). Since racism is contrary to the essence of the church, its presence has 'defiled the body of Christ' (Boesak 1983a:5). At an SACC conference on racism in 1980, a resolution was passed which speaks of the 'painful realisation that the churches to which we belong, have conformed to patterns of a racist society' and that the persistent cries of black people in this regard have fallen on deaf ears (SACC 1980:6).

It is important to note that the above statements refer to all South African churches, and not only to the Dutch Reformed Churches, which are the most conspicuously racist in structural terms. In fact, the majority of the early black theologians came from the so-called 'multi-racial' churches, and it was only by the mid-1970s that Black Theology was strongly articulated in Dutch Reformed circles. Nevertheless, the Dutch Reformed Church has always been severely criticised by black theologians for its open justification of apartheid in church and state. This criticism has been expressed most eloquently by a black theologian from one of the Dutch Reformed churches:

Apartheid is unique. But its uniqueness does not lie in the inherent violence of the system, nor in the inevitable brutality without which the system cannot survive, or in the dehumanization and the contempt for black personhood, or even in the tragic alienations and the incredible costs in terms of human dignity and human relationships. No, the uniqueness of apartheid lies in the fact that this system claims to be based on Christian principles. It is justified on the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is in the name of the liberator God and Jesus Christ, the son of God, that apartheid is perpetuated, and it is Reformed Christians who are responsible for it. Apartheid was born out of the Reformed churches.... In this uniqueness lies the shame of the Christian church in this country. Apartheid is

the grave of the dignity and the credibility of the Reformed tradition (Boesak 1984a:92f).

I will come back to the theological implications of these judgments later, and now move to the psychological or existential aspects of racism.

4.3.4 Racism as the destruction of personhood

Black theologians experience the South African problem not only as one of physical oppression and exploitation, but also as a psychological one: the white assault on black culture, religion and history has led to the creation of a 'creature with a hollow mind that could accept the authority of the white oppressor together with his system of values' (Mofokeng 1983:11). Virtually every black theologian speaks of the self-hatred which white racism has caused in the minds of black people, and of the disastrous consequences of this for black personality. As a result of generations of humiliation, black people accepted their own inferior status, thus becoming the 'unpeopled people of this land of our birth' (Pityana 1972:175). Many South African authors echo the sentiment expressed by Malcolm X: 'The worst crime the white man has committed has been to teach us to hate ourselves' (in Cone 1969:18). Tutu (1979a:484) is a case in point:

The worst crime that can be laid at the door of the white man (who, it must be said, has done many a worthwhile and praiseworthy thing for which we are always thankful) is not our economic, social and political exploitation, however reprehensible that might be; no, it is that his policy succeeded in filling most of us with a self-disgust and self-hatred. This has been the most violent form of colonialism, our spiritual and mental enslavement when we have suffered from what can only be called a religious or spiritual schizophrenia.

Biko (1979:29) called this 'spiritual poverty' and described it vividly: 'All in all the black man has become a shell, a shadow of a man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity'. Sebidi (1986b:254) elaborates on this ruthlessness of racism by stressing that it is 'aimed at the very foundations of your Being. In short, it is an ontological onslaught against the beingness of some people in society'. The effect of racism has therefore been not only to oppress black people, but also to create an 'oppressed consciousness' within them (Mofokeng 1983:11). This alienation is hauntingly expressed in a poem by James Matthews:

within the loneliness of my skin
a cry for recognition is strangled
the mirrors I scan for solace
show the emptiness of blind man's eyes
gropingly my hands reach out
to touch the warm flesh
of passing people
a phantom in their midst I am
not seen; not heard; nor felt
leaving me a castaway
within the loneliness of my skin

(Matthews & Thomas 1972:43)

One of the destructive results of this false consciousness is that black people become two-faced persons, 'who shout "Baas" willingly during the day and call the white man a dog in their buses as they go home' (Biko 1979:78). It also makes them vent their anger on fellow black people, causing black townships to be the scene of much assault, robbery, rape and murder. The growing problems of alcoholism and drug abuse also flourish among people who already have low self-images and desperately look for some means of escape from the harsh realities of life. Many black

people get caught in this downward spiral of greater and greater alienation (see Gwala 1973:45). It is this alienation, this disappearance of the black person as a subject, this self-rejection and self-hatred, that Black Theology sets out to combat and overcome in the name of Jesus Christ.

Black theologians realise at the same time, however, that white people have also destroyed their own personhood in the process of dehumanising black people. 'The material situation penetrated the consciousness of both the oppressor and the oppressed...', which means that now white people have actually come to believe in the constitutional inferiority of black people, simply because they believe 'that black is inferior and bad' (Mofokeng 1983:10f). Racism has thus become 'deeply ingrained in the psyche of Western society' and this psychological dimension of it should not be underestimated (Goba 1985:56).

4.3.5 Origins of racism

An important aspect of the view of black theologians on racism is their explanations of how it originated in South Africa. Fundamental to their explanations is the fact that they do not regard white people as inherently racist, in other words, they are not regarded as irredeemable 'white devils'. Most black theologians trace the origin of racism among white people to their economic greed. Classical in this regard are the words of Biko (1979:88):

There is no doubt that the colour question in South African politics was originally introduced for economic reasons. The leaders of the white community had to create some kind of barrier between blacks and whites so that the whites could enjoy privileges at the expense of blacks and still feel free to give a moral justification for the obvious exploitation that pricked even the hardest of white consciences.

Even though Biko was critical of Marxian class analysis, he clearly saw the material basis of white racism. In this he is followed by most black theologians. Motlhabi (1974b:120) says that it was 'in the atmosphere of a power and money struggle that the myth of racism grew'. Tlhagale (1986b:268) states that the racial factor was mobilised in order to 'facilitate white hegemony and to ensure its survival'. Sebidi (1986a:25f) states that racism is not innate, and that it was born on South African soil as a result of 'competition-for-scarce-resources' between the white settlers and the original inhabitants. It is surprising that Sebidi, in his survey of the development of the black struggle (1986a), does not relate the developments in South Africa to worldwide capitalist and colonialist expansion. He almost creates the impression as if racism first originated in South Africa and that the white settlers came from Europe with no preconceived idea in their heads about black people. Other black theologians draw clear connecting lines, however. Buthelezi links the origins of racism with European slavery, and this is something which needs to be explored more fully by black theologians. Boesak (1983a:3) also stresses that racism is an historical phenomenon, which came into being as an integral part of expanding European colonialism and capitalism.

A corollary to this emphasis on the historical nature of racism and its intimate connectedness with colonialism and capitalism is that racism, once it came into being, started living a life of its own and influencing the attitudes of white people in very definite ways. Biko (1979:88) saw this clearly: 'after generations of exploitation, white people on the whole have come to believe in the inferiority of the black man, so much so that while the race problem started as an offshoot of the economic greed exhibited by white people, it has now become a serious problem on its own'. For this reason racism could be called an ideology, understood as 'a way of thinking about reality which is not limited to what goes on in human heads but leads a material

existence ... finds expression in the total social reality' ... and as such 'precedes the individual and forms his or her world' (Witvliet 1985:47). It has now become so deeply imbedded in the social structures and the 'collective subconscious' of white society that it no longer depends on its original economic basis. In fact, racism now inhibits the development of capitalism in South Africa by not allowing a truly free enterprise economy to take shape (cf Fatton 1986:43).

It is for this reason that some black theologians warn against underestimating the problem of racism by concentrating solely on class analysis. Goba (1980b:16) emphasises that it is not only true that the conflict situation gives rise to racism, but also that racism generates the conflict situation in South Africa. Racism, having achieved a relative autonomy, keeps on acting like a cancer in South African society (Goba 1983:21). The term 'racial capitalism' captures the intimate relationship between the factors of race and class in South Africa, and black theologians assert that, as long as race plays such an important constitutive role, there will be the need for a Black Theology (cf Motlhabi 1984:277, Sebidi 1986a:35).

4.3.6 Racism evaluated

A number of aspects are central to the evaluation of racism in Black Theology, and I will structure this section around them. The first is that racism is social sin, since it denies the basic biblical affirmation that all people are created in the image of God. 'Image of God' is one of the most frequently used theological notions in the writings of black theologians, and it functions as a weapon in their hands to attack and expose racism as sinful and unchristian. 'Image of God' in the Bible means that men and women are entrusted with the responsibility of ruling over God's world, of 'having dominion' over nature and culture. The experience of black people in South Africa, however, is that they are ruled and are treated as 'non-whites', that is, as

people created not in the image of God but in the image of white people (Buthelezi 1976c:23). Racism is thus a 'fundamental distortion of our humanity', and to practise it is 'to insult God and to reject that He has created all human beings equal' (Goba 1984:99). It represents not only a denial of the unity of humankind, but also of the God-given responsibility of black people to be rulers and co-creators with God in the world.

A second concept which is central to the black evaluation of racism is idolatry. Racism is judged as a form of idolatry, because it 'idolizes and absolutizes human will' (Goba 1980b:20). Subjugating and dominating fellow human beings on the basis of hereditary or biological characteristics is tantamount to the worship of a 'god of racism' or 'tribal deity' (Noko 1977:25). It implies the elevation of race to divine status, which makes it idolatrous. Buthelezi (1973b:4) therefore says that Christian churches have become 'heathen shrines of a race and colour god', and that white people have 'done their best to destroy the heart of the faith they brought with them'. When one claims to be worshipping God while oppressing other people created in God's image, that becomes idolatry or false worship. Goba (1981b:38) concludes that it is 'the racist ideology of Apartheid which threatens to destroy our future. Our security as a people and our future will be assured when this idol is removed'.

This brings me to the third and last concept, namely heresy. As I have indicated earlier, it was ABRECSA which popularised the phrase 'Apartheid is a heresy' in 1981. The idea was used long before that, for example by Buthelezi (1976e:34): 'Apartheid in the church is damnable heresy', but the notion didn't attain prominence until the Ottawa assembly of the WARC in 1982 when it led to the suspension of the membership of two white South African churches. The exact wording of the WARC resolution on South Africa reads: 'We declare with black Reformed Christians of South Africa that apartheid ("separate development") is a sin, and that the moral and theological justification of it is a

travesty of the Gospel and, in its persistent disobedience to the Word of God, a theological heresy' (in De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio 1983:170). This event was perhaps the most spectacular for which Black Theology has been responsible thus far, and its effects on the whole church scene in South Africa have been significant. The acceptance (or otherwise) of this Ottawa resolution by South African churches has become a kind of 'shibboleth', indicating one's position vis-a-vis the State and its legitimising theology. It represents the fruit of years of black theological thinking and witness, and states in the strongest possible theological terms the utter rejection of racism.

4.4 CHRISTIANITY AND COLONIALIST DOMINATION

In the previous section I mentioned that black theologians link the origins of racism with Western colonial expansion. In this section I examine their description of South Africa as a system of 'settler colonialism' (Nolutshungu 1983:205), 'internal colonialism' (Sebidi 1986a:16) or 'colonialism of a special type' (CST) (cf Nolan 1988:70). This colonialist dimension is a vital component of the context analysis of black theologians, and therefore deserves careful scrutiny. Motlhabi (1974a:77) says that to be black in South Africa means to be an 'object of colonisation, disinheritance and exploitation'. In searching for the roots of their present suffering, black theologians therefore assert a 'continuity between colonial domination and present-day white supremacy' (Nolutshungu 1983:193). This becomes clear in the following two statements about the position of the whites in South Africa:

The white minority is colonialist in character no matter how violently it seeks to prove its permanence. If whites want permanence on this continent, they shall first have to decolonize us (Gwala 1976:32).

... the paradoxical situation of white Africans who,

while appealing to their many generations of ownership of land, are still very conscious of their European origins and refuse to identify themselves with black African people. Instead they have created powerful enclaves supported by the nations of the western world (Zwane 1982:113).

It is clear from these statements that we are dealing here with a key dimension of how black theologians see the South African problem and the way to its possible solution. Without giving due attention to this, one cannot do justice to their context analysis.

In this section I present four aspects of the present-day South African context which black theologians identify as colonialist. They are the distortion of black history, land dispossession, political subjugation and the colonial character of the Christian church.

4.4.1 Distortions of black history

Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it (Fanon 1967b:169).

As I have pointed out earlier, it is not surprising that the proponents of Black Consciousness and Black Theology in South Africa have leant heavily on Fanon in their interpretation of their context. His classical treatment of colonialism speaks directly to their situation. Biko (1979:69) quotes the above words of Fanon, and then calls on black people to rewrite black history, so that it will begin before 1652 and no longer consist of 'a long lamentation of repeated defeats' (:70). The stories need to be told of the black heroes who formed the 'core of

resistance to the white invaders' and of the 'successful nation-building attempts by people like Chaka, Moshoeshoe and Hints'a'. In other words, black people have come to realise to what extent white-controlled education has stripped them of the resources they need to become subjects of their own history. The result has been a 'colonised humanity' with a 'masochistic complex' and an 'unconscious self-hatred' (Buthelezi 1974c:101). I have already drawn attention to the negative view which black theologians have of missionary schools, since these schools caused black children to lose respect for their African culture. Closely allied with that criticism is this one which points out how missionary education destroyed the African sense of history. It is the recovery of that silenced, neglected and stifled black history which is part of the project of Black Theology. Mofokeng (1986a:126) speaks in this regard of the need for a 'fighting black history that energizes the struggle'.

4.4.2 Land dispossession

At the beginning of this study I referred to the anecdote about the Bible and the land changing hands. The time has now come to investigate how black theologians see the land question. It is one of the central reasons why they describe South Africa as colonialist in character.

All black theologians agree in describing black people in South Africa as dispossessed. Motlhabi (1972b:1) characterised Black Theology as, among other things, a 'theology of disinheritance', which articulates the agony of dispossessed people. In the Black Theology Resolution (1971:25) adopted at Hammanskraal, the 'basic problem' of South Africa was identified as 'that of land distribution and the consequent disinheritance of the black people'. The history of South Africa is therefore seen as one of 'continuous plunder of land and cattle by the European invaders, (Pityana 1974:59), in which 'black people's land has been forcibly and illegally stolen' (Mofokeng 1987a:10). This land dis-

possession turned black people into 'foreigners in the country of their birth' (SASO [1971] 1984:2). In pre-colonial times African producers had access to land and cattle, the fundamental means of production, but that was taken from them by the colonists. In fact, the success of the whole colonial enterprise depended on the existence of a 'landless class of former agriculturalists and pastoralists' who had been 'dispossessed of their fundamental means of livelihood' (Mosala, IJ 1983a:5). In this way a permanent 'reserve army of labour' was created, which ensured the 'continued existence of a class of poor super-exploitable people' (:5f).

Various means were used to coerce black people into leaving the land on which they had lived and farmed for centuries before the white settlers came. The foundation was laid by means of military conquest: 'colonial settlers expropriated the indigenous peoples' land by use of armed force and ... continued to consolidate the unjust occupation of the land of the indigenous people by the sustained build-up of military might' (Mokoka 1984:135). Later, the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, which entrenched the 19th century British colonial policy of 'Native Reserves', were used as legal instruments of coercion to complete the systematic dispossession of the black majority. Since black people were needed as labourers on white farms and in white mines and factories, they were forced from their soil and 'proletarianised'. Dispossession therefore meant continual uprooting and forced removals as demanded by the needs of the white-controlled economy and the compulsive racist need to remove 'black spots' from 'white areas'. Tlhagale (1986b:272) says in this regard that forced removals 'were not incidental or accidental to the system of white domination, but essential to it'. This history of uprooting is part of a deliberate 'psychological campaign that is aimed at alienating blacks from their land as well as at destroying their sense of ownership and value of their land' (Mofokeng 1987a:11).

The loss of their land caused a deep alienation in the lives of

black people. Since land is the 'basis of African self-respect and creativity' and regarded as the 'mother of all people and all creatures', the loss of it meant 'the enslavement of black people, their exploitation and political domination and loss of political power' (Mofokeng 1983:23). Since there is 'an organic vital connection between the indigenous people and their land', the severing of this bond means that 'the murder of the indigenous people is complete' (Modiba, in Mofokeng 1983:231). The fact that black people have been declared 'temporary sojourners' in the land of their birth has had the psychological impact of forced homelessness, which is a kind of exile experience, and has caused 'a deep sense of non-belonging' (Tlhagale 1986a:137). The experience of living in the 'dumping grounds' (Tutu 1983:46) called 'resettlement areas', is poignantly expressed by James Matthews:

Valley of plenty it is called;
where little children display their nakedness
and stumble around on listless limbs
... where mothers plough their dead fruit into the soil
their crone breasts dry of milk
... where menfolk castrated by degradation
seek their manhood in a jug
of wine as brackish as their bile.

(in Gordimer 1973:65)

In the midst of this alienation Black Theology calls on black people to affirm their right of ownership to the land and to commit themselves to the struggle for regaining it. A good example is the response of Boesak (1986a:281f) to the announcement by president P.W. Botha that black people would be allowed permanent residence in 'white South Africa': 'doesn't he know that this land is not his to give us, that this land is ours and will one day again belong to us?'

4.4.3 Political subjugation

Another colonial dimension of South Africa identified by black theologians flows directly from the previous one. On the basis of their military victories and the gradual dispossession of black land, the white settlers set up a colonial political structure which is still intact today. The fact that the black majority is still being ruled by a white minority more than three hundred years after the coming of the first Dutch settlers is proof enough that it is a system of 'internal' or 'settler' colonialism. One clear indication of this colonial character is the 'divide and rule' policy of homelands or national states. Black theologians reject this policy because it divides black people and 'domesticates' them (Goba 1985:55). Homelands are described as 'domestic colonies' and as 'backyards of the relentlessly aggressive white economy' (Gwala 1976:32). They are based on the 'myth that the Black people consist of separate nations' and are aimed at depriving black people of 'their inalienable right of citizenship in the country' (AZAPO [sa]:18). Homelands are intended to 'destroy all attempts at the emergence of Black solidarity and to perpetuate the maintenance of paternalistic White domination' (Goba 1988:27). Black theologians insist that South Africa or Azania is a unitary state in which black people must attain their full human rights.

Another aspect of South African society which is a symptom of colonialism is the totalitarian nature of the State. The words of Sartre (1965:xxiv) convey the feelings of black theologians on this point: 'Colonialism denies human rights to human beings whom it has subdued by violence, and keeps them by force in a state of misery and ignorance that Marx would rightly call a subhuman condition'. The authoritarian nature of South African society is therefore seen as a direct continuation of its colonial beginnings. Manganyi (1973:27) calls South Africa an 'ideologically totalist environment' in which black people undergo 'psychic manipulation'. Like the Soviet Union under Stalin, it is 'a

totalitarian regime, though to a lesser degree', evidenced by the Internal Security Act, States of Emergency, torture, shootings and 'political persecution' (Tlhagale 1986b:273ff). The ruthlessness with which the State suppresses black opposition has brought black theologians to make statements like the following:

Why does the South African Government seek in others for that which it is itself?... If anybody should be charged with terrorism then it is most surely the South African Government (Kameeta 1976:11).

Our communities are brutalized by the unrestrained force of a police state (Goba 1983:19).

The blood of hundreds of children on the ground is a chilling reminder of the sacrifices needed to still the cravings of the Moloch that apartheid has become (Boesak 1983a:7).

The most frightening aspect of apartheid is the totality of control that the government seeks to exercise over human lives -- from the subtle and not so subtle propaganda to the harsh, draconian laws designed to ensure the 'security' of the country. Apartheid is a false god whose authoritarian audacity allows no room for the essence of meaningful humanity: freedom under God (Boesak 1984a:105).

The apartheid system has always been understood and felt as an inherently violent system (Tlhagale 1986a:137).

The apartheid regime ... becomes an enemy of all the people. A tyrant. A totalitarian regime. A reign of terror (Kairos Document 1986:23).

These statements indicate very clearly that black theologians see the State itself as a violent institution, the continuation of colonial conquest which was achieved by force and which can be maintained only by force. The image of the army and the police force is therefore very negative in the eyes of black theologians: 'The army is seen by blacks as fighting for the maintenance of white domination while blacks see themselves as fighting for the right to be free in their own country' (Tlhagale 1986a:142). The States of Emergency imposed by the government have also contributed to the worsening of the image of the army and the police, so that they are regarded as the 'custodians of the security and freedom of the white people' and consequently as the enemy of black people (:141).

In the light of this assessment of the State, it is not surprising that its 'reform' initiatives are not accepted by black theologians. They are interpreted as ploys to co-opt black people into supporting the system which guarantees white power and privilege, without giving black people the power to bring about fundamental political change. Goba (1983:22) calls it the 'titivation of the oppressive structures of apartheid ... a very cunning process of giving apartheid respectability'. The Kairos Document (1986:24) says bluntly: 'it will introduce reforms that will always be unacceptable to the majority because all its reforms must ensure that the white minority remains on top' (3).

An important aspect of black theological analysis of the situation is summed up in the expression 'State theology'. This term became known as a result of its use in the Kairos Document, but a number of black theologians have pointed out earlier that the State makes some very important theological statements of its own. In an article about the banning of Black Theology and black theologians, Boesak (1981:183) rightly remarks: 'In banning something of a theological nature the South African government makes a theological judgment'. This statement also holds true for a number of government Commissions of Inquiry (1975a, 1975b, 1981,

1983), in which far-reaching theological judgements are pronounced. But it was the preamble to the new 'tricameral' constitution for South Africa which called forth the most vociferous opposition to this State theology. The preamble opens:

In humble submission to Almighty God, Who controls the destinies of nations and the histories of peoples;
Who gathered our forebears together from many lands and gave them this their own;
Who has guided them from generation to generation;
Who has wondrously delivered them from the dangers that beset them...

In response to this, Govender (1983:4) says: 'If the Bill claims that it was Almighty God who gathered the forefathers of the Billwriters together from many lands and gave them (mark well gave them) South Africa, who has guided them from generation to generation and delivered them from wars in victory, then we must say that this is not the God of whom the Bible speaks. Instead it is the narrow nationalistic anti-black God of present-day capitalist South Africa'. The Kairos Document (1986:8) comments on the preamble: 'This god is an idol.... Here we have a god who is historically on the side of the white settlers, who dispossesses black people of their land and who gives the major part of the land to his "chosen people".... The god of the South African State is not merely an idol or false god, it is the devil disguised as Almighty God -- the antichrist'. Yet this harsh judgement is nothing new in Black Theology. Already in 1973, while commenting on the notion that South Africa has a 'Christian government', Maimela said: 'Black Theology must oppose this thought and must show that the Devil is ruling this country' (Maimela 1973:118, my own translation). It is precisely because the government claims to be Christian, but their policies are experienced as destructive and demonic, that black theologians feel themselves compelled to make these theological statements about it. In the words of Govender (1983:4): '... this apartheid

is a Christian phenomenon... and that makes of apartheid a Church and a theological issue'.

4.4.4 The church as colonial institution

Flowing from the foregoing, the critique of black theologians on the churches which support and strengthen the State can be understood. Once again this collusion is traced to the colonial beginnings, and a direct continuity is asserted with the present time. After the initial military conquest, the colonial enterprise 'needed a religion that would teach the people the virtues of obedience and poverty' (Nxasana & Fisher 1976:54). This service the church, primarily through its missionaries, willingly rendered: '... the missionary, who was the agent of European imperialism, working hand in hand with the colonial powers for the subjugation of the black people and the territorial extension of the imperialist power' (Pityana 1974:59). It is in this connection that the church is called the 'handmaiden' of colonialism (e.g. Pityana 1974:60, Mofokeng 1983:15), and the missionary enterprise 'part and parcel of a land-hungry colonialisation surge' (Ntwasa 1974a:109). Buthelezi speaks of the 'missionary idea of conquest' and explains: 'They might not have sought political conquest, but it became an important and vital cog in their Christian mission' (in Motlhabi 1973:11). The 'aggressive theological onslaught coincided with a colonial onslaught' and the spread of Western civilisation was presented as the 'salvation blessing' (Mofokeng 1983:15). As a result of all this the impact of the church's mission is seen as an 'ideological tool for the softening up of black people' (Mosala & Tlhagale 1986a:vii). The whole attempt to implant Christianity among black people in South Africa was therefore 'more than an attempt to win converts. It was an effort to transform, by dismantling, African societies' (Mosala, IJ 1983a:3).

The role of the Dutch Reformed Church is singled out for special criticism in this regard, as I have already pointed out already.

Black theologians indicate how its missionary policy of creating separate churches for different races was transformed into a political system of apartheid, structuring every aspect of South African reality (e.g. Boesak 1983a:4). In this sense the DRC is criticised as the most blatantly colonial church in South Africa, but the other churches are by no means spared (see later).

An important part of the 'colonial ethos' for which black theologians criticise the South African churches is precisely the fact of denominational divisions. This 'theological separatism' of the Western church has been imposed on the black community by the missionary movement in addition to racial divisions, together constituting an 'unhealthy division amongst the people of God' (Goba 1980a:33). It was part of a theological strategy 'used to divide our people as part of the forces of imperialism in Africa' (Goba 1982:26). Black Theology therefore seeks to 'de-denominationalise' the church for the sake of black solidarity (4).

The most important black critique of the church in South Africa today is that it is still controlled by the racist and paternalist ethos of colonialism. 'The churches are an extension of the missionary ideal, being rooted in the white "racist" system, and dominated by whites and the values of white superiority' (Pityana 1974:61). The white church is still part of the social force of 'white baasskap' on which the whole 'South African way of life' is built, which means that Christianity in South Africa remains 'rooted in an exploitative, basically selfish cultural system' (:62). The continuity between the colonialist missionaries and present-day churches is emphasised also by Biko (1979:57): '... if Christianity in its introduction was corrupted by the inclusion of aspects which made it the ideal religion for the colonisation of people, nowadays in its interpretation it is the ideal religion for the maintenance of the subjugation of the same people'. An indication of this is the fact that most churches assign military chaplains to the South African Defence Force, an act which is seen as 'direct moral support and there-

fore approval to the army which is an agency of the repressive state apparatus. The army is the "killing machine" of the state' (Tlhagale 1986a:141).

Perhaps the central colonial feature of the church for which it is criticised by black theologians is precisely the fact that it does not see itself (and the whole South African context) as imbued with a colonial ethos. The church's emphasis on 'reconciliation', understood primarily as 'inter-racial fraternization', is sharply criticised, because church leaders are aware that the basic problem of South Africa is that of 'land distribution, economic deprivation and consequently the disinheritance of the Black people' (SASO Commission on Black Theology 1971:17). In the eyes of black theologians, this focus of the church on reconciliation reveals its inability to perceive the colonialist character of South Africa and to commit itself to changing that fundamentally. To put it in the terms used by Khoapa (1972:102), white-dominated churches are geared either towards separation (Afrikaans-controlled) or integration (English-controlled), but neither group sees the need for liberation, which is the concern of black theologians. Black theologians point out that the 'multi-racial' churches suffer from the same paternalism or 'Christian trusteeship' (although more subtly expressed) as the Afrikaans-controlled churches, which have created separate structures for different races. Black Christians have allowed themselves to be 'at the mercy of the white man and to have him as their eternal supervisor' (Biko 1979:95). Goba (1971:9) says that in multi-racial churches 'the idea of white supremacy is profoundly entrenched and has become a way of life'. This becomes clear from the fact that, until recently, most of the leadership positions in the 'multi-racial' churches were in white hands. The recent appointments of black leaders would also have been inconceivable without the constant pressure for Africanisation from the side of the black caucuses in these churches. But in a number of ways the structures and practices of the 'multi-racial' churches still reflect the paternalism of the colonial era, a kind of

'charitable racism' (Memmi 1965:76) which does not adequately grasp the necessity of structural change in church and society.

The denominational theologies upheld by the churches also reveal their colonial, European roots:

We ... worship -- many of us -- in churches wherein the same relations of white domination and ruthless brutalization of black Christians are reproduced. The unsuspecting black christian believers are also dominated, brutalized and deformed theologically albeit unintentionally in many cases. They are forced to accept unconditionally for confirmation, a denominational doctrine which was made by white christians in response to challenges that are totally different from and in most cases even contradictory to those facing black christians of all classes today (Mofokeng 1987a:1).

In the light of these criticisms, it is the view of black theologians that the church is 'as much in need of liberation as the society it is expected to liberate through the Gospel' (Buthelezi 1976e:38) (5).

4.5 CHRISTIANITY AND CAPITALIST EXPLOITATION

Another vital aspect of the South African context in the eyes of black theologians is its capitalist character. In the foregoing sections I have frequently touched on this already, since economic issues are never separated from the other dimensions of their context analysis, but in this section I focus specifically on economic exploitation and the class structure of South Africa, as seen by black theologians.

4.5.1 Historical emergence of class analysis

For a variety of reasons, Marxian class analysis was not used by black theologians during the first half of the 1970s (6). One of the major reasons for this was the fact that it was mainly white intellectuals who were using Marxian tools of analysis at that time and that an essential part of the Black Consciousness strategy was precisely for black people to escape from the tutelage of white liberals or radicals in order to decide for themselves what their liberation strategies should be. The well-known repudiation of class analysis by Biko is in fact primarily a rejection of white liberal patronage and of a crude Marxist reductionism, rather than a denial of the role of economic factors in the South African social formation. He wrote the following about white liberals:

To us it seems that their role spells out the totality of the white power structure -- the fact that though whites are our problem, it is still other whites who want to tell us how to deal with that problem. They do so by dragging all sorts of red herrings across our paths. They tell us that the situation is a class struggle rather than a racial one. Let them go to van Tonder in the Free State and tell him this. We believe we know what the problem is, and will stick by our findings (Biko 1979:89f).

In spite of this disavowal of class analysis, it is clear that Biko and other proponents of Black Consciousness and Black Theology were very much aware of the material basis of racism and colonialism in South Africa. The following quotations will illustrate this:

We must forever be aware that our conquest was determined and even prompted by economic motives (Gwala 1973:42).

[R]acial problems can only be solved in a climate of economic equality (Khoapa 1972:102).

[T]here is no doubt that the colour question in South African politics was originally introduced for economic reasons ... to give a moral justification for the obvious exploitation that pricked even the hardest of White consciences' (Biko 1979:88).

The important thing to remember about apartheid, segregation or what you will, is that it is designed to keep the black man as cheap labour to serve the white man's needs while ensuring that all wealth, prestige symbols and political power are effectively held in the white man's own capable hands. All other arguments, like "development along their own lines", "separate development" etc., are just so much eyewash for a policy that has nothing to commend it but the rapacity of the white man' (Nimrod Mkele, in Randall 1973:15).

Nevertheless, in spite of this clear awareness of the role of economic factors, early black theologians adopted an 'idealist' approach (Sebidi 1986a:23). This means that their primary focus was on the mind, attempting to change people's ideas or consciousness. Their strategies were therefore mainly psychological: 'education, preaching, heuristically oriented discussions' (:24). It was only later in the 1970s (as one of the elements of Phase II) that a materialist method was adopted by black theologians (7).

The economic dimension of black suffering has to do with the exploitation of black people as workers. The quotation by Mkele confirms the exposition I have given already about land dispossession resulting in the proletarianisation of black people. Because of the way in which black workers are treated by white

employers, work has become 'almost a curse' to them. Since they are treated as 'objects', work brutalises them and 'reduces them to the level of servitude' (Tlhagale 1985:128). Not only in mines and factories, but perhaps especially on white farms and in white homes, black workers are treated as little more than 'labour units': 'In the mine fields (sic), in the factories and in the sugar estates you find a big white boot sitting pretty on the neck of the Black man. All life is exploitation, degradation and dehumanisation' (Gwala 1973:58). The result of all this is that 'humanity is divided into a small class of rich and powerful people and a majority of poor and exploited people, the most exploited of the latter being black people and women' (Mosala, IJ 1983b:8).

Commenting on this economic dimension of the Black Consciousness movement, Fatton (1986:58) remarks that it was not a mere cultural renaissance, since it recognized that 'being black was not determined by color alone ... (but also) by daily experience of enduring oppression as a class of exploited peasants and urban workers'. This realisation of the importance of economic factors in black suffering grew stronger as the 1970s progressed, and with it the awareness of the need for a materialist rather than an idealist approach (Sebidi 1986a:29). It was especially after the banning of Black Consciousness organisations in 1977 that many black people started advocating a materialist methodology, and Marxian analysis is used for example in the AZAPO Policy document. It states: '... in our country race is a class determinant. Thus the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of the white race enables it to promote a rigid class structure' (AZAPO [sa]:18). South Africa is therefore seen (in Marxian terms) as basically a class society in which the class divisions are determined by race divisions.

The diversification of Black Theology during Phase II included not only a move towards the employment of materialist methods, but also a move away from the Black Consciousness strategy by

some black theologians, as I have pointed out in chapter three. These developments resulted in three basic approaches among black theologians to the question of class analysis, and to the status of the Black Consciousness philosophy within Black Theology (8).

4.5.2 'Phase I' Black Theology

Black theologians following this approach take the early form of the Black Consciousness philosophy as the frame of reference for their theology. They are uncomfortable with a 'vulgar' use of Marxian analytical tools, since this tends to reduce the South African problem to nothing more than a class struggle. To them that would deny the uniqueness of the black situation, by drawing attention away from the central role of racism. This was the view which Biko held until his tragic early death in 1977. It is also clearly articulated by Goba (1986:66ff), who describes Black Consciousness as the ideology which provides the context for developing a 'theological hermeneutic of the oppressed'. This approach could be characterised by the expression: 'we are oppressed first and foremost because we are black', and it throws out a challenge: 'those who view the black problem as part of the general problem of class oppression make a big mistake because this tragically underestimates the uniqueness of the black situation and black experience as a whole' (:67). In this view, Black Consciousness as a 'comprehensive ideology' has been and must remain the 'nerve centre' of Black Theology, since it compels black theologians to take seriously the 'particularity of black experience' and the 'emancipatory interests of the black community' (:68).

The economic philosophy associated with this approach shows a 'radical unease with capitalism' (Nolutshungu 1983:155), but no open choice for Marxist ideas. The alternative to capitalism is rather an 'African communalism', which is understood as an economic system based on the principle of sharing and on community ownership of the land and its wealth (BPC 1976:6). The

African understanding of a community as 'corporate personality' provides the basis for this kind of economy (see Goba 1974). This has much in common with 'African socialism' as proposed by Nyerere in Tanzania (9).

There is a number of reasons why a materialist method is not popular among black theologians who have adopted this approach. With some there is the association of a Marxist approach with communism, of which Baartman (1973b:4), for example, says: 'NO black man can ever truly be voluntarily a communist' since communism denies the life hereafter and the supernatural, two values which are strongly affirmed in African culture. Then there is the obvious failure to achieve working class solidarity (a key Marxist strategy) between black and white workers. This failure confirms the decision to continue the struggle on the basis of an exclusive black solidarity (see Sebidi 1986a:16). Nolutshungu (1983:157ff) ventures a number of other possible reasons for this 'poor showing' of Marxism in Phase I of Black Consciousness, but probably the basic reason is the one mentioned by Goba that a one-sided emphasis on class analysis 'tragically underestimates the uniqueness of the black situation' (Goba 1986:67). Black theologians following this line will not be convinced until those using class analysis can provide an understanding of 'class' as a 'collective heuristic concept' (:67) which will do justice to the racist dimension of the black struggle.

4.5.3 'Anti-racist' Black Theology

Under this heading I refer to the approach of black theologians who have adopted a materialist method, and who continue to uphold the Black Consciousness strategy of not forming alliances at present with white 'progressive democrats'. They identify the black struggle as leading to an 'anti-racist socialist Azania'. The Black Consciousness organisations which support these convictions are AZAPO (now restricted) and the National Forum Committee. The black theologians I discuss here are in basic agreement

with the aims and objectives of these two organisations.

Since these theologians have adopted a materialist approach, they see capitalism as the fundamental problem, but they point out that in South Africa it is decisively determined by racism. IJ Mosala (1983a:5) puts it like this:

[R]acist oppression is an indispensable part of capitalist exploitation ... Apartheid as a political structure of oppression is the soul of the particular form of capitalist accumulation found in this country'.

The primacy of economic analysis is clear. Mofokeng (1983:10) says: 'South Africa is a class society in which the division of the classes has deliberately been so drawn as to coincide with the race and colour lines'. The transition from the idealist to the materialist method in Black Theology is regarded as an 'inevitable' historical development: the Black Consciousness movement 'logically developed to a point where it adopted Scientific Socialism as its ideological instrument' (Mofokeng 1986a:122). We have here the use of a 'Marxian instrument of social analysis which has been adapted to peculiar South African realities' (:122). The adaptation refers to the way in which the Black Consciousness approach is integrated into the materialist method.

The view on Black Theology in this approach is therefore that as a 'theological expression and theoretisation of the black struggle for liberation', it cannot be understood outside the context of the Black Consciousness movement (Mosala, IJ 1983a:4). Black Theology and Black Consciousness are 'inseparably united' as 'twin sisters', but Black Theology accepts the 'praxiological necessity of the first twin sister' (Mofokeng 1983:3). It shares this conviction with the Phase I approach, except for the adoption of the materialist method.

An important part of this approach is its emphasis on making 'historical hermeneutical connections with precapitalist African social formations' in order to grasp properly the nature of the clash between black labour power and white capital. These black theologians describe African society before the coming of white 'civilisation' as an egalitarian social system where property was communally owned and where a person was a person in relation to other persons. This original African 'communal' mode of production was replaced first by a 'tributary' mode of production, and then by 'capitalist civilization', characterised by private property ownership and the commodification of all aspects of life (Mosala, IJ 1985:12, 1987a:66-107). Theology played an important role in this destruction and replacement process since colonisation was preached as the 'salvation blessing'; the result was that racism and capitalism merged through the mediation of theology (Mofokeng 1983:15). The term most commonly used to describe the South African context among this group is therefore 'racial capitalism'. It indicates the double bondage which black people experience, namely 'racial oppression and economic exploitation' (Sebidi 1986a:35).

4.5.4 'Non-racial' Black Theology

Another approach to class analysis comes from black theologians who initially belonged to the Black Consciousness movement, but moved out of it in order to identify with the non-racial democratic movement based on the Freedom Charter. The term which they use to identify their goal is a 'non-racial democratic South Africa'. The views expressed by black theologians in this group have much in common with both the 'Phase I' and the 'anti-racist' approaches. Some of them adopt the kerygmatic 'Word of God' approach of Phase I, whereas others have adopted a materialist method, as I have indicated in chapter three. The significant issue which distinguishes this approach from the others is the fact that it has softened the traditional Black Consciousness stand on no alliances with white 'democrats' or 'progressives'.

This new approach has arisen for a number of reasons (10). One specifically theological factor which has contributed to this shift is the influence of Latin American liberation theology. With its emphasis on solidarity with the poor and oppressed, without any consideration given to racial factors, it has led to a 'liberation theology' emphasis among black theologians which no longer holds to the tenets of an exclusive Black Consciousness approach. I have pointed out in chapter three that organisations such as ABRECSA and the Belydende Kring practise this 'broader' understanding of blackness. But this approach is by no means confined to the 'reformed' theological camp. All the black theologians who identify with the non-racial democratic approach to the struggle for liberation belong to this group.

There seems to be a tendency in this approach to drop the term 'Black Theology' in favour of terms such as 'contextual theology', 'people's theology', 'critical theology' or 'prophetic theology'. Whether, in the long run, they will continue to identify themselves as black theologians remains to be seen (11).

4.5.5 Mediations

Some black theologians attempt to mediate between these different approaches. An outstanding example of this is Sebidi's paper delivered at the ICT Black Theology seminar in 1984 (Sebidi 1986a). Entitled 'The dynamics of the black struggle and its implications for Black Theology', it is a wide-ranging and conciliatory attempt to locate the above-mentioned differences between black theologians at the level of strategy rather than ideology. He points out that the visions of the future embodied in the writings of both the 'anti-racist' and 'non-racial' approaches are unmistakably socialist in character and that the most visible difference between them is the question of the participation of whites in the 'pre-liberation' phase of the freedom struggle, which is a question of strategy or tactics, but not of ideology (Sebidi 1986a:32ff).

4.5.6 The church as capitalist institution

Having looked at the different methodological approaches which black theologians take to the analysis of economic exploitation in South Africa, I conclude this section by spelling out their view of the church as a capitalist, and therefore exploitative, institution. As I have pointed out before, black theologians see the church and its missionary endeavour as having been intimately involved in the land dispossession of black people and therefore in their proletarianisation. Mokoka (1984:160) calls the church 'a subtle promoter and defender of capitalist exploitation of the indigenous people' because, in spite of its public statements condemning the social system, the church is a 'self-declared enemy of the Black oppressed peoples'. Boesak (1980:137) speaks of the 'Babylonian captivity' of the church in South Africa, since it has adopted the ways of capitalist society and has become 'part of the capitalist structure'.

The inseparable connection between racism and capitalism is clear in the structures of the church. Black theologians point out how in fact there are two churches in South Africa: 'The church of the haves and the have-nots. The church of the oppressor and that of the oppressed' (Goba 1980b:19, Kairos Document 1986:1f). Even though some churches are 'multi-racial' and others racial as far as their official structures are concerned, the real division in the church runs between rich and poor, between white and black, determined by the racial capitalism of South African society as a whole. Therefore most black congregations are poorly organised and financially unstable, suffering from a 'dependency syndrome', relying as they do on subsidies and gifts from rich white congregations (see Goba 1980b:19). This dilemma for the church is pointedly expressed by Mkhathshwa (1984:3):

How does the christian church resolve its serious inherent contradictions where millions of its bona fide

members are supporters of liberal capitalism and all its attendant institutions of economic exploitation, political domination and upholders of Apartheid, on the one hand, and millions of its adherents who are determined in various degrees to destroy what they regard as a diabolical complex system, on the other?'

Another capitalist feature of the church's life is its moralism and individualism, salient characteristics of bourgeois society. This feature has made Biko (1979:31) say: 'To this date black people find no message for them in the Bible simply because our ministers are still too busy with moral trivialities'. This pietistic individualism which was brought to Africa by missionaries is at the same time dualistic, separating the 'sacred' from the 'secular' and declaring the latter less important. The church has therefore played a large role in transmitting the bourgeois individualism of the white church to the suffering black congregations, thus 'dividing and destroying our efforts to stand on our feet as a people able to help itself in a political and economic situation that is continuously dehumanising and oppressing us' (Goba 1974:69). With reference to the worship of the black 'mainline' churches, Mabona (1974:107) asks whether their members are 'communicating with an aristocratic or a capitalistic God who wants to the little people to be very well behaved or even muted when they approach his majesty?' In such a church experience the term 'conversion' means 'to become white and accept white values and the capitalist system as the framework of his salvation if he desired to be saved' (Mofokeng 1983:15). In the eyes of black theologians the 'established' churches are deeply compromised with the capitalist system in South Africa, and therefore need to be re-evangelised (12).

4.6 CHRISTIANITY AND SEXIST OPPRESSION

The final oppressive dimension of the South African social formation which is negated by black theologians is sexism. This is a

recent development in Black Theology. In Phase I there is only one isolated anti-sexist statement, in an article by Ntwasa & Moore (1974:25f):

Black Theology, as it struggles to formulate a theology of liberation relevant to South Africa, cannot afford to perpetuate any form of domination, not even male domination. If its liberation is not human enough to include the liberation of women, it will not be liberation (13).

However, in Phase II black women have begun to play an active part in black theological reflection. At the 1983 Black Theology Conference of the ICT there were two women speakers, and Mosala & Tlhagale (1986a:viii) say the following in an Editorial Note:

The single most important feature of this publication on Black Theology and the black struggle in South Africa is the inclusion in it of two papers on black feminist theology. It is the hope of many progressive black theologians that these two contributions herald a future of greater developments in the same direction.

When one listens to the voices of black Christian women (14) on their position in South Africa, one thing is abundantly clear: 'The Black women of South Africa are the most exploited group in the whole set-up of the apartheid system' (Bam 1986:40). This is explicated by Bennett (1986:170) when she describes the situation of women as triple oppression: 'They are exploited because they are black, because they are women, and because they are workers'. The super-exploitation of black labour is perhaps most clearly visible in the plight of black women: first those who are employed as domestic workers in white homes, and then those who are living with their children in a 'homeland' while their husbands are migrant labourers in the cities (15). Black women articulate their outrage at this destruction of black family life

with great passion. B Mosala (1986a:47) refers to the words of a white government official who said as recently as 1969: 'This African labour force must not be burdened with superfluous appendages such as wives, children and dependants who could not provide service'. The dehumanisation of women, children and the aged implied in the phrase 'superfluous appendages' reveals the frightening inhumanity of the racial capitalist system: black people are regarded as human only when they 'provide service' to whites. Black Christian women protest against this in the strongest terms, and see it as their responsibility to mobilise themselves to play their rightful role in the overall struggle for liberation. They also point out the sexist structures prevalent in the churches, where they are usually only expected to collect money, take care of Sunday schools, and run soup kitchens (Bam 1986:45). In many ways black women are made 'invisible' in the black church and in Black Theology (Mosala, B 1986b:130).

This critique by black women also exposes the oppressive nature of many black institutions. It applies to the black political struggle, the black churches, and the black theological enterprise. It embodies the awareness that not all problems in the black community emanate from dominant white society, and that the overcoming of the patriarchal oppression of black women is an integral part of holistic liberation. It is for this reason that the Final Statement of the 1983 ICT Black Theology Conference declared: 'the true measure of liberation in any society is the extent to which women are liberated' (ICT 1983:63) (16).

4.7 CONCLUSION

In the foregoing I have distinguished the cultural, racist, colonialist, capitalist, and sexist dimensions of South Africa as analysed by black theologians. I have done so in order to highlight the contribution of each dimension, but they are in fact only different ways of describing the one South African reality. This has become clear from the many ways in which the sections

overlap. In this concluding section I briefly point out how the black theological negation of 'apartheid' (17) unites these different dimensions into an overall vision.

The first concept uniting the different dimensions is that of structural violence. In a number of the preceding sections it has become apparent that black theologians experience the whole South African society as one which does violence to black people. Goba (1988:85) sums it up: 'The South African political system is violent in that it denies us as blacks our humanity'. It is for this reason that Boesak (1986a:284) can say to the Minister of Law and Order: 'the climate of revolution in this country is created by those who make policies that despise and undermine the human dignity of people'. This is closely allied to the concept of structural sin, which means that sin is perceived as a 'socio-political and historical fact', present wherever people are oppressed and exploited, ruled by violence, or deprived of their property (Kameeta 1975:277). Because sin is 'built into' the very fabric of the unjust social formation, it can only be overcome by a resolute project of liberation from the side of those who are suffering under it. That is the subject of the next chapter.

A number of black theologians draw together the different dimensions of oppression in a litany of black suffering. For example, Tlhagale (1985:126) refers to the 'harsh reality of racism, landlessness, economic exploitation and political powerlessness' (18). Suffering is a key word in this connection, as black theologians reflect on the damage done to the black community by the South African system. The haunting tune and words of the well-known protest song expresses something of the perplexity of black Christians at the length and depth of their suffering at the hands of white Christians in South Africa:

Senzenina, Senzenina?

The singing of these words, meaning 'What have we done?', is not

an exercise in self-pity (after all, it is a protest song, as the following verses show) (19), but it does reveal an abiding incomprehension on the side of black people at the fact that white people are able to sustain such inhumanity against them for three centuries.

To conclude this chapter, let me stress that the negation of South African 'Christian civilisation' by black theologians is not an exercise in negativism. It is an integral part of their understanding of mission, and gives birth to an affirmation of humanity and a commitment to the struggle for liberation.

NOTES ON CHAPTER FOUR

1. I use the term 'Northern' rather than 'Western' in order to express the fact that South Africa is part of the South of the globe, and that East-West language reveals a Eurocentric perspective. From where we live, the 'West' is the North. This terminology emphasises the economic dependency relationship between North and South, in terms of which all theologians in the Third World need to operate.

2. This is the Father Joseph Gerard who has recently been beatified in Lesotho by Pope John Paul II for his pioneering work in that country. The references quoted by Mokoka come from his ministry among the Zulu, where he worked before he left for the Basotho. The beatification of a priest who expressed views such as those quoted by Mokoka certainly presents a serious theological problem, unless it can be proven that he subsequently renounced them. I do not make a judgement in this matter, since I use Mokoka's criticism of Gerard merely as an example of black theological critique of missionaries. Detailed historical research will be necessary to make a responsible judgement. In chapter seven I contend that black theologians have thus far not done sufficient historical research on the role of missionaries to support their critique of them (see note 5 on chapter seven).

3. Fatton (1986:32ff) uses the term 'passive revolution' from Gramsci to describe the 'reform' initiatives of the South African government: 'The managers of white supremacy are engaged in a process of hegemonic de-racialization whereby certain concessions which do not endanger the existing structures of dominance are to be extended to the better-off sectors of the black population' (:33).

4. I give further attention to this aspect of 'de-denominationalisation' in chapter five.

5. This notion of the liberation of the church is a central theme in chapter five (5.3).

6. In note 6 to chapter seven I give more detail of the reasons for the 'poor showing' of Marxism in early Black Consciousness, with special reference to the view of Nolutshungu (1983).

7. For more information, see chapter three (3.4). Motlhabi (1986:xiv) points out that one of the features of Black Theology Phase II is the increasing use of Marxist analysis.

8. See the diagram and explanation in chapter three (3.4).

9. For a good introductory discussion of Nyerere's African Socialism, see Leatt et al (1986:149-179).

10. The reasons why black political figures adopted the 'non-racial democratic' approach when forming the UDF, as well as its interaction with AZAPO and the NFC, are discussed in detail by

Motlhabi (1988:79-117).

11. There is no indication that these black theologians are openly attacking the term Black Theology or that they refuse to be identified as 'black theologians'. Time will tell whether the term Black Theology will continue to be used by black theologians who are part of the non-racial tendency, or whether it will be used solely by adherents of the Black Consciousness approach.

12. The theme of re-evangelisation is central to my discussion of the mission of Black Theology in chapter five (5.3).

13. This sensitivity to feminism seems to have been the influence of Basil Moore rather than Sabelo Ntwasa. Moore was well acquainted with white feminism in the UCM, which could explain his commitment to it. It does not seem as if any male black theologians took the position of women in Black Theology seriously until the establishment of the ICT Black Theology 'task force' in 1981.

14. I avoid the term 'feminist' in this connection, since it is not accepted by all black women theologians. See the view of Chase (1987:1,14): 'Feminism for me almost means a separate struggle for women or women's rights. For me the struggle for women's rights is an integral part of the struggle for liberation.... I believe that if we become feminists we are going to divorce ourselves from the liberation struggle'. Chase is a Namibian Christian presently working for the WCC. I come back to this in chapter five (5.4.4.5).

15. The only other group of black workers in a similar position are farm workers. Neither domestic nor farm workers are protected by South African labour legislation, which makes them the most vulnerable and exploited workers in the country. Jordaan (1987:43) sketches the plight of black women as workers in the following way: 'Black women are the lowest paid work force in SA. It is known that in boom times they are hired at low wages, and fired during necessary (sic) periods. They form 70% of the unemployed community. They have to cook, wash, clean in their own homes after a day's hard work (Those who are lucky to have jobs)'.

16. I come back to the view of black women theologians in chapter five (5.4.4.5), where I will analyse their understanding of action for a non-sexist society.

17. The term 'apartheid' is often used by black theologians for the totality of the South African social formation, not merely the racial dimension of it.

18. Another clear description of the totality of black suffering is given by Mokoka (1984:188). He emphasises forcible dispossession, the imposition of capitalism and racialism, the 'constitutional derecognition' of the indigenous majority, and the 'sur-reptitious and systematic introduction of the Christian faith in

CHAPTER 5

BLACK THEOLOGY AS CALL TO LIBERATING MISSION

5.1 BLACK MISSIOLOGY

Having looked at Black Theology as negation, I now study it as affirmation, as a positive call to participation in God's mission. In terms of my definition of mission in chapter one, I give attention to the personal, ecclesial, and societal dimensions of mission as understood by black theologians. Much of the content of this chapter has been suggested already in previous chapters, but I now spell it out in detail.

5.1.1 Black people as subjects of mission

In using the term 'black missiology', I follow the example of Goba (1981c) and Mofokeng (1983), who speak of 'black ecclesiology' and 'black Christology' respectively. It is a short way of saying 'the missiology of Black Theology' and expresses the view of black Christians on the mission which God has entrusted to them in South Africa. The first thing to note about black missiology is therefore that it deals with black people as the subjects or agents of Christian mission. It spells out the mission of the black church, that is, the 'black communal praxis' directed towards realising God's reign on earth. This view of mission is a concrete expression of the birth of 'new black subjects', who are no longer submerged in their material situation or merely react to it, but who take the initiative to respond to it (Mofokeng 1983:13). It speaks of the will and power of black people to become subjects of their own history, a community which has been liberated by the Spirit in order to become liberative, in order to take concrete action to open up the future (:13, 43).

Since the stereotyped view of mission as something which white

people do to black people is so deeply ingrained in popular South African consciousness, this deliberate and self-conscious black initiative is highly significant. The fact that it comes from people who have traditionally been regarded as the recipients of mission, makes it even more important.

5.1.2 Mission as liberation

Flowing directly from the foregoing, black theologians express the central aim of mission in one word: liberation. Goba (1980a:34) speaks of a process of theological self-criticism which is needed to evolve 'an effective mission of liberation'. Their basic presupposition is that 'salvation or liberation is the essence of the christian faith' (Mokoka 1984:173), and that 'to be a Christian means to participate in ... liberation' (Noko 1977:120). All black theologians are agreed that liberation is the central concern of the Christian faith, and that participating in it is the hallmark of a believer. References in this regard can be multiplied. Goba (1978:23), for example, speaks of a 'mission of liberation' which implies that the church should be 'incarnated in the world taking a concrete form in manifesting God's liberating activity in the world in Jesus Christ'.

For black theologians their commitment to liberation means that nobody can ever be neutral with reference to injustices in society. Neutrality is described by Cone as the 'moral luxury of being on neither side' (1975a:11). Sebidi (1983:13) speaks of the 'God-given bias of the church' which is 'built into its mission' and which makes it impossible for it to be ideologically neutral. Boesak (1977b:11) describes neutrality as the 'worst kind of partisanship', since it means 'taking the side of the oppressor without accepting responsibility for it'. This flows from their description of South Africa as a situation of oppression (see chapter 4), which challenges all Christians to get involved in changing it. A black theological understanding of mission is therefore concerned with participating in the black struggle for

liberation. But this is a human struggle, and not an exclusively or even primarily Christian one, a fact which has far-reaching implications for Black Theology.

It means that Christians do not have a monopoly on the struggle for liberation, but must identify themselves with the initiative taken by 'the oppressed and poor in their struggle for the dignity which is theirs as human persons created in the image of the Triune God' (SACC 1980:6). They are challenged to 'participate in human struggles for true liberation' (Goba 1981b:40). The black Christian community can therefore not remain aloof from the search for justice, but needs to 'risk itself in seeking the transformation of this world' (Fatton 1986:114) by becoming 'part of black people's struggle for freedom' (Goba 1980a:23). This is clearly expressed by Mkhathshwa (1984:3): '... there is no such thing as a christian liberation struggle. Admittedly one's motivation for getting involved should ideally be christian. In a people's struggle room should be made for the possibility of forming alliances with organisations working for identical objectives'. This means that black Christians are called upon to join black people of all persuasions in the struggle for human liberation (1). In the view of black theologians, Christian mission therefore takes place within this broader human mission, as an essential part of it. A black missiology, then, entails theological reflection on Christian involvement in this common human struggle.

When speaking about the view of black theologians on liberation, it is important to point out that they see it as all-encompassing and holistic. They see it as affecting every aspect of human life and society, thereby rejecting all dichotomies imposed by Western theology. This means in the first place the rejection of an individualistic view of conversion, characteristic of missionaries and churches influenced by Pietism. According to Dwane (1977:8), since salvation is seen not as the 'salvation of souls', but as the 'transformation of the entire cosmos', the

individualistic pietism of the West is 'repugnant' to black theologians. Instead, they insist that the Gospel addresses human society as a whole, and that they have 'a mission to the whole of life' (Dwane 1980:35). This holistic perspective is well expressed by Boesak (1984a:80):

The liberation the church proclaims is total. It is liberation from sin in all its manifestations of alienation from God and neighbour. It is liberation from economic exploitation, dehumanization, and oppression. It is liberation from meaninglessness and self-alienation, from poverty and suffering. It is liberation toward a meaningful human existence seeking freedom and human fulfilment. It is liberation for the service of the living God, so that God's people will no longer be subjected to the tyranny of false gods.

Similar sentiments are expressed by Gqubule (1974:21f), Tutu (1979b:164) and Mokoka (1984:180), to mention only a few. An African sense of the wholeness of life merges with their interpretation of the Bible to produce a peculiarly black view of liberation as encompassing the totality of human existence and the fulness of life in community (Witvliet 1985:80).

It is this holistic liberation which is the concern of the present chapter. After a section on the Christological basis of this view of liberation (5.2), I structure the chapter along the lines of the following statement by Motlhabi (1974a:76):

We need a personal, psychological liberation from ourselves and what enslaves us; a social, political and economic liberation in relation to our fellow-men ... and a religious liberation in relation to God' (my emphasis).

I discuss the dimensions of personal and religious (or ecclesial)

liberation under the heading 'Mission as re-evangelisation' (5.3), and the dimension of social, political and economic liberation under the heading of 'Mission as societal transformation' (5.4).

5.2 THE MISSION OF THE BLACK MESSIAH

5.2.1 Rejecting the white Christ

A central and persistent question for black theologians is: 'Who is Jesus for us?' (Goba 1980c:136) or 'What does Christ, the Son of the living God, mean to me as an oppressed person in this country?' (Kameeta 1978:92). Many black Christians have long sensed the foreignness and irrelevance of the Christ proclaimed to them by churches controlled by a white theology, a sentiment clearly expressed by Wilmore (1974:216): 'Could this fair-haired, blue-eyed American Jesus ... have anything at all to do with us and with our struggle?'. In the light of this, Gqubule (1974:18) defined the essence of Black Theology as follows: 'If Christ is to be relevant to the Black man he must speak the accent of a Black man, through the life experiences of the Black man, reacting to life situations in ways which would be recognisable to the Black man as his own'. The crisis which the foreignness of the white Christ brings about in the life of black Christians is starkly portrayed by Sikakane (1974:22):

We still preach the Christ we have heard and read from White theology. The world now seems to be turning against us in the same way as the evil spirits rebuked and attacked the itinerant Jewish exorcists and the seven sons of Sceva saying: "Jesus I know and Paul I know but who are you?".

The dilemma of believing such a 'second-hand' message is clear for all to see. Black Theology wants to help black Christians come to a first-hand encounter with Jesus Christ and to develop a

genuine black Christology which is relevant to their daily human needs.

However, the message of a white Christ is not only foreign and irrelevant to black people. It is in fact immensely harmful to their self-image, since in the process 'white' is identified with the ultimate good and 'black' with the ultimate evil. Black theologians therefore see themselves as 'iconoclasts of the "white" God', with the responsibility to 'tear down every image and symbol which, by presenting God as "white", reinforces this sense of human inferiority and worthlessness' (Ntwasa & Moore 1974:24f). In order for Jesus to play a positive role in the lives of black people, they have to strip him of his 'white' attributes, especially his image as ruler, who legitimises white rule in South Africa (Maimela 1973:117). The 'white Jesus' who spoke to blacks through the preaching and lives of white Christians is portrayed as follows by Boesak (1977b:38):

Always irrevocably on the side of the powerful, He was the guarantee of white 'baasskap' and of black subservience and obedience. It was He who blessed their weapons and assured them of victory over Kaffirs and Indians. His gospel, the expectation of the poor, became the blueprint for their law and order, giving their way of life the glow of divine approval.

It is this 'white' image of Jesus that black theologians set out to demolish, in order to confess him as the black Messiah.

5.2.2 Confessing Jesus as the black Messiah

The element of negation portrayed in the previous section is only one aspect of the black Christological enterprise. Black theologians, reading the Bible from within their situation of suffering, discover Jesus of Nazareth positively as the poor man, 'in whom God identified himself with the sinners, the oppressed,

those discriminated against, the poor, the colonized and the "marginalized" people of the earth' (Noko 1977:57). This 'discovery' takes place 'only in the context of active resistance and struggle for social justice', which enables the poor to encounter God anew and to 'begin to reappropriate the biblical God in their own ways as they start to identify kindred struggles in the very pages of Scripture' (Mosala, IJ 1983a:6). Black Christians therefore begin to read the Bible for themselves and discover it as 'the history, wisdom and faith of an oppressed people, with its central figure as the Discarded Person par excellence' (Moore 1973:82). In other words, they discover that, in South African terms, Jesus is black like themselves. By this statement South African black theologians do not mean that Jesus physically had a black skin. They mean that, since Jesus Christ was born among the poor in Palestine and clearly identified himself with the oppressed among his people, he also identifies with oppressed black people in South Africa and can therefore only be understood as black (2). Since he became human for the sake of the poor and outcasts, 'his messianic mission means that he is one of the ill-treated' (Kameeta 1978:93). The 'blackness' attributed to Christ thus expresses his solidarity with suffering black people and his will to empower them to struggle for their own liberation. It is not some eternal abstract truth claim made about Jesus, but a highly concrete and contextual confession of who he is today to struggling black people. It is an affirmation of the fact that in a racist society, where black people suffer for the fact of being black, Jesus is not a colourblind or colourless figure who observes 'neutrality', but a partisan figure who identifies himself with the least of his brothers and sisters. With an explicit reference to Matthew 25:31-42, Mofokeng (1987a:15) says: 'This is how God came to us and this is who he is among us: the oppressed poor God. God has not just become man. God has become oppressed man. God has come as the black in the scarred and bleeding bodies of black people of this country'. In the words of Fatton (1986:108), the affirmation of the blackness of Christ therefore has the aim of renewing Christianity to what it once was, namely

'the prophetic world-view of the wretched of the earth'. It is abundantly clear to black theologians that the confession of Jesus as Lord is not only a theological decision, nor only a political or cultural one; 'it is also, and perhaps more fundamentally, a class and an ideological choice and commitment' (Mosala, IJ 1984a:7). The real Christological question is which Jesus we confess as Lord, and since it is naive to believe 'that in a divided world there can be the Jesus of all classes' (:7), black theologians confess the Lordship of the black Messiah, who has identified himself with the wretched of the earth in their struggle for humanity.

5.2.3 The black Messiah and black history

An important perspective on the understanding of Christ as the black Messiah is presented by Mofokeng (1983, 1987a). According to him the confession of the contemporaneity of Jesus Christ as the victorious Lord of history, means that black people 'affirm his presence and victorious activity in our past, including our distant African past' (1987a:7). Throughout black history He has been present, creating new black men and women and transforming the world. 'Jesus Christ the Crucified was there as the liberative undercurrent in our African past, creating, evoking and empowering a corresponding liberative undercurrent in our African history' (:7). For this reason the heroes and 'founding fathers' of black society, like Chaka, Moshoeshe and Sekhukhuni can be called 'the carriers of a liberation tradition in our Black history' (:8). However, this does not mean a wholesale acceptance of everything that happened in the black past; the criterion used by Mofokeng in this process of reappropriating elements of black history is that of 'liberative current'. What is retrieved is 'only that which has proved its worth in the purifying fire of the struggle for the humanity of our forefathers and its material basis, their land' (:8).

With this theological interpretation of history, Mofokeng sys-

tematically develops and expands views held by other black theologians. Many of them merely point out analogies between the situation of Jesus in first century Palestine and that of black people in present-day South Africa, thereby justifying their present struggle for humanity as in basic agreement with the liberating ministry of Jesus in the first century. Mofokeng, on the other hand, posits an ontological presence of Jesus Christ within black history: wherever there have been liberating elements in it, Christ has been actively at work since the beginning of time. The struggles of poor and oppressed people everywhere are therefore 'taken up in God's event of salvation of man and the creation of the new world and the new heaven', thus attaining a 'universal significance' (Mofokeng 1983:235). Very similar to this is the view of IJ Mosala (1983a:6): 'the God of the poor ... is the fundamental force at the heart of history, and is to be known and discovered only through a deliberate engagement in history'. Reinterpreting black history therefore amounts to nothing less than tracing the footprints of God, in order to discern what our footprints should look like as we participate in his liberating mission today.

5.2.4 The liberating mission of Jesus Christ

Central to the black theological interpretation of Jesus is the use of Luke 4:16-20. It appears throughout the writings of black theologians, starting with the statement of the SASO Commission on Black Theology (1971:17): 'Black Theology asserts its validity and sees its existence in the context of the words of Christ, who in declaring his mission said: "He has sent me to bring good news to the poor ..."'. When Sebidi (1983:16) refers to the ministry of Jesus as indicated in Lk 4:18-19, he speaks of the 'divine bias, in favour of the poor and oppressed, that was intrinsic to his mission'. It is this liberating mission of Jesus Christ which the black church must embody in its ministry today (Goba 1980a:30). Whenever black theologians speak about the liberating ministry of Jesus Christ, therefore, they do so while speaking

about the mission of the church, and never in isolation from it. In line with this, Mofokeng (1987a:2) says that theology arises 'when those people who are truly converted to the liberating praxis of Jesus the Messiah ... attempt to imitate him or translate his liberative praxis into their saving praxis to affect the lives of their fellowmen and transform the world around them making it a worthy reflection of the coming Kingdom of God'. Similarly, Ntwasa (1974a:115) speaks of the church as the people who are 'in Christ' and whose lives are therefore perceived to have 'the quality of Christ-in-his-struggle-against-human-bondage'.

It is clear, then, that incarnation is an important aspect of a black theological understanding of Jesus' mission. 'It is ... the incarnation which forms the theological basis, as it were, for the starting point adopted in Black and Liberation theologies' (Sebidi 1983:11). Jesus Christ is the one 'who is below and who operates ... from below in the transformation of the world' (Mofokeng 1983:5). In this regard Dwane (1977:8) says that 'for black theologians ... the humanity of Jesus is not to be taken for granted, but it has to be aggressively asserted'. The reason for this strong emphasis on the humanity of Jesus is to counter the negative effects of the 'spiritualising' tendency of Western missionary theology. This missionary emphasis on 'spiritual freedom' has made Christ an anaemic and distant figure, unconcerned about the daily struggles of black people. The dualism inherent in this white theology is vehemently rejected by black theologians. Since 'the mission of Christ is the liberation of the whole man', spiritual freedom is 'only part of the truth' (Makhathini 1973:10). Jesus saw his vocation as 'a mission to the whole of life' (Dwane 1980:35):

He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and restored to community the outcasts. He proclaimed the good news to the poor, effected inner healing and restored to human dignity those who were known to be notorious sinners.

He released men from guilt, from physical sickness which handicapped, and from the hold which evil spirits had on them. He accepted politics as part of the business of life, calling men to render to Caesar his limited due and to God the whole of life.

The incarnation of Jesus means that he is the 'Parable of God par excellence' as well as the 'Comrade of humanity par excellence' (Mazamisa 1987:172). He entered into the very depths of human existence by becoming a poor and oppressed man, coming to know the world of the poor 'not like an observer who remains unscarred by his knowledge of phenomena, but as a victim who bears deep psychological, physical and emotional scars of that world' (Mofokeng 1987a:16). In this way he reached down to 'the bottom of the pit', so that his resurrection becomes the empowerment of those struggling to lift themselves from the pit. Black theologians see the incarnation as 'the historical event in which God experienced the depth of human suffering and degradation thus committing the divine self to the giving of abundant life to the sinful, oppressed and poor people' (Maimela 1987:96).

This dialectic of cross and resurrection is central to Black Theology, as is clearly expressed by Goba (1988:39): "God on the cross", in God's forsakenness, reaches the depths of our struggle and agony under the oppressive structure of Apartheid. God not only shares our suffering in the death of Jesus, but becomes the source of hope and liberation'. Mofokeng (1983:39) speaks of cross and resurrection as 'a living paradigmatic event for the liberation effort of the oppressed', characterising the cross as the 'test of God's love for the oppressed' and the resurrection as 'the vindication of the tenacity of God's love'. Suffering black people, as 'crossbearers', experience the presence and solidarity of the Crucified throughout their lives, as his cross 'shakes up the crosses of the oppressed back to life' and as the risen Christ 'continues to embed himself deeply into the history and situation of the destitutes (sic)' (:222f). The resurrection

of the Crucified brings about (and is verified by) insurrections of the oppressed as they become a liberative community (:43). The death of Christ has brought liberation to black people and empowers them to become a 'cohesive group determined to rise from the death bed of oppression and exploitation' (Tshenkeng 1977a:10). A central question for black theologians is indeed 'how the messianic reality of the Risen One is present in the life of his people' (Witvliet 1985:80).

The mention of insurrection in the preceding paragraph leads me to mention the fact that black theologians speak of Jesus Christ as a revolutionary. Already in 1971 Biko (1979:94) stated that Black Theology 'wants to describe Christ as a fighting God, not a passive God who allows a lie to rest unchallenged'. The 'lie' to which Biko refers here is the way in which missionaries distorted Christianity in preaching it to black people. Boesak (1984a:79f) speaks of his 'divine radicality', which amounted to a profound disturbance of the existing order, but does not see him as a Zealot. Jesus was revolutionary 'in that he offered an alternative consciousness to the sterile ideological postures of the Zealots, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Essenes' (:79). His revolutionary intention went far beyond the dream of restoring a Jewish political kingdom based on legalism. In the words of Sebidi (1983:15), he 'literally and physically subverted the whole exploitation exercise which had become an essential part of the religio-political power structure of the time', which means that he made options 'that could be interpreted, in today's language, as socio-political, ideological options'. Countering the usual criticism by the South African State that black people are influenced by outside 'agitators', Kameeta (1978:94,105) replies: 'Der "Agitator" ist nicht der ausländische Mitarbeiter, sondern Jesus Christus selbst. Er steht bei den Unterdrückten und spricht zu ihnen: ... "Komm zu mir, ich werde dich erlösen und du sollst mein Mitarbeiter sein im Kampf um die Befreiung, dadurch, dass du mein Zeuge sein wirst in dieser Welt" Er is der grösste Revolutionär, den die Welt jemals gekannt hat'. Mazamisa

(1987:165f) points out the destabilising effect which Jesus' parables had on the Jews, especially the Pharisees, and states that God 'permeates our history like a parable in order to destabilize its stasis and stability, equilibrium and equipose'. Black theologians who employ a materialist analysis, stress the fact that there was a class struggle being waged in first century Palestine in the economic, political and theological spheres, and that 'Jesus entered that struggle on the side of the poor and the oppressed' (Mofokeng 1987a:12). In the eyes of black theologians, Jesus not only made choices which in modern terms would be called political; for them his impact can only be adequately described as revolutionary.

5.2.5 Exodus and liberation

To avoid giving the impression that black theologians adopt an ahistorical view of Jesus Christ, I must briefly indicate how they see the continuity between the ministry of Jesus in Palestine and the Exodus event many centuries earlier. Although there is a concentration on Christology in Black Theology, it would be misleading to underemphasise the role of the Exodus in a black theological understanding of liberation. In fact, one could call the Exodus and the Christ event the two biblical focal points of Black Theology (cf Mofokeng 1987b:32).

Black theologians who hold to a more traditional 'idealist' hermeneutics, acknowledge that their use of Scripture is selective, since 'by the token of particularity, certain parts of the biblical message will be more apt for certain situations than others' (Tutu 1979b:165). In this view, all theologies are limited and conditioned by their contexts, and therefore liberation theologies have the right to claim their place within this rich theological diversity. Whereas the most apt message for hate-filled Ulster is that of reconciliation, 'for the victims of oppression and injustice it is important ... to hear that the God they worship is the liberator God of the Exodus who led a rabble

of slaves out of bondage into glorious freedom' (:165f). They need to hear that, 'according to the Bible, this God is always on the side of the downtrodden', not because they are better or more virtuous than their oppressors, but due to the just and compassionate character of God, who saves but who also judges those whom he saves (:166). In a similar way (Boesak 1979b:173), referring to the Exodus, says that 'the theme of liberation in the Old Testament became the same theme in the New Testament proclamation of Jesus Christ, and there is no way you can speak of the Gospel without speaking of liberation'. The Exodus is thus not seen as an isolated event, but as the 'beginning of a movement all through history', which means that 'Jesus Christ announced and accomplished what Yahweh was doing from the very beginning' (:174). The whole Bible is therefore pervaded with this emphasis on liberation: 'liberation is not merely part of the gospel, nor merely "one of the key words" of the gospel; it is the content and framework of the whole biblical message' (Boesak 1977b:17).

In these interpretations, the centrality of the Exodus in Black Theology is justified either by the notion of the necessity of a selective contextual use of Scripture, or by the 'biblical theology' notion of a central theme (namely liberation) dominating the whole Bible. Either way, the unity and integrity of the canonical Scripture is upheld.

Black theologians who adopt a materialist hermeneutical approach point out that there was a class struggle going on in Israelite society, and that evidence of this is found in the Bible itself. It is therefore harmful to speak of the whole Bible as the 'Word of God', thereby suggesting that every part of it is equally 'inspired'. In the light of the class struggle in which black interpreters are involved today, they discover 'kindred struggles' suggested (but often hidden) in the pages of the Bible. To them the only valid hermeneutical starting point for Black Theology is 'the social, cultural, political and economic world of the black working class and peasantry' (Mosala, IJ 1986b:181).

This starting point is necessary because the Bible is not only 'a product and record of class struggles, but ... also a site of similar struggles acted out by the oppressors and oppressed, exploiters and exploited of our society even as they read the Bible' (:196). Such a hermeneutical starting point is essential to ensure that black theologians are indeed waging their theological struggle about the interpretation of the Bible in the interests of black oppressed and exploited people and that they have made a theoretical break with dominant hermeneutics. In this view, the Exodus as an historical and political event is important to Black Theology not because it is part of a canonical Scripture which demands obedience, but because it confirms and challenges the historical struggle of black workers and peasants, and can be appropriated by them in the interests of their liberation.

5.2.6 A spirituality of liberation

From the foregoing sections it has become abundantly clear that black theologians understand God as the One who is intimately involved in their lives, and committed to their struggle for freedom and justice. In different ways they trace this conviction to the biblical accounts of the Exodus and the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. These two biblical focal points are expressed 'in one breath' by Baartman (1973c:20): 'The black man must hear it again and again ... that God is on his side. He is for the oppressed, the dispossessed and the downtrodden' and: 'the most important point about Black Theology is that it has Jesus Christ as its centre, area and circumference'. In this section I want to stress that this conviction flows from (and produces) a very definite spirituality, a spirituality of struggle. Kameeta, who has been imprisoned a number of times (in Namibia) for his opposition to government policies, asks himself whether it is worth continuing the struggle against such overwhelming odds, and then replies: 'It is exactly the fact of belief that history and the existence of the world is (sic) in the strong hands of God which

makes it impossible for me to leap back and withdraw to "safety" (Kameeta 1976:12). Similarly, Boesak (1984a:105) speaks of a 'revolutionary spirituality without which our being Christian in the world is not complete, and without which the temptations that are part and parcel of the liberation struggle will prove too much for us'. This spirituality is therefore in the first place a motivating factor which upholds Christians in their struggle, and secondly a critical factor which restrains them from what is incompatible with their Christian conscience. It is a 'quiet, subversive piety that is quite indispensable for authentic Christian participation in the struggle for liberation' (:106). This is clearly not an escapist spirituality which deadens the senses to the injustices of the world in the light of the glories of heaven, but an engaged spirituality which emerges from the pain and the faith of black people who are struggling for the realisation of God's reign on earth. Black Theology attempts to 'become the expression of the spirituality and faith response of oppressed people as they cope daily with the evil which inheres so deeply in the fabric of the society in which they have no say' (Govender 1987a:159).

In a sense this whole section (5.2) deals with a black spirituality of liberation, since I have tried to show who Jesus Christ is to black theologians, in other words, how they experience his life as touching theirs. It is essential to understand this deeply 'spiritual' dimension of Black Theology in order to avoid misinterpretation. That is why I have discussed their understanding of Christ's mission before turning to their views on the liberating mission of black Christians in South Africa.

5.3 MISSION AS RE-EVANGELISATION

The liberating mission of black Christians, who have been awakened to a growing realisation of their humanity, is directed first of all at fellow black Christians. It grapples with existential problems of black people and 'seeks to bring back God to the black man and to the truth and reality of his situation' (Biko 1979:94). This means that black priests and church ministers have a responsibility towards the many black Christians 'swimming in a mire of confusion' as a result of the missionary era, and to 'save Christianity by adopting Black Theology's approach ... thereby once more uniting the black man with his God' (:94). Black theologians intend to 'help restore God to our people, who died with the coming of the missionary and is still being crucified in the hands of some of our own black brothers' (Motlhabi 1973:9). Every Christian should be concerned with the spread of the Gospel, and this means the 'reorientation and rehabilitation of the people of God' (Motlhabi 1974a:80).

There is an acute awareness among black theologians that 'the future of Christianity in this country is at stake' (Goba 1980b:22) and that it is the role of the black church 'to save the authenticity of the Christian faith in South Africa' (Goba 1980a:34). As a result of the actions of Christians in South African history, 'the credibility of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is at stake' (Boesak 1981:2). It is the intention of black theologians to give it credibility among black people in South Africa, which is only possible if the church can be 'reconverted' and begin to engage in a 'new mission' (Mofokeng 1983:59). Black Theology therefore presents a challenge to the church to embark on 'the "re-evangelisation" of Black people that will lead to their spiritual freedom and simultaneous striving for their political and social liberation' (Motlhabi 1984:260). This re-evangelisation therefore has a personal dimension ('spiritual freedom') as well as a dimension of political and social liberation. For the sake of credibility, black Christians must face the

burning questions that live in their own hearts and in the hearts of their fellow black people. There are personal questions like:

Why did God make me Black? If God made us all, loves us all and is father of all, why does he allow his Black children, whom he loves, to suffer so much at the hands of his White children whom he also loves? Or are the Blacks, perhaps, God's stepchildren? (Gqubule 1974:19)

And then there are socio-political questions like 'the death of children from starvation, outbreaks of epidemics in poor areas, or the existence of thuggery and vandalism in townships' (Biko 1979:59). Church ministers need to shift their emphasis from 'petty sins' to these 'major sins' in society 'if they are to save Christianity from falling foul with black people particularly young black people' (:60). Tlhagale (1985:126f) says that one can no longer assume the presence of faith among black people, or continue to assert that they are 'traditionally a religious people', since the harsh reality of the apartheid system has caused their religiousness to 'wear thin'. Black theologians face these questions squarely and attempt to develop an approach which will mobilise black Christians to become the answers to these questions. Black Theology therefore sees mission in the first place as the re-evangelisation of the black community (3).

5.3.1 Re-evangelising the black community

A common misunderstanding of Black Theology accuses it of being completely politicised and secularised, and therefore of being unconcerned about personal sin. A case in point is the view expressed in the Editorial of Die Sendingblad (1971:258): 'Bekering is vir die swart teologie verandering van maatskaplike omstandighede -- en nie van die sondige hart van die mens nie'. This is a grave misunderstanding of Black Theology. In this section I point out the clear emphasis on personal change in

Black Theology, representing its strong pastoral and evangelistic dimensions:

Black Theology is a pastoral theology ... which seeks to restore and heal the brokenness of black humanity (Goba 1979b:8).

Black Theology has ... a burning and evangelistic zeal necessary to convert the black man out of the stupor of his subservience and obsequiousness to acceptance of the thrilling but demanding responsibility of full human personhood (Tutu 1979a:489).

The intense concern of Black Theology for the healing of personal brokenness is abundantly clear from these two quotes. What is needed in the lives of black people is personal transformation, which is described as 'deep spiritual as well as social conversion' (Goba 1979b:12) and as 'a radical transformation of the human psyche' (Goba 1980b:19). Since the notion of conversion is central to this emphasis in Black Theology, I use it as a key category in this section.

5.3.1.1 Self-acceptance

In chapter two I have discussed the internal liberation of the Black Consciousness experience. In this section I focus more on the black theological interpretation of this experience. Adapting the terminology of 'Negro-to-Black conversion', which Cross (1973:267ff) used in the USA, one could speak in South Africa of a 'Non-white-to-black conversion'. The theological implications of this experience need to be explored, since many sins of which black people need to repent were caused by the sins of others against them. Due to the persistent sin of white people against them, black people have begun sinning against themselves, becoming unable to accept and love themselves or to assert themselves as human subjects in history. As a result of three cen-

turies of oppression, black people have been socialised into accepting the negative view of themselves held by white people. This has led to a destructive self-image, described so vividly by SASO Commission on Black Theology (1971:17) as a 'slave mentality, inferiority complex, distrust of themselves and continued dependence on others culminating in self-hate'. In this situation Black Theology 'challenges them not to be consumed by hatred, self-pity, bitterness ...' (Tutu 1979b:167), but to stand up and become human. The radical change implied in this 'getting up' can only be described as a conversion: 'the affirmation of blackness in a world dominated by whiteness ... amounts to a total conversion and experience of re-birth on the part of black people' (Maimela 1984:42). Similarly, Boesak (1977b:27) says: 'For people to become authentically black ... is an experience similar to a rebirth, a total conversion, the participation in the creation of a new humanity'. This happens by the power of the risen Christ, which is directed towards 'the upliftment of the oppressed out of misery and self-hate' (Dwane 1977:10). For black theologians conversion therefore means primarily that black people turn away from sinning against themselves, since the other sins they commit are affected (and sometimes even caused) by this fundamental sin. In this connection Tshenkeng (1977a:15) rightly asks: 'How can one love another if he despises himself?'. This difficult but joyful conversion from self-hatred to self-love is well described by Boesak (1977b:29):

To ask blacks to love themselves is to ask them to hate oppression, dehumanization, and the cultivation of a slave mentality. It is to ask them to know that they are of infinite worth before God, that they have a precious human personality worthy of manifestation. It is to ask them to withstand any effort to make them believe the opposite. So it is not hatred of white people that blacks have. It is white oppression they hate. And hate it they must. With all their hearts.

Black people need to learn that 'self-denial is not the same as self-hatred and self-destruction' and that 'self-love should be a joyous affirmation of the desire to be there for the other in a genuine, human way' (:28). This emphasis therefore is not intended to foster black egotism, but rather to help black people shake off their feelings of inferiority and thus become genuinely able to love others.

Black Theology therefore preaches a message of self-love, self-acceptance and self-affirmation as the basis for a life of self-denial and service. In this respect it represents a fundamental critique of traditional missionary preaching, which does not go to the root of black people's 'spiritual poverty' and therefore preaches on the one hand 'moral trivialities' and on the other hand 'that all authority is divinely instituted' (Biko 1979:31). This kind of preaching worsens the plight of black people, since it teaches them to accept their inferior and dispossessed status in South Africa as the will of God and to concentrate on private morality. It provides no guidance for a way out of their suffering and instead teaches them to 'suffer peacefully'. When people who have been treated for generations as 'stupid, lazy, dishonest and ignorant', hear from the church only that they are 'rotten sinners', such a message contains no good news for their lives and only adds to their oppression. Black Theology seeks to do away with the 'spiritual poverty' underlying this situation of suffering and shouts out: 'Black man, you are grown-up, stand on your feet and get counted' (Makhathini 1973:15). This means that the church 'seeks to affirm the black man' (Baartman 1973c:21). In response to the burning question of credibility mentioned before, it can be said that 'Black Theology has saved Christianity among blacks because it says "Christ says you are a man", and there is liberation in that' (in Lewis 1974:126). It is in this connection that the Black Consciousness emphasis on withdrawal from 'multi-racial' organisations must be understood: 'they need to withdraw from the THOU-IT situation in order to come back, having accepted themselves as THOU'S. Only as the

black man takes pride in his blackness can the church hope to grow richer in her life' (Baartman 1973c:22). According to black theologians, the re-evangelisation of the black community consists in proclaiming the good news that black people may accept themselves and take pride in their God-given blackness. Re-evangelisation is therefore a process of humanisation.

5.3.1.2 Humanisation

The biblical notion that human beings are created in the image of God is frequently used by black theologians. Conversion is therefore primarily the discovery and persistent affirmation of this truth about oneself. It is a constant 'quest for true humanity' (Biko 1979:87f), 'awakening in blacks a sense of their intrinsic worth as children of God' (Tutu 1979b:163). The Gospel thus becomes good news to black people: the dehumanisation which they experience in South Africa is not the will of God, since God has created all human beings with the same inherent dignity and wills that they should all live together in justice and love. Black Theology can therefore justly be called a 'theology of human dignity' (Mokoka 1984:194), with conversion meaning to 'regain the Imago Dei' (Makhathini 1974:3). This implies a dynamic historical process: 'Nach dem Bild Gottes geschaffen sein, heisst, gegen alles, was mich dieser Ebenbildlichkeit berauben will, zu kämpfen' (Kameeta 1978:97). Conversion is therefore not a once-for-all event, but an ongoing process of becoming more fully human. In the words of Fanon (1967b:28): 'the "thing" which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself'. 'Image of God' is therefore not a static, ontological concept, but something which is only realised in and through the struggle for humanity.

This is true in a special sense of the views of black theologians who adopt a materialist approach. To them God's image is not a 'given', but something to be striven for: 'the more workers labour in accordance with their free will, in response to their

material needs, the more the image of God becomes a reality' (Tlhaqale 1985:130). This involves 'creative acts, acts modelled on the liberator-God who acts in history', since the image of God means that workers become co-creators and partners with God in ruling over nature, in creating their environment and in sharing the benefits accruing from such activity (:130).

Black theologians also use other biblical notions to describe conversion as a process of becoming human. Mofokeng (1983:23) uses creation terminology when he speaks of the 'creation and growth of the black human person who can be the acting subject of his own history of liberation that is in progress'. He expresses it thus in Christological terms: 'Jesus Christ the event of creation awakens those oppressed blacks who had resigned themselves to the mercy of the white oppressor and creates well motivated acting subjects who are determined to go all the way and do whatever is necessary to affirm their humanity and create social and economic structures which will support it' (Mofokeng 1987a:6). What is involved here is a conversion from non-person to person, from object of history to subject of history.

Goba (1979b:11f) speaks of the healing of human brokenness, which involves a 'deep spiritual and social conversion' of both black and white people. According to him the black church should become a 'healing liberating community' which will provide 'a context in which personal transformation can take place' (:12). Using the even stronger image of exorcism, Sebidi (1986b:258) speaks of the attempt of Black Consciousness organisations to 'exorcize the demon out of the black man's mind, the internalized demon of the "white master" within the black man's mind and heart'. The 'false consciousness' or 'mind of the oppressed' (Biko 1979:92, Boesak 1977b:6, Goba 1979b:11), created in the minds of black people as a result of so many years of oppression, needs to be completely eradicated, and this process of humanisation can only be adequately described in such radical terms as conversion, re-birth, creation, healing and exorcism. It is to this mission of

humanisation that black theologians commit themselves.

An important dimension of the humanisation envisaged by black theologians is the reappropriation of black history and culture. Black history and culture are no longer interpreted negatively, using the value system of the oppressor, but positively, in the light of the black liberation praxis. This provides a 'basic framework for the national project for the future', expressed in the words of Biko, 'Ours is a truly man-centred society whose sacred tradition is that of sharing' (in Mofokeng 1983:14). The re-evangelisation of black people in South Africa thus includes the 'reviving' of certain aspects of African culture that had been suppressed by the dominant white culture. Motlhabi (1984:113) mentions the following aspects in this regard: 'man- or community-centredness, eagerness to communicate in various forms with one's neighbours, joint ownership of land, neighbourliness and mutual help, which made poverty foreign to Africans, and a holistic view of life'. Contrary to the emphasis of the white dominant group with its racist use of the concept ethnicity, this reappropriation or revival of African culture in Black Theology 'will have to be a culture of liberation, a removal of the shackles that bind us' (Langa 1973:63). This search for roots is 'not only a search for humanity but it is an assertion and affirmation of the worth and dignity of the black man' (Pityana 1974:61). What is involved here is the mobilising of cultural resources in the black struggle for humanity: 'blackness is for us a supremely cultural fact the consciousness that we have tremendous resources of the soul at our disposal out of which to grow strong in every sense, as long as we can succeed in eliminating the white man's ideas about us from our minds' (Small 1974:16). Humanisation means freedom; the freedom to be oneself and define oneself: 'the free man is the oppressed man who says no to oppressors, in spite of the threat of death, because God has said yes to him, thereby placing him in a state of freedom' (Dwane 1977:10). Such free human beings have renounced fear, even the fear of death, and are therefore able to strengthen others in

the face of suffering and harrassment. Pityana (1972:181) speaks of the 'soul-force' which black people in ghettos have generated to 'enable them to remain human in these camps'. A good example of this is the words of a black woman to her white friend, about to be questioned by security police: 'Take the freedom not to be scared'. This is liberated and liberating black humanity.

A final aspect which deserves attention in this section is the black theological view of conversion as the empowerment of powerless black people to assert themselves in society. The National Committee of Negro Churchmen in the USA declared in 1966 that 'powerlessness breeds a race of beggars' (in Wilmore & Cone 1979:23). In the struggle of black theologians to help black people claim and express their humanity, they are therefore concerned that this powerlessness be overcome. The 'courage to be' (Tillich) is seen by Boesak (1977b:49) as an 'essential inner self-affirmation' which makes it possible for someone to live a human life. Blackness is therefore 'a discovery, a state of mind, a conversion, an affirmation of being (which is power)' (Boesak 1978:80). What makes Black Theology an evangelistic missionary theology is the fact that it does not leave black people in their beggarly powerlessness, but calls on them to be empowered by the Spirit and to take the courage to become human subjects, even while the oppressive social structures are still in force around them. According to Williams (1973:18), it is the duty of black churches to 'lend their resources and leadership to the Black man's fight to escape from the trap of powerlessness'. However, no black theologian is so naive as to think that the changing of individuals will automatically change society. 'A man cannot maintain dignity in a world of exploitation, suffering and oppression all by himself. As Black people we don't have a lot of separate dignities. We have one dignity' (:18). Humanisation requires black solidarity, and individual conversion is an integral part of the overall struggle for liberation. The life of a person who has begun to accept and express his/her black humanity can be seen as a small 'liberated zone' which has

already been 'conquered' within the overall struggle for humanity. Black Consciousness organisations and liberating black churches represent larger zones of freedom, where more of this new humanity is seen and felt in the midst of oppressive structures. The gradual spreading of these zones of liberated humanity, personal as well as collective, can best be described by using the term 'conscientisation'.

5.3.1.3 Conscientisation

'Black Theology served as a project of conscientization and as such as a project of self definition and self articulation, a project of liberation for the theologian and for the liberating truth of the Gospel' (Mofokeng 1983:18). This view is confirmed by Motlhabi (1984:260) when he says that 'the primary focus of Black Theology is ... conscientization in the grass roots'. He explains this concept as follows (quoting from Davies): 'As the exploited learn, on the one hand, to perceive the truth of their existing socio-political conditions, and on the other hand, hear the gospel call to freedom, they are motivated to act against dehumanization' (Motlhabi 1984:260). Conversion understood as conscientisation therefore has two dimensions: oppressed people changing their minds about their socio-political reality and secondly obeying the Gospel's call to act for justice. These two dimensions of conscientisation have also found their way into the structure of my study: Black Theology as critique or social analysis (chapter 4) and Black Theology as call to liberating mission (chapter 5). These two dimensions correspond to the traditional Christian understanding of conversion as 'dying to the old life' and 'being raised to new life', with the major difference that in Black Theology this is not understood in an individualistic manner.

Since I have already discussed the first dimension of conscientisation in chapter four, I now concentrate on the second, that is, the call to oppressed people to realise that the Gospel calls

them not to accept their oppression as inevitable, but to work for its eradication. In the words of Goba (1988:78f),

[T]o be converted is to discover a new sense of responsibility in the promotion of liberation The challenge and essence of conversion is to confront the demonic power of Apartheid. It is the capacity to denounce and change oppressive structures.

The important thing to note at this point is that conversion is not stripped of its personal emphasis: 'Our new life in the liberating power of Christ becomes a challenge to work for radical change.... without the conversion experience, we lose the imperative power to work for the Kingdom of God' (Goba 1988:79). In other words, the commitment to changing social structures grows out of a personal experience of the reality of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the lives of black Christians. But since sin is understood as a socio-political and economic (and not merely an individual) reality, the struggle against sin is a struggle for political and economic liberation. Christian mission (as conscientisation) is therefore aimed at creating a new black communal praxis directed towards the realisation of Gods' reign of peace and justice. As I have pointed out before, the symbols of Exodus and resurrection are central to Black Theology and they serve 'to conscientise blacks and motivate them to become engaged in the overthrow of the conditions of their oppression' (Leatt et al 1986:119). This intimate connection between the personal and structural dimensions of liberation is clearly expressed by Boesak (1977b:50): 'The power to be, the courage to affirm one's human dignity, must inevitably lead to the transformation of structures to fulfil its search for completion and wholeness'. It is for this reason that I now move to a consideration of how black theologians propose to change ecclesial structures.

5.3.1.4 The black church

In the previous three sections I have concentrated on the personal dimension of the re-evangelisation of the black community as envisaged by black theologians. I now look at their views of communal Christian praxis, that is, of the life of the black church. Black theologians are highly critical of the black church for its structural and theological subservience to the dominant white church in South Africa. At the same time, as members of the black church, they are working for its renewal and liberation. As I have pointed out in chapter 4, black theologians see the church in South Africa as reflecting the basic societal structures of racism, colonialism and capitalism. It is in many ways part of the problem rather than part of the solution: 'One of the major problems confronting especially the black church is its theological captivity under white dominated ecclesiastical structuresIn other words the black church continues to have no theological self-understanding so as to carry out its mission of liberation' (Goba 1988:64). The re-evangelising mission of black theologians is precisely to renew the communal praxis of the black church so that it may 'become an authentic agent of liberation and reconciliation in a torn and sorrowfully divided society' (Boesak 1981:188). The church must become relevant by discovering its 'radical theological mission within the given political context, as it engenders a spirit of commitment to its members to participate in God's activity of liberation in the world' (Goba 1980a:29). The church should be the 'company of liberators', whose lives 'are perceived to have the quality of Christ-in-his-struggle-against-human-bondage' (Ntwasa 1974a: 114f). Black Theology therefore calls the black church to its authentic mission in the world: 'The Church expresses its essence as long as it participates in Christ's mission of liberation in all aspects of human life' (Goba 1981c:55). The church should not be a 'rigid national monument', but 'the nation of the Exodus to meet the coming Lord ... the instrument of Jesus Christ whereby mankind ... will be called to deliverance ... the sign of a new

mankind' (Kameeta 1975:278). What is needed is a 'reconversion' of the church, so that it may exercise a 'new mission', characterised by its choosing sides with the poor and oppressed in their struggle and by its relinquishing of power structures (Mofokeng 1983:59). Such a re-evangelised black church will become a 'liberating sign through which the world is challenged to believe and to participate in God's liberating activity in the world' (Goba 1988:106).

It is important at this point to make some remarks about the concept 'black church' which I use here, following the example of most black theologians. Does such an entity exist? In the writings of black theologians the term does not refer to one particular denomination, but to black Christians in all existing Christian churches who share the same black context of deprivation and oppression. The use of the term 'black church' rather than 'black churches' therefore implies a definite ecumenical commitment. There is a clear awareness of the 'ecumenical imperative' for black Christian solidarity across the barriers of denominationalism, which is regarded as 'a theological separatism which fosters false Christian consciousness' (Goba 1988:105). Makhathini (1973:11) speaks of the need of black people to be 'de-denominationalised' by 'instilling into them that they are first Black before they are Christian, and not vice versa'. This means that black theologians understand ecumenism as an 'ecumenical praxis which expresses commitment to the struggle for liberation' (Goba 1988:106). It is not unity for doctrinal or historical reasons, but instead 'the struggle for unity must become a unity for struggle' (BK Bulletin 1988:2). Black Theology therefore 'challenges the current division of the black church in South Africa not so much on theological grounds, but on political grounds' (Goba 1980a:33). Satterwhite (1983:46), an Afro-American black theologian, refers to this 'black ecumenism to combat racism' as opening up a more comprehensive understanding of the word 'oikoumene', which contains a dimension 'beyond confessional, doctrinal, or denominational issues, namely, in the problems

of poverty and the struggle for social and economic justice'. For this reason black theologians have been critical of church unity discussions in South Africa which begin by 'looking at the problem purely from abstract theological categories', and as a result of their criticism they have been accused by some white theologians of 'not being committed to the call for Christian unity' (Goba 1982:21). This charge is denied by Goba, and he points out the root of the problem: 'Can we participate in this visible unity with those who do not share our vision of what constitutes the liberating mission of the Church in society, those who support intentionally the existing structure of bondage in our society? (:30). The search for unity is therefore understood by black theologians 'within the context of the Church's mission of liberation' (:28). Speaking of 'the black church' is therefore not the description of an achieved state of affairs, but a commitment to strive for black unity for the sake of the liberation struggle.

Another aspect of the use of the term 'black church' is the socio-political fact that there are in reality two churches in South Africa, one white, powerful and affluent, the other black, powerless and poor. Mokoka (1984:165), speaking of the Roman Catholic Church, says that 'in fact a two-stream church exists in South Africa', the one stream fighting against unjust occupation and the other legitimising the status quo. In similar vein the Kairos Document (1986:1) says: 'there are in fact two Churches in South Africa -- a White Church and a Black Church In the life and death conflict between different social forces that has come to a head in South Africa today, there are Christians (or at least people who profess to be Christians) on both sides of the conflict'. Speaking of 'the black church' therefore highlights the fact that the racist and capitalist structures of South African society have in fact created a black church, distinct from the white church. Speaking of the 'black church' and 'white church' in South Africa therefore means thinking of the church in terms of how it actually exists in society, and not in the first

place in concepts derived from the Bible or church tradition. In the light of the socio-political realities of South Africa, black theologians regard it as totally misleading to speak merely of 'the church'.

Having clarified the implications of the term 'black church', it is necessary to study the views of black theologians on how to re-evangelise it. I must point out that even those black theologians who are highly critical of the church, emphasise the strategic importance of trying to re-evangelise it. One example is the view of the UCM Black Theology project in the early 1970s, as expressed by Moore (1973:82):

In South Africa black people's access to platforms where they could speak to others has systematically been removed This has left the black pulpit as virtually the only place through which a lot of black people can be reached. This meant that while the Church was in fact politically disastrous, there was just a possibility of utilising the black pulpit as part of the process of liberating black people.

In other words, in spite of their reservations, black theologians realised the importance of trying to re-evangelise the church to become 'truly an agent for liberation - redemption - change' (:82). In this approach to the re-evangelisation of the black church, much emphasis is placed on preaching ('the pulpit'). There is no doubt that 'prophetic and critical sermons' (Motlhabi 1984:261) are important vehicles of re-evangelisation, especially under a State of Emergency which, among other things, bans black political leaders and organisations, prohibits public meetings and allows only ordained ministers to speak at funerals of black activists. However, in spite of years of prophetic sermons, the black church has not yet been adequately transformed into an agent of liberation. It is clear that sermons alone are not sufficient to achieve this goal.

Another method of re-evangelisation mentioned by Motlhabi (1984:261) is 'Christian pressure groups', something which I have discussed in some detail in chapter 3 under the headings 'Black denominational caucuses' and 'Ecumenical forums'. Perhaps this has been the most effective method employed by black theologians thus far, since in this way they have succeeded in making many church members aware of their responsibility in the struggle for liberation. Regrettably, most of the members activated in this way have been ministers, something which has prevented these 'black caucuses' from becoming effective means of re-evangelising the churches as whole entities. Nevertheless they have played a significant role in fomenting change in the churches.

5.3.1.5 Africanisation

An important dimension of the re-evangelisation of the black church according to black theologians is the urgent need for Africanisation. The term itself is not used that frequently, probably because it seems to suggest the return to an idealised and romanticised African past, but the emphasis is nevertheless present in the writings of most black theologians. It has to do with the black church focusing on the 'urgent, existential questions of black people', which are not answered by white theology (Boesak 1978:79). It is therefore the answer of Black Theology to the problem of cultural alienation in the black community, which I have analysed in chapter four (4.2).

The stress on a critical reappropriation of African culture has been part of the Black Consciousness approach right from the start. Biko constantly reiterated the need to rescue African culture from its distortion by dominant white culture. For example: 'We must reject the attempts by the powers that be to project an arrested image of our culture.... It is through the evolution of our genuine culture that our identity can be fully rediscovered' (Biko 1979:70). This emphasis went hand in hand with the stress on socio-political liberation, since black

theologians realised that African culture was a living reality with vast resources that had to be mobilised for the liberation struggle. Goba (1981c:53) therefore says that in Black Theology 'the emphasis lies equally on the process of Africanisation -- an attempt to revitalise certain significant cultural elements of the Black people's worldview -- and on socio-political liberation'. What is needed is to develop a theology and church praxis 'which reflects our cultural experience as well as our existential brokenness resulting from the oppressive structures of our society' (Goba 1979b:9).

The re-evangelisation of black congregations, dominated by a white approach to theology and worship, therefore implies a process of Africanisation: 'If the church is the greatest cause of the misshappen (sic) state of our country ... it must in future work for the culture of liberation. It must go back to the roots of broken African civilisation, and examine the traditional African forms of worship, marriage, sacrifice, etc., and discover why these things were meaningful and wholesome to the traditional African community' (Pityana 1974:62). It is significant that Pityana uses the term 'culture of liberation', since it shows the intimate connection perceived by black theologians between the cultural and socio-political dimensions of the struggle for liberation. He makes an important statement on the shape of a re-evangelised black church:

To black people the Church needs to be a haven where they can freely shed their tears, voice their aspirations and sorrows, present their spiritual needs, respond to the world in which they live and empty their souls out to God. Traditional belief provided psychological areas where uprooted men and women could find comfort, a sense of oneness and belonging together, and a recognition of being wanted and accepted. This is the true Church. But the Church, as at present constituted, is still foreign to the soul of

the black man.... The Church of the people must have its roots deeply established in the history and traditions of those who profess its doctrine (:62).

In the words of Mokoka (1984:166), the major aim of this process of Africanisation is 'to inscribe the indigenous character of the peoples of the continent into the relatively new Christian way of life which is partly manifested in the institutions of the church'. It is not a question of Christianising Africa, but rather of Africanising Christianity, and it includes the 'indigenisation of the liturgy', the 'ascendancy of indigenous clergy to organs of ecclesiastical control' and the 'gradual effacement of the missionary enterprise in the African Continent as a whole' (:166). The term 'indigenous' in these quotations of Mokoka does not have the negative connotation given to it by Buthelezi in his articles on African theology and Black Theology (1973a, 1974a). This view, expressed by Mokoka and many other black theologians in Phase II, shows that the sharp distinction drawn by Buthelezi between African Theology and Black Theology during Phase I has been left behind. The realisation has dawned on most black theologians that there is an 'inseparable interconnection' between the process of Africanisation and the struggle for political and economic emancipation (Mokoka 1984:169).

Africanising the liturgy of the black church is an important aspect of the re-evangelisation process, since the development of a spirituality of struggle is essential for the success of the liberation project as a whole. It is the only way in which the black church can be an instrument of conscientising and mobilising the black community for the struggle. The symbols used in worship need to be brought 'down to earth' so that they can function as 'natural and encompassing expressions of reality' (Motlhabi 1984:122). The 'stilted and restrained' forms of worship are strongly criticised by Mabona (1974:107):

Are we communicating with an aristocratic or a capita-

listic God who wants the little people to be very well behaved or even muted when they approach his majesty? Let there be less cringing and scraping in the liturgy. Let us be apostles of more freedom and spontaneity in worship.

He also criticises the individualistic piety and meditation taught to black theological students, since these tend to create 'a kind of halo of sanctity and holiness' around some people, instead of making them 'sensible and well-adjusted' members of society, as African religiosity would want it. This brings out an important aspect of an Africanised black church, namely that it is oriented towards collective participation in the black community as a whole. Wilmore (1974:223) calls this a 'low church motif which saw the total black community within the ambit of the black church, thereby erasing the line between secular and sacred by integrating the whole of black culture and institutional life in the household of faith'. It is this holistic approach uniting religion and culture, piety and politics, worship and struggle, which characterises Black Theology. Worship is therefore 'a celebration of God's liberating activity in Jesus Christ, moving the worshippers to a profound involvement in the everyday affairs of life under oppressive conditions' (Goba 1978:25).

It is in this respect that the African Independent Churches also play an important role in Black Theology. Most black theologians agree that they should be taken seriously (e.g. Motlhabi 1986b:52), but at the same time there is a large degree of embarrassment with the seemingly 'vertical' and 'apolitical' approach which these churches adopt. This ambiguous attitude characterises most black theological responses to the Independent Churches. IJ Mosala (1982:5), with his emphasis on black working class and peasant culture as the hermeneutical starting point for Black Theology, regards the Independent Churches as very important since they embody the 'traditional world' which is the 'ideological resource centre, without which the African is doomed to

excruciating estrangement within the present international social relations'. There is agreement that the role and significance of pre-capitalist African religions and their embodiment in the Independent Churches need to be studied by black theologians for their 'potential epistemological significance' (ICT 1983:62). While showing great respect and interest for the Independent Churches, black theologians admit that much more research needs to be done before impulses from these churches can be integrated responsibly into Black Theology (4). They nevertheless regard it as an important aspect of their task of Africanisation.

5.3.1.6 A separate black church?

Another important matter pertaining to the re-evangelising of the black church, mentioned already in chapter four, needs to be taken up here. It concerns the suggestion which has been made periodically by some black theologians that a separate black church, free from all white interference and domination, should be formed. This was argued strongly at the first Black Theology seminar in Roodepoort in 1971, especially by Thebehali (1972). After exposing the political role of missionaries and their failure to relate to indigenous beliefs and worship, he argued as follows:

Christianity, which at present has an active element in favour of maintenance of the status quo, must lose its European form and colour; it must become a black religion for black men, as it is today a white religion for the whites. In order to achieve this, in order that Christianity may have relevance for and a future among the black people of South Africa, complete separation between black and white churches is of great importance and must be seriously studied. Has the time not come for the establishment of a Black National Church which will be a symbol of the fulfilment of the aspirations of the black people? (:45)

This sparked off a vigorous debate at the seminar, but no unanimity was reached. While all were agreed that the churches in South Africa were deeply racist and colonialist in character, there was disagreement on the question whether the strategy of withdrawing from 'multi-racial' churches would best serve the interests of black people in their struggle for justice. In a report on the seminar, Ntwasa (1971a:1) explains that those advocating withdrawal 'felt that the degree and extent of white domination in the major churches was too great for any real impact to be made which would bring about significant changes for the black members'. It seems that among those propagating withdrawal there were two groups, those supporting Thebehali's suggestion of a permanently separate 'Black National Church' and those feeling that the withdrawal of respected black leaders from the churches increased the chances that white church people would take black grievances and creative contributions seriously, thus helping along the process towards a 'truly non- (rather than multi-) racial church' (:1). In the latter approach a separate black church is not an end in itself, but a means towards the end of a truly integrated church.

Those who argued for remaining felt that it was still possible to make their presence felt within the white-dominated structures. Some wanted to do this by bringing moral pressure to bear on the white leaders and hierarchy. Others felt that such an approach would be ineffectual and 'questioned why they as blacks should allow themselves to be squeezed out of their majority black churches by a white minority'; they therefore proposed the development of strong black pressure groups ('caucuses') who would work towards 'taking over the control from the whites' (:1). This was in agreement with the strategy of caucusing to take over power which was put forward by Biko (1979:59), as I have indicated in chapter three. This strategy envisages a gradual takeover of the churches by black leaders, who would then systematically transform them into structures serving the

interests of black people. What is very important to note, however, is that there was unanimity at the conference on 'the goal of a non-racial church' (Ntwasa 1971a:2). In other words, the intention of black theologians was not to replace white domination in the church with black domination, but to create a just and liberated church in which racism would have been overcome. As in the broader political strategy of Black Consciousness, here too the antithesis is aimed at an eventual synthesis.

However, it seems as if the example of the 'African Independent Churches' played an important role in keeping alive among black theologians the other option of encouraging the formation of a 'black national church'. The freedom and spontaneous acceptance which black people experience in these churches have constantly attracted black theologians, and Maimela (1973:120) asserted that these churches presented the best basis for black unity: 'Die Einheit zwischen diesen Gruppen könnte die beste Basis für die Einheit der Schwarzen bilden'. In fact, Maimela regards the attempt to use the church as the basis for achieving black unity as a central aspect of the programme of Black Theology, which he formulates as: 'Die Einigung der Schwarzen unter der Führerschaft Jesu Christi, der alle Schwarzen in ihrem Kampf zur Freiheit führt' (:120). In similar vein, Ntwasa (1974a:116) argues that the individualist and racist character of the white-dominated churches was 'reason enough for black Christians to create a black church'. It is not quite clear in these statements whether an eventual 'synthesis' with white Christians is envisaged or whether a final break is meant (5).

In any case, the majority of the 1971 seminar participants favoured not withdrawing at that stage (Ntwasa 1971a:2). In spite of the problems they experienced, they remained in these churches to re-evangelise them from within. However, the idea of establishing a separate black church surfaced again in 1980, when the anger of black theologians at the recalcitrance of white Christians reached a new peak. The resolution concerning the 'Black

Confessing Church' reads as follows (SACC 1980:6):

We the black representatives in this consultation, wish to place on record the painful realisation that the churches to which we belong, have conformed to patterns of a racist society. The persistent cries of the black people that the Church is not consistent with the demands of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, have fallen on deaf ears.

We acknowledge our participation in the sin of the church. We are aware that God has been calling and continues to call his church to be a community that transcends all barriers of denomination and race.

We realize that the racial situation in this country has reached a critical stage and that God is calling the Church as a liberating and reconciling community to identify itself with the oppressed and the poor in their struggle for the dignity which is theirs as human persons created in the image of God.

We call upon black Christians prayerfully to seek the guidance of God in our desire to understand what obedience to God means in this situation.

We further call upon all white Christians to demonstrate their willingness to purge the church of racism.

If after a period of twelve months there is no evidence of repentance shown in concrete action, the black church will have no alternative but to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ by becoming a confessing church.

It is clear that this statement was drawn up by a black 'caucus' during the conference, and that the level of indignation and

disappointment with the 'liberal' English-speaking churches was very high. The Afrikaans-speaking white churches were absent, since this meeting had been called by the SACC to review the first ten years of the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism, as well as to plan strategies to combat racism in the 1980s. For the first time a representative group of black Christians here gave an 'ultimatum' to white Christians for the removal of racism from the life of the church, showing how serious they were about this. As a document it reveals very clearly the black theological attempt at re-evangelising the church in South Africa, especially when read together with the twenty-three conference recommendations on how churches could eradicate racism from their midst (SACC 1980:7ff). The term 'black confessing church' also reveals a merging of the notion of a 'confessing church', which emanated from the German Protestant experience during Hitler, with the black theological notion of a separate black church (6).

This prophetic call on the South African churches to purge themselves of racism did not produce any spectacular results within the twelve month period stipulated by the conference, and yet the black theologians who issued the 'ultimatum' did not react by establishing a black confessing church. It seems as if, just as in 1971, the black theologians who propounded 'takeover' rather than 'withdrawal' won the day. It may be that the material interests of black pastors in 'mainline' churches played a decisive role in this decision to stay, but probably the strategic choice for developing black caucuses within established churches seemed to them more likely to reach the intended goal than the strategy of establishing a separate black church. It seemed to embody more clearly the theological motive of trying to achieve an eventual reconciliation between black and white people in these churches. This motive is stated as follows by Nxumalo (1981:63): 'The Church, even in Black ecclesiology, is a sign of the ultimate unity of all things in Christ'. In the words of Witvliet (1987:132), black withdrawal is a 'demonstrative gesture' which, paradoxically, has the purpose of trying to establish eventual

dialogue, not alienation. To conclude this portion, it seems clear that the proposal to form a separate black church surfaced periodically in South African Black Theology, but that it never succeeded in gaining majority support. The 'gradual takeover' strategy, carried out by black caucuses within the churches, remained the majority view.

5.3.1.7 The continued relevance of the church?

More recently, however, another view has surfaced among black theologians with regard to the black church. This view has serious reservations concerning the possibility of re-evangelising the institutional churches in South Africa. Goba (1985:55) says: 'The church on the whole is becoming irrelevant to the struggle for liberation owing to internal problems and the lack of a prophetic vision and commitment of its leaders and members'. Because the churches are such an 'integral part of the socio-economic system', the question arises whether one should not 'confess Jesus against the church' (Mosala, IJ 1984a:5). In another paper ([sa]:5f), Mosala argues that most black theologians are merely 'progressivist' rather than liberation theologians. He bases this criticism on the fact that Black Theology does not emerge from mature Christian communities who reinterpret the Gospel in the light of the situation of the oppressed, redefining the sources of theology from within their praxis of liberation and allowing a class of participants in the struggle to emerge as the interlocutors of their theology. Mosala concludes his paper with a quote from Gonzalo Arroyo regarding the socialist Christians in Chile: 'The question now is whether they can carry on this struggle within the institutional church or whether they will be forced to carry it on outside the Church' (:6). For Mosala the same question applies to black theologians in South Africa.

A similar view is expressed by Govender (1987b:11) in a paper proposing the formation of a national assembly of confessing

Christian communities:

In a time when the very fabric of the existing social order is undergoing a fundamental redefinition and restructuring, the Church as part of that same social order cannot expect to pass unscathed and unaffected from the old into the new order. The great challenge for Christians in such a situation is how to let the message of the gospel of liberation become part of the new order, while discarding all those structures, traditions, mannerisms, powers and practices of the Church which are distinctly a part of the old order.

What Govender proposes here is not that black Christians leave their churches altogether, but that the already existing pockets of 'confessing communities' within the different churches pool their resources in order to develop their Christian praxis and theology. According to him, Black Theology now faces the challenge of becoming 'a theology of the confessing church in South Africa' (Govender 1987a:160).

This highly critical view of the institutional church does not seem to imply a complete rejection of the black church. It can be compared to the move in Black Theology from identifying its acting subject as the black community to the black workers (see Mofokeng (1987b:24). Such a move does not imply a rejection of the black community, but a 'necessary deepening' of the concept (:24). In the same way it seems to me that a 'deepening' of the concept 'church' takes place in the views of these black theologians: the authentic subjects of the black church are critical groups of black workers and other Christians who allow the workers to be the interlocutors of their praxis and theology. The subjects of the re-evangelisation of the black church in this view are not professional black theologians or ministers, but groups of black workers who mobilise the resources of their working class culture and faith in the struggle for liberation.

The black Christian community is therefore to be re-evangelised 'from below' by such groups, consisting of its most oppressed members and all others who have opted to live in solidarity with them. The view of Mofokeng (1988:40) on the continued relevance of the black church is very significant here:

African traditional religions are too far behind most blacks while Marxism, is to my mind, far ahead of many blacks, especially adult people. In the absence of a better storeroom of ideological and spiritual food, the Christian religion and the Bible will continue for an undeterminable period of time to be the haven of the Black masses par excellence.

In the whole of this section (5.3) I have indicated the different views of black theologians on the re-evangelisation of the South African black community. A wide range of approaches has become evident in the foregoing discussion. It has become clear that Black Theology is a pastoral and evangelistic theology, deeply concerned with the role of Christian praxis in the black liberation struggle. It is concerned to help black people overcome the negative and destructive self-image which they have internalised through years of white domination, and to transform the black church into an agent of humanisation and conscientisation. Different approaches to the black church have become apparent, but all black theologians are agreed that it should become a genuinely African home for suffering people, as well as a place where they are strengthened to persevere with their struggle for full humanity. Having looked at this primary emphasis of black theologians on re-evangelising the black community, I now move to consider their views regarding their responsibility towards white people.

5.3.2 Re-evangelising the white community

Some black theologians have expressed very strong convictions regarding the task of black Christians to preach the Gospel to white people in South Africa. Buthelezi (1973b:6) says that God has sent black people with the message 'that God died in Christ to liberate the white man from the urge to oppress the black man' and to 'evangelize the white man into accepting him as a brother'. Such black mission to whites embodies 'an evangelistic duty of getting the white man out of spiritual darkness', and black people who fail in this duty will face the following judgement (:6):

God will ask: "Black man, where were you when the white man abandoned my Gospel and went to destruction?" When the Black man answers, "I was only a kaffir, how could I dare preach to my baas?" God will say: "Was Christ's resurrection not sufficient to liberate you, black man, from that kind of spiritual and psychological death? Go to eternal condemnation, black man, for you did not muster courage to save your white brother".

Baartman (1973c:20) develops this further when he says that 'non-whites' normally fear whites, but that Black Consciousness says to black people: 'You must so love the white man that you become a Thou rather than an It. You must so love him that for his sake, for his humanity, you will never allow him to treat you as an It'. Boesak (1977b:147), also writing about love, says the following:

We cannot accept ... Cone's contention that 'to love is to make a decision against white people'. We would have thought that to be able to love white people would mean precisely to make a decision for them! For their humanity, however obscure, against their inhumanity, however blatant. For their liberation, and against

their imprisonment of themselves. For their freedom, against their fear; for their human authenticity against their terrible estrangement.

Buthelezi (1973c:156) adds another dimension when he says: 'For the sake of the survival of Christian faith in South Africa it is urgently necessary that the black man should cease to play the passive role of the white man's victim' and begin to 'evangelize and humanize the white man'. Similar sentiments are expressed by Tutu (1971), Thebehali (1972) and Kameeta (1978:96), who speaks of 'der Auftrag der Unterdrückten, den Unterdrücker durch das Evangelium zu der Erkenntnis zu führen, dass er, der Schwarze, ein Mensch ist' (7).

It is clear from these views that the intention of the 'withdrawal' of black theologians from multi-racial institutions differs from that of the 'Independent Churches', who left white-controlled churches in order to express themselves freely, but without an explicit aim of changing white people. In this regard Setiloane (1980:51), himself a critic of Black Theology, says: 'we are consistently distracted by the vociferous and dominating White minority in our Christian community here. The temptation is to push them aside and forget about them, as the Independent Churches have done, perhaps a little too soon...'. This may be a slightly one-sided interpretation of the Independent Churches, but it is certain that Black theologians do not 'push white people aside'; they are too deeply aware of the suffering caused by white people to want to ignore them. Their withdrawal is intended precisely to develop strategies for eradicating the oppression perpetrated by whites, so that a future synthesis between white and black may become possible.

However, not all black theologians see it as the responsibility of black Christians to evangelise whites. Some see it as the role of black theologians to address and re-evangelise the black community, but they hope that white Christians will 'get the mes-

sage' of Black Theology and start re-evangelising their own white community. This is the 'classic' Black Consciousness posture, expressed in the words of Stokely Carmichael: 'If the white man wants to help, he can go home and free his own people' (in Kleinschmidt 1972:1). As I have indicated in chapter one, Mpunzi (1974) and Mosala & Tlhagale (1986) articulate this indirect call to white people, stating that black theologians do not direct their message to them, but nevertheless hope that some white people will listen and be saved. Phakhathi (1977:5), in a hard-hitting address to 'white liberals' asks:

If you do not go out to convert others, have you yourself truly accepted the gospel? ... It is your task as white people to go out and awaken the entire white community to discover themselves, and to accept black people as people created in the image of God.... blacks can only be assistants in this battle.... white consciousness cannot be evolved by blacks. We can only confront you with the necessity.

This means that, even if the actual re-evangelising of whites is not the task of black Christians, they nevertheless assume responsibility for confronting whites with the need to do so. What black theologians regard as an urgent need in the white community is the development of a 'white consciousness', which I will discuss in more detail in chapter six. The important point to stress here is that the idea of letting white people evangelise 'their own people' has nothing to do with an acceptance of apartheid. What is envisaged is not an ethnic but a liberating 'white consciousness'. White consciousness is another dimension of the same struggle for liberation but strategically separate from Black Consciousness during the period before structural liberation is attained. The kind of re-evangelisation envisaged for the white community by black theologians flows from the insights of Black Theology and can therefore only be done by whites who have understood its message and who see their ministry

as an integral part of the struggle for holistic liberation. This evangelistic initiative directed at the white community comes 'from below', articulated by the 'organic intellectuals' of the oppressed, and revealing a genuinely Christian desire to see their oppressors not destroyed but changed. At this point it is important to note what black theologians see as essential ingredients of this liberating ministry in the white community.

5.3.2.1 Unmasking oppression

The first dimension of the re-evangelising of the white community, as seen by black theologians, is the unmasking of the oppression perpetrated by white people. Wilmore (1974:230) says that the true significance of Black Theology for the mission of the whole church is its function of 'unmasking the sin of Western Christianity'. Phakhathi (1977:5) proposes a 'relevant white programme' of evangelism which will awaken white people to the fact that they are oppressors, that oppression is inhuman, that being an oppressor means being enslaved, and that they therefore need liberating as much as black people do'. An important part of this unmasking is to help white people lose their 'innocence', that pseudo-innocence with which they have always believed that social and political structures are the will of God rather than their own creation (Boesak 1977b:4). They need to be helped to see their complicity in the evil being done to millions of people in South Africa in the name of Christ. They need to be helped out of the one-sided view of 'politics', which sees something as political only when it opposes or threatens the status quo. Kameeta (1976:11) points to this when he says that pro-government churches who hold a public 'day of prayer' are not accused of being involved in 'politics', whereas 'when churches who reject South African government policy intervene and speak for the thousands who are exploited, humiliated and trodden underfoot day and night, this is regarded as politics and subversion'. What needs to be unmasked to white people is the fact that they are not neutral in the South African situation, but that they benefit

directly from social, political and economic structures which keep black people in bondage. In other words, the different dimensions of the South African context discussed in chapter four need to be conveyed to whites, to help them 'see' the situation through the eyes of those who suffer under it, and to accept co-responsibility for it.

With this unmasking of sin, black theologians do not intend to create a pathological guilt feeling among whites. On the contrary, they intend to challenge white people to change their way of life and to get involved in the struggle against oppression. What they propose is 'a purposeful, systematic re-evangelization and conscientization effort, which will lead Christians themselves to engage in direct action for change' (Motlhabi 1984:270). White people need to be challenged to participate in alternative actions, otherwise they remain 'on-lookers' and never become participants in meaningful programmes of change in South Africa. In the words of Baartman (1975:3): 'They need to listen and hear and respond, not in intellectual exercises, but in concrete terms'. This unmasking is therefore not intended to humiliate white people, but to free them from their bondage to power and fear, and to contribute to their humanisation.

5.3.2.2 Humanisation

It is one of the fundamental tenets of Black Theology that oppression dehumanises not only the oppressed but also the oppressors. By keeping black people in bondage, white people have imprisoned themselves and distorted their own humanity. A ministry to re-evangelise white people is therefore primarily understood by black theologians as an effort to humanise them, that is, to restore the image of God in their lives. One serious distortion of humanity which black theologians discern in the white community is its 'capitalistic individualism', which has to be rejected totally, since 'individualists cannot be concerned about liberation' (Ntwasa 1974a:117). Black people need to take

the lead and build their 'tremendous sense of community' into the very fabric of the life of the church, so that they can then offer white people 'the joy of belonging to a community which is marked by a known and felt unity in the dynamic corporate life which surges on to break every yoke of human bondage' (:117). This task of 'humanizing the disfigured individualistic white world' (Fatton 1986:113) therefore springs from a motivation which is at once deeply African and deeply Christian.

One could describe this approach to humanisation as helping white people to become 'white Africans', truly at home among the people of Africa. Black theologians have no illusions about the difficulty of this enterprise and speak of it in different ways. In any case it implies that black people take the initiative in their relationship with white people: 'We are aware that the white man is sitting at our table. We know he has no right to be there; we want to remove him ... strip the table of all trappings put on by him, decorate it in true African style, settle down and then ask him to join us on our terms if he wishes' (Biko 1979:69). The painful reality of white people having been in Africa for generations and regarding themselves as Africans, while at the same time oppressing black Africans and refusing to identify with them, presents an enigma, a 'paradox' to black theologians (Zwane 1982:113). Perhaps this is the central problem facing black people as they consider the re-evangelisation of white people in South Africa today. Manganyi (1981:41) calls this a 'tremendous psychological problem', since 'the sensibility of white South Africans will have to undergo a radical transformation ... in the direction of a sort of gut level conviction that they are Africans, that they are in Africa'. In other words, the question here is how the colonialist mentality prevalent in the white community can be overcome. Since South Africa is not a classical colonialist situation (where the colonisers can return to their 'motherland'), but a 'settler colonialist' state, liberation means change in the oppressors themselves:

The present-day ruling class, even though they come from Europe do not belong there anymore. In a liberation they cannot be 'sent home'. The liberation will have to achieve a change in the oppressor, not drive him away (Govender 1987a:88).

An important part of the problem is that the identification of whites with Africa 'appears to be attached primarily to power and privilege and not to the land and to the total context itself' (Manganyi 1981:41). Whites need to be helped to stop looking down on black people and to begin to 'think African', but it seems that this will only become possible when black people have taken over power: 'I wonder whether in this century the white man will ever spiritually feel he belongs to Africa as long as we are not in power' (:42). In this respect one should note that black theologians view the re-evangelising of white people as a long process, which will only succeed when black people have attained sufficient social power effectively to counter the negative socialisation which white people presently undergo.

Another dimension of the humanisation of whites, alluded to in the previous paragraph, is that white people need to be set free from their bondage to power. Dwane (1977:10) speaks of the humanisation of oppressors as their being set free from 'self-deifying tendencies', that is from their role as 'masters'. Cone ([1970] 1986:103) says that oppressors are 'enslaved and dehumanized by their own will to power' and that it is only the oppressed who can liberate them from such 'megalomania' by 'refusing to behave according to the master's rules'. It is only when black people assert themselves as full human beings in interpersonal relationships that they can teach white people to give up the illusion of superiority.

An important aspect of the humanisation of the white community is the concern expressed by black theologians that the Gospel itself needs to be liberated from the stranglehold of dominant white

Christianity in South Africa. Boesak (1977a:39) says that the Gospel, 'so abused and exploited, needs to be liberated' but adds as a statement of faith: 'the gospel can be manipulated -- at least for a time, but ultimately its liberating truth shall make itself known to those who search for it'. He speaks in this regard of South African 'Civil Religion', which he describes as a 'pseudo-theological ideology which serves the oppressor' (:36). The Christian message has been fatally distorted due to its having been 'hi-jacked' by the white dominant class in South Africa. It is therefore a European, racist, colonialist and capitalist message, providing Christian legitimation for the whole 'South African way of life'. The re-evangelisation of the white community in the eyes of black theologians thus includes rescuing the Gospel from the hold of this Civil Religion. Here again the inherently missionary character of Black Theology becomes evident: black theologians need to do all this since 'ultimately ... the credibility of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is at stake' (Boesak 1981:2).

An important aspect of this attempt to liberate the Gospel is the fact that black theologians see the political struggle for the dismantling of apartheid also as a theological struggle, 'if for no other reason than that the system itself is undergirded by a demonic perversion of Christian theology' (Davis 1985:52). The struggle for the liberation of the oppressed and exploited black people has to be waged 'at all levels of the social formation' and therefore has to be taken also to 'the very centre of capitalist ideology, namely the Christian theological realm' (Mosala & Tlhagale 1986a:vii). The theological struggle to contest and undermine the use of the Bible to legitimise racial capitalism in South Africa is therefore an integral part of the black liberation struggle. In this respect Tutu (1971:111) speaks of the need for a 'radical decolonisation of theology' in South Africa, implying that black Christians must take the initiative to determine the agenda and method of theology. IJ Mosala (1987a:159) formulates it sharply: 'Black oppressed and exploited people must

liberate the gospel so that the gospel may liberate them. An enslaved gospel enslaves, a liberated gospel liberates'.

This theological struggle takes a variety of forms. In the first place Black Theology exposes and rejects the so-called neutrality and innocence of white (and some African) theologies. It affirms very strongly that every theology is conditioned by the social position and material interests of its authors. It therefore opposes all theologies which pretend not to be committed to any class interests (Houtart 1976:183).

Another specific instance of the theological struggle against dominant white theology is the rejection of the 'pessimistic anthropology' underlying white theology. Like a constant refrain one hears Biko (1979), Mpunzi (1974), Motlhabi (1974b) and Maimela (1987) echo this sentiment. Maimela (1987:45) speaks of 'this totally negative, cynical and pessimistic anthropological presupposition of the human self in general, a presupposition much more heathen, unchristian and therefore Hobbesian -- even Marxist -- than biblical in its orientation and content'. The main point of this 'Hobbesian' anthropology according to Maimela (:47) is that 'it continues to teach us that humans have uncontrollable fracticidal (sic) drives which even the Gospel and conversion cannot tame'. Despite theological statements to the contrary, white Christians in actual daily living seem to regard all humans as threatening and dangerous to themselves. Flowing from traditional African belief in 'the inherent goodness of man' (Biko 1979:93), black theologians develop a positive anthropology based on the notion of all people having been created in the image of God and therefore able to love others: 'the entire biblical ethics and commandments that we should love our fellows are premised on the assumption that humans are not predetermined by nature to destroy others' (Maimela 1987:57). If the Gospel is liberated from this negative anthropology, it will have a liberating effect on both black and white people in South Africa. Black people, by holding to this pessimistic view of humanity

have allowed themselves to be oppressed: 'This pessimism about man is therefore an ally in our undermining of ourselves' (Mpunzi 1974:138). Rejecting it is therefore a prerequisite for involvement in the struggle for liberation. If white people, for their part, reject this pessimistic view of human nature, they will be able in the long run to learn to trust and accept black people as fellow human beings and friends.

5.3.2.3 Conversion to struggle

Another aspect of the re-evangelisation of whites is the call extended to them by black Christians to be converted to the struggle for justice. Humanisation does not mean becoming human in some abstract or static sense. The humanisation of white people, just as the humanisation of black people, means being mobilised for the liberation struggle. Black theologians therefore challenge whites to get involved:

We are committed to Black liberation because thereby we are committed to White liberation. You will never be free until we Blacks are free. So join the liberation struggle. Throw off your lethargy and the apathy of affluence. Work for a better South Africa for yourselves and ourselves and for our children. Uproot all evil and oppression and injustice of which Blacks are victims and you Whites are beneficiaries, so that you won't reap the whirlwind. Join the winning side. (Tutu 1983:44)

This call to get involved in the struggle of the oppressed is formulated by some black theologians as an invitation to white people to 'become black'. So, for example, Cone (1986:103) says that white people should liberate themselves by joining the revolution of the black community, and thus 'destroy themselves and be born again as beautiful black persons'. In an important address to the SACC National Conference in 1979, Boesak

(1984a:24) defined blackness as a condition and continued:

Those white Christians who have understood their own guilt in the oppression of Blacks in terms of corporate responsibility, who have genuinely repented and have been genuinely converted; those whites who have clearly committed themselves to the struggle for liberation and who, through their commitment, have taken upon themselves the condition of Blackness in South Africa ... are part of the Black church, not as lords and masters but as servants, not as "liberals" but as brothers and sisters, for they have learned not so much to do things for Blacks, but to identify with what Blacks are doing to secure their liberation.

In similar vein, Goba (1978:20), speaking about theological education in South Africa, says: 'those white theologians who have become black by identifying themselves with the oppressed, black people's struggle for liberation, can be in a position to participate in black theological education'. At the founding of ABRECSA in 1981, he re-affirmed this approach by saying that ABRECSA should not be trapped 'like so many black organisations in ideological bickering and the "blacker than thou" attitude, nor should we see our role as an exclusive black struggle, but the struggle of the whole people of God committed to the ministry of liberation' (Goba 1981b:39). This 'racially broadened praxis' (Goba 1986:61) is also evident in the following statement by Maimela (1984:48): 'everyone who shares this attitude or awareness and joins the struggle in solidarity with the oppressed people against oppression and domination is, according to Black Theology, "black" '.

The black theologians mentioned above therefore see the re-evangelisation of white people as calling them to become 'black' by identifying themselves with the plight and struggle of the black community. The word 'black' is therefore used here not only

in the physiological or ontological sense, referring to actual skin colour, but also in the symbolic sense, referring to 'every human situation of enslavement, domination and oppression' (Maimela 1984:48). Both Cone ([1970] 1986:144) and Boesak (1977b:44) state that this interpretation of blackness gives a 'universal' dimension to the contextuality of Black Theology, not only in the sense that this links it with other liberation theologies, but also in the sense that it makes room for committed white Christians in the black struggle.

However, there is also another strand of Black Theology, adhering to the Black Consciousness strategy of black exclusiveness, which rejects the 'racially broadened praxis' explained above. To them the re-evangelisation of white people is not understood as calling them to 'become black' by joining the black struggle. In this connection Mofokeng (1983:234) says that 'the blackness of black people becomes more than the colour of their skin, while it is not less than their colour'. They certainly view the re-evangelisation of whites as conversion to struggle, but would confine the struggle of liberated white people to the white community. The view of Biko (1979:23) is classical in this regard:

Instead of involving themselves in an all-out attempt to stamp out racism from their white society, liberals waste lots of time trying to prove to as many blacks as they can find that they are liberal. This arises out of the false belief that we are faced with a black problem. There is nothing the matter with blacks. The problem is WHITE RACISM and it rests squarely on the laps of the white society.... White liberals must leave blacks to take care of their own business while they concern themselves with the real evil in our society - white racism.

White people therefore need to be converted and challenged to an all-out struggle against white racism in the white community. If

they have been awakened to a realisation of their complicity in the suffering of black people, their mission is to re-evangelise their own white community. These black theologians see their role in such re-evangelisation of whites as an indirect one: by analysing the black experience of suffering and by reflecting on the black struggle for liberation they can do no more than stimulate and challenge committed white Christians to engage in a liberating ministry in the white community. However, it must be underlined that these black theologians do not regard such a ministry as very promising or as strategically important for liberation, since 'all whites are part of the problem' and blacks are 'the only people who can create a new society ... not based on race or colour' (Mofokeng 1983:10). In such a consistent Black Consciousness approach, the re-evangelisation of whites, as an integral part of reconciliation and integration with whites, is made into a post-liberation issue, which is therefore not to be pursued by blacks at the present stage of the liberation struggle. In this view it is exclusively the responsibility of white theologians at present to develop strategies in this regard.

Let me conclude this section on the view which black theologians have of the re-evangelisation of the white community by saying that it is a fragmentary picture, much less elaborate than their views on the re-evangelisation of the black community. This is due to the fact that they regard it as the primary responsibility of white Christians to analyse their situation and develop a liberating ministry within it. It is nevertheless highly significant that they regard white liberation as an integral part of the holistic liberation which they are struggling to bring about. It is also significant that black theologians have not 'written off' white people, but leave room for the possibility of creative change to take place in the white community, preparing the way for a new South Africa where black and white can live together in harmony.

5.4 MISSION AS SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION

Earlier in this chapter I have discussed the Christological basis of Black Theology's view of mission, and mission as 're-evangelisation'. That encompassed the personal and ecclesial dimensions of mission. What demands attention now is mission as Christian involvement in the transformation of society, which represents the widest and deepest dimension of liberation as understood by black theologians.

This dimension of societal transformation is an inherent part of holistic liberation in Black Theology, as I have explained earlier. To be converted means 'the capacity to denounce and change oppressive structures' (Goba 1988:78). The courage to affirm one's human dignity 'must inevitably lead to the transformation of structures' (Boesak 1977b:50). In the thinking and praxis of black theologians there is no rift between personal, ecclesiastical and political liberation. These are different dimensions of the same struggle. In the view of black theologians, liberated black persons and a liberated black church are per definition liberating in their effect. This holistic and dynamic understanding of liberation is based on Christology: Jesus is seen as 'liberating black people from ukufa (=death) in its inclusive meanings' (Noko 1977:134). Christ's work must be understood as 'a comprehensive divine activity whose goal is to free men and women from all socio-political, cultural and spiritual (psychological) powers that enslave them' (Maimela 1987:94). The Gospel is political in its essence, because in the death of Jesus 'we see God identifying Himself with the wretched, the downtrodden of the earth' (Goba 1978:28). The church is engaged in a 'universal struggle for the liberation of mankind as a whole', which is 'consistent with the mission of Jesus Christ to secure salvation for the whole of mankind' (Mokoka 1984:8). For that reason the church has a responsibility to work 'for the eradication of those structures which promote hostility and dehumanisation' (Goba 1980a:30).

The scope of Christian mission therefore includes working for liberation from socio-political bondage. The church has a 'social mission' which implies a 'striving for ... political and social liberation', since the 'central social goal of the Christian ethic is a redeemed society' (Motlhabi 1984:225,260,263). The church must not only declare the social structures in South Africa unjust, but also 'contribute actively, within its prophetic limitations, toward ... their replacement' (:275). The church is entrusted with a 'mission of liberation, one which challenges us to confront the demonic power of Apartheid' (Goba 1980a:30). It is the responsibility of the whole church to become aware of injustice and to make an effort to eradicate it: 'Part of the mission of the church is to exhort and help Christians to make a total break with the unjust established order and make a forthright commitment to a new society' (Motlhabi 1984:261). In the South African situation of 'settler colonialism', liberation means to change the oppressor, but that means 'changing the political and economic structures of capitalism within which white domination is exercised at the expense of the black person, and especially the black worker' (Govender 1987a:88). This understanding of the scope of mission is echoed by the 'Black Theology in 1976' statement of the National Conference of Black Churchmen in the USA, which describes the first priority of mission as 'the restructuring of power relations in church and society and the liberation of the poor and oppressed' (in Wilmore & Cone 1979:342). The atoning work of Christ is understood as 'a transformation of the entire human situation in all its aspects' (Maimela 1987:95).

This holistic view of mission shows that Black Theology goes beyond the church as an institution 'to embrace aspects of black life and culture which white scholars have regarded as secular, non-Christian and sometimes even anti-Christian' (Wilmore 1974:215). It is Christian theological reflection on the involvement of the whole black community in its struggle for liberation.

5.4.1 Mission and history

I have already discussed the view that Jesus Christ is the 'liberative undercurrent' of black history and of the black struggle for freedom. In this section I look at the broader question of the relationship between history and mission in Black Theology.

Black theologians regard it as very important to 'read the signs of the times' in order to discern God's work in history and to participate in it. Mofokeng (1983:6) speaks of the Black Consciousness movement as a 'pneumatic activation', in other words, he interprets it as the work of the Holy Spirit. Maimela (1973:109) says of Black Theology : 'Sie lässt die Schwarzen ihren Befreiungskampf als Gottes Werk in dieser Welt verstehen'. There is a broad consensus among black theologians that 'God is working in movements such as Black Power to bring an end to white domination' (Moore 1971:5). They discern the hand of God in the Black Consciousness movement, awakening and challenging black people to recover their God-given human dignity.

This is a very important aspect of their understanding of mission, since this is how they ascertain what Christians are called to do in the world. Taking his cue from M.M. Thomas, Boesak (1977b:83) says: 'The work of Christ and his kingdom is discernible in the secular, social, and political revolutions of our time and ... the church's function is to discern it and to witness to it and to participate in God's work in changing the world'. Discern, witness, participate: these are the three aspects of Christian involvement in God's mission, that is, in God's ongoing work of liberation in history. A crucial question is: according to what criteria do black theologians determine where God is present in a liberating way in history? The answer is a Christological one, as I have pointed out earlier: God's character is revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, who was himself a poor and oppressed person, pro-

claiming good news to his fellow oppressed Jews. Wherever human liberation is effected, Christ is therefore at work (:87). As I have pointed out, this Christological criterion for God's presence is underpinned by the notion of the Exodus: God is revealed as the One who hears the cries of exploited slaves and who sets them free from bondage. 'Yahweh's liberation is not an isolated happening.... It is a movement through history wherein Yahweh has proven himself to be the Liberator' (:20). God is active within history, bringing about liberation for the poor and oppressed. There is in the history of all people the 'liberative undercurrent' (Mofokeng) of God's presence which can be discerned by faith and in which Christians should participate.

5.4.2 Mission as struggle

The commitment of black Christians to take part in God's liberating activity in history implies a commitment to struggle. It is a costly participation in the fight against social, political and economic sin. 'Being in the power of the Holy Spirit means being critical of all forms of human bondage ... deeply involved in the actual transformation of the situation of bondage' (Goba 1981c:57). The word 'love' is therefore understood in a thoroughly non-sentimental way: 'Evangelical love is on the side of the oppressed and ... this partisanship gives it an impact and effectiveness that is socially subversive' (Mkhatshwa 1984:3). It is a militant love, a life of engagement, which arises among the crosses of the oppressed today (see in Mofokeng 1983:97f). Black Theology therefore shifts the emphasis from 'petty sins' to 'major sins', teaching people to stop 'suffering peacefully' and instead to commit themselves to 'eradicating all cause for suffering' (Biko 1979:59). Since 'all life is exploitation, degradation and dehumanisation', black people are engaged in 'a struggle to lift ourselves from underneath this big boot that threatens to squeeze all life out of us' (Langa 1973:58). Black Theology encourages the black community to form a 'cohesive group determined to rise from the death bed of oppression and exploitation,

since they have the assurance that God is always with them, 'identifying himself with the struggle for liberation' (Tshenkeng 1977a:10). This 'social mission' of black Christians therefore necessitates the development of black solidarity, which means overcoming the growing individualism among black people (Goba 1974:69f).

This mission of struggle in the political, economic and social arena is seen by black theologians as a fight against social and structural sin. Since social structures do not give way without persistent pressure being applied to them, the challenge facing black theologians is to contribute towards 'the development of a counter-hegemonic culture in society' (Govender 1987a:152). In this connection Said (1971:524) says: 'a strategy of liberation includes a ministry of exorcism, the naming and casting out of demons'. He mentions racism, war, poverty, powerlessness and self-depreciation as 'demonic forces which constitute the negation of God's HUMANITY' (:524). The naming of demonic forces in society is expressed by Boesak (1977b:12) as the calling to 'unmask the lies, the halftruths and the myths that are employed to destroy humanity'. This corresponds with Black Theology as negation, which I have described in chapter four. The casting out of these demons is what this chapter is about. It requires persistent prayer, preaching, strategising and struggle by black people to break the power of these societal demons, and this is the mission to which Black Theology calls and empowers them. However, what is also necessary in this respect is the ability to discern the false gods and their idols (cf Boesak 1984a:83f):

The church of Jesus Christ is called to be particularly sensitive to false gods. It must be a liberated church, able to identify the false gods in our society, and to call them what they are.

What is needed is a mission of liberation, which challenges black people to confront the demonic power of Apartheid' (Goba

1988:79). The emergence of such a 'black Christian revolutionary praxis' cannot be understood apart from commitment to Christ: 'It is only on the basis of our commitment to the liberating activity of Christ in our midst that we are called to change dehumanizing and oppressive structures in the world' (:81).

An essential part of mission as struggle for justice is the prophetic dimension. Tutu (1979b:168) says that Black Theology challenges churches 'to be true to their calling to exercise a prophetic ministry in speaking up for the dumb, the voiceless, for those too weak to speak up for themselves'. However, this is not understood as asking the government for 'concessions'. On the contrary, speaking up for the voiceless is intended to encourage them to assert themselves as subjects of history. Black theologians do not expect structural change in South Africa to come about through polite dialogue with white authorities; they realise that it will only come about when black people apply constant pressure 'from below' on the structures of dominance. The Kairos Document (1986:12) is emphatic in this regard: 'True justice, God's justice, demands a radical change of structures. This can only come from below, from the oppressed themselves'. It is the spirituality of black Christians which sustains them to persevere in their pressure on the system. An important 'freedom song' which expresses this spirituality of struggle is 'Thula Sizwe':

Thula Sizwe, ungabo khala	Be still, people; Do not cry;
uJehova wakho uzokuqobela	Your LORD will conquer for you.

Inkululeko, Inkululeko	Freedom! Freedom!
uJehova wakho uzokuqobela	Your LORD will conquer for you.

Black theologians do make prophetic appeals to the consciences of the rulers (8), but their primary prophetic function is to empower black people by encouraging them to analyse and change

their situation of oppression through their own communal strength. The experiences which black people have had of dialogue with white authorities have convinced them that fundamental change will never come about in that way:

Dialogue

the bribe offered by the oppressor
glitters like fool's gold
dazzling the eyes of the oppressed
as they sit around the council table
listening to empty discourse promising empty promises
beguiled by meaningless talk
they do not realise ointment-smearred words
will not heal their open wounds
the oppressor sits secured with his spoils
with no desire to share equality
leaving the oppressed seeking warmth
at the cold fire of
Dialogue

(Matthews & Thomas 1972:2)

5.4.3 Mission as reconciliation

South African society is riddled with conflict and alienation. This is due to the cultural, racist, colonialist, capitalist and sexist dimensions of oppression, as I have shown in chapter four. Black Theology's deepest intention is to mobilise black people in order to overcome this conflict and alienation. Expressed in theological terms, black theologians strive for reconciliation in South Africa. However, they have often been accused, especially by white liberals, of being opposed to reconciliation and of fostering separation instead. It is crucial, therefore, to examine their view of reconciliation as an integral part of the mission of Christians in South Africa.

Baartman (1975:1,7) says that reconciliation is 'part of the very positive mission of the church', since the church is only true to its mission when it concerns itself with 'broken relationships'. The church has a 'direct mission towards the fostering of a "human community" Christianity must ... carry Christ through every sphere of human life' (Motlhabi 1974a:77). The church must therefore be an 'authentic healing agent in the world' (Boesak 1984a:82). It can be safely asserted that black theologians see reconciliation as an essential part of the church's mission in South Africa. However, their understanding of it differs substantially from that of most white theologians.

5.4.3.1 Withdrawal and reconciliation

The strategy of withdrawing from 'multi-racial' organisations is one of the most criticised aspects of Black Theology; and it has been criticised specifically in the name of 'reconciliation'. How does withdrawal serve reconciliation in the understanding of black theologians? In the first place it enables black people to be reconciled to themselves, to accept themselves as God's black children. In the presence of white people this self-acceptance is difficult to attain, since black people are constantly reminded of their inferior status. 'In order to be reconciled to others, black people first have to be reconciled with themselves. This means consciously overcoming the self-alienation that has grown out of the rejection of black humanity' (Boesak 1977b:92f). In order to overcome this self-alienation, an 'interim period of self-reliance' is essential, so that black people can become 'relatively equal' to white people and thus be able to achieve 'genuine interdependence' (Tlhagale 1985:133). Reconciliation between black and white only becomes possible when black people can enter into this relationship as equals: 'For the white man in power to speak of reconciliation to the black man in a position of powerlessness is to show a complete misunderstanding of the term' (Baartman 1973c:22). Withdrawal from white-run organisations is therefore a temporary measure intended to act as a means

towards reconciliation between black and white people: 'In the temporary separation the black seeks to find his own identity and come back into unity a free man [they] withdraw from this THOU-IT situation in order to come back, having accepted themselves as THOU's' (:21f). The strategy of withdrawal is therefore not opposed to reconciliation; on the contrary, it is an essential prerequisite for reconciliation to become possible. Magesa (1977:220) says in this respect that 'the desire for ultimate reconciliation distinguishes a genuine Christian liberation theology from mere harangues masquerading under the name'.

Another way to describe the 'temporary' nature of black withdrawal is by recognising that it represents 'the antithetical stage of the revolutionary dialectic' (Fatton 1986:77). The thesis is white racism, the antithesis is Black Consciousness and the synthesis is a 'true humanity', which will arise from a 'classless and nonracist society' (:77). This means that the Black Consciousness approach is 'bound to work for its own abolition' (:77). In similar vein, Sartre ([sa]:60) says of 'Negritude' that it is 'dedicated to its own destruction', since it 'serves to prepare the way for the synthesis or the realization of the human society without racism'.

This black withdrawal also implies the rejection of a policy of 'integration', which is seen by black theologians as 'reconciliation' on white terms. It would mean that 'the oppressed reconciles himself into a harmonious relation with the structures of oppression' (Buthelezi in Magesa 1977:220). What I have said in chapter two about the Black Consciousness view on integration doesn't need to be repeated here. An integration which is acceptable to black people is not 'an assimilation and acceptance of blacks into an already established set of norms and code of behaviour set up and maintained by whites', but 'a free participation by all members of a society, catering for the full expression of the self in a freely changing society as determined by the will of the people' (Biko 1979:24). Black withdrawal is

therefore a necessary prerequisite for black people to make their own creative contribution to the shaping of a new, reconciled South African community. Its intention is not 'separatist', but 'liberationist' (Khoapa 1972:102). In other words, reconciliation achieved through a strategic withdrawal of black people aims to change the white as much as the black community: 'It is only when both the oppressor and the oppressed die that there can be born a reconciled people' (Buthelezi in Magesa 1977:221).

5.4.3.2 Confrontation and reconciliation

Flowing directly from the emphasis on withdrawal, is the emphasis on confrontation. Reconciliation is not cheap or superficial. It does not mean 'papering over the cracks' or ignoring the serious divisions between people. To black theologians it is not a 'polite gesture' to let bygones be bygones, but a 'frank cooperative exchange and deep examination of the roots of the race relations problem' (Noko 1977:77). Reconciliation means 'freeing the racist of racism by making him confront blacks as men' (Cone 1969:69). Self-affirming black people therefore need to act in such a way that 'white Christians ... [can] learn and practise to accept a black man as their equal' (Sikakane 1974:20). Black theologians oppose an understanding of reconciliation which

becomes an ideology because it tends to avoid the confrontation so absolutely necessary, tends to avoid the fact that before you even talk about reconciliation you must recognise that there is alienation.... Reconciliation -- in scripture, in the life of the church, all through history -- is a costly thing involving blood and life and death and resurrection -- pain (Boesak 1980:138).

Experiencing the pain of oppression and exploitation by whites, black theologians find it impossible to speak superficially of black-white 'brotherhood'. Deutsch (1981:193) is correct in

calling Black Theology a 'conflict-oriented theology which sees reconciliation at the end of the struggle, but not in its stead'. To achieve fundamental change in personal relationships as well as in societal structures implies pain, since it can only be achieved through honest confrontation between equals, who take seriously whatever separates them. But because black people have been made structurally powerless and poor by whites, they have adopted a strategy of withdrawal for empowerment, withdrawal for confrontation. They strive for black solidarity so that with their collective power they can confront the white community with the need for social justice, without which reconciliation is impossible. Confrontation is thus not intended to humiliate or destroy white people, but rather to liberate them from their lifestyle of oppression and exploitation. Here again it is clear that the liberation of the oppressed includes and implies the liberation of the oppressors.

5.4.3.3 Justice and reconciliation

It has become clear in the previous two sections that black theologians do not see reconciliation as something happening between isolated individuals, but as a social and political event. Before reconciliation can become a reality, the structures of injustice in society need to be removed: 'In socio-political terms, reconciliation is possible only after the establishment of righteousness and social justice, after power, rights, and responsibilities are no longer the privilege of a happy few, but shared by all' (Boesak 1977b:93). This is affirmed by Noko (1977:142), who states that 'liberation is a precondition of reconciliation'. He points out that black theologians strive for a country in which black and white can live together peacefully, but that 'the possibility of a reconciled society presupposes liberation as the initial step' (:71). A message of unity or reconciliation, separated from the demands of justice, is 'the greatest heresy of our time', according to Sebidi (1983:19), quoting Miguez-Bonino. Such a message 'protects the dominant

groups and their power and makes the people at the bottom submissive' (:19). It represents 'an ideological appropriation of reconciliation by the liberal capitalist system ... to conceal the brutal fact of class and imperialist exploitation and conflict' (:12). Black Theology rejects such an interpretation of reconciliation as a superficial and therefore harmful 'covering up' of the painful realities of South African life. The church is in danger of failing in its mission of love 'as long as it is surrounded by unjust structures and if it does not do its part in working to dismantle them' (Motlhabi 1984:263). This does not mean that the church will necessarily be successful in achieving change in social structures, since they may not 'tumble like the walls of Jericho'; however, if the church fails, let it fail 'trying as hard as it can to fulfil its social mission to South Africa' (:263).

Reconciliation without justice means integration on white terms, in other words, a notion of reconciliation 'based on a cold-blooded exclusion of the history of alienation', and therefore on an exclusion of 'black history, black culture and the black struggle' (Mosala 1987c:19,20). Black theologians therefore reject an ahistorical and abstract notion of reconciliation, since such a view embodies the interests of the dominant white group in South Africa. 'There is no possibility of reconciliation between black and white people in this country until the oppressive structures and institutions, be they black or white, are transformed and put into service for the benefit of the underprivileged majority' (Mofokeng 1986b:172). This view is expressed as follows by Boesak (1977b:150):

Reconciliation requires a new image of humanity which is why reconciliation without liberation is impossible. But the new image of humanity requires new structures in society How new, then, are black persons who move out of their old lives of poverty and dejection into a higher status in the unchanged structures of an

oppressive and exploitative system?

Buthelezi (1976f:178) puts this graphically when he says that Christians cannot meet at the foot of Calvary to pray together if they do not also meet at the foot of Table Mountain to make laws together! This sentiment is also expressed by the Kairos Document in its critique of 'Church theology': 'There can be no true reconciliation and no genuine peace without justice. Any form of peace or reconciliation that allows the sin of injustice and oppression to continue is a false peace and counterfeit reconciliation' (Kairos Document 1986:9). This is so because the South African conflict must be described as a 'struggle between justice and injustice, good and evil, God and the devil' and to speak of reconciling these two is a 'total betrayal of all that Christian faith has ever meant' (:10). Pleas for reconciliation and peace before the injustices have been removed 'play into the hands of the oppressor by trying to persuade those of us who are oppressed to accept our oppression and to become reconciled to the intolerable crimes that are committed against us'.... No reconciliation is possible in South Africa without justice, without the total dismantling of apartheid' (:10).

While agreeing with the basic thrust of what the Kairos Document, says on reconciliation, Mosala (1987c:23) accuses it of 'biblical hermeneutical bankruptcy', since it uses the same hermeneutical approach as the theologies it is castigating. One crucial symptom of this is the fact that it accepts a division between reconciliation and liberation: 'It adopts a ruling class definition of reconciliation as the harmonisation of attitude between persons, especially blacks and whites' (:23). This critique of Mosala on the Kairos Document applies to much of Black Theology as hitherto articulated in South Africa. Reconciliation is seen by many black theologians as that dimension of liberation referring specifically to the 'harmonisation of attitudes between persons, especially blacks and whites'. Mosala does not repudiate this aspect of black-white reconciliation, but relegates it to a

secondary place in his understanding of reconciliation:

Reconciliation must have something to do with the reversal of our alienation; and our alienation is not alienation from white people first and foremost; our alienation is from our land, our cattle, our labour which is objectified in industrial machines and technological instrumentation. Our reconciliation with white people will follow from our reconciliation with our fundamental means of livelihood (:22).

Seen in this light, the two notions of reconciliation and liberation are in fact synonymous and inseparable, understood as the 'fundamental, comprehensive transformation of all oppressive and exploitative structures' (:25). He draws on the Old Testament theology of Jubilee to interpret reconciliation as restoration or restitution, implying a 'process of socio-economic and political reconciliation' (:24). This leads immediately to the next section, on the future South Africa envisaged by black theologians.

5.4.4 The shape of a new South Africa

Black theologians are passionately concerned about the future. Having experienced the life-long pain and humiliation of being black in South Africa, they are committed to the creation of a new political order which will afford themselves and their children (as well as white people) the opportunity to live full human lives. This new South Africa is described as follows by black theologians:

A just, egalitarian society with an equitable economic system based on the principle of equal sharing of the country's wealth. There would be a completely non-racial franchise: an open society, one man one vote, no reference to colour (Motlhabi 1984:120).

A totally united and democratic South Africa, free from all forms of oppression and exploitation. A society in which all people participate fully in the Government of the country through the medium of one man one vote. A society in which there is an equitable distribution of wealth. An anti-racist society (in Thoahlane 1976b:73).

These summary visions of a future South Africa are confirmed by Noko (1977:74), who envisages 'a country where Black and White will live together in peace and equality'. This is echoed by Boesak (1978:81), who calls on black people to 'make South Africa a country where both black and white may live in peace'. Motlhabi (1974b:126) speaks of Black Theology as a word of hope to people without power 'that one day we will live together without masters or slaves'.

Biko (1979:98) challenges black people to march forward together in order to 'bestow upon South Africa the greatest gift possible - a more human face'. The goal of black endeavours is to attain power, but it is more than that; it is to attain 'human beingness', the restoration of the imago Dei (Baartman 1973b:4). Black Theology is indeed the quest for a true humanity for all South Africans (Biko 1979:87ff).

Another way of putting this is to speak of justice. Goba (1980c:136) says that the process of liberation means 'the complete transformation of the existing socio-political structure, and the creation of a just society for all'. Mokoka (1984:195) emphasises that Black Theology is not a call for the substitution of one form of exploitation with another, but that it posits the 'principles of justice, non-exploitation and self-determination'.

Having given a survey of these general black visions of a future South Africa, I now want to show how black theologians describe that future with reference to the five elements of context

analysis given in chapter four. What they envisage is a non-racial, democratic, socialist, African, and non-sexist society.

5.4.4.1 A non-racial society

A liberated South Africa will in the first place be free from the curse of racism. Black people who suffer 'simply because they are Black people' (Mofokeng 1983:28), hope and struggle for a society in which people will no longer be classified and treated according to their 'race'. That is, a society in which all the social structures based on race will have been dismantled and the resulting black suffering eliminated. Such a society, in which the 'destructive obsession with skin colour' (Buthelezi 1976e:35) and the racist system of domination is overcome, is described as 'non-racial'. Some black theologians formulate their vision of the future as 'anti-racist' (see Sebidi 1986a:35) rather than 'non-racial', since the latter term has often been used in the sense of 'multi-racial', which means recognising the category of race as constitutive for society. The terms 'non-racial' and 'anti-racist' have become the distinguishing marks of the two approaches to the black struggle for liberation in South Africa, the former representing the UDF line and the latter the AZAPO/NFC line. The real difference between them seems to be the question: 'whether to forge alliance trans-racially for the struggle, or to operate solely on the basis of black solidarity, black unity' (:34). Sebidi, taking his cue from Neville Alexander, locates this difference not at the level of blueprints (ideology), but at the level of strategy or tactics. He argues that the two streams have similar visions for a future South Africa/Azania: 'it does seem that both the NFC and the UDF are attracted and fascinated by blueprints ... which are not that dissimilar' (:34). He also refers to the repeated assurances by an organisation like AZAPO 'that its racial exclusivity stance is only confined to what they term the "pre-liberation phase of the struggle"' (:34). There is agreement among 'non-racial' and 'anti-racist' black theologians that white people will be part of

the new South Africa, provided they renounce and relinquish racism. However, the 'anti-racist' line of thought suspects that white racists will retain their power if a 'non-racial' approach is followed. This suspicion is fuelled by the following words in the Freedom Charter, which is the central symbol of the 'non-racial' approach:

ALL NATIONAL GROUPS SHALL HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races ...

All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride.

The fact that 'national groups' and 'races' are to be protected, suggests to critics of the Charter that it envisages a multi-racial rather than a non-racial future. It must be pointed out, though, that the ANC has recently drawn up a set of constitutional proposals, not to replace the Charter, but to clarify some of the problems in it (9). The Azanian People's Manifesto does not use the term 'non-racial', and speaks instead of a 'democratic, anti-racist and socialist Azania' (in Pheko 1984:185). Speaking about the future South African society as 'anti-racist' implies (among other things) that the struggle against racism will have to continue for a long time even after black people have taken over power in South Africa. This will be necessary due to the long and pernicious history of racism in South Africa, which has caused it to become deeply entrenched in the social, political and economic structures of society. In order to attain a society in which 'race' will no longer be used to oppress human beings, an ongoing battle will have to be waged against racism until it is completely uprooted. Black theologians are therefore quite realistic when they envisage a future non-racial South Africa: they admit that it will require the take-

over of power by black people as well as a sustained programme of liberating education to eliminate this 'destructive obsession' and its evil effects from the structures of society and from the minds of both white and black South Africans. Daunting as this task may seem, this is the mission to which black theologians commit themselves.

The basic strategy which black theologians recommend in this regard is that of persistent pressure on the structures 'from below'. Biko (1979:91) says:

We must realise that our situation is not a mistake on the part of whites but a deliberate act, and that no amount of moral lecturing will persuade the white man to 'correct' the situation. The system concedes nothing without demand

Since racism is a system of domination and not merely prejudice or wrong attitudes, a confrontational rather than a moralising approach is required to change it. Adam (1973:155) remarked that the Black Consciousness approach was more realistic than earlier phases of black resistance to racism since it realised that:

a ruling group does not give up its privileges voluntarily unless pressured into doing so by the strength of its opponent. Racial prejudice is not to be changed by enlightenment, since racial attitudes reflect and rationalize group interests and privileges.

It is simply not true that 'if we try hard enough and wait patiently, the oppressors will eventually feel ashamed of their conduct and relinquish their power to enslave' (cf Cone 1974:51). What is needed is to 'declare war on racism', which has become a 'demonic force' in society (Goba 1985:58). Programmes of conscientisation are therefore not enough; the problem is so serious that this demon needs to be 'exorcised' for a common humanity to

be attained by black and white people (:58). Black Theology is therefore concerned about the 'authentic freedom for both black and white people. It affirms the humanity of white people in that it says "no" to white oppression' (Pityana 1974:63). A 'true humanity' (Biko) beyond the destruction and distortion caused by racism is what black theologians envisage for a future South Africa.

5.4.4.2 A democratic society

Black theologians are deeply aware of the undemocratic, indeed colonialist, nature of South African society and they suffer under it together with the whole black community. What they desire in a new South Africa is a political structure in which all people will have the democratic right of full participation in the political process. A good transition from the previous section on racism to the present one is supplied by Motlhabi (1974b:122f), when he says:

Racism as such is not the real poison in inter-personal relations. It is that for which racism exists, i.e. vast discrepancies in the distribution of power. To reject racism and leave the authoritarianism basically unchanged may be to change the names of the people in 'office' but it is unlikely to change the names or the lot of the people at the bottom of the power pile.

If black rulers were merely to replace white ones, that would leave the daily lives of the poorest and most exploited people unchanged and a black theology of the oppressed would remain necessary. Black theologians envisage a society where the authoritarianism (which is inherent in racism and colonialism) is destroyed, and where an egalitarian community life may become a reality. This necessitates a fundamental reversal of the unequal distribution of land, which is one of the central features of 'settler colonialism' in South Africa. Then black people, who

have been taught for centuries to 'know their place' in white-dominated society, will at last have a place, indeed 'a place in the sun' (cf Witvliet 1985). The importance of land is stressed by Mokoka (1984:254), who says that 'possession and occupation of territory is logically anterior to any meaningful exercise of freedom, autonomous culture and self-determination'. Mofokeng (1983:233f) speaks of the 'restoring of the organic vital interconnection with their land' as an essential part of the liberation of black people. What empowers black people to attain this is the knowledge that God is 'in solidarity with the poor in their struggle to reclaim and regain their dispossessed land' (:232). At present black people are lost, since the land is their mother and they have been forcibly taken away from her. In the black cultural tradition, land is not only a source of livelihood, but also of health, having deep religious significance, functioning as place of habitation, as bedroom and as house of the ancestors (Mofokeng 1987a:11). It therefore not only has far-reaching psychological and sociological significance, but also creates a sense of community and history. Salvation will therefore mean that black people are reconciled to their land in order to live in security. This view is supported by IJ Mosala (1987c), as I have pointed out in the discussion of reconciliation.

This 'theology of land' is prominent in some recent Black Theology and is critical of the Freedom Charter, which is seen as guilty of an 'ideological reduction of the significance of land' (Mofokeng 1987a:11) and of 'having substituted political ideals for historical truth and objectivity' (Mokoka 1984:252). In the eyes of these black theologians, to say that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white' and that black people have been robbed merely of 'their birthright to land', implies overlooking the 'settler colonialist' nature of the South African problem. I must emphasise, however, that black theologians who support the Charter and the non-racial strategy of liberation are equally insistent on the necessity of redivision and redistribution of the land as an inherent part of liberation.

They take their cue from the Charter itself, which says that 'all the land [shall] be redivided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and land hunger'.

All black theologians therefore agree that a democratic South Africa will be characterised by a redistribution of land. This will entail much more than the scrapping of the Group Areas Act and the various Land Acts. It will mean the systematic restoration of the land to its original inhabitants. In the present, while the struggle continues towards reaching that goal, Black Theology endeavours to 'restore and sustain the hitherto battered and besieged sense of ownership of that land' (Mofokeng 1987a: 10).

5.4.4.3 A socialist society

'Land is a God-given gift to the people comprising a nation and therefore it shall be owned by all the people with the State being entrusted with its control' (Black People's Convention = BPC 1976:7).

These words from the statement on 'Black Communalism' by the Black People's Convention provide a bridge between the previous section and the present one. Black theologians all support some form of socialism for the future South Africa. Sebidi (1986a:35) quite rightly states that both UDF and AZAPO/NFC favour 'an anti-racist, socialist Azania'. Black theologians point out that socialism is much more in agreement with African communalism than is capitalism, and that the destructive effects of the latter on the culture and livelihood of black people has made it unacceptable for the future. There is disagreement on the precise type of socialism which should be adopted and on exactly how it should be brought about, but there is no doubt that black theologians want to see the establishment of socialism in a future South Africa. It is for this reason that in Phase II of South African Black Theology a serious debate has begun on the employment of

Marxist tools of analysis (see Govender 1987a:25ff).

The North American black theologian Cornel West (1979:556) has pointed out that the lack of a social theory or a 'social vision' in Black Theology can easily lead to the inclusion of black people into white-dominated society rather than their liberation from it. In similar vein, IJ Mosala (1984a:1) says that 'there can be no justice without an ideology of social transformation, no revolutionary theological praxis without a theory of revolutionary action'. This is the full development of an idea which was present in the Black Consciousness philosophy since its inception, as I pointed out in chapter two. Khoapa (1972:102), for example, said that 'racial problems can be solved only in a climate of economic equality'; likewise Gwala (1976:28f) said that there can be 'no true and lasting political, social or psychological liberation of Blacks without economic liberation'. This intimate relationship between racism and capitalism, which has come to be emphasised more and more by black theologians, has led to the clear realisation that racial equality and justice will not be attained unless a socialist economic system can be introduced in South Africa. Fatton (1986:56) is correct when he says that the Black Consciousness movement (and Black Theology) 'came to recognize the phenomenon of class struggle and the fundamental role of man in abolishing oppressive social structures'. Pityana (1974:63) speaks of the need for the church to learn from the 'primitive communism' of the early church and the communalism of traditional African society in order to build, together with the African masses, a 'just socialist society'. Since a people's liberation is not purely moral or spiritual but also material, there is the need for the liberation of their 'productive forces', that is the means of production (land, cattle, raw materials, etc) as well as their human labour (Mosala 1987a:66). All of this amounts to the necessity of establishing a socialist alternative if black people are to be liberated to full humanity.

5.4.4.4 An African society

Black Theology sincerely believes that it is possible to recapture what was sacred in the African community long before white people came -- solidarity, respect for life, humanity, and community (Boesak 1977b:152).

This statement connects the emphasis of the previous section on socialism with the present one on Africanisation. Since black theologians experience the present reality of South Africa as one of cultural alienation, liberation means the full flowering of 'what was sacred in the African community long before the white people came'. What needs to be restored is African communalism, which is in direct conflict with the 'rampant individualism of the free-market system' (Tlhagale 1985:134). Black Theology stresses the corporate nature of humanity, a value which 'has deep roots in African traditions' (:134) and which corresponds closely with the 'corporate personality' of the Old Testament (Goba 1974). The new South Africa which they envisage and for which they are working is therefore a society in which the African tradition of communal sharing will be restored to a dominant position. This does not mean the mere restoration of a static African culture from the past. Instead, Black Theology locates itself 'in the context of the dynamic cultural revolution that is currently going on in Africa ... in which God's goal of liberation is manifesting itself' (Goba 1980a:26). It means that black people assert themselves in the land of their birth, as is vividly expressed by Biko (1979:69), as I quoted earlier:

"This is a black man's country; any white man who does not like it must pack up and go"... We knew he had no right to be there; we wanted to remove him from our table, strip the table of all trappings put on it by him, decorate it in true African style, settle down and then ask him to join us on our terms if he liked.

However, black theologians point out that black culture is neither a monolithic unity nor merely something of the past or the future. It bears the scars and bruises of the oppression which black people have been suffering, but it is also a loud and subversive protest against their dehumanisation (Mofokeng 1987a:9). It is therefore from black culture and history that weapons for the black struggle need to be appropriated and refined by those involved. IJ Mosala (1987a:72) points out the special significance of reappropriating the economic morality of the communal stage of production. This mode, which prevailed before the 'tributary' and 'capitalist' modes of production, takes human beings and their well-being as the starting point and the goal of production (:72). The heavy burdens placed on black workers by the capitalist mode of production need to be removed, so that there can be room and time for them to become real and full human beings. Cultural practices geared towards survival in earlier times therefore reappear as 'cultural weapons of struggle' for liberation in the present.

This emphasis on Africanisation also reveals a nationalist element in Black Theology. Although there is a whole spectrum of views on this among black theologians, there seems to be agreement that 'the nationalist emphasis is valid and necessary and constitutes an important ingredient in the overall strategy of the liberation struggle' (Govender 1987a:89). The new South African society envisaged by black theologians will therefore bear an unmistakably African stamp, even though this aspect is not spelt out in much detail.

5.4.4.5 A non-sexist South Africa

As I have pointed out before, the awareness of sexist oppression has only recently arrived on the scene in South African Black Theology, mostly as a result of the influence of North American black and 'womanist' theologians (10). Mofokeng (1987b:25) says in this regard that for this 'gross neglect' black theologians

have to 'hang their heads in shame and ask for God's forgiveness and that of our mothers and sisters'. It was at the Black Theology Conference of the ICT in 1983 that black women were invited for the first time as speakers and thus began articulating within the Black Theology movement a distinctly feminist voice. The Final Statement of that conference concluded: 'Black Theology cannot be a theology of liberation unless feminist theology is a fundamental part - autonomously organised - of a broad movement of a Black Theology of liberation' (ICT 1983:63). Bonita Bennett (1986:174) supports this by saying that black women see their role as taking part in the struggle for the liberation of all people in the country and that this 'total liberation' cannot be achieved without the liberation of women.

What black feminist theologians would want to see in a new South Africa is the elimination of the triple exploitation to which black women are presently subjected (as black persons, as women, and as workers, see chapter 4). The first and the last forms of exploitation have been dealt with already, and in this section I will briefly analyse how black feminist theologians envisage a South Africa without sexist oppression. This has not yet been developed in much detail by black feminists, but it flows from the fact that they see themselves in the first place as struggling together with black men for political and economic liberation: 'Black women who have tasted equality in battle, in suffering and in victory are not prepared to return to their former status in the community and at home after combat or when the struggle is over' (Mofokeng 1987b:25). Black feminist theologians do not indulge in strident anti-male rhetoric, since 'black women have come to identify the real enemy, and are committed to struggle for justice and peace' (Jordaan 1987:44). They do this not because they are 'soft' on black men, but because they want to avoid the impression that they see them as enemies, so that together with men they can focus on 'the real enemy' of racial capitalism. In spite of the fact, therefore, that the implications are not yet spelt out in detail, black feminist theologians

have begun articulating their concerns within the ambit of Black Theology and take on the responsibility for their own liberation: 'liberation does not fall into one's lap. It must be claimed and protected.... Unless we are willing to exercise our right to claim power and to do something about bringing about the changes we believe are necessary we will remain the invisible creatures who are always on the outside looking in' (Mosala, B 1986:132).

It is clear, then, that black feminist theologians have helped black male theologians to see holistic liberation as including the liberation of women from the shackles of patriarchy: 'total liberation cannot be achieved without the liberation of women' (Bennett 1986:174).

To conclude this section on the shape of a new South Africa envisaged by black theologians, let me reiterate that they regard this socio-political and economic task as an essential part of their Christian calling. They do so on the basis of their conviction that 'it is only the victims of the situation of racist oppression who are strategically situated to create a new society by liberating themselves' (Mofokeng 1983:12). The liberation which they seek is holistic, and efforts to transform South Africa into a just society is an indispensable dimension of Christian mission. This raises the question of the appropriate means to achieve this goal.

5.4.5 Struggle and violence

The new South Africa which black theologians envisage will not come about merely by dreaming dreams or preaching sermons. It demands dedicated action by black people, who commit themselves to struggle for its realisation in the name of Christ. This gives rise to a new set of 'beatitudes', as Mogale (1984:60) has so pointedly formulated it:

blessed are those who struggle
in this perpetual state of war
on the side of the weak
against the strong
blessed are those who struggle
for righteousness
in opposition to wrong
blessed are you my countrymen
who will join us now
in this struggle
of life and death
so that freedom and peace
will be more than words
in this land
where the voice of
the blood of my people
cries from the soil
blessed are those who struggle.

In the light of the suffering which black people are experiencing, black theologians call on them neither to despair nor to adopt an 'escapist' spirituality, but instead to rebel against their circumstances, to 'fight back with the whole of [their] being' until they are recognised by their oppressors as human beings (Cone 1969:12). The category of struggle is therefore central to Black Theology:

Als wahrer Mensch in dieser Welt zu leben bedeutet, täglich gegen Strukturen zu kämpfen, die mich zum Nicht-Menschen machen wollen.... Nach dem Bild Gottes geschaffen sein, heisst, gegen alles, was mich dieser Ebenbildlichkeit berauben will, zu kämpfen.

(Kameeta 1978:96f).

In similar vein, IJ Mosala (1983a:3) says: 'Black Theology is an attempt to theorise the struggle from a position of commitment to the black side of the conflict'. What is important to describe now is the views of black theologians on the appropriate means to be employed in this struggle.

5.4.5.1 'Amandla Ngawethu' - 'power is ours'

This rallying cry of black political activists expresses very clearly the basic approach of black theologians to the struggle for a new South Africa: to empower black people to assert themselves as subjects of history (11). This means that they apply constant pressure 'from below' on the structures of injustice, until the oppressors who are perpetuating the structures are forced to abandon them and to negotiate with the oppressed about new structures that would embody justice for all: 'Black Consciousness seeks power for the black man. It is aware of one basic thing: a man in power finds it extremely difficult to listen to one who is powerless' (Baartman 1973c:20). They are quite realistic about the fact that white people in South Africa are not going to relinquish or share power unless black people force them to do so through consistent pressure. This was articulated very clearly by Sobukwe in 1949: 'History has taught us that a group in power has never voluntarily relinquished its position. It has always been forced to do so. And we do not expect miracles to happen in Africa' (in Gerhart 1978:184f). Moore (1971:7) describes the strategy of Black Theology in a similar way as one of 'separation for coercion':

It will not be without a bitter struggle that whites yield their land, economic, military, and educational advantage -- even though it is absolutely necessary that they do so if the way is to be opened for reconciliation and the enjoyment of a full human life by all ... in South Africa.

Mofokeng (1983:229) concurs that 'black people have to use power to coerce for their liberation', but this bitter struggle of coercion does not necessarily imply the use of violence, as I will point out later. What is clear is that 'there must be no misunderstanding about the moral duty of all who are oppressed to resist oppression and to struggle for liberation and justice' (Kairos Document 1986:30).

The kind of concrete actions primarily envisaged in this strategy of coercion are things such as boycotts, strikes, protests and demonstrations. Boesak (1977b:71) describes this strategy as the use of 'resources of culture, politics, and economics to force upon white people a change in existing structures that have not been affected by mere moral suasion and appeals to conscience'. One could characterise these activities with the terms defiance, non-cooperation, non-collaboration or civil disobedience (12). They are intended on the one hand to conscientise and mobilise the oppressed community and on the other to challenge and pressurise the rulers into taking their demands seriously. These actions have come to be described as 'non-violent direct action' and are intended to undermine the power base of the authorities so that they will recognise their illegitimacy and be forced to share power with the black majority or to transfer power to them: 'The only responsible way out of this crisis is to find effective ways of pressurising the government to go to the negotiating table' (SACC 1988:66) (13).

It is in this connection that mention should also be made of the call by black theologians for international pressure on South

Africa. The most controversial is certainly the call for the imposition of economic sanctions, but black theologians have also added their voices to calls for sports and cultural boycotts. Due to the international dimensions of the capitalist system and the strong political support which the South African government gets from its allies in the Northern hemisphere, black theologians have come to realise the strategic importance of mobilising pressure from the outside world. The following call emanated from the Black Renaissance Convention in 1974: '[The Convention] declares that legalised racism in South Africa is a threat to world peace and therefore calls upon all countries of the world to withdraw all cultural, educational, economic, manpower and military support to the existing racist institutions' (in Thoahlane 1976b:73). The refusal of countries such as the USA, Britain and West Germany to bring any meaningful pressure to bear on South Africa 'is in fact a refusal to help in the dismantling of the apartheid system' (Tlhagale 1986a:144). Even though the limited sanctions that have been applied by some countries have not made a significant impact on the South African economy, they do reveal a growing moral repugnance for the apartheid policy and certainly have a 'psychological effect' on South Africa. Tlhagale (1986a:147) therefore argues that the government has been forced to respond to these internal and external pressures and has made (and promised) some political changes. Cracks are appearing in the granite edifice of apartheid, and what is needed is sustained pressure both from inside and outside South Africa.

The call on the outside world to impose sanctions is seen by black theologians as one of the last non-violent strategies that are open to them to force the government to take black aspirations seriously (14). It also stems from the growing consensus among them that economic realities underlie and undergird racist policies in South Africa, which means that these economic structures need to be changed in order to eradicate racism.

However, due to escalating oppression and the banning of even

non-violent black initiatives for change, there are many black people who have become convinced that to change this situation the deliberate use of violence is inevitable.

5.4.5.2 Violence

When discussing this highly emotive topic, three things need to be borne in mind. First, the freedom to express views on violence is severely limited in South Africa by an awesome array of laws, aggravated by the stipulations of a State of Emergency. Due to the banning of publications and individuals, some black theologians have avoided being explicit about the use of violence to attain liberation. It is therefore not possible to give the complete picture. When one realises the risks incurred by black theologians when writing about this, their silence is perfectly understandable.

Secondly, the question of the use of violent means to achieve a more just society can only be understood against the background of what black theologians see as the violent nature of the South African state (as I have explained in chapter 4). When I discuss violence in this section, I am therefore referring to the counter-violence of the oppressed black community, who are defending themselves against the structural violence of the South African political and economic system, and attacking the oppressive system as such.

Thirdly, when I refer to violence I am not thinking only of the armed struggle being waged by the ANC and PAC as 'liberation movements'. Since 1976 black townships have become the scene of many violent acts against the South African state, not only against the police and defence force, but also against institutions and individuals seen as symbols of 'the system'. Violence in this context therefore refers to everything from stone throwing by black children to the use of conventional weapons by trained guerillas.

The first view prevalent among black theologians is that violence (which could lead to bloodshed) should preferably not be used in the struggle for liberation. Tutu (1983:143) says that a new South Africa should be brought about by 'reasonably peaceful means'. It is for the same reason that Baartman (1973c:19) accepted Black Consciousness but rejected Black Power: 'I believe that Black Power has violence built into it. Black Consciousness does not have violence as one of its facets'. The same sentiment is expressed by Buthelezi (1974a:29): 'To interpret the quest for a Black Theology purely in terms of the awakening of black nationalism or the consolidation of Black Power forces us to trifle with one of the most fundamental issues in modern Christianity'. However, as Boesak (1977b:79f) has shown, both Buthelezi and Baartman do speak in a positive sense of 'a power which seeks the transformation of societal structures to accommodate the new humanity'. This power, which Black Theology would encourage black people to claim and to exercise, is therefore understood as a moral power, intended to pressurise the ruling white community into change without necessarily threatening anyone's life. Said (1971:523), writing from a slightly different context, supports this view: 'We want to destroy the sperm and egg of white colonialism and the cult of white supremacism. But we are not going to destroy anybody, because we do not want to copy the inhumanity of the oppressor'. This shows the 'indispensably moral ingredient' of Black Theology and of Black Consciousness, since it 'could not harden itself to preach violence' in its aim to achieve a 'truly liberating revolution' (Fetton 1986:118). Gerhart (1978:285f) confirms this in her interpretation of Black Consciousness:

The aim of Black Consciousness as an ideology was not to trigger a spontaneous Fanonesque eruption of the masses into violent action, but rather to rebuild and recondition the mind of the oppressed in such a way that eventually they would be ready forcefully to

demand what was rightfully theirs.

Baartman (1975:15) formulated it as follows: 'The Christian cannot plan violence as a form of strategy', because 'the way of Christ is the way of suffering'. That the question of violence is no easy matter for black theologians becomes clear, for example, from the way in which Goba (1988:84ff) deals with it. A number of times he refers to the complexity of the issue and to the fact that violence is becoming a 'tempting option' to more and more black people. He says, however: 'While we may understand the compelling aspects of violent change, we as Christians are not called to initiate violent change' (:86). What black Christians are called to do is to work 'for the eradication of those structures which promote the terror of violence' and to search for 'relevant and lasting radical alternatives' (:89f).

What black theologians reject vehemently is the hypocritical attitude of most white people to black counter-violence, expressed in questions such as 'How does one reconcile violent confrontation with the gospel?' (:86). The following sharp words of Cone (1969:56) are echoed in many different ways by South African black theologians: 'There is an ugly contrast between the sweet, nonviolent language of white Christians and their participation in a violently unjust system'. The sudden pacifism prescribed by white Christians when confronted by angry black people who are throwing off the yoke of oppression is plainly hypocritical when seen in the light of the open support which most white Christians give to the violence of the apartheid system and of the South African Defence Force (15).

Although the black theologians discussed here (and many others) prefer non-violent strategies of resistance, very few (if any) of them are absolute pacifists. As I have mentioned above, it is simply not possible to determine to what extent black theologians sympathise with or support the armed struggle of liberation movements, even if they choose to follow non-violent strategies

themselves. Some openly qualify their non-violent commitment with the possibility of violence as a 'last resort'. For example, Baartman (1973c:19), who rejects the term 'Black Power' because of its violent connotations, says in the same breath: 'Nevertheless, he [the black man] cannot say that there are no instances when he will be violent'. This is echoed by Motlhabi (1984:263):

The church rightly strives for a peaceful solution to all kinds of conflict in the world. If violent revolution should suddenly become inevitable in South Africa, however -- as it seems imminent in the absence of any viable solution -- then the church must heed the words of Bennett: 'some Christians find themselves in situations where they must, in all responsibility, participate fully in revolution with its inevitable violence'.

There is, however, a clear awareness of the implications of embarking on the road of violence, so that Boesak (1977b:70) feels compelled to say: 'Whereas we do not deny that a situation may arise where retaliatory violence is forced upon the oppressed and no other avenue is left open to them, we do so with a clear hesitancy, knowing full well that it will probably prove a poor "solution" and that violence can never be "justified"'. This avoidance of violence is required of Christians so that they may 'create and keep open the possibilities for reconciliation, redemption and community' (:70).

Having looked at the first major trend concerning violence, which emphasises the use of non-violent strategies for liberation, I now move to the second trend, which justifies the use of violence. It does so by stressing the colonial or totalitarian nature of the South African state and by using the 'just war' theory. I am going to concentrate mainly on the views of Tlhagale (1986a) and Mokoka (1984) as representatives of these views.

Tlhagale, writing about violence from a township perspective, first of all rejects the term 'unrest' for the violence taking place in black townships. It should be seen not as savagery, but as an 'aggressive statement of a radical protest, of self-affirmation, a calculated tactic to compel the government to reckon with the frustrated aspirations of the black people' (Tlhagale 1986a:137). Directed against community councillors and their properties as well as against police informers, it must be seen as 'a protest beyond moral indignation, beyond words... a direct assault on the apartheid system' (:137). The complex scenario of township violence includes 'consumer boycotts, work stoppages, work stay-aways, school disruptions, protests, the destruction of selected targets, the merciless killing of "collaborators", etc', which prove that the black youth are 'irrevocably committed to bursting the chains of the apartheid system' (:138). Since these acts are highly visible they demand immediate attention, and by destabilising the country they are calculated to 'precipitate an abrupt end to racism and political domination' (:138). In the light of the calculated and deliberate nature of these violent acts it is therefore totally inadequate to refer to them as 'unrest-related incidents'.

Regarding the preference of Christian theology for 'non-violence at all costs', Tlhagale exposes the contradiction in the stance of the church, since it appoints military chaplains to the army (the 'killing machine of the state') and at the same time 'preaches restraint to the black oppressed masses' (:142). He points out that the apartheid system is inherently violent and that it has no moral legitimacy in the eyes of black people since it has imposed itself on them by force: 'The inherently violent apartheid system has simply entrenched itself with all the viciousness imaginable' (:139). The violence of the black community should therefore be seen as an act of self-defence, a response to the persistent institutional violence of the South African state. In this situation black people have the right and the duty to resist the state, even though it is a very unequal

battle:

Whilst black people have a conviction that they have a right to reclaim their fatherland and uphold their dignity and freedom, they do not have the lethal instruments of war which would enable them to protect themselves. As a subjugated people only stones and the ability to render the country 'ungovernable' remain the immediate instruments of self-assertion (:142).

The white South African state is therefore seen as an 'unjust aggressor', which may be violently resisted according to the classical tradition of 'just violent struggle' (:142). The different canons of the 'just war' theory (16) are then applied to the South African situation and the conclusion is: 'the logic of the ethic of force from a township perspective, does seem to support the justifiability of a violent struggle as a last resort at a rational level' (:147), even though some 'hard sayings' in the Gospels seem to challenge the morality of a violent struggle for justice. These verses remain a 'massive scandal amongst the oppressed' (:149), and yet the life of Christ should be seen as the story of a series of subversions. This view opens the way to see a violent struggle as compatible with Christian discipleship:

The rekindled desire to be free and the intensive assault on the apartheid institutions is not incompatible with the tradition of subversion modelled on the person of Christ. In fact Christian discipleship demands the subversion of the oppressive socio-political order in order to establish justice and consequently peace (:150).

An important aspect of this careful and qualified justification of violence by black theologians is the assertion of the illegitimacy of the South African state. It is also used by the Kairos Document to criticise the approach of 'church theology' to

the question of violence:

The problem of the church here is that it starts from the premise that the apartheid regime in South Africa is a legitimate authority. It ignores the fact that it is a white minority regime which has imposed itself upon the majority of the people, that is blacks, in this country and that it maintains itself by brutality and violent force and the fact that a majority of South Africans regard this regime as illegitimate (Kairos Document 1986:14).

On the basis of their understanding of colonial dispossession (see chapter 4), black theologians reject the claim of the government to being legitimate: 'They [blacks] see the present government and its predecessors as having no democratic mandate from them, and they believe they have a right to defend their destiny at all costs' (Mpumlwana 1987:91). The government is therefore seen as the aggressor and the resistance movement as exercising the recognised right of self-defence. However, this is not an uncritical identification with violence. It is 'a call to a prophetic theology ... a persisting critique of the best of human efforts in the light of the greater call of God's "Kingdom" which, this side of eternity, can only be approximated' (:93).

Mokoka, writing from exile in Holland, says that the question of the just war theory 'as a specific theme with direct relation to the problem of oppression and exploitation in South Africa has not been fully addressed by Black Theologians in that country' (Mokoka 1984:226). He stresses that black theologians cannot escape the responsibility to deal with the land question, and that Black Theology must become 'a theology of the christian theory of the just war' (:192). After applying the canons of the just war theory to South Africa, he concludes:

Any theology which claims relevance to the dispossession and exploitation of the indigenous people of South Africa cannot avoid to take into account the question of the objective necessity to wage an armed struggle against injustice, oppression and exploitation in South Africa (:260).

Since black people lost their land by forcible conquest to 'alien European settlers', it is their right and duty to recover it in order to fulfil the demands of justice that 'the land must revert to its rightful owners' (:245). Mokoka takes issue with Boesak, who for him represents 'the pacifist trend' in South African Black Theology, but interprets Boesak's view that reconciliation means death and suffering (Boesak 1984a:32) to mean that 'relevant christian ethics for the indigenous people of South Africa must begin from the premise that death-oriented confrontation between the forces of oppression and those of liberation is justified' (Mokoka 1984:244). In this way he unambiguously justifies the use of violence for the attainment of liberation in South Africa.

To conclude this section, let me underline the fact that black theologians are committed to the empowerment of the oppressed to struggle for the attainment of justice and peace in South Africa. They insist that this empowerment for struggle is consistent with the Gospel of Christ, in fact that it is a 'pneumatic activation' (Mofokeng 1983:6) which brings the reality of Christ's resurrection into the lives of oppressed black people as they journey towards the ever fuller realisation of the reign of God.

5.4.6 Mission and eschatology

Black Theology's challenge to black Christians to become involved in the transformation of society is intimately linked to its eschatology (17). As a profoundly Christian theology, it is

conscious of the fact of living 'between the times', during the time when the future reign of God made manifest in the life of Jesus is being realised more and more by the Holy Spirit. The humanisation of black people and of society as a whole is seen as one important way in which that future is arriving in the present. In unmistakably eschatological language, Tutu (1979a:489) speaks of Black Theology's concern 'to convert the Black man out of the stupor of his subservience and obsequiousness to acceptance of the thrilling but demanding responsibility of full human personhood -- to make him reach out to the glorious liberty of the sons of God'. What black theologians are concerned about are concrete mediations of God's new world, anticipations of the Kingdom of God within the suffering of this 'long Good Friday'. The focus is therefore not on the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, but on dusty township and village streets where the justice and humanity of the new world are beginning to take shape in the lives of oppressed people. Liberation is a free gift from God and transcends human history, but it becomes real within history and so proves not to be the proverbial 'pie in the sky' or Marx's 'opium of the people'. Even though the approach of black theologians could be called 'other-worldly' in stressing the transcendence of the coming reign of God, it is not 'other-worldly-quietistic' but 'other-worldly-disruptive', an other-worldiness which has given oppressors no cause to relax (Wilmore 1983:51). Black theologians agree with Sobrino that the coming of the reign of God in the present unites God's 'liberative invasion of history' with the 'utopian longing of the poor for liberation', which is expressed in their 'historical projects' for freedom (see Mofokeng 1983:81). In the same way, Goba (1981b:44) says: 'The Kingdom always forces us to make projections about the future ... an element of profound dissatisfaction with the present as we anticipate something new'. The new world does not fall from the sky, therefore, but is realised in and through human projects in history. An authentic Christian response to God is a 'combination of an active expectation and an active participation' (Mofokeng 1983:87). This thought is expressed in a

slightly different way when Christians are called 'co-liberators with God' (Noko 1977:118ff), who 'labour with God to humanise the universe and to help his children become ever more fully human which is a glorious destiny' (Tutu 1983:77).

5.4.6.1 Hope and suffering

It is clear, then, that Black Theology is a 'theology of hope', because it 're-invigorates the vision of the attainment of lasting justice and peace' (Mokoka 1984:ii). It keeps alive the vision of a new world of justice, and thus sustains black people in their struggle to become human in history:

God's presence with the poor eliminates their despair and thereby empowers them to keep on struggling because they have a 'home over yonder'. The eschatological theme of the 'home over yonder' is not an opium but a stimulant. It is the good news of the gospel, assuring us that our ultimate future is in the hands of the One who made us all (Cone 1985:188).

Freedom is therefore not a state but a process: 'struggling to understand and respond to God -- the God who is not yesterday's explanation but the vision of, and call to, tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow' (Mpunzi 1974:140). It is a hope which focuses on the future 'in order to make us refuse to tolerate present inequities' (Cone [1970] 1986:3). In this way the eschatology of black theologians avoids both an escapist belief in the hereafter and 'a pessimistic realism ... which no longer believes in a new heaven and a new earth' (Witvliet 1985:68). Instead, they struggle for justice now, assured and encouraged by God's coming reign and consciously striving towards it. Black Theology leads neither to despair and resignation nor to a paralysing spiritual escape from the world, since it 'realizes that New Testament eschatology is a call to arms, a summons not to be content with the existing situation of oppression, but to take

sides with the oppressed and the poor and subsequently for the new humanity and the new world' (Boesak 1977b:145). It therefore holds on to hope and suffering with equal insistence, neither allowing the abject suffering of black people to choke their hope in a new world of justice nor allowing the assurance of God's future to blind their eyes to the cruel realities of South African society. This spirituality of suffering in hope and hope in suffering characterises the eschatology of black theologians:

Victory does not always mean the complete wiping out of the visible marks of defeat. It does not always mean the experience of sudden healing, but merely the start of the process of healing beneath a festering sore. Victory happens while the struggle continues. To know that your contribution is a link in a chain whose last link will be a victory is to taste victory without touching it. It is to see the promised land while the toil and agony of the long journey is still the present experience (Buthelezi 1979:53).

An important feature of this eschatology is the central place accorded to the resurrection of Christ: 'Because God has succeeded in winning victory over evil, Christians can start to embody and institutionalise this victory here and now in anticipation of the ultimate victory with Christ's second coming' (Maimela 1987:97). The resurrection of Christ opens the future and impels believers to work for liberation here and now: 'Christians must fight against evil, for not to fight ... is to deny the resurrection' (Cone [1970] 1986:140). The dialectic of cross and resurrection, as well as the close connection between Christ and the black 'crossbearers' today are movingly described by Mofokeng (1983:41f):

The history of Jesus goes on in the struggle of the oppressed who rise to affirm themselves. He is present there among them even though submerged. The event of

the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth sustains the struggling community of the oppressed during their protracted hanging on the cross. It is a powerful event that does not only sustain but also drives this community forwards. It also constitutes the basis of their hope that the truth will triumph over the lie, that liberation will be a reality. The message of Jesus Christ's resurrection to them is that the God who raised Jesus is at work in their period of hanging on the cross, affirming black humanity and raising a new humanity and a new world in which human life will be possible for all.

In this way the insurrection of the oppressed becomes a verification of the resurrection of Jesus, and the event of the resurrection continues to empower them for their praxis of liberation.

5.4.6.2 Eschatological 'proviso'

To conclude this consideration of eschatology, it is important to point out that black theologians do not fully identify the black liberation struggle with the reign of God. They uphold an 'eschatological proviso' which acknowledges that God's reign is a free gift to the world, for the coming of which believers are made co-responsible. There is little evidence of a triumphalistic 'building God's Kingdom on earth' in South African Black Theology. A deep awareness of black suffering and of white intransigence prevents black theologians from having over-optimistic hopes for the attainment of total liberation. Mofokeng (1983:52) points out that his qualitative and intensive understanding of salvation 'does not imply a total identification of salvation here and now with the absolute salvation.... Life and the struggle for life is still under the eschatological horizon and this makes a certain reserve that does not alienate from, nor relativize the here and now, but rather emphasizes the importance of the temporal-historical sphere'. This view of history implies

that 'the Kingdom of God always stands over against every social or political order thus exposing all forms of dehumanisation' (Goba 1981b:41). There will never be a perfectly just society, and liberation efforts are therefore provisional and penultimate:

Because of the sin and human imperfection in anything we do, there will always be some forms of oppression and injustice in human society, which call for Christian action in restructuring their social relationships so that they might approximate the ideal of the perfect justice and righteousness that shall arrive with God's coming Kingdom' (Maimela 1984:49).

Boesak (1977b:98) remarks similarly that 'the forces of Black Power will never bring about the fullness of the kingdom of God. This fact, however, will not deter blacks in their efforts to transform the world through their prophetic witness and total commitment to the liberation of the oppressed'. This eschatological 'proviso' functions therefore as a self-critical element in Black Theology, helping black theologians to 'guard against equating "God being on the side of the oppressed" with "the oppressed being on the side of God"' (Zulu 1973:13). Black theologians must be able to be 'critically active' within the black struggle at times when criticism is necessary. There are times when they should speak of identification and other times when they should speak of separation between God's action of salvation and the oppressed's fight for liberation (Mofokeng 1983:199). Quoting Cone, he continues:

When oppressed people are feeling proud of their success in the struggle of freedom, and thus begin to think that any action is justifiable, as if their ethical judgment is infallible, then theologians, preachers and others in the oppressed community must remind the people of the utter distinction between their words and God's Word. But when the oppressed are

passive and afraid of the struggle of freedom, then they must be reminded that the gospel is identical with their liberation from political bondage.

Black Theology thus has the task of 'being a "gadfly" vis-a-vis social structures viewed in the light of the eschatological vision' (Mpumlwana 1987:94). In this way black theologians have, by and large, avoided falling into the trap of a narrow ideological interpretation of the Gospel, and have built an element of self-criticism into the very fabric of their theological approach. Tutu (1979b:167) expresses a realistic awareness of the fallenness of human society, which means that it cannot be changed overnight into a utopia: 'Liberation theologians have too much evidence that the removal of one oppressor often means replacement by another; yesterday's victim quite rapidly becomes today's dictator'. Nevertheless, they do not allow this knowledge to make them passive in the face of injustice. Inspired and empowered by the risen Christ, they strive to realise and anticipate the liberating reign of God within the harsh realities of South Africa.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 5

1. This raises the thorny question of the specific contribution of Christians to the struggle for liberation, and of the distinctive nature of the church. I come back to these questions in chapter 7.

2. South African black theologians do not propagate the view that Christ actually had a black skin, as does Albert Cleage in the USA. See the critique on Cleage's views in Boesak (1977b:116f). Ntwasa (1971a:3) explains the blackness of Christ as follows: 'It is legitimate to translate Christ's being one of and with the poor and oppressed in his day as his being Black in South Africa today'. IJ Mosala (1987a:153) illustrates this with the question: 'How can the saviour of the world emanate from the ghettos of Crossroads and KTC in Cape Town rather than the wealthy white suburbia of Johannesburg?'

3. The term re-evangelisation assumes on the one hand that the black community has already been evangelised (in the sense that a majority would declare itself to be Christian), but on the other that things have gone seriously wrong in the process, leading to a credibility crisis for the Christian faith. What is necessary is therefore a thorough reconversion to an authentic Christian faith in terms of the crisis. According to Mofokeng (1988:40), African traditional religions and Marxism are not viable options for the black community at this stage: 'In the absence of a better storeroom of ideological and spiritual food, the Christian religion and the Bible will continue for an undeterminable period of time to be the haven of the Black masses par excellence'. This fact makes the re-evangelisation of the black community an urgent priority for black theologians.

4. A good example of this attitude is Motlhabi (1986b:50): 'More research still needs to be done into the theological roots of the African Independent Churches...and how these roots can be seen as rudimentary or inspirational to Black Theology'. He stresses that Black Theology has to take these churches seriously in order to understand the message which they have for all black Christians (:52). See also Mofokeng (1987b:30), who is cautiously positive about these churches and the contribution they could make to Black Theology. He also anticipates more research in this field by black theologians.

5. These two options probably represent the two basic black responses to white 'settler colonial' Christianity in South Africa: total withdrawal (separate black church(es)) or withdrawal for eventual synthesis (Black Theology within established churches). Mere acquiescence in white-controlled churches is no longer an option to self-aware black Christians. The class basis of the two options (AICs = black working class, Black Theology = black petit bourgeoisie) needs to be further analysed and explored (cf Mosala, I J 1982, 1987a:2, 98ff).

6. Goba (1983:23) says that this call for polarisation is a

'strong conviction emerging within the black Christian community that black churches should go it alone and participate in the ongoing struggle without appealing for any support from the white Christian community'.

7. This case for the explicit responsibility of black Christians to evangelise whites was made in the early part of Phase I of Black Theology, after which it receded into the background. There are probably many reasons for this shift. A growing awareness among black theologians of the structural nature of racism could have been responsible for a decreased emphasis on evangelism (for personal conversion) in the white community. The far-reaching implications of events such as the Soweto uprising (1976) and subsequent eruptions of black protest (1980, 1984-86) have also left their mark on the attitude of black theologians to the proposal of evangelising the white community. At the same time, however, as a result of their insistence on black leadership in the English-speaking churches, a number of black theologians have been appointed to positions of responsibility in these churches, and have had to deal directly with white members placed under their care. In other words, such ministry of black to white has become more and more common in the time that Phase II of Black Theology developed. The role of black Christians in the re-evangelising of whites is now a reality, which perhaps makes it unnecessary to insist that it should take place (as was necessary in Phase I).

8. A number of examples of this can be quoted. I mention a few: 'An open letter to Mr John Vorster' (Tutu 1983:1ff); 'Divine obedience: a letter to the Minister of Justice' (Boesak 1984a:36ff); finally the spate of letters addressed to President Botha during 1988 by black church leaders, first a group of twenty-five, then Archbishop Tutu and Rev Chikane (cf Journal of Theology 1988:68ff).

9. In these proposals the question of 'national identity' is addressed in clause G: 'It shall be state policy to promote the growth of a single national identity and loyalty binding on all South Africans. At the same time, the state shall recognise the linguistic and cultural diversity of the people and provide facilities for free linguistic and cultural development' (Weekly Mail Oct 7-13, 1988:7). This clarifies the issue of 'national groups' to a large extent, especially when read together with clauses I: 'The state and all social institutions shall be under constitutional duty to eradicate race discrimination in all its forms' and clause K: 'The advocacy or practice of racism, fascism, nazism or the incitement of ethnic or regional exclusiveness or hatred shall be outlawed' (:7). It is clear, then, that there is no room for exploitative race or group interests in this ANC vision of a non-racial future. On the question of 'national groups' in the Freedom Charter, see also Suttner (1984:17f).

10. In the volume on Black Theology (Wilmore & Cone 1979) there appear five contributions by black women, and the contact with

this development in the USA has stimulated South African black theologians to remedy the 'invisibility' of women in their Black Theology. The term 'womanist' has been adopted by black women theologians in the USA to distinguish their project from that of white feminists. See chapter 7 note 13 on 'womanist' theology.

11. See my comments on the clenched fist salute in 2.3.1.4. and also the exposition of Nolan (1988:164) on the acclamation 'Amandla Ngawethu'. He interprets it as 'power with' rather than 'power over', and says: 'What we are dealing with ... is not the power of domination and oppression but people's power' (:164).

12. All these terms have been used at different times and by different tendencies in the black struggle. 'Defiance' became best known during the Defiance Campaign of the ANC, launched in 1952, its first nationwide campaign of 'passive resistance' (cf Gerhart 1978:89); Non-cooperation and Non-collaboration were characteristic of the policies of the PAC; The term 'civil disobedience' has been used more recently, especially in Christian circles, to affirm the right of subjects to 'obey God rather than men', with reference to Acts 5:29.

13. The term 'non-violent direct action' has been popularised in South Africa recently by Walter Wink's book Jesus' third way. This strategy was used as the basis of the march to parliament by church leaders on 25th February 1988 (cf Chikane 1988:8), which ushered in a period of heightened tension between church and state in South Africa. An important perspective on this is the view of Chikane (1987b:308): 'Thus if the church could approve only non-violent methods, it would have to lead the way in proving that non-violence could be effective in removing an illegitimate regime from power'. In other words, debate about non-violence or violence is not meaningful at present: let those who propagate non-violence prove through action that it is effective in bringing about fundamental social and political change.

14. The view of Tutu (1987:77) is representative in this regard: 'International action and international pressure are among the few non-violent options left. And yet how strident is the opposition to economic sanctions. Blacks cannot vote. We are driven therefore to invoke a non-violent method which we believe is likely to produce the desired result. If this option is denied us, what then is left? If sanctions should fail there is no other way but to fight'.

15. Nolan (1988:40f) gives an interesting exposition of the connection between hypocrisy, blindness and false consciousness. The blindness of most white Christians in not 'seeing' the inconsistency of their attitude to violence is a good example of what Nolan is saying. One of the most important contributions of Black Theology is that it has relentlessly exposed this hypocrisy of white theology.

16. The criteria for a 'just' war as put forward by the theologians Augustine, Aquinas and others are discussed by Bax (1987).

To determine the 'jus ad bellum', Thagale (1986a:142-147) utilizes the criteria of last resort, disinterested authority, competent authority, proportionality, and reasonable prospect of success. Mokoka (1984:227-233) uses the criteria of last resort, right intention, and just cause. Following Aquinas, he includes under the latter criterion the principle of recoverability of 'what had been seized injuriously' (:228).

17. In this section I have drawn extensively on my article entitled 'Black eschatology and Christian mission' (Kritzinger, JNJ 1987).

CHAPTER 6

THEOLOGY FOR WHITE LIBERATION

The time has now come for a missiological response to Black Theology. As I have said in chapter one, it is necessary that this should be a consciously white response, since the way in which black theologians deal with their own blackness makes it impossible to respond to them in a neutral, objective or 'colourless' way. White people who really listen to Black Theology have to admit that their whiteness is an important reality with which they need to grapple in their theology. The 'pseudo-innocence' of neutrality has been knocked out of their hands. White theologians who immediately proceed to criticise, without first facing the prophetic challenge which Black Theology presents to their own praxis and theology, have not understood it. In this chapter I present an outline of a theology for white liberation which has been stimulated by Black Theology and therefore takes seriously its call to conversion.

6.1 WHITE RESPONSES TO BLACK THEOLOGY

Before launching into this, however, I briefly describe and evaluate other white responses to Black Theology. This is necessary in order to locate my own approach within the existing spectrum of white responses. As I have indicated in chapter one, there are three kinds of white responses to Black Theology, namely rejection, sympathy and solidarity. I first describe and evaluate the first two, and then expound my own response of solidarity. It is not my intention to put white theologians into 'boxes', but rather to indicate three typical white responses to Black Theology.

6.1.1 Rejection of Black Theology

White theologians reject Black Theology in many different ways

and for many different reasons. Probably the most common way is by simply ignoring it as unimportant. White academic arrogance has led theologians to regard Black Theology as not worth responding to. This is the only conclusion which one can reach when observing the silence on Black Theology among most white theologians. However, there are white theologians who reject it openly, and their reasons for doing so concern me here.

The most common reasons given for rejecting Black Theology are: it is a foreign import, inspired by black racism, Pan Africanism and Marxism, and it is intent on destroying true Christianity and civilisation in South Africa. Pont (1973:24,26) says in this connection:

Black Consciousness is 'n wisselbegrip vir Black Power en dit beteken dat die skerp, negatiewe, anti-blanke karaktertrekke van die Panafrikanisme en Black Consciousness volledig in die Black Theology verdiskonteer word.

In feite is die Black Theology ... 'n radikale inkorting en vervalsing van die Bybelse evangelie. Dit kan miskien selfs getipeer word as 'n vlak, marxistiese en optimistiese antropologie met 'n paar teologies-klinkende kanttekeninge daarby.

In similar vein, Crafford (1987:28ff) calls Black Theology a 'secular and political theology' which 'tempts young Blacks to embrace Marxism' and which encourages violence. Boshoff (1973:5) comes to the conclusion: 'dat as die Swart Teologie in sy volle konsekwensies deur die swartmense van Afrika aanvaar word, alle moontlikheid tot kommunikasie tussen wit en swart finaal vernietig sal wees'. He therefore interprets it as inherently anti-white. The basic paternalism of his approach becomes clear when he writes: 'ons moet probeer om agter die skreeu van die kind, die pyn te ontdek' (:6). In a later publication, Boshoff (1980)

gives a more nuanced interpretation of Black Theology, but still regards it basically as a foreign import from North America. He has therefore entitled the book 'Swart Teologie van Amerika tot in Suid-Afrika', and does not do justice to the original emphases of South African black theologians (1). This notion of the foreignness of Black Theology brings Schulze (1975:51) to call it 'weinig oorspronklik', and Oosthuizen (1973:77) to ask whether it is not merely 'white theology painted black'. An important factor which has contributed to this accusation of importation is the role which Basil Moore (as a white person) played in the early stages of Black Theology in South Africa. Meiring (1976:93) says, for example:

Die feit -- hoe onwelkom dit ookal vir baie ore is -- [moet] tog gekonstateer word dat Swart Teologie in sy huidige vorm deur 'n witman in Suid-Afrika oorgeplant is. Dit is vanuit Amerika ingevoer!

Much stronger is the viewpoint of the Schlebusch/Le Grange Commission of Enquiry (1975a), which interprets the role of Moore as proof that foreign forces hostile to South Africa (such as the 'communist-controlled' World Council of Churches) were responsible for introducing this evil theology to innocent and gullible black South Africans. Nobody has replied more incisively to this fallacious argument than Buthelezi ([1975] 1981:264):

If black Americans inspired us to do our own good thing in South Africa, what is wrong with that? Has South Africa not recently confessed that it has something in common with far-away Paraguay? What is wrong if Dr Basil Moore played a role in 'fathering' Black Theology? That was, at least, something better and more acceptable than what other white people have 'fathered', namely Apartheid (2).

This whole stress of white critics on the importation and

foreignness of Black Theology not only reveals an amazing disrespect for the intelligence and integrity of black South Africans, but also an unhealthy 'persecution' mentality ('there is a sinister worldwide plot against us') which prevents people from perceiving the realities of their situation. Had there not been a long history of black Christian protest and resistance to white rule in South Africa, which provided fertile soil for this new development, Black Theology would never have taken root, and nobody (white or black) would have been able to 'import' it here. It is also significant that white theologians do not brand new trends in European theology which are introduced to South Africa as 'importations'. The vehemence of this white reaction to Basil Moore, and the government bannings to which it gave rise, can only be understood in the light of the peculiar Afrikaner aversion to whites who 'treacherously' take sides with black people against perceived white interests (3).

Other similar white responses reject Black Theology as a 'teologie van Swart heerskappy', arising from the twin roots of the Social Gospel and black racism (Woord en Daad 1972:7). Schulze (1975:51) goes so far as to compare the 'racist' nature of Black Theology with that of German National Socialism:

Die repristenasie (sic) van die voor-christelike kultuur vind ons by Hitler ook, geïnspireer deur Wagner se operas met die Germaanse mitologie as tema. Al verskil is: vir die Nazis was Jesus 'n Ariër, dus wit, vir Cone is Hy swart.

The Eloff Commission of Inquiry into the affairs of the SACC also described Black Theology as 'nothing but a form of Black racism', which has the potential to:

evoke extreme opposition to all things White, to create an intense confrontationist climate, and to instil in the minds of its adherents a spirit of revolt.... [to]

drive its adherents into a desperate struggle in which many value systems are rejected and in which peaceful coexistence may be seriously imperilled (COI 1983:160).

Black Theology's starting point in the concrete situation of black people rather than in the Bible is strongly rejected. It is common to hear Black Theology condemned for being 'horizontalist' and 'anthropocentric' (cf Oosthuizen 1973:84). True theology, it is said, should be 'colourblind' by confessing the 'universal Christ' (cf Woord en Daad 1972:7). Such views do not only emerge from Afrikaans Reformed churches, but also from the English-speaking churches. Dwane (1981:29) refers to a presidential address at an Anglican Provincial Synod, in which Black Theology and the theology of apartheid were both rejected as 'essentially two sides of the same coin', both equally one-sided, since they 'come out of the same struggle for political power'. The clear implication of this view is that one can design a Christian theology which is not influenced in a fundamental way by the social, political and economic realities of South Africa, but which does contain the answers to its problems. This is similar to the suggestion of Boshoff (1973:20) to create a 'teologie vir ons tyd, nie 'n Swart Teologie nie, en ook nie 'n Wit Teologie nie, maar 'n teologie van die gekruisigde Heiland vir Afrika'.

Such views imply that it is possible for a theologian to stand above and outside the situation, at some objective 'Archimedean point', from which the one-sidedness of all other views can be detected. The ideological blindness of such a response to Black Theology offers no way forward. It is this kind of response which closes the door to future communication between black and white, since it means that white theologians do not reveal (or realise) the ideological conditioning of their own theological perspective. Boshoff (1980) is one of the few white theologians in this group who openly reveals his ideological bias. He rejects the notion of South Africa as a unitary state, an idea which according to him is based on the dangerous concept of 'pluralism', and

then proceeds to advocate a partitioned South Africa on the basis of separate ethnic identities (:132-148). Most theologians in this group, however, operate with a depoliticised view of sin and a privatised understanding of salvation (Jacobs 1984:121).

In conclusion it may be conceded that some of these interpretations were early responses to Black Theology, and that some white theologians have tempered their criticism over the years (4). Nevertheless, I believe that this type of response is sterile, since it does not take Black Theology seriously as a genuine South African initiative for overcoming the immense problems of suffering and injustice in our context. Nor does it reveal an adequate awareness of the political conditioning of all theology, thus creating the (false) impression that only Black Theology is biased and ideologically committed.

6.1.2 Sympathy for Black Theology

This response cannot be neatly separated from the previous one. There are some theologians who reject Black Theology but nevertheless admit that it raises important questions and that some of its answers need to be taken seriously. However, there is a slight difference between rejecting a view with understanding and accepting it with reservations. The latter is a reasonable description of the sympathy approach.

Meiring (1976:97) is a good example of this approach to Black Theology:

Nederigheid pas ons almal wanneer ons hiermee besig is. Nederigheid, as wit christene, omdat ons die laaste is om met die vinger te wys, omdat die skim van 'n wit teologie altyd voor ons opdoem. Nederigheid, as swart gelowiges, omdat ons weet hoe feilbaar die mens is, hoe maklik die mens in sy oormoed die spoor byster kan raak.

The implication of this statement is that there should be constant dialogue between Christian theologies, and that by becoming humble towards one another, both white and black theologians can get rid of the excesses of their separate theologies, in order to build a common theology. Deeply aware of the complicity of white Christians in the suffering of black people, these white theologians adopt a humble and sensitive stance to Black Theology, realising to what extent it is a reaction to their own exclusive and oppressive white theology. They hope, however, that black theologians will realise to what extent white theologians have changed, and therefore resume the conversation. Feeling uneasy about polarisation and about the fact that black theologians have decided to go their own way, these white theologians seek reunification with them as soon as possible through an approach of humility, while acknowledging many of the accusations which black theologians level against white Christianity. This approach therefore constantly warns of the dangers of one-sidedness and of the risks of 'capturing' God in the interests of a particular group, nation or race (see e.g. Pretorius 1977:351f). They regard it as necessary to stress constantly the danger that mission may become 'merely a handmaiden of an ideological struggle' (Kritzinger, J J 1986: 742). Whereas this danger is a real one, Gollwitzer (1975:56) quite rightly points out that such warnings by white theologians amount to nothing less than white hypocrisy.

This sympathetic approach often includes an emphasis on the need for black Christians to develop an indigenous African theology. Black Christians are therefore not expected to agree with white theologians in everything, but they need to be protected and guided in order to prevent them from being 'carried away' by dangerous theologies. A good example of this approach of sympathy coupled with paternalism is the view of Crafford (1973:46):

In die Swart Teologie sien ons die eerste tekens dat die bevrydende Evangelie van Christus ook die swartman

in beweging kan bring om hom daarvoor te beywer om vir homself 'n toekoms te skep. Hier is tekens van aktivisme en idealisme -- van hoop vir die toekoms van die swartman wat hy vir homself sal moet skep deur harde werk. Dat daar onder die swartmense van Afrika hoop, idealisme en beweging kom, kan ons alleen maar verwelkom. Solank hierdie beweging maar net nie op loop sit in 'n rewolusie teen die Christendom nie.

He therefore stresses that black and white Christians need to do everything to ensure 'dat die swart reaksie nie op loop sit met 'n nasionalistiese en rassistiese teologie wat ook die ware evangelieboodskap kan verswelg nie' (:47). They must see to it 'dat die reaksionere Swart Teologie gestuur word in die bane van 'n gesonde Afrika Teologie' (:37). This approach implies that white theologians really know what is healthy ('gesond') for black Christians, an attitude which reveals the quality and extent of the 'sympathy' which they have for Black Theology. The same paternalism is revealed by Oosthuizen (1973:89), who suggests that Black Theology is 'a theology in the puberty stage of reaction'.

It is true that any theology can lose its self-critical nature, and thus become ideological in a closed and rigid sense. It is also a meaningful ideal to strive for an ecumenical and inclusive Christian theology in South Africa. My problem with this approach is that it seeks a 'short cut' to inclusive theology, and thereby does not allow Black Theology to 'be itself' as a political theology. This approach does not accept the fact that Black Theology sees itself as the antithesis to dominant white theology, which implies that there will only be a real theological synthesis when the material conditions causing the present division have been removed. Black theologians are not interested in a theological 'reconciliation' with white theologians in isolation from the establishment of justice in structural terms for South Africa as a whole. If white theologians do not honour this basic

character of Black Theology, they will not be able to develop a meaningful response to it.

Another basic inadequacy of this approach is that in it white theologians attempt to reach a common understanding with black theologians on the basis of discussions or publications alone, without reference to concrete involvement in the struggle for justice. Such an approach does not do justice to Black Theology as a liberation theology, which regards theological reflection as a 'second step', preceded and accompanied by actual involvement in the struggles of oppressed people. The words of Jacobs (1984:122) are applicable to them:

Solidariteit met, en 'n keuse vir die armes en onderdrukte, sonder om 'n samehangende sosiaal-analistiese verklaring te gee van die oorsake van die onderdrukking en te werk aan die verwydering daarvan -- so 'n solidariteit bly alleen maar by 'n algemene impressionistiese beskrywing van die ellende, en daarom is so 'n solidariteit sonder inhoud en leeg.

To conclude: There are some positive elements in this approach, especially its insistence that white people should listen humbly to black theologians, but it does not go far enough. It tries to 'co-opt' black theologians against their will into a premature theological consensus, while racial and class divisions are still deeply entrenched in the whole social formation. It also does not take seriously the call to conversion which Black Theology directly or indirectly addresses to white Christians. If white theologians are to take black theologians seriously as exponents of Black Theology, a more costly and painful path needs to be followed. Over the years some white theologians have indicated what this option of solidarity involves.

6.1.3 Solidarity with Black Theology

The major difference between this approach and the previous one is that this response is not concerned in the first place with airing reservations about Black Theology, but with developing a liberating praxis and theology for and among white people, in response to the challenge of Black Theology. As I have indicated in chapter one, this approach affirms the liberatory thrust of Black Theology, and attempts to develop a complementary liberating ministry in the white community. Since the whole of the present chapter is devoted to such a theology for white liberation, this section will indicate only the basic outline of the approach.

6.1.3.1 Concern for white liberation

First, it must be stressed that this attempt to develop a liberating ministry to the white community has been called forth and stimulated by Black Theology. In the previous chapter I have discussed the different views among black theologians on 're-evangelising' the white community. Boesak (1977a:44) sums this up well by saying that black theologians are aware of the 'terrible estrangement' of white people, and of how sorely they need to be liberated. Because of this, Black Theology also represents:

a call for a theology of liberation for white people. To stand alongside the theology of liberation in Latin America and Asia, African Theology and Black Theology -- for it is in this expression of Christian Theology that Western Christendom will ultimately find its salvation.

In a similar way, Goba (1979b:8) has pointed out that Black Theology 'offers a challenging paradigm for the white community to restore and heal the brokenness of white humanity'.

This approach therefore takes its cue from Black Theology, and agrees with its basic contention that Christian praxis should have a liberating and humanising effect on the lives of people and on the structures of society. The 'white theology' which emerges from this is described by Moore ([sa]:1) as 'an attempt by whites to take Black Theology seriously, and apply its insights to a theological assessment of their own particular political situation'. A central concern of such a theology is to develop a liberated and liberating 'white consciousness', in a similar way to which black people have developed a black consciousness out of their suffering and struggle. Randall (1973:80) has described this white consciousness as follows:

White consciousness implies a coming to terms with the fact of being white and the inevitably privileged position this gives one in a society structured to maintain white power and privilege. It means overcoming the paralysing feelings of apology and guilt which tend to make white liberals gloomy and ineffectual protagonists of change. It means being radical in the sense of going to the roots of the problem and dealing with the basic issues of power, wealth and land. Spro-cas has attempted to play a role in the practical working out of such an approach, by seeking to prepare whites for meaningful change, by supporting black initiative where possible, and by helping other whites to react creatively to black initiative.

White theology conceived in this way is therefore inherently missionary in nature, seeking to help white people come to terms with themselves and their guilt, as well as to prepare them for a new South Africa. As I have pointed out before, Phakathi (1977:5) sees the mission of white Christians as follows: 'It is your task as white people to go out and awaken the entire white community to discover themselves, and to accept black people as people

created in the image of God'. As Barndt (1972:22) has put it, this insistence by black people is not a rejection, but 'a push in the right direction'. It is abundantly clear, then, that this white response to Black Theology takes its point of departure in the call of black theologians for the establishment of a liberating theology and ministry among white people.

6.1.3.2 Listening to Black Theology

White theologians need to listen not only to the call of black theologians to develop a liberating ministry among whites; they need to listen very carefully to the whole of Black Theology. The need for talkative white theologians to become silent and listen to what black theologians are saying has been stressed by a number of different theologians. Oosthuizen (1978:81), for example, argues that white theologians should not try to do Black Theology, but listen to it and explain the real situation to their fellow white Christians. Bosch (1972b:9), in a review of the book Essays on Black Theology, said quite clearly:

This volume should therefore be read by all intelligent whites in South Africa.... Intelligence on the part of whites will, however, not be enough. It must be combined with a willingness to listen to and learn from these brethren of ours. I do not suggest that we listen to them uncritically, however, for that would actually mean rendering them a disservice. But we must listen with empathy and, above all, with humility, that virtue so few whites possess in their relations with blacks.

This listening must lead to a radical rethinking of theology by white theologians: 'Black Theology forces those who come out of the white Western theological mould to re-think, re-evaluate, and re-state the Christian faith for our time and place' (De Gruchy 1984:52). It may sound platitudinous to say that white theologians should listen to Black Theology, but it is by no means

obvious that they will do so. In fact, Black Theology 'scandalises' most white Christians, and the reason for this was formulated clearly by the Bangkok CWME conference on 'Salvation Today': '... the West has arrogated to itself the right to determine the criteria for what is acceptable in all spheres of human endeavour. Black Theology scandalizes because it repudiates this arrogant claim' (Bangkok 1973:189f).

A response of solidarity implies that white theologians are not 'scandalised' by Black Theology's rejection of 'universal' white theology. Nor are they offended by the call to conversion emanating from it. In this regard Bosch (1974:22) rightly describes Black Theology as an occasion for sincere self-examination: 'nothing less than a new metanoia is expected of us, a new and radical conversion'.

Listening to Black Theology therefore occupies a central place in this response: taking it seriously by really studying it. This means that a liberating white theology does not begin in this chapter. Chapters two to five, which contain my 'listening' to black theologians, is already an integral part of this posture of solidarity.

Listening to Black Theology as a negation of white Christianity (chapter 4) means experiencing it as an unmasking of one's own complicity in the suffering and oppression of black people. This unmasking includes in itself a call to conversion, that is, a call to admit one's co-responsibility for the wrongs that have been done to black people in South Africa. The sharpness of this black critique demands a rejection of apartheid theology, together with its racist/colonialist presuppositions. I develop this 'negative' aspect of conversion, which amounts to a turning away from oppressive white praxis and theology, in section 6.2.

Listening to Black Theology as an affirmation of the creative role of black people in transforming South Africa (chapter 5)

means realising the inadequacy of the paternalist 'white liberal' approach to action for a new South Africa. Black self-affirmation also includes a call to conversion for whites, in this case a call to solidarity with suffering black people and to the acceptance of black leadership in the struggle for justice. It means developing a liberated and liberating 'white consciousness', a white counter-culture which will be able to present a radical challenge to the dominant Christian praxis and theology. These two 'positive' aspects of conversion, that is, the affirmation of solidarity with the black struggle, and the development of a liberating white consciousness, are discussed in 6.3.

6.1.3.3 A missiological response

A final introductory comment regarding an approach of white solidarity with Black Theology, as proposed in this chapter, concerns its missiological nature. What I develop here is the basic outline of a liberating Christian ministry or mission in the white community. It is an attempt to redress the imbalance in South African missiology revealed by the fact that the main emphasis is placed on communicating the Gospel to black people. The full implications of the ecumenical dictum 'Mission in six continents' (5) still need to be worked out in South African missiology. The focus of Christian mission needs to be broadened from an exclusive concentration on the periphery of black 'homelands' and 'townships' so as to include the centre of white suburbs and towns. In this way a 'boomerang effect' is emerging: after centuries of a paternalistic one-way relationship, the challenge of the Gospel is coming back to the white community from the former 'objects' or recipients of mission. My whole study, and this chapter in particular, is an attempt at mediating this black challenge to white Christianity, and to 'catch the boomerang' by working out a theology for a liberating ministry in the white community. It is not intended as a separate white theology which falls into the trap of apartheid all over again, but a theology which is intimately related to Black Theology, and

which unfolds in constant dialogue with it.

The missiological nature of this response is also revealed by the fact that it is structured around the different dimensions of the missiological notion of conversion. As I have explained already, the following sections of this chapter represent the negative ('turning from') and the positive ('turning to') dimensions of the conversion required of white people in South Africa today.

At this point I need to give a brief explanation of my understanding of conversion (6). Conversion is not a sudden, once-for-all event, but a gradual, ongoing experience of 'growing into' a life in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. In the words of Costas (1980:173): 'Conversion [is] a dynamic, complex, ongoing experience, profoundly responsive to particular times and places and shaped by the context of those who experience it'. This has a number of implications for what follows. First, the dynamic and complex character of conversion implies that it may not be narrowed down to one dimension. I am in agreement with Costas (:182), when he calls conversion 'an eschatological adventure where one is confronted with ever new decisions, turning points, fulfilments, and promises which will continue until the ultimate fulfilment in the Kingdom'. What I am presenting in this chapter is therefore not the totality of what can be said about conversion in South Africa. It is one perspective, emerging from dialogue with Black Theology. I regard this perspective as indispensable to an understanding of conversion, but do not claim that it exhausts its meaning. Secondly, I do not suggest that this view is the 'ultimate' in conversion, making other perceptions inferior or false. I believe that any perception of conversion in South Africa which ignores the challenge of Black Theology is inadequate, but I make no arrogant claim to having a monopoly of the truth in this regard. Thirdly, a call to conversion is not an attack. It is motivated by concern and love, since it seeks to rescue people from bondage to sin. The following should therefore

not be seen as an angry attack on the white community, but as a prophetic attempt at indicating the way in which white people (including myself) may become part of the solution to South Africa's immense problems.

6.2 FAREWELL TO WHITE INNOCENCE

6.2.1 Admitting complicity

The first dimension of a liberating white theology is an admission of collective responsibility for the suffering of black people. Before being able to develop anything creative, white theologians first need to confess the destructiveness of the white presence in South Africa. Not everything in the white presence has been negative, however. There are some redeeming features on which one can draw in order to develop a new white consciousness (see 6.3.2 below). Nevertheless, in the face of the critique of Black Theology on white South African Christianity, one has to begin with a humble admission of guilt. As I have pointed out in chapter five, black theologians see the unmasking of oppression as a first step in the re-evangelising of the white community. This means saying farewell to the 'innocence' of white theologians who explain black poverty and suffering with words such as the following:

Aan die ander kant moet die Nieblanke nie 'n toestand van onderontwikkeling as verdrukking sien nie. Die onderontwikkeling van die Bantoe in Suidelike Afrika is 'n historiese feit wat alleen deur harde werk en wedersydse vertroue en steun oorbrug kan word en nie deur emosionele beskuldigings nie (Boshoff 1973:19).

This view that 'underdevelopment' is a mere 'historical fact', something which 'simply happened' to black people, must be rejected as dangerously unhistorical. It represents the false consciousness of white 'innocence', which obscures the dispossession

and destruction caused by white supremacy in South Africa. The words of Gollwitzer (1975:38) are important in this regard:

Whoever belongs to the camp of 'white theology', as soon as he is confronted by 'black theology', has every reason to become conscious of the specific historical and societal conditioning of his theology and his view of the Christian message. Although he did not deny the conditioning thus far, since probably he was aware of the historicity of his thought for some time, it now receives -- on account of the negative characterization through black theology -- a terrifying relevance. Ideology critique as self-criticism is now required of him, but not merely as an individual; the tradition itself in which he stands and which he tries to develop further is being questioned as a whole.

White theologians who take Black Theology seriously are forced to engage in 'ideology critique as self-criticism', that is, to become aware of the ideological nature of their own presuppositions. Their 'pretense of pure religion' (Lamb 1982:xiii) is unmasked, and they are forced openly to express their bias. At this point I emphasise the fact that white theologians need to confess their complicity in the suffering of black people in South Africa. This complicity has taken two forms: on the one hand open support given by theology to successive colonial administrations and to white minority governments since 1910, and on the other hand tacit support for the status quo by remaining silent. White theologians need to admit that theology has contributed in both these ways to black suffering in South Africa.

6.2.1.1 Seeing themselves 'through black eyes'

For this confession of guilt to become possible, white people must learn to see themselves through the eyes of their victims. In the words of Bonhoeffer (1971:17): 'to see the great events of

world history from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspect, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled'. It is precisely at this point that the importance of Black Theology becomes clear: it challenges white theologians to see themselves through black eyes and thus come to grips with their own bias. Gollwitzer (1975:39) describes this experience of a white theologian as follows:

He suddenly sees himself together with the world to which he belongs from the outside, as it were, from the perspective of another community and another historical fate. And he must ask himself to what extent his theology and its tradition were perhaps merely a reflection of his world, the world of the dominant race.

The paradox of this experience for white theologians is that one learns to see reality by being seen from below. In the words of Sartre ([sa]:7ff), which I have quoted earlier, white people are now experiencing the sensation of being seen by black eyes which are no longer domesticated, but have become 'savage and free'. The 'elenctic' (7) power of this 'gaze' of the other is a neglected feature in theology, but it becomes unavoidable when one is confronted with Black Theology. Russell (1981:130) contends that 'in order to challenge the culture of the oppressors in a critical way it is necessary to experience the results of that culture among those who must pay for it'. Who can be unmoved when overhearing a black Christian pray these words to God:

Sit no longer Blind, Lord God, deaf to
Our prayer and dumb to our dumb suffering
Surely Thou, too, art not white, O Lord, a
pale, bloodless, heartless thing!

(in Smith 1984:6)

In a white re-reading of the Bible in the light of the challenge of Black Theology, the parable of the last judgement in Mt 25:31-46 acquires renewed relevance. In the searching and accusing eyes of the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and imprisoned black people of South Africa, white Christians see the eyes of Christ himself, coming as judge of all the earth to call them to conversion. Many suffering black people have not yet taken the courage to lift up their heads and look straight into the eyes of their white 'masters' or 'madams'. Those who have been empowered by the Spirit to accept themselves as God's black children and are looking straight and deep into white eyes, mediate to white people both God's wrathful judgement on their injustice and God's gracious call to conversion. If white people are willing to expose themselves to this burning gaze and to become vulnerable before it, the possibility is there for a new human beginning.

Having been disappointed so many times by the seemingly good intentions of white people, however, black theologians are not too optimistic about the white response. The words of Small (1974:15) could be taken as representative here:

The very situation which now makes us look at ourselves now (sic) does the same for them for the first time in world history.... Do whites, however, want to face up to their whiteness and all its consequences, even now?

The question remains an open one.

6.2.1.2 'Escape hatches'

There are some excuses ('escape hatches') which white theologians employ, however, to avoid the confession of guilt called for by the steady gaze of black theologians.

The first is an individualist 'liberal' attitude, which claims that individual white people (including theologians) cannot be

held responsible for everything that has gone wrong in South Africa. These are people who 'completely disclaim responsibility for the country's inhumanity to the black man' (Biko 1979:77). It is often pointed out that many white theologians have protested against unjust government policies over the years and that Christians have been responsible for large-scale projects of aid and development in black communities. Without disparaging any of these efforts, it needs to be stated quite clearly that 'all the noise [= protest against apartheid JNJK] has not stopped a single white person from benefitting from what he tells the world is evil.... All whites enjoy superiority of privilege with the consequent superiority of living' (Zulu 1973:12). Speaking from a European context, Gollwitzer (1975:50) similarly states the need for white people to 'recognize that with our affluence including the material status of our divinity schools and seminaries we are daily beneficiaries of white imperialism as the major fact in the present world situation'. What is urgently needed is a deprivatization of Christian faith, which will enable Christians to see their complicity in societal injustices. Lamb (1982:3) expresses it well:

Individuals may have the best will in the world, may be good and upright, and yet by their actions contribute to social and historical processes which oppress and dehumanize.

This awareness of being compromised, of being in solidarity with the guilt of the whole white community, is a prerequisite for a liberating white theology. No genuine effort for radical change can emerge unless we all 'realise our collaboration with oppressive structures' (Goba 1988:80). For white people this implies that they must 'face the dismal truth -- we are the problem and we are the oppressors' (Nettleton 1972:9). This realisation that South Africa does not primarily have a 'black problem' but a 'white problem', is a fundamental pillar of a liberating white consciousness.

Another 'escape' which some English-speaking white theologians have used to avoid a confession of guilt, is the accusation that structural injustice in South Africa has been the responsibility of Afrikaners. After all, it was they who created apartheid! Black Theology unmasks the hypocrisy of this 'white liberal' view, and rejects it as vehemently as it does the openly racist view of Afrikaners (8). It is clear that the present-day black 'homelands' in the Cape and Natal are largely based on the 'Native Reserves' which the British colonial administrations had bequeathed to posterity. The capitalist basis of the South African economy was also laid by English initiative. Cochrane (1987) has shown conclusively how the English-speaking churches acted as 'servants of power' in the formative first three decades of this century. My view here is not an anti-English diatribe by an Afrikaner. It is to affirm the solidarity in guilt of the whole white community for the oppression of black people in South Africa. It is to affirm that there is no possibility of partnership with God or with one another, 'unless we acknowledge that we are all caught in social sin' (Russell 1981:119).

Another common escape from admitting complicity in social structures and the suffering they cause is what de Gruchy ([1979] 1986:190) calls 'pseudo-pietism'. He describes it as a religiosity 'hiding inadequacy, justifying social irresponsibility, and giving ungodly deeds a sanctimonious aura'. It is a spirituality which is prevalent not only in the more recently formed charismatic churches, but also in large sectors of 'mainline' denominations. It is a religiosity which insists on 'not mixing religion with politics', without realising what an important political stance such a statement implies. Such an 'irresponsible' theology is unacceptable in the light of the major emphasis in the prophetic tradition that true worship is incompatible with societal injustice. Some central biblical passages in this regard are Isaiah 1:10-17, 58:1-14, Amos 5:21-24, Matthew 5:21-26, 7:21-23, and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. In all these passages the messengers

proclaim a God who does not allow believers to escape from their responsibility for justice in society, and who actually rejects their worship if they do so. A theology which is to have a liberating effect in the white community will have to reject this escapist spirituality which prompted Marx (1974:36) to coin the phrase 'opium of the people'.

All escape hatches need to be closed, not because of masochism, but because of a clear realisation of the historical realities of South Africa, and of the complicity of all white people in creating, maintaining and enjoying the present social formation. These hatches also need to be closed in the interests of developing an authentic theology for white liberation. De Gruchy ([1979] 1986:190) has rightly said that the confession of social guilt by white Christians 'could be one of the most potent forces for healing society's wounds'.

6.2.1.3 No paralysing guilt feelings

An important aspect of this awareness of guilt which a liberating white theology wishes to foster among white people is that it should not lead to pathological and paralysing guilt feelings. The metanoia intended here implies that guilt is exposed, confessed, and then decisively left behind by embarking on a new life style of struggle against injustice. As I have pointed out, Randall (1973:80) regarded one of the essential features of 'white consciousness' as 'overcoming the paralysing feelings of apology and guilt which tend to make white liberals gloomy and ineffectual protagonists of change'. The awareness of complicity will bring about a healthy conversion only if it leads white people to an active involvement in the struggle for liberation -- of black people and of themselves. This means that reparations are needed:

The cost of freedom with justice is reparations. It is working for the mending of creation by acting in

response to the pain of others.... The oppressors are not asked to feel guilty. As Stendahl says, 'The poor can't eat guilt'. They are being asked to act in such a way as to address the causes of injustice so that the poor can eat food (Russell 1981:117).

If the words complicity and guilt are used here, they do not intend to foster a sickly preoccupation with one's own evil, a 'cringing confession of sins that seems to gain special satisfaction in one's failure' (de Gruchy [1979] 1986:190). Instead, they aim to bring about shame, which Marx has aptly called a 'revolutionary emotion' (cf Sölle 1987:11). When sensitive white people are exposed to the ugly reality of black suffering, they undergo a cathartic conversion experience which Casalis (1984:3) describes as a form of death, causing a 'rebirth into a struggle for the present and the future of humankind'. In a similar way, Barndt (1972:36) says: 'Guilt is debilitating and powerless, but anger has the power to break chains'. A genuine realisation of complicity in the suffering of others does not paralyse; Instead, it energises people to turn away from the evil being done against others.

6.2.2 Turning from idols

In the understanding of conversion in the Christian tradition, the notion of turning away from idols has occupied a central place. This theme has acquired special relevance in Latin America, as the following statement (Richard 1983:1) confirms:

The central question in Latin America today is not atheism -- the ontological question of whether or not God exists.... The central issue is idolatry -- a worship of the false gods of the system of oppression. Even more tragic than atheism is the faith and hope that is put in false gods. All systems of oppression are characterized by the creation of gods and idols

that sanction oppression and anti-life forces.

A very similar situation prevails in South Africa. As in Latin America, the majority of the population is nominally Christian, and the Christian faith is used to justify the present political and economic system. In chapter four I have indicated how black theologians unmask and expose these 'idols of death' in South Africa. In this section I develop a liberating white perspective in response to their analysis.

The choice of idolatry as the central theme for this response has a number of consequences. In the first place it implies that society is understood to be a battlefield, the site of a life and death struggle between Yahweh and the false gods, and consequently between the people of Yahweh and the people of the false gods. The conflictual or 'antagonistic' dimension of this approach is typical of the prophetic biblical tradition, from which my approach draws its inspiration. This element of antagonism is clearly expressed by Richard (1983:1):

The search for the true God in this battle of the gods brings us to an anti-idolatrous discernment of false gods, of those fetishes that kill with their religious weapons of death. Faith in God as a liberator, who reveals his face and mystery through the struggle of the poor against oppression, necessarily entails repudiation and removal of false gods. Faith becomes anti-idolatrous.

There is a second implication of such an anti-idolatrous approach. It insists that, on a battlefield such as this, neutrality is impossible. Seeing the world in this way means that one has made a fundamental choice to stand on the side of the poor and oppressed in their struggle for justice. To take a prophetic, anti-idolatrous approach to theology means therefore the 'open acknowledgement of the class interests' that are expressed in

your stand (Mosala, IJ 1987a:61). For white people this means choosing against their own class interests, having come to see many of these interests as in fact idolatrous. The term often used for such a choice is 'class suicide' (10), but the substance of it is well known in the biblical tradition. Two examples will suffice. First, the option of Moses as interpreted in Hebrews 11:24ff:

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward.

While taking into account the interests of the author of Hebrews in presenting these 'heroes of faith' in the way that he does (11), there is preserved in this text the subversive memory of a believer who chose against his own material interests and for a new future with God's people, even though he knew it would entail suffering.

Secondly, the option of Rahab as interpreted in Hebrews 11:31:

By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given friendly welcome to the spies.

Rahab 'turned traitor' to her 'own people', because she discerned where the future lay, and obtained 'the assurance of things hoped for' (Hebrews 11:1) while they could not yet be seen. It is this risky and costly conversion to the future that is demanded of white people in South Africa today by the challenge emerging from Black Theology. Gollwitzer (1975:38) describes this challenge to the white person as follows:

As a member of his world he appears under a spell which falsifies not merely isolated theological statements, but church and theology as a whole, which he can break only in giving up his hitherto uncritical solidarity with the other world and trying to 'become black'. This is the concrete form of the metanoia by which he sees himself challenged -- cutting deeper into his lifestyle than any metanoia he had previously imagined.

There is a third implication of a prophetic, anti-idolatrous approach to theology. It is that the whole of the human reality is addressed in theology, and not merely a 'spiritual' or 'religious' component of it. Such an holistic approach to human society attempts to ascertain the things that actually control the lives of people, in other words, the real 'gods' to which people are devoted and bound. It does not focus on discovering 'idols' among people of other religions, but searches for them within 'Christian civilisation', as this has taken shape in South Africa (12).

6.2.2.1 The race idol

The first and foremost idol of which a white person becomes aware when confronted with the challenge of Black Theology is that of race. Black theologians have unmasked racism as a form of idolatry, since it 'idolizes and absolutizes the human will' (Goba 1980b:20). White people need to become aware of the fact that they have ascribed to their whiteness the status of divinely sanctioned superiority. In both crude and subtle ways this false self-consciousness has been instilled into white minds in South Africa. The corollary of this is the belief in the 'constitutional inferiority of black people' (Mofokeng 1983:10f). As I have observed in chapter four, racism should not be understood merely as a set of attitudes or prejudices, but as a system of oppression, closely linked to colonialism and capitalism. Simpson

(1974:17) is therefore correct when he says: 'The power structure of white racism is identified with those demonic and destructive principalities and powers which Christ has come to conquer'. The testimony of Berkhof (1962:25) is instructive in this regard:

When Hitler took the helm in Germany in 1933, the powers of Volk, race, and state took a new grip on men. Thousands were grateful, after the confusion of the preceding years, to find their lives again protected from chaos.... No one could withhold himself, without utmost effort, from the grasp these Powers had on men's inner and outer life. While studying in Berlin (1937) I myself experienced almost literally how such Powers may be 'in the air'. At the same time one had to see how they intruded as a barrier between God's Word and men. They acted as if they were ultimate values, calling for loyalty as if they were the gods of the cosmos.

In a similar way to Nazi Germany, and influenced by it in many ways (13), South Africa is a scene of the destructive 'gods' of 'volk', race and state. It is not accidental that black theologians have drawn direct parallels between South Africa and Nazi Germany (14).

To turn away from this idol of race, it is necessary to become aware of the vast number of ways in which it manifests its power in societal structures, interpersonal attitudes, views of God, language, perceptions of history, and the distorted self-image of white people. It is not possible thoroughly to explore all these aspects here. I will limit myself to a few specific remarks about views of God and self-image, since they are central to the others. A more comprehensive theological critique of this white racist consciousness and praxis is an urgent priority for white theologians in South Africa. The words of Goba (1988:5) underline the seriousness of this:

The future of the white Christian community, and for that matter of the whole white South African society, will be determined by a willingness to accept the gift of liberation Christ makes possible which will enable them to rediscover their authentic humanity free of racial pride and bigotry and to create a just social order.

An important challenge to white theological consciousness is the confession of Jesus as the black Messiah by black theologians. The 'colourblind' or 'universal' Jesus of traditional white theology is unmasked by Black Theology to be in fact a white Jesus who leaves oppression unchallenged. White people need to turn away from this white Jesus, who has been used to justify white racism and individualist 'neutrality'. According to Mt 25:31-46, he is to be found especially among the least of his brothers and sisters. This requires a rejection of the 'Christmas wrapping' Jesus, in order to discover him as a baby born to a 'resettled' or squatter family, one of the many pawns on the chessboard of history. He is to be found especially among the toiling and suffering crowds of today's 'Galilee', among the outcasts, 'tax collectors', 'sinners' and 'Samaritans' of South Africa. In the light of the definite choices which Jesus made in Palestine then, it is clear that he is black in South Africa today. He moves among black oppressed people, empowering them to assert their God-given humanity and to take their rightful place on the stage of history. From his vantage point among the poor, he also moves among privileged and powerful white people, challenging them to renounce the Christ whom they have comfortably 'domesticated' to justify their way of life.

With reference to the white self-image, Black Theology presents a tremendous challenge. Black theologians use the notion of the imago Dei to help oppressed black people claim and develop their God-given human dignity, worth and creativity. A prophetic and anti-idolatrous white theology has to dismantle the white self-

image of being divinely appointed rulers and guardians of 'inferior' races. This 'natural' assumption of superiority, which is so successfully instilled into white children through white societal institutions (including the church), needs to be exposed as idolatrous. Racism, which has indeed become 'deeply ingrained in the psyche of Western society' (Goba 1985:56), needs to be actively combatted as a pernicious 'idol of death'. A relevant understanding of the imago Dei to challenge the idolatrous self-image of white racism includes an emphasis on the image of God as relational. To be created in God's image means to be created for relationships -- with God and with other people (see e.g. Gen 1:26ff). Black theologians rightly emphasise the imago Dei as a divinely bestowed gift of authority and creativity, with the purpose of lifting up downtrodden and stifled black people. White theologians need to emphasise the imago as a divinely bestowed duty to relate in equality and justice with fellow human beings, with the purpose of 'cutting down to size' white people who have arrogated to themselves the right to 'play God' in the lives of other human beings.

6.2.2.2 The land idol

Uit die blou van onse hemel, uit die diepte van ons see,
Oor ons ewige gebergtes waar die kranse antwoord gee,
Deur ons ver-verlate vlaktes met die kreun van ossewa --
Ruis die stem van ons geliefde, van ons land Suid-Afrika.

Ons sal antwoord op jou roepstem, ons sal offer wat jy vra:
Ons sal lewe, ons sal sterwe -- ons vir jou, Suid-Afrika.

(Langenhoven [1933] 1974:125)

The wording of this first verse of the South African 'national anthem' reveals very clearly the status of land in white (certainly Afrikaner) thinking. The fact that this anthem is called 'Die Stem', that is, the voice or call of South Africa, shows how

the land is personified and revered. It is religious language which is used here. On the one hand the 'believers' speak of the country as 'ons land Suid-Afrika', revealing a deep sense of belonging, and on the other they commit themselves to obey the call ('roepstem') of their Country, even unto death. This Country is therefore not merely a geographical area; it is qualified by 'die kreun van ossewa', in other words, it is the Land of white people who trekked into the interior to take possession of it and claim it as their own. It is not surprising, then, to hear a white theologian speaking of South Africa as a 'witmansland' (white man's country) (Pont 1973:26).

Black Theology exposes this as a thoroughly colonial way of relating to the land. A white minority of less than 20% of the total population claims 87% of the country for itself, leaving the vast majority to live in overcrowded conditions on the 13%, or else as 'foreigners' in 'white South Africa'. Human suffering on such a scale can only be justified by recourse to a very powerful myth or religious idea, such as is expressed by the character Marlow in the novel Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad ([1902] 1973:10):

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea -- something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to...

Black Theology has exposed this idea, this Country for which white people are willing to sacrifice their lives, as an idol. It is a false god, which creates the false and arrogant consciousness among its white worshippers that they have the sole right to control the land, and to 'give' certain parts of it to the black

majority.

In order to develop a new white theology of land, a number of aspects will be crucial. First, the myth that South Africa was 'empty land' until the white settlers arrived needs to be debunked. The classical formulation of this myth states that the various black 'tribes' crossed the Limpopo river at the same time that the Dutch settlers arrived at the Cape (15). This myth was supposed to justify the claim of white people to have as much right to the land as the black inhabitants. To counter this myth at the intellectual level, it is essential to take cognisance of the archaeological evidence which establishes the presence of black settlements all over South Africa for the past two thousand years (16).

A second crucial aspect of a theology of land is that white South Africans need to turn away decisively from all ideas of forced separation or partition. Any such programme represents a failure to accept responsibility for all fellow South Africans, and the retention of the existing enclaves of white privilege and power. Having benefitted for centuries from the unjust distribution of land and opportunities, whites cannot now shirk their responsibility to make restitution to those whom they have dispossessed. What white people need to instil in themselves and their children is the sense of being one nation with the black majority. This means insisting on South Africa as a unitary state, and turning away from the idolatrous view of the 'anthem' that it is a white Country calling its white subjects to sacrifice their lives to ensure its survival against threats and dangers.

A third crucial element of a theology of land is to develop the biblical notion of stewardship, which implies that land (together with all of creation) belongs to God, and is entrusted to human beings. This brings about a perception of 'ownership' and 'property' which is communal and also accountable to God. Another powerful (and related) biblical symbol which needs to be deve-

loped is that of the Jubilee. As portrayed in Leviticus 25, the yobel has political, socio-economic and religious meaning, as IJ Mosala (1987c:24) has rightly pointed out: it includes not only a general political amnesty, but also the returning of all alienated property to the original owners, and living 'in fear of God', which is interpreted as abstaining from cheating. Working for the realisation of such a Jubilee is a high priority for white Christians in South Africa (17). The proposal of Arias (1984) to conceive of mission in terms of the jubilee paradigm needs to be explored. Gilkes (1984:75) is correct when she says that the full appropriation of the good news insists that the oppressed must have their land restored to them, so that 'we all have the Bible and ... all share the land'.

In order that white people may turn away from this particular idol, more than mere moralising and preaching will be necessary. The material basis of this colonialist ideology will first have to be altered, or at least placed under tremendous pressure from the side of black people, causing its 'plausibility structure' to crumble, before white people generally will begin to readjust their views on the land. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need among white people to prepare the way for such a new theology of land, so that it may come to full fruition when the material conditions for it eventually become ripe. This is one of the central features of a liberating ministry directed at the white community (18).

6.2.2.3 The state idol

White people do not only have an idolatrous view of the land, they have also turned the state into an idol. The pre-occupation with 'state security', in response to the 'total onslaught' detected against the state, has given rise to a 'total strategy', leading to a far-reaching militarisation of South African society. This is evident from the high visibility of the police and defence force, the declaration of successive states of emergency,

but primarily from the 'National Security Management System', which has created a network of local and regional committees under the control of the Defence Force (19). The state, which is becoming in this way progressively totalitarian, arrogates to itself the right to control virtually every aspect of the lives of the people of South Africa. One could indeed say that the ideology of the 'national security state', as this has evolved in Latin American dictatorships, is now the operative ideology of the South African state (20).

The widespread, often unquestioning, support of white people for this security ideology, understandable as it is from the viewpoint of white fear, needs to be exposed as idolatrous. Placing one's trust in the might of the state and its military machine of destruction is not the way for Christian believers to prepare for the future. A state, however powerful, which is not based on justice and compassion, is built on sand. The theological critique of 'state theology', as expressed in the Kairos Document, needs to be taken with utmost seriousness in a liberating white theology. The call to turn away from the god confessed in the preamble to the 1983 Constitution cuts particularly deep. It is the god:

who controls the destinies of nations and the history of peoples; who gathered our forebears together from many lands and gave them this their own; who has guided them from generation to generation; who has wondrously delivered them from the dangers that beset them (Kairos Document 1986:7).

What should become clear to white Christians is that the confessional language of this preamble is very clearly the voice of the dominant and successful, who can easily and effortlessly equate history with the will of God. Black Theology challenges white Christians to turn away from such an understanding of divine providence, which in effect gives divine legitimation to the

dispossession and oppression of black South Africans. It is an invitation to see God through the eyes of the black victims of history, and therefore to reinterpret 'omnipotence' and 'providence' as God's empowerment and guidance of those struggling to become subjects on the stage of history. In the light of their complicity in the suffering of black people, white Christians are challenged to become actively involved in dismantling this oppressive state of affairs. Such a commitment demands a decisive epistemological break from dominant white theology and its god (21). It must be clear, however, that this commitment is an act of genuine patriotism, in the spirit of Bonhoeffer: 'Loving our country means being able to fight it in order to defeat the oppressive rule that it exercises over others' (in Casalis 1984:3).

6.2.2.4 The money idol

In chapter four I have indicated that many black theologians characterise South African society as 'racial capitalism', which means that they regard it as a class society, of which the class structure is fundamentally determined by racial factors. With this analysis I am basically in agreement. Underlying the race and state idols (and intimately connected to them), there is the money idol, which is ardently worshipped, and to which many human lives have already been sacrificed. Nolan (1988:72) gives a poignant description of South Africa's 'worship' of capital in the following words:

It was the initial need for cheap labour, for an exceptionally numerous labour force at an exceptionally cheap price, that made South Africa different. Without this need most of the indigenous people might have been eliminated like the native Americans or pushed into separate colonies outside of the 'golden areas'. What actually happened was that millions of black people were forced into a kind of 'slave' labour to dig the

deepest holes and the largest network of tunnels on this planet. Pharaoh's little effort at putting up huge buildings and pyramids with forced labour was as nothing in comparison with this.

The conversion necessary in the lives of white South Africans is a turning away from their ingrained practice of using black people (and other whites) as mere 'labour units' for the sake of enriching themselves. What makes an idol a false god is that to worship it leads people to harm their fellow human beings. Idolatry is not merely a question of false worship, but of false living, leading to the abuse and exploitation of people. It is clear that the capitalist economy of South Africa has acted like a Moloch, devouring many human sacrifices. The suffering brought about in the lives of black people by migratory labour, job reservation and other aspects of South Africa's economic system has been analysed in chapter four. What concerns me here is the damage done to white people by this 'idol'. Nolan (1988:80f) has assessed the damage as follows:

When you treat other human beings as mere units of labour and when you treat your money, your property, your privileges and your standard of living as more important than human beings, you begin to lose touch with your own humanity. And when you can only contact other people on the basis of their skin colour, their status within the system or their possessions, you have begun to treat them as objects, no matter who they are or how valuable they may be to you as objects. There is no human contact.

White people need to turn away from this dehumanisation of others and of themselves in order to attain a fuller humanity in just relationships. Mpumlwana (1987:97) reminds us that the mission of the church in the midst of violence is 'to witness to and struggle for right relationships in the world, as a pointer to the

eschatological manifestation of God who is Right Relation'. Black Theology extends a call to the white community to turn away from their capitalistic individualism, and to accept the African understanding of what it means to be human: motho ke motho ka batho, that is, 'One is only human because of others, with others, for others' (Boesak 1977b:152, cf Nolan 1988:80). In this regard Simpson (1974:19) remarks: 'It is black liberty of spirit which alone can rescue the white man from his preoccupation with secondary concerns and his deification of the false idols of power and wealth'. It is clear that, as in the case of the state idol, white people are not going to turn away from the idol of wealth merely as a result of moralising sermons. A vigorous prophetic witness needs to be developed in this direction, but white people will only change their perceptions on a large scale when it becomes evident to them that they stand to lose far more if they do not relinquish their exploitative economy. This raises the question of self-interest in a liberating white theology.

6.2.2.5 White self-interest

To conclude this section on conversion as a turning away from idols, it is important to stress that all of this is not an exercise in white masochism. The radical call to white conversion spelled out above is, in fact, deeply concerned about the welfare of white people. It takes up an emphasis found throughout the writings of black theologians that white people should realise how apartheid has harmed them, and therefore fight against it primarily for their own sakes. The following words of Biko (1979:66) can be taken as representative of this view:

The liberal must fight on his own and for himself. If they are true liberals they must realise that they themselves are oppressed, and that they must fight for their own freedom and not that of the nebulous 'they' with whom they can hardly claim identification.

It is clear that 'self-interest' is not meant here in the sense of selfishness or opportunism. It refers to a healthy and necessary self-love. One could say that the conversion envisaged here is a turning from selfishness to self-interest. White people need to realise that they are collectively not only sinners (see 6.2.1 above), but also sinned against, and therefore in need of liberation. In a similar way to black theologians they also need to affirm and assert their own humanity against the distortions imposed upon them by apartheid society. According to Randall (1973:80), the present oppressive situation locks whites into 'a prison of racism, authoritarianism, intolerance and fear'. It is therefore in the interest of their own humanity and freedom that white people need to develop strategies to combat the pernicious effects of racism. Barndt (1972:36) says of white people: 'when we become aware of our imprisonment, we will stop being guilty and defensive and start getting angry'. Likewise, Robert Terry ([1970] 1985:15), writing from years of experience in struggle against racism in the USA, says:

The more I have worked with whites on racism the more I realize the need to articulate clear self-interest arguments for whites combating racism. Whites need to understand more sharply how racism destroys them as well as others in the society.

This emphasis is essential in order to prevent the awareness of white complicity in black suffering from becoming a paralysing, guilt-inducing exercise. For a healthy and solid white praxis against racism to develop, it needs to be based on more than 'liberal' altruism. It has to emerge from the struggle for the liberation of both oppressed and oppressors, for the attainment of humanity by all. This approach is well articulated by Moore (1970:3): 'I rebel against being treated as a white thing in the form of a man by both whites and blacks. This would be valid justification for both a white theology and a black theology'. It is essential to communicate to the white community that one is

not just an iconoclast, unmasking the destructive idols of society, but in fact an 'opener of new horizons on the use of the name of God' (Assmann 1976:125), deeply concerned about the welfare and future of all South Africans. It is also important to ensure that this approach does not degenerate into legalism, with all the mechanisms of purity and exclusion that accompany it. This emphasis on white self-interest is based on the message of God's offer of grace to white people who live in bondage to power, wealth, and race. It is a gracious call to turn from fear to love, from exploitation to justice, from death to life.

Using the imagery of the 'hunters' and the 'hunted' from the Psalms (e.g. Psalm 9,10), one could say that Black Theology is a theology of the hunted, whereas a liberating white theology is a theology for 'hunters'. It calls them to stop their hunting, before they are caught in the traps they have dug for others (Psalm 9:15). White people have been hunting the land, diamonds and gold of South Africa. In their worse moments missionaries have even 'hunted' the 'souls' of Africa's people. Now they need to hear the prayers of the oppressed calling to God (Psalm 10:12-18), not asking for revenge, but for justice. If white Christians cannot hear this cry from the heart of the oppressed, as embodied in the challenge of Black Theology, they will reveal thereby that they have become so blinded and drugged by their power and affluence that they are no longer able even to discern what is in their own human interest.

To relate this to the central New Testament passage of Matthew 22:34-40, one could say that whites need to combat racism in order to love their black neighbours, but also in order to love themselves. A self-effacing concern of white people to achieve only black liberation cannot escape the trap of paternalism, since it contains the tacit assumption that white people do not need to be liberated. This seriously underestimates the poisoning effects of racial capitalism on those who benefit from it.

Finally, this approach is also commended on the basis of strategic considerations. Russell (1981:126), speaking about the related struggle against sexism, says the following:

[G]roups are not likely to move against their present position of advantage unless forced to do so by pressure from below, or convinced to do so by peers on the basis of self-interest.... there are those among the dominant groups that catch a vision of the possibility of a more human identity for all and move to advocate this change.

Black theologians have been putting pressure on the white community 'from below' ever since the inception of Black Theology. What needs to be developed much more vigorously now is a liberating white theology to convince white people ('as peers') to relinquish their position as oppressors and to combat injustice for the sake of their own humanity.

6.3 COMMITMENT TO LIBERATION

Having looked at the negative aspect of conversion as a turning away from idolatry and selfishness, I now discuss the positive dimension of conversion ('turning to') which is necessary if white people are to develop a liberating white praxis in solidarity with black theologians. It is not enough for white people merely to admit their complicity in the suffering of black people and to turn away from their idolatries; they also need to commit themselves to active participation in the search for justice and humanity.

To link this view to some perspectives of conversion in the biblical tradition, I start with the words of 1 Thessalonians 1:9:

[Y]ou turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Conversion means not only to turn away from idols, as I have indicated in the previous section, but also to turn to a life of servicing the living and true God. The way in which God has become known and experienced as the true and living One, is through the raising of Jesus from the dead, and through the impending judgment (wrath) on evildoers. The living God is the One who raises the dead and who condemns injustice, who takes sides for life against the idols of death. Putting this differently, the God of Jesus is the One who empowered him for his ministry and who did not abandon him irrevocably to his enemies. The true and living God is the One who endorsed the kind of life Jesus lived in Palestine by raising him from death, to ensure that such a life would continue; who poured out the Holy Spirit on the followers of Jesus to empower them to continue his lifestyle and ministry; who keeps alive in the world the dangerous memory of

Jesus' life and his subversive hope that the first will be last and the last first.

I say all this because when one speaks about 'turning to God', the question immediately arises: whose God? A liberating theology turns to the true and living God revealed as the God of the lowly and oppressed, the God of Jesus, who empowers those who struggle unceasingly for the realisation of God's reign of justice on earth. Because this God is revealed in the endorsement and empowerment of the liberating ministry of Jesus, conversion to God includes solidarity and comradeship with those who today are continuing that ministry. For my study this means that conversion to the living God must be understood as opting for open solidarity with what black Christians are doing for the liberation of all people in South Africa.

The eschatological dimension of conversion is also important in this regard. 'To wait for his Son from heaven', as it is expressed in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, refers to the inherent future-directedness of conversion to the living God. It is clear from the whole New Testament that this waiting is not passivity, but a commitment to working for the progressive realisation of God's reign on earth. It is a 'reaching out' towards the justice of the new heaven and new earth, which flows from the awareness that inclusion in this movement to the future is a gift of God's grace.

The apocalyptic notion of 'the wrath to come', from which Jesus will deliver believers, needs to be related to the parable on the last judgment in Matthew 25:31-46. The style of one's waiting for Jesus to come 'from heaven' is to be determined by solidarity with the least of his brothers and sisters on earth. The 'deliverance' from wrath, which Jesus will grant to the righteous ('Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom ...') is directly related to their concrete comradeship with the wretched of the earth. However, this solidarity with the suffering should

not be understood as benevolent and paternalistic charity. The central place allocated to children, women, the poor, and Samaritans in the Gospel tradition indicates that conversion is becoming like the oppressed and not merely helping them. Solidarity or comradeship implies first of all the establishment of a 'horizontal' relationship of equality and mutuality. In terms of my study this means that white solidarity with suffering black people is not primarily constituted by what they give to blacks or do for them, but by what they receive from them. Freire (1970b:46f) says in this connection: 'The man who proclaims devotion to the cause of liberation yet is unable to enter into communion with the people, whom he continues to regard as ignorant, is grievously self-deceived.... Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth'.

6.3.1 Solidarity with the black struggle

The first dimension of a liberated and liberating white theology is the recognition that the principal agents of liberation in South Africa are black people. This statement is based on the understanding of social change enunciated by most black theologians and expressed very clearly in the Kairos Document (1986:12): 'Real change and true justice can only come from below, from the people, most of whom are Christians'. This posture of solidarity is a rejection of the paternalistic 'white liberal' approach, which implies that white people could lead and advise black people in their struggle. It implies a recognition of the fact that, as a result of the impact of the Black Consciousness movement, the black community has taken over initiative and leadership in the struggle for justice. This understanding also implies a rejection of the notion that the change of individual white attitudes is an adequate strategy to bring about a new social order in South Africa. Since it is primarily sustained pressure from below by the black community which will bring about fundamental change, white people committed to such change need to express their solidarity with what black

people are doing to bring it about.

It further means the positive acceptance of the fact that black people are no longer under white tutelage, and have chosen to become subjects of history in their own right. It is therefore an attitude of respect for the fact that blacks have withdrawn from 'multiracial' organisations and that they cooperate with whites only when they judge it in their interest to do so. The patronising attitude of white trusteeship or guardianship needs to be resolutely rejected and in its place must come an affirmation of the essential role that only blacks can play in creating a new South Africa. This must not be accepted grudgingly, but gladly, since it is not the beginning of the end of all communication between black and white (Boshoff), but the beginning of a new beginning. Goba (1988:5) is correct when he says:

The black/white conflict can be resolved by a clear commitment to the liberation movement in which blacks have a primary responsibility of leading whites, who by virtue of supporting the existing political system have completely denied themselves such an opportunity.

6.3.1.1 Becoming 'black'

In chapter five I have discussed whether or not, in the opinion of black theologians, white people become 'black' by committing themselves to concrete solidarity with the black struggle. Since black theologians are divided on this, it is a sensitive issue.

First it needs to be said that it was not white theologians who proclaimed themselves 'black', but black theologians such as Cone ([1970] 1986:144), Goba (1978:20, 1981c:39), Boesak (1984a:24) and Maimela (1984:48) who have done so. They have recognised in the actions of some white Christians the comradeship and solidarity which brought them to the point of describing them as 'black'. They are people who 'through their commitment, have taken upon

themselves the condition of Blackness' and have 'learned not so much to do things for Blacks, but to identify with what Blacks are doing to secure their liberation' (Boesak 1984a:24). Set against the background of black people who have openly sided with the oppressive apartheid system and thus contribute to the suffering of their own community, whites who were committed to fundamental change clearly qualified to be designated as 'black'. It seems to me that this view, expressed by some influential black theologians, should be respected and acknowledged. At any rate, I do not regard it as fruitful for white theologians to attack it. It does seem appropriate, though, to warn against a 'cheap' use by white theologians of this designation of blackness. It is their responsibility to come to terms with their own whiteness, and to develop their creative contribution to the struggle for liberation. If, in the process, they are called 'black' by black theologians, they should regard such a designation as an honour, but not as something to take for granted or to proclaim about themselves. The reformational dictum 'simul justus et peccator' seems applicable in this regard.

I base this on the fact that white people are not able to identify totally with the plight of the black community. In the words of Wilmore (1974:216): 'white theologians have never been lowered into the depths of the experience of being black in a white world'. There is a definite limit to the solidarity and comradeship which white Christians can express towards black fellow Christians. As a result of the racist structures of South African society, from which all whites benefit, their identification with what blacks are doing for the liberation of South Africa will never be more than partial. By this I do not mean that they have no positive role to play, but that the designation 'black' cannot be applied to them in an uncontested way, and that they should therefore not claim it for themselves as a right. The sharp words of Tlhaqale (1985:129f) need to be heard at this point:

White theology ... abounds in its homiletic expression with phrases such as: opting for the poor, siding with the workers, sharing with the poor, or all are made in the image of God. Black Theology locates the 'solution' not in the gratuitous options of rich Christians but in the revolutionary awareness of the workers themselves.

It is especially when the class structure of South African society, and the role of race in determining it, is taken seriously, that the designation of some white theologians as 'black' becomes problematical. Whatever designation is used for such white theologians, however, what really matters is that they heed the words of Boesak (1977b:66):

[B]lacks must do their own thing and ... whites, 'conservatives' as well as 'liberals', can no longer make a decisive contribution. As far as we are concerned, there is only room for those whites who share so deeply the concern of black people that they are willing to work for the radical change of oppressive societal structures wherever this is needed.

6.3.1.2 Concrete solidarity

Solidarity with the black struggle could take many different forms. In this section I outline some of the most important.

First, there is the responsibility to be informed. One of the most pernicious effects of the settler colonial structure of South African society is that white people generally are hopelessly uninformed about what is going on in the black community. The percentage of white people who know their way around black townships, have black friends, or read black newspapers, is small. The irony of any colonial situation is that the colonised know and understand the situation much more clearly than the colonisers. From 'below' they see right through the edifice of

oppression and, since they commute between the two worlds daily, they are 'at home' in both of them. Black people generally are polylingual, speaking not only their mother tongue, but also English or Afrikaans (or both), in addition to a number of other African languages. This gives them access to the white world and all its media, which means that they are in a position to unravel its mechanisms of oppression. White people, on the other hand, are generally at most bilingual, able to speak only English and Afrikaans. This means that the black world is a closed book to them, and that black people remain a homogeneous mass of 'strangers'. Whereas black people often work in white homes as 'domestic workers' and in other capacities, whites seldom see the inside of a black home, thus remaining woefully ignorant of the conditions under which the majority of South Africans live. Nolan (1988:78) has highlighted the irony that the South African system of settler colonialism isolates whites rather than blacks, cutting off whites from reality and thus making them blind to it. The effect of this is that black people are functionally invisible in the worldview and theology of most whites. The impassioned words of Lincoln (1975:19) are to the point here:

Practical invisibility -- oblivion -- is the common experience of black people in a world dominated by whites. The practical invisibility of blacks sustains the profane illusion that the world as presently ordered is the best available, and encourages the self-elected shapers of human destiny to indulge in the euphoria of fantasy. They want not to see blacks who are hungry, blacks who need housing, blacks, who for want of a modicum of power are always pawns, never players in the game.... the common wish is for black people to go away. To get lost. To vamoose. To vanish. And the strategies for black disappearance, psychological and physical, constitute the principal agenda of the racist enterprise.

A commitment to solidarity with black people and their theologies of liberation will have to begin by reversing this unacceptable situation. The duty to be informed and to inform other whites about the actual situation of black communities is the first concrete step of solidarity with their struggle. This means that black people need to become visible to the consciousness of white people, so that the 'fool's paradise' of white privilege and power may be shattered. The view of Cone (1986b:166), reflecting on his visit to South Africa and commenting on the ignorance of whites about blacks, is noteworthy:

How can we, black and white together, build a just society if we do not know each other and do not share in the responsibility of breaking down the walls that separate us? How can Christians do theology, preach the gospel, and live in faithful obedience and not actively seek to create one community defined by justice and love rather than racism and hate?

Another dimension of concrete solidarity with the black struggle, flowing directly from the previous one, is personal friendship. Contrary to the stereotype created by white theologians like Boshoff, black theologians do not oppose or destroy all communication between black and white. Ntwasa (1971b:22f) stated this quite clearly, and I quote him extensively because this view is generally not well known or understood by white theologians:

[I]nstead of collective inter-racial surges, I opt for personal inter-racial contact. Here you do not meet because you subscribe to some constitution, but just because you happen to have something to talk about. This sort of meeting is important because I believe that before people can meet in open society or organization they must have got rid of most of their personal hang-ups which are carry overs from our racist society. By personal contact, I do not mean one-sided contact in

which the one is expected to 'toe the line' of the other. It means a free give-and-take in which both are open to being changed by the encounter. If there is this living alongside of and undergirding the situationally separated organizations for working out strategy, then there is hope for a future non-racial society not based on either White or Black values, but on human values.

The separation of black theologians from 'multi-racial' organisations is not inherently anti-white, but a strategy for the sake of attaining a real meeting between black and white in the future, while not excluding the possibility or even desirability of personal friendship between black and white people along the way to that goal. This is an important aspect of the solidarity between white and black theologians. It is not enough to be merely informed of the black situation or to be well read in Black Theology; grave misunderstandings occur if there is no personal contact. A posture of solidarity means entering into personal friendships with black Christians, not in order to become an 'expert' on the black world, but to become more human through interaction with them.

Another dimension of solidarity with black theologians is the need for white theologians to become acquainted with the spirituality of black Christians. Black Theology cannot be understood without reference to the songs, prayers and sermons embodying the faith commitment of black Christians in their struggle against injustice. Black Theology is expressed as much in funeral sermons and 'freedom songs' as it is in theological publications, and no solidarity is possible unless one is exposed to this spirituality of struggle. This does not necessarily mean that white Christians need to become members of black congregations, but such a step is certainly a clear way of identifying with what black Christians are doing to encourage one another for their daily fight against oppression. The experience of being

drawn into the rhythm and message of songs such as 'Thula Sizwe', 'Senzenina' and 'Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika' (to mention a few) leaves an indelible stamp on one's faith. Nolan (1988:159) says about this:

Singing and dancing are a way of celebrating the struggle. What they express and confirm most of all is the joy of hopefulness, the indestructible conviction that victory is certain.... The struggle rescues people from alienation, isolation and individualism. It restores ubuntu (humanness) and the experience of being a living member of a living body.

By becoming part of this experience, white theologians receive immeasurably more than they can give to the black community. By being welcomed into the fellowship of those who sigh under oppression as they call on the Lord for justice and freedom, white people are converted by the Spirit to action for a new South Africa.

The last aspect of solidarity which I want to mention is concrete support for actions of black Christians in their pursuit of justice. This may take many different forms and entail many risks, but it is essentially a 'co-suffering with the victims in their struggles to transcend victimhood' (Lamb 1982:8). It is based not on an arrogant white claim to 'liberate' black people, but on identification with the call made to all South Africans by Bishop Desmond Tutu (1983:15) at the funeral of Steve Biko:

We are experiencing the birth pangs of a new South Africa, a free South Africa, where all of us, Black and White together, will walk tall, where all of us, Black and White together, will hold hands as we stride forth on the Freedom March to usher in the new South Africa where people will matter because they are human beings made in the image of God. We thank and praise God for

giving us such a magnificent gift in Steve Biko and for his sake and for the sake of ourselves, Black and White together, for the sake of our children, Black and White together, let us dedicate ourselves anew to the struggle for the liberation of our beloved land, South Africa.

6.3.2 Liberating white Christianity

For white Christians conversion to the living God means not only that they commit themselves to a life of solidarity with the black victims of society, but also that they discover themselves in a new way as human beings. A mature white response to the challenge of Black Theology cannot mean that whites merely become 'parasites' on the black struggle. They can only be worthy dialogue partners of black theologians if they are busy developing a positive and creative white consciousness and praxis. Turning away from the idolatry and selfishness of the system of settler colonialism and racial capitalism also means turning towards a new human identity for a new South Africa. Solidarity with the black struggle cannot mean a denial of one's own white history and culture in order to 'go native'. It means a critical reappropriation of the white past in order to make a positive contribution to the history and culture of a new South Africa. The development of such a theological approach is missionary in its intention, since it aims to help fearful and disillusioned white people to come to terms with the reality of a new non-racial South Africa, by reinterpreting their history as well as the Christian message. The aim is therefore to begin constructing a theological, cultural and political 'mind set' which could enable white South Africans to come to terms with the challenges presented to their existence by the demands of the black majority, as these are articulated and interpreted by black theologians. In short, it is a commitment to work for the liberation of the white community from the bondage in which it has entangled itself through its persistent and systematic oppression of black people.

6.3.2.1 The healing of human brokenness

The starting point of a liberating (and liberated) white Christianity is a sense of kinship and solidarity with other white people. Barndt (1972:49) addresses this crucial and sensitive issue as follows:

All too often, when we white people discover racism in other white people or institutions, we turn away from them, disassociate ourselves from them and begin to believe that being white is ugly and evil. For us to hate white, however, is to participate in self-hatred and self-destruction. Besides destroying our own egos, we will never be concerned to set our sisters and brothers free if we despise them.

This solidarity has nothing to do with condoning racism or oppression. It is an expression of love for white people as people, created in God's image and needing liberation from their own particular forms of bondage. The temptation for white people to indulge in self-hatred when they become aware of the tremendous human suffering caused by white racism is a very real one indeed. This often gives rise to judgmental and arrogant diatribes against the white community, which do little more than alienate and antagonise the white sisters and brothers who need to be set free. It smacks of 'renegade's hatred', and due to its judgmental nature leads either to angry rejection by the white community or to pathological guilt feelings among them. What needs to be developed is a prophetic solidarity with fellow whites, which does not communicate a 'holier-than-thou' attitude, but a genuine concern for their conversion to the search for true humanity. A commitment to black liberation therefore implies an equal concern for white liberation and humanisation. Mature white Christians will have to take themselves seriously enough to say with Moore ([sa]:10):

White involvement in the black liberation struggle cannot be patronizing, i.e. it cannot give its blessing to everything black simply because it is black. Whites need to be sufficiently conscious of their own humanity to take their own self-fulfilment seriously and thus the threats to it.

In other words, the focus should be on analysing the dimensions of 'spiritual poverty' (Biko 1979:31) or 'human brokenness' (Goba 1979b:8) of the white community, and on developing a style of Christian ministry to deal with it. For doing this, Black Theology presents an exciting and challenging paradigm, especially in the way it focuses on the analysis of human experience and consciousness as an integral part of theology.

The first dimension of the brokenness or bondage of white humanity which deserves attention is fear. De Gruchy ([1979] 1986:188ff), begins his 'phenomenology of contemporary white existence', by showing how the white position of power and wealth constitutes a 'fatal privilege' for whites, since it increases fear of change and anxiety about the future. Fear is the price whites pay for their exploitation and domination of black people, and is a common feature of relationships between the colonisers and colonised. What makes this fear more destructive of white humanity is the fact that it is suppressed by many whites, who prefer not to know what is happening in black townships or to consider the implications of increasingly repressive legislation. (:189) rightly comments: 'the effect of this constant sublimation is not less anxiety, but more'. There are many kinds of white fear in South Africa, related to the different dimensions of the 'white problem'. At the root of them all is the fear of losing the wealth and comfort built up over the years. This is the very real material basis of white fears. Another dimension is the fear of losing political power, which means that whites will no longer be able to determine the direction of government policy. This is

closely allied to the fear of a 'Communist take-over' and the corresponding fear of losing 'religious freedom'. In this sense it is clear that a colonial situation still prevails, in which the white minority fearfully observes the growing restiveness of the 'native' population, and embarks on a policy of reform-with-repression to stay in control. This is closely linked to racial fear, explained as follows by Moulder (1981:187):

We fear that we may be dominated by other racial groups; we fear inter-racial mixture; the loss of our racial identity; the loss of our affluence and privilege.

Such fear is often expressed by saying that whites need to preserve 'Western Christian civilisation', 'democracy', or 'civilised standards', thereby implying that blacks are uncivilised, unchristian and undemocratic.

It is not possible to analyse or evaluate each of these fears, but what needs to be said is that they pose a formidable challenge to the ministry of the Christian church, since most whites controlled by these fears identify themselves as Christians. Some of these fears are not unfounded; whites will indeed have to lower their standard of living if a more equal distribution of wealth has to be brought about in South Africa. They will indeed lose their exclusive control of the political process if a black majority government takes over. On the other hand, it must be said that, on the basis of a biblical understanding of justice, the present settler colonial situation of domination by a white minority cannot be justified. A liberating ministry to fearful white people will have to convince them that there can be no peace without justice, and that white Christians should do their share in dismantling the unjust status quo. The message of the Gospel which needs to be communicated to white people is:

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out

fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love (1 Jn 4:18).

Although the term 'love' has been sentimentalised and thereby trivialised, it is necessary to insist that it describes the basic posture of the followers of Jesus in society, understood as a fundamental attitude and concrete actions of good will towards others. White Christians need to be helped to see that it is in the interest of themselves and their children to establish economic and political structures which embody love and justice for all. Love for their neighbours and for themselves can only become a reality in a society where there is room for all to become human in the full sense of the word. White Christians will have to learn to entrust their future into the hands of the black majority, because the attempt to preserve either the present arrangement or an adapted form of apartheid will (sooner or later) result in certain civil war. Cone (1986b:165) after his visit to South Africa, expressed it as follows: 'Unless a larger number of whites develop the courage to take a more radical stand against apartheid, with words and deeds, a racial war seems unavoidable'.

Love and trust are the only antidotes to fear, and this is precisely what the Christian message calls white South Africans to put into practice in their relationships with black people. The inability of white Christians to love and trust black people as their equals and fellow Africans constitutes a fundamental spiritual problem in South Africa. The conversion which whites need to undergo, therefore, is a turning away from the false gods of race, money and land, which keep their followers in desperate fear, to serve the living God and to trust their fellow human beings. If whites are unwilling to undergo this humanising conversion, they could bring destruction to the whole of Southern Africa.

This brings me to another (and frightening) aspect of the white

'mind set' in South Africa: the nihilistic streak evident in it. Small (1974:16) said that 'nihilism, as Nietzsche saw it -- that it is sheer self-interest -- sits fast in the breast of every white man, even despite himself; his position in relation to the black man is defined nihilistically'. This attitude of 'sheer self-interest' can be seen most clearly in the threat of a 'Sampson option' which has been made by some whites: that they will pull down the edifice on themselves and on all the blacks rather than live under black rule. This is an extreme view, and does not represent majority white opinion, but there are enough white people who are determined to fight to the 'bitter end' for their power and privileges, rather than enter into a settlement with the black majority. In this case the brokenness of white humanity is revealed not in fear, but in the rock-hard arrogance of sheer white self-interest, revealed in irrational distrust and hatred of black people. Nolan (1988:83) points out how especially the Security Forces 'makes young human beings into monsters'. The naked racism of the shooting of more than twenty black people in Pretoria recently by an ex-policeman, for no other reason than that they were black, reveals dramatically what kind of monsters the apartheid system has created. It may well be that whites holding such views will not be convinced by any argument of genuine self-interest or strategy of pressure to negotiate a common future with blacks, and will insist on dragging South Africa into a bitter war for the survival of white racism. The tragic 'heroism' of such a 'Masada' option will reveal the utter bankruptcy of white humanity, the refusal of the most basic human (and Christian) act, namely sharing. White Christians should do everything in their power to prevent such an option from attracting widespread support in the white community, and expose it as a demonic distortion of humanity.

In order to counter the destructive hatred and self-hatred revealed in these views, white Christians will have to heed the serious critique from the side of black theologians on the pessimistic anthropology on which these views are based (see Mpunzi

1974, Maimela 1987:41ff, see chapter 5.3.2.4). In the view of Maimela (1987:45), it is a 'totally negative, cynical and pessimistic anthropological presupposition of the human self', leading to the portrait of a world in which 'every human self is the enemy of every other human'. The diverse roots of this negative anthropology need to be traced by white theologians, in order to develop a truly liberating and humanising message to the white community. Comblin (1979a:90), in his critique of the National Security State ideology, traces this anthropology back to Hobbes (just as Maimela does), and then says:

[T]he gospel commands love of enemy, and this command means that the evangelical message must exclude any doctrine that gives an absolute value to security. In Christian ethics, love is the absolute value, even in the face of the overwhelming danger of losing security. In opposition to the absolute of security without love, Jesus Christ teaches love without security.

The only way to sustain such a lifestyle is by a more positive theology of creation and an emphasis on the resurrection: 'If God's power is sufficient to bring about a great miracle of resurrection and ushering in the coming Kingdom, it surely cannot fail to change us into beings God had intended us, beings capable of meaningful and creative interpersonal relationships' (Maimela 1987:58).

The white community, in bondage as it is to fear and hatred, needs to be re-evangelised 'from below' by the humanising perspective emanating from Black Theology. The systematic development of such an authentic white theology of liberation is an urgent priority for white theologians in South Africa.

6.3.2.2 Decolonising white minds

I have already discussed the view of black theologians that South Africa is a settler colonialist state, and have indicated the structural evidence of this in chapter four. In this section I focus on ways of overcoming the colonial mentality prevalent in the white community.

The arrogant assumption of 'might is right', which is inherent in the worship of the 'land idol' and 'state idol', is reproduced in the minds of white children through the family, religious and educational institutions of white society. A liberating and positive white Christianity will entail an attempt at re-socialising the entire white community through the creation of new symbols of white identity. This includes the turning away from racist colonialist assumptions of superiority, and a turning towards a definite 'white African' identity. One of the most important functions of Black Theology is that it forces white theologians to come to terms with their own history and identity. The view of Opocensky (1973:154), reacting to the role of Black Theology at the Bangkok conference of the CWME, is foundational for my approach:

[W]e in Europe have to redefine our own position, find our roots, dig deeper, discover each in his place an authentic heritage of which we can feel proud. If we meet again after such an exercise ... it may be that we shall be more honest and more blunt with each other, without having feelings of inferiority or superiority.... To dig deeper will certainly require us in Europe to reread church history and to have our ears and eyes wide open for the voice of those who have been oppressed and marginalised in the past.

A number of features stand out in this approach. It sees Black Theology as a challenge to white theologians to reread their

history, to dig for their roots, and to find a heritage of which they can be genuinely proud. The only way in which white people in South Africa can shed their colonial mentality is by rereading their history with their ears wide open to the voices of their victims, digging out from the past a human and liberating heritage which they can proudly carry with them into a shared future with the black majority. This means also to expose and reject the lies that were (are) being taught as 'history' in white schools and churches. Witvliet (1987:182) emphasises 'the struggle for the past as an essential part of the struggle for the future', and continues:

However, liberation is not served with absolutized half historical truths on either one side or the other.... The texture of historical fabrications is only broken apart when the realization dawns that coping with a past which is hard to get at and even harder to accept is a task to be shared between whites and blacks.

In order to do their 'homework' for such a joint reconstruction of the past (for the sake of a joint future), white theologians need to dig into the past with great intensity. The quality of their contribution to a joint South African future will depend on the depth of their historical probing.

The first emphasis in such a white rereading of history will have to be the language one uses. The vocabulary of oppression, which subtly entrenches colonial attitudes, must be resolutely rejected. By using seemingly 'neutral' terminology, one can easily fall into the trap of being co-opted by the dominant racist ideology. Terms such as 'Hottentot', 'Bushman', 'Coloured' and 'Bantu' are racist impositions on groups in the black community, and need to be avoided at all costs (22) . But it goes much further than this. Terms such as 'resettled communities', 'locations', 'townships', and 'population groups' are nice-sounding words which refer to ugly black realities (23). The habit of

speaking about Western values or civilisation also reveals a Euro-centric colonial mentality; it is only people living in Europe who understand themselves as a 'Western' society, over against 'The East'. People living in South Africa, at the southern tip of a Third World continent, must learn to speak of the North and the South of the world, in order to locate themselves in their proper context (23). It has also become commonplace for people to speak of the 'First World' and 'Third World' components of South African society, terms which function as euphemisms for white and black, rich and poor, developed and underdeveloped. These terms also obscure the fact that South Africa is a Third World country, perhaps with a larger elite than most other Third World countries, and with the added complication that this elite is predominantly white, but nevertheless a Third World country. The refusal by whites to acknowledge this fact is the result of a deeply ingrained European colonialist mentality. By their choice of words, white theologians should indicate that they regard themselves as part of Africa, and that they respect the feelings of black people about the use of racist terms.

Probably the most important element in such a white rereading of history is the critical reappropriation of white historical figures and symbols in order to create a 'an authentic heritage of which we can feel proud' (Opocensky 1973:154). This procedure corresponds with the approach of black theologians such as Mofokeng (1987a:6), who says:

Jesus Christ the Crucified was there as the liberative undercurrent in our African past, creating, evoking and empowering a corresponding liberative undercurrent in our African history.

With equal justification white theologians need to search their history for the presence of the Crucified Christ, using the criterion of 'liberative undercurrent', to retrieve and reappropriate symbols that can empower and inspire them today in their

struggle for authentic humanity. Despite the colonial, racist, and capitalist dimensions of white history in South Africa, there are some redeeming features which need to be reclaimed, even if these represent only scattered fragments of a liberating and liberated white existence. This is the same in Black Theology, for Mofokeng (1987a:8) says clearly that it is not 'Black History in its entirety', but a critical selection from it, which is being appropriated. Black theologians affirm that, in spite of the fact that most black people succumbed and submitted to white conquest and domination, there were always black women and men who resisted white oppression and became 'carriers of a liberation tradition in our Black history' (:8). In similar vein white theologians now need to affirm that, in spite of the fact that most white people comfortably and unquestioningly benefitted from the dispossession and exploitation of black people, there were also white women and men who realised the injustice being done and who resisted such policies in the name of Christ. The bearers of this liberating white tradition, together with the bearers of the liberating black tradition, need to be held up to whites as symbols of what the risen Christ empowers them to do today.

This is not the place to identify in any detail such liberating white figures or symbols from the past. At this point I can do no more than indicate some people or events which have enduring significance for whites in their contribution to the liberation struggle. The figures of some Christian missionaries such as Van der Kemp, Philip and Colenso, in spite of their complicity in colonialism, nevertheless provide some elements of a white counter-history which have an abiding relevance (25). The same is true of people like Bram Fischer, Patrick Duncan and Basil Moore, to mention just a few more (26). The Afrikaner history of anti-imperialist warfare, civil disobedience, and open rebellion against British colonial rule, makes it possible for whites not only to understand the option of blacks to engage in armed struggle, but also to decide what their own role should be in the present struggle for justice.

An important cultural vehicle which needs to be critically reappropriated is the Afrikaans language. It should be accepted and treasured as (in some sense) an African language, due to its black working class origins in the kitchens of the colonisers (27). Afrikaans-speaking white Christians need to strip their language of its racist and exclusivist stigma by beginning to use it in a liberating way. This will only be possible if they are willing to do theology in Afrikaans together with black Afrikaans-speaking theologians, in order to transform their language into a vehicle for the struggle against injustice. This should be a high theological priority for Afrikaans theologians dedicated to a liberating ministry in their own community.

6.3.2.3 Becoming 'white Africans'

We are in Africa. The majority of whites in this country look to Europe for their cultural sustenance and for the perpetuation of their Western-Christian norms and values -- firmly embedded in white supremacy. That is their mistake (Mattera 1988:3).

Another way of formulating the need to decolonise the white mind is to say that whites need to identify themselves in word and deed as white Africans. What needs to be fostered among white people is the sense of being sons and daughters of Africa, and that they therefore need to share it with the black majority as a common motherland. This sense needs to be fostered already, even though it will only be truthful to call white people white Africans once they have renounced the colonialist claim to ownership of the majority of the land and once the unjust system of white minority rule has been dismantled. It is not helpful to use it as an empty slogan: there is no 'short cut' to being a white African -- the way to it leads through the struggle for a new political and economic order. In this respect I need to refer again to the view of Manganyi (1981:42): 'I wonder whether in

this century the white man will ever spiritually feel he belongs to Africa as long as we are not in power'. This is indeed a spiritual question, which affects every other aspect of white existence. It is true that the terms 'European' and 'Non-European' are no longer used as official categories to distinguish white and black in South Africa, but the identification with Europe is still strong in the white community. In one sense this is understandable, due to strong economic, cultural and theological ties, but the widespread disrespect for African people and cultures reveals that many (or most) whites are not spiritually at home in Africa. And yet, at the same time, they are also no longer at home in Europe, having been physically separated from it for so long. This crisis of personal and cultural identity is compounded by the fear of losing material wealth, personal comfort and political power. From this situation of alienation and uncertainty, white people need to be evangelised and converted into an African community life, not conceived of in some static or romanticised way, but as a communal existence where people live for the sake of others. This 'homecoming' in Africa will be a slow and even painful process, due to the depth of alienation caused by three centuries of colonialism, but this is an essential part of the church's mission if it is to minister to this fundamental human need of whites. This need is movingly expressed in the novel Wasteland, when the two central characters discuss why a white South African returned to South Africa after having stayed in Britain: 'The need for an unequivocal home. For wholeness' (Robbins 1987:181). For many Afrikaans-speaking whites, whose religion and culture have been shaped by Afrikaner nationalism, there is also the deep need for patriotism: a flag, an anthem, and leaders to be proud of. When this desire is no longer satisfied by a racist white nationalism, the only real alternative seems to be African Nationalism, an option which has not yet been seriously explored by whites, but which certainly needs to be. In looking for symbols which could unite all South Africans into a common patriotism, the symbol of 'Mother Africa' readily comes to mind. There is certainly great

potential in such an approach, as long as it is not used as a mystification to try and achieve a superficial unity which covers up the present unjust division of land. No common patriotism will be possible unless the racist system of white domination is completely dismantled. The classical expression of 'assimilationist' Africanism by Robert Sobukwe may provide a vision for drawing whites into the process of building a united nation:

We aim, politically, at government of the Africans by the Africans for Africans, with everybody who owes his only loyalty to Africa and who is prepared to accept the democratic rule of an African majority being regarded as an African (in Gerhart 1978:195).

Becoming white Africans does not necessarily have to be interpreted in this strict Africanist sense; it may be that more white people are attracted to the 'non-racial' vision of the Freedom Charter. What is inevitable is that white South Africans sooner or later to come to terms with the aspirations of the liberation movements, who certainly represent the majority opinion of the black community. This process is taking place in Zimbabwe and Namibia; it will not really begin in South Africa until the balance of power has shifted towards the black majority. But Christian theology has the serious responsibility of stimulating the movement of thought in this direction already, thus ministering to the basic human need of white South Africans who are casting about for a solid basis on which to face the future.

South African whites need to come to terms with the fact that they are living in Africa, among a majority of Africans, and that they have no right to demand any special privileges merely because they are white. They therefore need to step out of the European 'enclaves' in which they are living, and turn to the acceptance of a positive African identity. This conversion to an African identity is an important dimension of a truly liberating mission to whites, since it will help them to overcome the

alienation caused by the false consciousness of settler colonial existence. Black theologians challenge white theologians to begin their theology (as they themselves have done) with questions such as: 'Who am I?' and 'What does it mean to be white and Christian in South Africa today'? The fact that white theologians generally do not treat this question as an integral part of their theology and of their ministry to other whites, reveals a serious weakness. It creates a theology and ministry which are not rooted in the realities of Africa, but merely repeat answers given to questions that are asked in the North of the world.

In the deepest sense this conversion of white people to Africa is a turning to themselves, a discovery of who they are as 'natives' of Africa. It is an ongoing process of finding out the will and purpose of God in allowing them to be born as white people in Africa. Such a conversion constitutes a reconciliation with the land: having assumed control over it, and taken possession of it for three centuries on the basis of 'might is right', whites now need to become reconciled to it as the 'mother' of all her children, as the gift of God to be shared, cultivated and enjoyed together with others. Therefore it is also a conversion to the other people of Africa, so as to live together in justice and love with all the other sons and daughters of the soil.

An important aspect of such a conversion of whites to an African identity is the learning of African languages. One of the most striking symptoms of the colonial nature of South African society is the fact that, after three centuries, only a small percentage of whites are able to speak an African language. The possibility is there, of course, that whites can learn an African language with the purpose of controlling and manipulating black people more effectively. This happens especially in industry and on farms, forming a clear instance of elements of black culture being 'stolen' from them in order to be used against them, as IJ Mosala (1987a:203 passim) has pointed out. The ability to speak an African language is therefore no guarantee that someone

has turned away from a colonial mentality, but when it is done for the sake of genuine human communication, it is an important dimension of white conversion to the realities of Africa.

To conclude, one of the key symbols for white South Africans of their identification with Africa is to join black people in adopting as their national anthem the prayer for God's blessings on all the people of Africa:

Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika, Maluphakam' uphondo lwayo:
Yiva imithandazo yethu,
Usisikelele, Thina lusapho lwakho.

Yihla Moya, Yihla Moya; Yihla Moya Oyingcwele,
Usisikelele, Thina lusapho lwakho.

Morena boloka sechaba sa heso
O felise lintoa le matsoenyeho

U se boloke, u se boloke
U se boloke Morena, u se boloke
Sechaba sa heso, sechaba sa heso.

Makube njalo, makube njalo
Kuze kube ngonaphakade, kuze kube ngonaphakade (28).

6.3.2.4 A socialist option

Above all, we should try to formulate a theology which will enable the white man to escape from the dehumanizing effects of the materialistic and selfish society which he has created.... In my view, the problems and needs of white society are such that the only logical solution to them is to be found in the direction of Christian Socialism (Simpson 1974:18).

As I have pointed out, Black Theology challenges white theologians to come to terms with their own ideological presuppositions, and to develop a theology which will have a liberating effect. Since all black theologians in Phase II point out that the problem in South Africa is not just racism, but 'racial capitalism', they all favour some form of socialism for a new South African society. Not many white theologians have taken up this particular challenge, a state of affairs which has elicited the following comment from Govender (1987a:141):

In general white theologians in South Africa -- even those who appear to have a radical slant -- are more often than not either politically confused or spiritually afraid to commit themselves theologically to an option for socialism.... it is symptomatic of the crisis which all disenchanted white intellectuals in South Africa face, when white theologians adopt a critical theological stance vis-a-vis apartheid, but are devoid of political praxis when it comes to the alternative.

There is indeed an urgent need for white theologians to take seriously a socialist option for the future South Africa. It is not enough merely to denounce apartheid and to turn away from the idols of the status quo. As IJ Mosala (1987a:26) has said:

It is not enough to be existentially committed to the struggles of the oppressed and exploited people. One has to also effect a theoretical break with the assumptions and perspectives of the dominant discourse of a stratified society.

The central question facing white (and black) Christians in their struggle against apartheid concerns the ideological framework they will adopt and therefore 'the shape of the political economy of a post-apartheid society' (Govender 1987a:145). It concerns

the concrete forms which the new humanity needs to take, as well as the strategies needed to achieve it. When white Christians consider their possible role in the mission of God to transform the present societal structures into ones that will embody more fully the coming reign of God, they cannot avoid giving serious consideration to socialism.

In this respect Afrikaner theologians need to recapture and reappropriate elements of socialism that are part of their history. Bosch (1985:67) has drawn attention to the report Kerk en stad issued by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1947, in which the plight of the Afrikaner workers are clearly articulated in opposition to urban capitalist exploitation:

City life is conditioned by capitalist exploitation. The powerful press, current public opinion, even social legislation, mostly side with capital; the labourer constantly has the worst of it. He needs a champion, a patron, the Afrikaner labourer in particular. The church should be his father, his advocate; it should stand up for the rights of the oppressed; it should proclaim social justice; it must champion social security, better housing, better labour conditions. The pulpit cannot promulgate laws but it can disseminate ideals... (in Bosch 1985:67) (29).

The Afrikaner nationalist sentiment is clear in this statement, but it does reveal that Afrikaners have something to draw on when today they develop a socialist vision and programme together with black South Africans (30).

6.3.2.5 Transforming Christian symbols

The final dimension of the mission to the white community which I am proposing is the transforming of liturgical and theological symbols in order to foster a spirituality which could have a

liberating and humanising effect in the white community. It is a very demanding task to be involved in the transformation of society, and it is necessary therefore to be sustained for that struggle by a vigorous Christian faith. The foundations for such a spirituality have been laid in the previous sections, but some specific dimensions of it need to be developed further.

The first major change which is needed in white spirituality is the development of a sense of wholeness which would overcome the many dichotomies inherent in the white worldview. The separations between sacred and profane, religion and politics, Sunday and weekdays, soul and body, etc. need to be overcome, if whites are to be set free to become part of God's liberating mission in the world. All these separations, in which the priority is always assigned to the 'divine' or 'spiritual' dimension, establish and strengthen the status quo, by withdrawing it from the criticism of the Christian message. The resulting individualism relegates Christian faith to a private sphere of 'personal opinions', from where it is powerless to transform society. In this respect white Christians have much to learn from the holistic and communal approach of black Christians. But the individualistic spirituality of the white community is not an 'innocent' cultural phenomenon; it is a typical feature of certain classes in a capitalist society, and will therefore not change substantially until there is a major reordering of the whole social formation. The most that one can hope for is that small communities of white Christians will begin to relate their faith to the whole of life, and thus act like 'leaven' within the white community. Such 'abrahamic minorities' (Camara 1974:42) may not be outwardly powerful or successful, but they can play a very important role in developing a relevant Christianity, which could become a home for many disillusioned white Christians in the future, when their white power structure will have collapsed.

Since communal worship is the 'major character-forming event of the Christian community' (Villa-Vicencio 1988:218), it is the

place where a spirituality of wholeness should be developed. The 'abrahamic' communities, functioning on the fringes of the established churches, are able to challenge and renew the churches by offering them such a spirituality of holistic liberation. A number of different dimensions of worship come to mind, but I limit myself to the transformation of eucharistic experience and theology. Liberating Christian mission flows from a eucharistic celebration where the anamnesis ('remembrance') of Jesus is integrally connected with the remembering of those who are in prison and those who are being ill-treated (Hebrews 13:3). Lamb (1982:54) calls this an 'anamnetic solidarity with the dead and the victims, the outcasts and the powerless'. Around the simple but profound ritual of the bread and the cup there is ample opportunity to tell the story of the Crucified as it relates to the stories of today's crossbearers. As Saayman (1984:55) has pointed out, the celebration of the Lord's Supper has tremendous potential to renew and motivate Christians for their mission of liberation in South Africa: 'the Eucharist is not a spectacle to be seen or endured, but action in the sense of con spirare, "conspiracy", a promise made together, action that involves us in the same process ... to show with facts that only one liturgy exists -- the liturgy that liberates' (31).

To conclude the chapter, let me repeat that this is merely an outline for a liberating ministry in the white community. Some dimensions have not been mentioned at all; others have been treated far too superficially. Many elements remain at the level of ideas, rather than practical strategies for mission. All the dimensions need to be worked out in detail by communities of Christians (white and black) who are concerned about a credible and liberating witness to white people in South Africa (32). This whole exercise must not degenerate into an 'indigenous' theology which white Christians do among themselves in splendid isolation. To underline this, I conclude with an extract from a 'position paper' drawn up by the ICT project entitled 'A liberating ministry to the white community':

There can be no sense in which the undertaking of such a ministry to whites can be divorced from the insights and directions of Black and liberation theology. In fact, the whole exercise is stimulated and called forth by Black Theology, and proceeds by constant interaction with black theologians. It is thus not an exclusively white enterprise, but a joint effort of black and white Christians to develop a liberating ministry to white people. Since we recognise that oppressors are incapable of bringing about liberation, we affirm that the oppressed need to take the initiative and critically accompany this enterprise (ICT 1987:2).

NOTES ON CHAPTER 6

1. Boshoff concentrates on the views of Moore and Boesak, who can really not be taken as the only representatives of Black Theology in South Africa in 1980 (when he published his book)! See also the criticism of Kretzschmar (1986:101).

2. It must be noted that Buthelezi qualified this statement on the 'fathering' role of Basil Moore. He added in brackets: '(In saying this, I do not necessarily share the Commission's view on the question of the paternity of Black Theology)' (Buthelezi [1975] 1981:264). It is my view that one can ascribe to Moore nothing more than a mediating role in the genesis of Black Theology in South Africa.

3. This attitude dates back to the Afrikaner rejection of Dr J T van der Kemp and Dr John Philip, LMS missionaries in the Cape Colony during the 19th century. It is since then that the term philanthropist ('filantroop') attained a negative meaning in Afrikaans, signifying a meddlesome person who cares more for blacks than whites. The term 'kafferboetie' falls in this same category. It is not exclusively applied to English-speaking people. It is used with equal (or perhaps even more) vehemence when referring to Afrikaners like Beyers Naude or Nico Smith, who are seen by most Afrikaners to have 'turned against the interests of their own people'.

4. One example of this is Oosthuizen, whose articles of 1973 and 1978 show a marked difference in tone. Other white theologians seem to be moving in the opposite direction, compare for example the views of Crafford (1973) and (1987).

5. See my comments in chapter 7 note 14.

6. When writing about the need for the conversion of white people in this chapter I am not taking a superior position, suggesting that I am fully 'converted' whereas others are not. I am also addressing myself when I write this. In my discussion of conversion in this section I have used a number of ideas from an article on the Kairos Document (Kritzinger, JNJ 1988).

7. I use 'elenctic' to mean 'that which convinces of sin', and I base it on the use of the Greek verb 'elengchein' in John 16:8. In this saying the unmasking of human sin is attributed to the promised Paraclete. It is my contention that the elenctic function of the Spirit of God is mediated primarily by the gaze of the victims of society. Whoever is scandalised by them, is unable to repent. Bavinck (1960) uses the term 'elenctics' to describe the Christian approach to other religions: 'it is the science which unmasks to heathendom all false religions as sin against God, and it calls heathendom to a knowledge of the only true God' (:222). In this study I use the term not for the unmasking of the sins of others (e.g. people of other religions), but primarily of the sins of Christians.

8. See my discussion of this in chapter two (2.3.2.4).

9. The statement by Marx (1974:35f) reads as follows: 'Religious misery is in one way the expression of real misery. Religion is the sigh of the afflicted creature, the soul of a heartless world, as it is also the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people'.

10. This idea is expressed in The Communist Manifesto (Marx & Engels [1888] 1967:91): 'Finally, in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands'. The notion of the 'betrayal' of one's class is closely related to this. See Moltmann (1978:414).

11. The reference to the Old Testament 'heroes of faith' in Hebrews 11 seems to have a paraenetic purpose. It is intended to encourage the Christian community to retain their faith (11:1), in spite of the suffering which that might entail. The Old Testament believers are therefore used as examples of perseverance rather than subversion. Nevertheless the subversive memory of their actions is preserved in the text.

12. This understanding of 'idols', stimulated primarily by recent developments in Latin American liberation theology, needs to be explored more fully. What needs to be resolutely avoided when using this kind of approach is the arrogance of earlier generations of Christian missionaries, who chopped down sacred trees and destroyed 'pagan' sanctuaries. An iconoclastic approach is inherently loveless and self-righteous. An important difference between my view and earlier missionary approaches is that I do not focus on idols in other religions, but on those within 'Christian civilisation'. The concept of idolatry could, I suppose, be used in a theology of religions, but that would be a different exercise altogether. A second difference is that my approach is not iconoclastic in the sense of destroying idols. It is rather an attempt to subvert and undermine the idols that are exerting their destructive influence on human society, and to call people away from them.

13. The influence of Nazi ideology and theology on Afrikanerdom since the 1930s has been explored by a number of authors, among them de Klerk (1975:193-228), Bosch (1984:29-32), and Kinghorn (1986:53-55, 63-69).

14. Archbishop Tutu has called South Africa 'one of the most vicious systems since Nazism' (in du Boulay 1988:190), and Tlhagale has explored the implications of this in the volume published in honour of Tutu (Tlhagale 1986b). An important study on this by an exiled South African is Mzimela (1980).

15. This myth has been widely propagated by school history text

books. It is also reported in Rogers (1980:49): 'A South African then drew the parallel in his own country; official history books written by Europeans claim, falsely, that the territory of South Africa had been uninhabited when the whites first "discovered" it'.

16. For a summary of the archaeological evidence, see Hall (1987:32-45).

17. The applicability of this notion of 'returning alienated property to the original owners' is often questioned. The major arguments are usually: 'How far do you go back to determine the original owners? This principle is impossible to apply in places like Australia, the USA or Israel, so why apply it to South Africa? There is little evidence that the jubilee was ever really practised in ancient Israel, which shows that is an impractical proposal'. In response I submit that: (1) It is typical of 'universal' Northern theology to argue that if a principle cannot be applied in every instance it should not be applied in any instance. It is not for South Africans to make out whether American Indians should insist on owning the major part of the USA or Canada. We are responsible for our own context first and foremost, and need to explore the usefulness of biblical paradigms for our situation. (2) With Namibia finally on the brink of a one person one vote election, only South Africa remains on the African continent with a colonial-type white minority government. It is in terms of this African reality that we need to approach the question of the applicability of the jubilee to South Africa, not in terms of the question whether it is applicable in Australia. (3) Even if the jubilee was never (or only partially) practised in ancient Israel, this does not diminish its usefulness as a paradigm or vision of just relationships in society.

18. The very real fear of white people that they are going to 'lose everything they have worked for' needs to be taken very seriously in a liberating Christian ministry to the white community. How precisely the 'returning of all alienated property to the original owners' will take place in South Africa is a serious question, which is answered differently by the black liberation movements. The recent constitutional proposals of the ANC says the following: 'The state shall devise and implement a land reform programme that will include and address the following issues: Abolition of all racial restrictions on ownership and use of land. Implementation of land reform in conformity with the principle of affirmative action, taking into account the status of victims of forced removals' (Weekly Mail 7-13 Oct 1988:7). Whereas the details of such a programme of land reform is not a theological issue, the changing of the white sense of ownership of 87% of South Africa certainly is. The urgent need for land reform must therefore be a central emphasis of a liberating ministry to whites. It is interesting to note at this point that wholesale expropriation of white properties took place neither in Mozambique nor in Zimbabwe when black majority governments with strong Marxist convictions took over control. For South Africa, too, one has to envisage a long-term (but vigorous) programme of

redistribution of land, which will gradually undo the colonial dispossession of the black majority.

19. This National Security Management System (NSMS) is not openly publicised by the government, but forms an authority structure which runs parallel to the official (elected) state structures. At the head of the NSMS is the State Security Council. For an explanation of the functioning of the NSMS, see Weekly Mail (Oct 3-8 1986:12f).

20. The 'National Security State' ideology in Latin America has been thoroughly analysed by Comblin (1979a:64-98). Lamola (1987) explores this ideology with reference to South African realities.

21. It is not sufficient merely to adapt and reform dominant white theology in South Africa. In order to actually dismantle the system of injustice and its theological legitimation, a new type of theology is necessary, which adopts a liberating theological methodology. Witvliet (1985:24ff) has analysed the 'epistemological break' which Third World liberation theologies have made in their move away from traditional Northern theology. He describes the three salient features of this epistemology as insight into the situational character of all thought, and into the connection between thought and action, which leads to criticism of ideology (:34).

22. The terms Khoikhoi and San are preferable when referring to the groups formerly known as 'Hottentots' and 'Bushmen', but there are no acceptable equivalents for 'Coloured', 'Native', or 'Bantu'. They must simply disappear. The use of these (and more blatant) terms in Afrikaans and English is one of the most glaring ways in which racism manifests itself. Afrikaans expressions used only with reference to black people and animals reveal the shocking dehumanisation implied in these terms. Some of the words in this category are 'skepsel', 'kraal', 'hans', and the habit of referring to oneself as 'oubaas' or 'ounooi' when speaking to black workers or to pets. In English the use of words are usually not as glaringly racist, but often similar attitudes are expressed. Black people often point out that some white people treat their pets better than their workers.

23. The word 'location' ('lokasie') is another example of this. In general English usage it means a place or position, but in South Africa it has acquired the specific connotation of a black residential area adjacent to a white town or city. Similar to the word 'slum', it conjures up associations of dirt, poverty, crime and danger in the minds of white South Africans. It reveals that black people have their definite place in South African society, outside the 'civilised' areas, and that they should 'know their place'. The word is no longer used very frequently, having been replaced by the euphemism 'township', but it still expresses ingrained white attitudes which need to be rooted out.

24. See chapter 4 note 1.

25. Much historical research has been done on each of these missionary figures. The most important recent works are Enklaar (1988) on Van der Kemp, Ross (1986) on Philip, and Guy (1983) on Colenso. However, missiological reflection on the liberating potential of the ministries of these men has been largely neglected. Much work still needs to be done in this regard.

26. For a bibliography on Fischer, see Maartens (1980). The significance of the life of this surprising Afrikaner still needs to be explored theologically. Regarding the life of Patrick Duncan, there is a definitive biography by Driver (1980), which describes his development from white liberalism to Pan Africanism. Very little has thus far been published on Moore, that original and controversial theologian, often maligned by the white establishment as the 'father' of Black Theology in South Africa (see note 2 of this chapter). Much can be gained theologically from a careful study of the liberating example of these figures (and others like them).

27. The oldest extant printed text in Afrikaans is 'Die betroubare Woord', dating from 1856. It is a Muslim 'catechism' written in Arabic script (Dekker [sa]:8). This is clear evidence that Afrikaans, which is a simplified Dutch interspersed with words of Malay (and other) origins, originated among black workers in white households. The white Afrikaners used Dutch as their written language until the late 19th century, since they regarded Afrikaans, the spoken language, as a 'plat omgangstaal, ongeskik vir meer verhewe doeleindes' (:7). The racial and class biases of the white settlers are revealed in this attitude. It was only towards the last quarter of the 19th century that white Afrikaners molded their spoken language into a cultural and political vehicle to oppose the anglicising policies of the British Empire, so that a distinct Afrikaans literature developed. In the 20th century it became synonymous with Afrikaner nationalism and racism, epitomised by the enforcement of Afrikaans as medium of instruction in black schools, the issue which sparked off the Soweto uprising in 1976. However, the implications of its black working class origins need to be reclaimed by Afrikaners in the interest of a liberating white consciousness today.

28. A number of different wordings of this hymn are in circulation. This has to do with the different African languages used in it, and the occasions at which it is sung. I use the wording as given in de Gruchy (1986:65f) and give also the translation which he supplies there:

Lord, in your mercy bless Africa,
Lift up the horn of her power and strength.
In your love and kindness hear our prayer,
Father, look on us, and bless your family.

Come, Spirit, come -- come and bless us
Father, look down, and bless Africa,
Father, look on us, and bless your family.

May it be so always, for ever and ever.

29. The English translation of this portion was made by Bosch. The original publication is entitled Kerk en Stad (Albertyn, du Toit & Theron 1948). It was the result of an extensive study of nine urban centres in South Africa by the 'Armesorgkommissies' of the four provincial white Dutch Reformed Churches to assess the plight of the Afrikaners in the cities (Albertyn et al 1948:iii).

30. This issue of a socialist option cannot be worked out in any detail, but it is one of the high priorities for theological debate among white theologians.

31. Saayman is here quoting Vannucchi (1976). On this question of the liturgy, too, I am only indicating the work that needs to be done. A detailed treatment of the mutual relationship between liturgy and mission is necessary in South Africa. The stimulating influence of the Orthodox tradition needs to be taken up in this regard (cf Bria 1980).

32. It is my conviction that both theology and ministry need to be developed in communities of Christians who are actively involved in liberating mission. In my view, the Northern individualist model of the solitary academic theologian holds very little promise for the future.

CRITERIA FOR LIBERATING MISSION

In chapter one I declared that the purpose of this study is to develop the outline of a liberating missiology for South Africa. In order to achieve that aim I chose the procedure of listening to Black Theology, a liberation theology which has developed among oppressed black Christians in South Africa. I did so from a position of solidarity with the liberating vision which it projects, and was challenged by it to propose a liberating ministry to the white community. That was the first part of my response to the double challenge contained in Black Theology. As has become clear from chapter six, I agree with much of its prophetic critique (or negation) of South African 'Christian civilisation'. I also support its call (or affirmation) to engage in liberating mission, which is why I devoted chapter six to drawing out the implications of that call for the community in which I am situated. In this concluding chapter I draw together some of the issues that have emerged in the previous chapters, thus continuing my response to Black Theology. I do so with the purpose of formulating briefly my understanding of Christian mission in South Africa in the light of the challenge of Black Theology. My purpose here is therefore not to raise new issues, but to draw some conclusions from the foregoing chapters and to ask critical questions about some aspects of Black Theology.

7.1 LIBERATION

I have chosen liberation as the central theological concept in my missiological design, and my decision to study the challenge of black liberation theology in this connection was deliberate. Too many white South African theologians study Latin American liberation theology, without taking the theological challenge seriously which emerges from black Christians in their own country. The

question of IJ Mosala (1987d:37) needs to be considered carefully: 'Is there an ideological-cultural explanation of white "progressive" theologians' predilection for Latin American liberation theology?' It is certainly important to take note of theological developments elsewhere in the world, but an authentic liberational perspective begins by opening its ears to the sighs coming from its own 'back yard'. Such a theological approach is not interested in establishing a new 'orthodoxy', with its headquarters in Sao Paulo or Lima instead of Rome or Geneva. It seeks to have a liberating effect rather than merely to talk about liberation. In South Africa that can only mean taking seriously the liberation efforts and projects of the black oppressed community, one of which is Black Theology (1). My first contention about a liberating mission and missiology is therefore that it should take its point of departure in the liberation praxis of the oppressed in South Africa, not in books on liberation published elsewhere.

7.1.1 Holistic liberation

An essential feature of a liberating missiology is its emphasis on the holistic nature of liberation. It is important that missiology should not move from one reductionism ('mission is the conversion of individuals') to another ('mission is the transformation of political structures'). It is my view that the concept of liberation provides a perspective which can hold together all these legitimate missiological concerns. However, this does not mean a static 'balancing out' of concerns which are inherently unrelated, or a continuous struggle for priority among a number of 'worthy causes'. A holistic approach to mission from the viewpoint of liberation is based on a particular understanding of history. It is this which provides the dynamic focus which gives coherence to the different dimensions of liberating mission.

The understanding of history in Black Theology provides the basic model here. Black theologians combine 'in one breath' the strug-

gle of the oppressed with the coming of God's reign. The black struggle for liberation, coming from the past, is seen as integrally linked with God's irrupting reign, coming from the future. Jesus Christ, the 'event of creation', stands at the beginning of African history and has always been active in creating and stimulating the 'liberative undercurrent' within this history (Mofokeng 1983:236f). At the same time, the life of Jesus is the way in which God 'inaugurates his kingdom on earth' (:257). In other words, the coming of God's reign in history works as an undercurrent, undermining unjust structures, relationships and attitudes, as well as empowering downtrodden people to create a new future for all. This view of history rejects the (typically Reformed) understanding of God's providence as the overcurrent of history, guiding and controlling all events on earth according to a 'perfect plan' (2) . It sees history rather as an arena of struggle, in which God 'raises up' prophets and activists to campaign for the realisation of justice and love.

7.1.2 Liberation and mission

Out of this understanding of history there emerges a holistic view of mission as participation in God's liberating activity in the world. This includes a whole spectrum of concerns, including the conversion of individuals from sinful lifestyles, the gathering and upbuilding of the church as a messianic community, and the common human struggle against every form of injustice. All the activities included in this mission are integrally related to one another, as different dimensions of the same process of liberation.

This view of mission as liberation in no way underestimates the power of sin, nor does it 'horizontalise' the Gospel by reducing it to an innerworldly utopia. In fact, it refuses to use the customary terms 'vertical' and 'horizontal' for distinguishing the relationship with God from the relationship with people, because it has come to see that the oppressed have a 'vertical'

relationship (from below) with their oppressors! In their striving to overcome their situation of suffering, the oppressed encounter many humans above them, blocking their path. To depict the relationship between human beings as 'horizontal' therefore betrays an individualistic and ahistorical view of society, and has the effect of keeping both God and other people 'in their place'. The ruling class can indeed look up and 'see' only God above them, and therefore distinguish their relationship with God (vertical) from their relationship with people, which they then claim to be horizontal in nature. When the oppressed look up, they see many human beings, and when they look around them at other people, they discover God right there beside them in their struggle to be human. To parody the traditional theological dichotomy, one could say that the oppressed have a vertical relationship with people and a horizontal relationship with God! However, my real point here is that the distinction between vertical and horizontal should be given up if a holistic understanding of mission is to be developed. One's relationship to God has everything to do with one's relationship to people, and vice versa.

Challenged by a materialist understanding of history and an African sense of the wholeness of life, both embodied in recent Black Theology, a holistic view of mission rejects all the traditional dichotomies of Northern theology: vertical and horizontal, soul and body, sacred and profane, religion and politics. It strives to establish on earth the freedom from whatever prevents human beings from living fully human lives. It is utopian in the sense of the petition in the Lord's Prayer: 'Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (Matthew 6:10). It fosters a missionary praxis which prays and works for 'heaven on earth', in which God is glorified by human beings becoming fully alive (*gloria Dei vivens homo*) (3).

An important dimension of this holistic mission is the fact that sin is seen not only in individual terms, but also in social and

structural terms. Perhaps one could call this the rejection of another dichotomy, namely between 'private' and 'public' spheres of life, closely related to the dichotomy between religion and politics. Cook (1985:231) rightly remarks:

Protestants mistakenly identify 'religious freedom' with 'freedom to preach the gospel'. They overlook the fact that a gospel that fails to be concerned about every dimension of human freedom is not worthy of being called the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In South Africa there is also a privatised gospel, unconcerned about all dimensions of human freedom. The ideological character of this blindness to the corporate or structural nature of sin is clear: religion is necessary to preserve the status quo, and should not be allowed to challenge or undermine it. Black Theology challenges Christian mission to grapple with the major collective and structural dimensions of sin in South Africa (as I have pointed out in chapter 4), and to reject the 'separation of spiritual salvation from earthly welfare' (Gollwitzer 1975:54). In order to avoid the common human failing of swinging from one extreme to the other, a holistic mission will have to combine in a creative way the 'mystical' and 'political' dimensions of salvation (Comblin 1979b:60). This points to the necessity of a spirituality of liberation, in which all fruitless and paralysing dichotomies are overcome.

7.1.3 A spirituality of liberation

This means the development of liturgical celebrations which communicate the collective nature of sin and the holistic approach needed to combat it. It is an essential part of the much-needed re-evangelisation of the church (4). However, this spirituality is necessary not only to help more traditional Christians out of their dichotomies; it is just as necessary for Christian activists, who can easily succumb to the temptation of dismissing

worship as an irrelevant waste of time. The holistic character and integrity of Christian mission can only be upheld when the dimension of faith and worship is constantly nurtured at the heart of the whole enterprise.

To avoid a pharisaic legalism, and thus to ensure that this approach remains truly liberating, a definite spirituality of struggle needs to be developed, in which God's grace and mercy are central. Casalis (1984:120) rightly emphasises the experience of forgiveness as an indispensable element of Christian militancy. What is essential in this regard is to draw strength from the 'freedom songs' of the black community as they express their sorrow, anger, faith and hope in the presence of the living God. One weakness of Black Theology in South Africa is the absence of theological reflection on the content of these songs, which sustain the struggling communities in their search for justice, and are the bearers of a very clear spirituality of liberation (5). A similar view has been voiced by Lamola (1988:6), who self-critically poses the question whether black theologians in South Africa 'have ever taken seriously the task of reflecting on the liberating heritage of our religious history as a people'. He focuses primarily on the history of the 'African Independent Churches', but his statement applies also to the spirituality of struggle to which I am referring here. His following statement seems programmatic for the creation of a liberating missionary spirituality:

The liberatory undercurrent of our ancestors' experience of God awaits not only to be discovered but also to be reinterpreted, restated and developed into a revolutionary idiom of our time and into projects for the transformation of Black life in oppressive South Africa (Lamola 1988:13).

One of the most important ways in which Black Theology can further contribute to the strengthening and deepening of a spiri-

tuality for liberation is by reflecting critically on the songs, sermons, prayers and poems of the struggling black Christian community.

7.1.4 Different dimensions of mission

When developing a holistic approach to mission, it is important to emphasise the wide spectrum of bondages that need to be addressed. In agreement with the view of West (1983:77), to which I have referred already, the intimate connection between the four major kinds of oppression in our time (imperialist, class, racial and gender) must be taken seriously. This can be seen in the development of Black Theology in South Africa, where the initial concentration on racial and colonial oppression has made way for a more inclusive approach, which includes class and sexual oppression. Challenged by Black Theology, one of the major tasks of a liberating missiology is to unravel the complex interrelationships between these dimensions of South African society, and to develop effective strategies to counter their destructive influence. For the method of a liberating missiology it is therefore essential to heed the words of Alexander (1985:94) about the triple oppression of black women (due to race, class, and gender):

When we speak of the struggle for liberation we are speaking of the struggle against all three of these kinds of oppression. We are not speaking of three different stages or three different struggles.... We are speaking of one struggle.... freedom cannot be divided. You cannot call yourself 'free' as long as one or other of these types of oppression exists.

The concrete implication of this is that a missiology will not be fully liberating without the contribution of feminist and womanist theologians (6). In this respect South African missiology has much 'homework' to do. It has not yet identified the patriarchal

system, with the suffering it causes in the lives of women, as a 'frontier' to be crossed or an idol to be dethroned. Black theologians have also admitted that this has been a much neglected feature of Black Theology, and have underlined the urgency for black women to develop a feminist theology in South Africa.

An holistic understanding of mission also implies that it can no longer be conceived or practised as something which white people do to black people, as has been the stereotype for many years! It is the participation of all Christians in liberating historical processes. As black theologians have suggested, this means that black Christians should become agents of mission. It also means that the white community must be seen as an area where liberating mission needs to take place. My previous chapter is an attempt to sketch the outline of such a ministry to whites. Christian mission therefore needs to discover the wholeness of a liberating ministry to all people, in whatever kind of bondage they are held. Missiology has to shed its image as the 'department of black affairs' among the theological disciplines, in order to become a critical reflection on liberating Christian praxis. The full import of the ecumenical dictum 'Mission in six continents' (Mexico City) has still to be grasped and practised within South Africa (7).

The holistic nature of Christian mission also means that personal, existential questions such as guilt, illness, despair, witchcraft and death need to be addressed. These are very real and destructive symptoms of human brokenness, which no liberating Christian mission can ignore. In this respect I agree with West (1983:73) when he criticises Black Theology for not giving adequate attention to these existential issues. It is at this level that the African Independent Churches are immensely effective in helping suffering black people to survive in spite of all the obstacles against their humanity. This is one area which needs thorough attention in Black Theology if it is to become more liberating in its effect on the black community. It is also

an indispensable element of a liberating approach to missiology. However, this should not be seen in isolation from the broader and deeper issues of political and economic liberation. They are all symptoms of the same broken society, which needs healing and liberation.

A final dimension which deserves attention in a holistic Christian mission is a concern for ecology. This is an essential dimension of liberating Christian praxis, since it has to do with saving the earth, setting it free from the greed and rapacity of human beings. It is an area where the themes of liberation and creation converge, thus placing the double responsibility on Christians of caring for the earth as 'God's garden' and of setting it free from exploitation so that it may be a habitable home for future generations. What is at stake is the fundamental issue of human survival, and no Christian praxis dedicated to fostering full humanity on earth can ignore the serious threats to human life contained in unbridled erosion, pollution and deforestation. This is an element which has not yet received any attention in Black Theology. Understandably its emphasis has been on personal, ecclesial, and political liberation, and its utilisation of the creation theme has focused mainly on the fact that all human beings are made in the image of God, thus bestowing on them an inalienable human dignity. The relationship between human beings and nature has not become a theological issue. This can probably be explained from the material reality of black township existence out of which Black Theology arises. Since black people were (until very recently) not allowed home ownership in urban areas, they felt no sense of belonging and consequently little sense of responsibility for their environment. This lack of responsibility is exacerbated by the dehumanisation communicated to black people through the monotonous lay-out of township homes, the absence in most 'locations' of tarred roads, electricity, parks and recreational facilities, in short, by the totally inadequate funds allocated for the development of black areas. Such a material situation creates contempt rather than respect

for one's environment. Nürnberger (1987:59) rightly points out that 'a situation in which the majority of the population experiences itself as being dominated, dependent and impotent is not conducive to the growth of public responsibility'. A similarly depressing situation prevails in rural areas:

The Black peripheral population in the homelands often has to survive under conditions of severe physical deprivation. If you are cold and hungry you will chop down the remaining tree or kill the almost extinct animal. There is no place in one's mind for niceties such as the prevention of soil erosion or overgrazing. The fate of future generations is a theoretical question when you have to feed your children now (:59).

Given this situation, it seems to me that Black Theology, in its mobilising of the black community to create a new future for all South Africans, has the responsibility of creating environmental awareness and responsibility by relating the message of political liberation to the urgent need for conserving non-renewable natural resources. Such an ecological theology is an indispensable component of any positive programme of nation building for the future of South Africa. However, this point is not meant only as a criticism of Black Theology; it is also a plea for missiology as an academic discipline to reflect seriously on this dimension of holistic Christian praxis.

7.2 TAKING SIDES

Another dimension of a liberating missiology is that it will not only be based on interest in the concept of liberation; it will proceed from commitment to the struggle for a liberated South Africa. In other words, it is not just choosing an idea, but it is taking sides in the actual conflict. This is perhaps the most important challenge presented by Black Theology: its exposing and

unmasking of the ideological bias of 'universal' white theology, and its unashamedly partisan option for the oppressed. A central methodological principle of a liberating missiology is therefore the commitment to take sides with black people in their struggle to change the oppressive nature of South African society. This 'preferential option for the poor' (8) must determine the whole theological approach to mission. An important implication of this is that the poor and oppressed are no longer seen as the 'marginalised'. As Tlhagale (1985:131) has pointed out, the poor are not on the fringes but at the centre of history (see also Casalis 1984:149). By calling the oppressed the 'marginalised', one is speaking the language of the dominant classes and thus affirming their dominance (9). This insight is essential in order to prevent an 'option for the poor' from being mere condescending charity. It implies that the poor and exploited workers (and unemployed) hold the future in their hands, which explains why Jesus chose to live and move among them, empowering them to create a new society. To use once more the typology of Moses in Egypt, Christian mission means moving from the periphery (Pharaoh's palace) to the centre of God's liberating activity (the community of suffering slaves).

This brings me to the Christological basis of such an option for the poor and oppressed. It is true that this theological option (and the way it is articulated) is deeply influenced by an historical materialist analysis of society, but it finds its Christian character from its anchoring in the historical praxis of Jesus of Nazareth. A missiology which proceeds from an option for the oppressed will combine these two emphases by adopting a materialist interpretation of the Bible and the Christian tradition. An epistemological break with dominant idealist hermeneutics is necessary in order to make a theological option for the poor more than just an empty slogan. It is the methodological conversion which is necessary in order to give substance to such a commitment. This need is stated sharply by Witvliet (1985:83), in criticising Bosch's analysis of South African Black Theology:

At the end of his argument Bosch says: 'One thing is clear; no less is expected of us than a new metanoia, a new radical conversion.' If such a sentence is meant seriously and is not an all too facile edifying slogan, then Dr D J Bosch must relate this conversion first of all to the methodological and hermeneutical presuppositions of his own theologizing.

This conversion entails a recognition of the limitations of conceptual thought in theology, 'in which the other (Other) is objectified and definitions, distinctions, categories have to give the illusion that people are dealing with living reality' (:83). In order to overcome the 'tyranny of concepts' in theology, it is necessary to give due recognition to theology as narrative, that is, to allow the story of Jesus and the stories of the oppressed to destabilise the smooth flow of our theological 'logic' (10). It is true that the story of Jesus (like all other stories) shares the vulnerability to be manipulated in the interest of the status quo, but the power of the Spirit manifests itself in the fact that:

time and again this story can cut through all the religious mechanisms of justification and adaptation and create a hearing for itself, and in so doing demonstrate an unmistakable option for those for whom Jesus was primarily concerned: the poor, the imprisoned, the blind and the afflicted (Witvliet 1987:261).

Built into the very method of a liberating missiology there therefore needs to be constant exposure to the world of the oppressed, so that one can hear their stories and learn to read the story of Jesus in constant interaction with them.

This partiality or partisanship for the oppressed is the starting point for a liberating missiology. However, serious self-critical

questions need to be raised at this point by both white and black theologians. As I have mentioned before, Tlhagale (1985:130) relativises the 'gratuitous options of rich Christians' by locating the real solution to the oppressive situation rather in the 'revolutionary awareness of the workers themselves'. In the first place an option for the black oppressed community by white theologians needs to be seen in this perspective, stripped of the pretense that whites can make a major contribution to the eradication of oppression. Every thought of white 'saviours' or 'messiahs' needs to be repudiated. An option for the poor is not to be followed because it is a 'recipe for success' or a means to restore respectability to white people. White Christians need to opt for solidarity with the oppressed because this an integral part of following Jesus of Nazareth.

A serious question facing white theologians who use the phrase 'option for the poor', is whether it has any concrete meaning in their lives. It can easily become an empty slogan, thus destroying their credibility in the process. No separation between truth and action may be allowed; truth needs to be done. Nothing could be worse than a 'sect of pharisees dedicated to talking about praxis' (Casalis 1984:25). In order to be credible, white theologians who choose these terms must express concrete solidarity with struggling black people, fully aware of how ambiguous and questionable such a commitment by a privileged white person is. On the other hand, this ambiguity must not deter them from following in the footsteps of Jesus and from making this the starting point of their theology.

On the question of partiality and commitment, black theologians also need to ask themselves some critical questions. The first concerns the charge of elitism often levelled against Black Theology. This charge has come from white theologians such as Oosthuizen (1973:87): 'it is the "Black elite" which propagates Black Theology', and Verryyn (1979:40): 'Black Theology tends ... to be a mid-upper-class phenomenon'. Black theologians themselves

have been aware of this problem. At the 1971 Black Theology Seminar, Goba (1974:73) already warned that the 'gap between the black elite and the ordinary black man' needed to be bridged if black solidarity was to have any meaning at all: 'Today when we speak of the Black Consciousness movement, we immediately think of students in S.A.S.O. and a few clerics. The rest of the people are not involved'. In a later article he refers to the perception of some that Black Consciousness is 'a bourgeois ideology of the black elite' (Goba 1986:68), partly because it is an exclusively urban phenomenon. But it is clear that even in urban areas Black Theology has not captured the imagination of the masses of black workers. Wilmore (1982:5), speaking about Black Theology in South Africa and the United States, observes that it failed to become a mass movement because of its 'origin in a small circle of Black intellectuals' and its 'inability to locate the springs of action in the religion of the masses of Black people'. Gwala (1976:31) also clearly describes the class situation out of which Black Consciousness and Black Theology arose:

[I]t is only the elite that are plagued by the problem of identity. Not the mass of Black people. The common Black people have had no reason to worry about blackness. They never in the first place found themselves outside or above their context of being black. But the student, the intellectual, the theologian, are the ones who have to go through foreign education and assimilate foreign ethical values. Later, when weighed against the reality of the black situation, this alienates them from their people.

Recently, IJ Mosala (1987a:12f) has also analysed the class situation of black theologians, and its implication for their theological methodology:

Black theologians' failure to root black theology in the culture of resistance of the oppressed and

exploited black people is a function of their own middle class commitments.... Thus the problem of the lack of a biblical hermeneutics of liberation has its roots in the inherent crisis of the petit bourgeoisie of all shades but especially those of the colonised countries.

As a result of this, Mosala contends that Black Theology in South Africa has been at most a progressivist or protest theology, but not a liberation theology, since the latter 'issues out of and refers back to actual struggles of oppressed peoples' and adopts a different theological method than do dominant theologies (Mosala, IJ [sa]:2). This failure of Black Theology to 'become the property of the masses' (Mofokeng 1987b:27) has sparked off a search for an appropriate biblical hermeneutic, which takes its point of departure in black working class and peasant culture. IJ Mosala (1987a) has proposed an approach which leans heavily on the literature theory of Terry Eagleton and on the tradition of materialist exegesis initiated by Gottwald and others (see Mosala, IJ 1987a: passim). It is an impressive proposal, but Mofokeng (1987b:28) is correct in saying: 'It is ... not evident whether this approach will make Black Theology grip the black Christian masses and enhance their faith as well as stimulate and radicalize their struggle for justice and liberation'. It remains to be seen whether the theology of the 'Zion-Apostolic African churches', whose brand of black theology IJ Mosala (1987a:222) regards as 'most genuinely liberative', will indeed 'relocate itself more systematically and critically in the broad black working class struggle'. The approach to Black Theology epitomised by figures such as Tutu, Boesak and Chikane seems to have a greater mass appeal due to its affinity with the kerygmatic tradition prevalent in most churches (including the African Independent Churches), but the sharp theological critique of their approach by IJ Mosala (1987a) cannot be ignored. These are two different forms of Black Theology existing at the moment, and the real test of their fruitfulness (in terms of their own self-

understanding) will be to what extent they are able to contribute to the actual motivation and empowerment of the oppressed community in their struggle for liberation.

To sum up, let me repeat the central thrust of my argument in this section. The starting point of a liberating missiology lies in an existential commitment to the struggles of the oppressed and exploited workers. Theologians who are thus committed need to develop an hermeneutical approach which will avoid being paternalistic and condescending to the poor. This will be possible only if a 'fruitful tension' can be maintained between its being a theology of the people and a theology for the people (Witvliet 1985:84). In this way it may indeed be possible for theologians to become 'organic intellectuals' of South Africa's oppressed black majority, thus making a theological contribution to their struggle.

7.3 CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Another major dimension of a liberating missiology is rigorous context analysis. It needs to heed the challenge of Black Theology to say farewell to the pseudo-innocence of a 'purely spiritual' Gospel, and to give an account of the role their context analysis plays in their theology. In this respect there is the need for a constant deepening and broadening of context analysis.

Whereas traditional Northern missiology operates with the distinction between believers and 'unbelievers', 'saved' and 'lost', as its fundamental analysis of society, a liberating missiology will regard the distinction between oppressors and oppressed as the most basic division in South African society. In its analysis of the South African context it will therefore concentrate on unravelling and unmasking the subtle (and not so subtle) mechanisms of oppression, not as a mere academic exercise, but in order to design an effective praxis of liberation against it. In

this respect the context analysis of black theologians, as described in chapter four, will be foundational. What needs to be done, especially in missiology, is to deepen that analysis by making in-depth historical studies of the way in which mission and missionaries have contributed to the establishment of the apartheid state in all its ramifications. The view of Witvliet (1985:9) is important in this regard:

Present-day missiology is intensively preoccupied with the normative question of the missionary task of the Christian community, and in answering this question it works with concepts like 'holistic approach' and 'contextualization'; however, valuable though such concepts may be in themselves, they remain in a vacuum unless they are systematically applied to the historical question of the significance and function of mission in past centuries.

Thorough historical studies need to be made of the complicity of Christian mission in the dispossession and exploitation of black people in South Africa, not in order to indulge in the popular exercise of 'missionary bashing', but to uncover the complexity of the situation and therefore to contribute to its dismantling. This also implies a criticism of the context analysis of Black Theology, especially its assessment of the role of missionaries, which is based on very little historical research. By this I do not mean that their critique of missionaries is false or unfounded, but that it is largely unsubstantiated, relying on generalisations (11). A great deal of research needs to be done to correct this lack, and thus to deepen the understanding of the present context. My contention here is not only that black theologians need to take historical research more seriously, but also that it is a priority for missiology in South Africa to do so. The ambiguities and atrocities of the past need to be faced with ruthless honesty for the sake of finding a liberating way into the future.

However, the context analysis presented by black theologians also needs to be broadened through historical and sociological research. Witvliet (1985:85) is correct when he suggests that 'Black Theology must put the "internal colonialism" in South Africa in the broad historical context of Western economic, political and ideological expansion'. In this respect Cornel West's 'critique of capitalist civilization' needs to be developed from a South African vantage point (see West 1983). It will help to broaden the context analysis if the specific South African social formation is analysed with the awareness that 'from its emergence through its duration to its decline, capitalist civilization remains racist and sexist at its core and based upon class exploitation and imperialist oppression' (West 1983:77). The unique interplay of these four kinds of oppression in South Africa can only be properly appreciated when seen as an integral part of worldwide relationships of exploitation and domination. In this area, too, much work of analysis needs to be done in order to strengthen the struggle for liberation from all these kinds of oppression.

With reference to the tools of analysis to be used by a liberating missiology, it seems to me that an 'orthodox', reductionist Marxist analysis of society will not be adequate to grasp the complexities of South African society. There is a lively debate among South African black theologians about the precise role of Marxist analysis in Black Theology, as I have pointed out in chapter four. At this stage of the debate, I agree with the view of Mofokeng (1987b:25) that:

black theologians and other social analysts should not rely exclusively on marxism in their attempt to understand their predicament in a capitalist and racist world. They have to find within their own cultural heritage other tools which will be used complementarily with marxism.

Govender (1987a:160) seems to affirm this when he says that a black theology of liberation must interact critically with developments regarding socialism in the rest of Africa, thus 'weaving its own criticism of political economy, neo-colonialism, culture, religion and liberation struggle, and the essentials of the Gospel, into an organic whole'. This needs to be done so that Black Theology will not merely establish itself within the struggle against apartheid, but 'become a part of the spiritual heritage of the peoples of Africa' (:160). To achieve this, more will be needed than Marxist tools of analysis.

For a variety of understandable reasons Marxist analysis has, until recently, not been used freely by South African theologians (12). However, for a liberating missiology, which attempts to get to the roots of human suffering in order to eradicate it, the Marxist analysis of the mechanisms of capitalism will be an indispensable component. Much work needs to be done in this respect to develop a meaningful and responsible utilisation of Marxist tools in a liberating missiology for South Africa (13).

Closely related to this is the importance of interpreting the significance of contemporary events, in order to discern in them the action of God and the agenda for Christian praxis. This prophetic activity of 'seeing through' the outward appearance of events into their real significance, is also an integral part of a liberating missiology:

[O]nly a Christian community that is keenly sensitive to history can provide the basis for such a liberative theology. Attention to the signs of the times is the theological criterion which sets off a theology of liberation from a conservative, academic theology (Segundo 1976:40).

This 'discerning the signs of the times' is clearly not something

different from or additional to context analysis, but one particular way of describing it. However, it is important to stress this approach to context analysis when defining the method of missiology, since it contributes a specific perspective to a liberating theology. It represents the utilisation of paradigms from the prophetic Christian tradition as models for Christian praxis today. To approach context analysis as a discerning of the 'signs of the times', therefore means drawing inspiration and guidance from the biblical prophets in their confrontation with systems of oppression. It anchors present-day Christian mission in the long line of messengers who have been willing in the name of God to endure rejection and persecution from the powerful for the sake of standing with the oppressed. Since 'discernment' is presented in the Bible as a gift of the Spirit, it also emphasises the need for a liberating mission (and missiology) to be rooted in a Christian community where the Spirit guides the communal praxis of believers. Discerning the 'signs of the times' is a prophetic ministry exercised by communities of the poor and those in solidarity with them, as they analyse the situation 'from below' by the guidance of the Spirit. 'It is this Spirit which enlightens the human spirit to discern the signs of the times and to discover where the lines of conflict run in history in the struggle between the living God and the idols of death' (Witvliet 1987:265).

7.4 CONVERSION AND COMBAT

Christian mission is persistent struggle against the idols of death. Having learnt from black theologians to see the destructive effects of these forces on the lives of black and white people, a liberating Christian mission needs to be understood as combat. This suggests that the definition of mission as 'crossing frontiers' (14) is inadequate to tackle the serious challenges posed to Christian praxis in South Africa today. The image of mission as crossing boundaries, even when interpreted as not only geographical in nature, assumes the ability to travel, and the

possession of a 'passport'. In other words, it presupposes social power and status. Black Christians who would want to convey the Gospel to the white community, find it virtually impossible to get across the 'frontiers' of racist and capitalist structures in order to reach white people. In fact, the boundaries prove to be impenetrable walls or ceilings. These barriers first need to be broken down, or at least breached, before mission as a crossing of frontiers can really become possible. Mission therefore needs to be conceived as active combat against divisive and oppressive societal structures. This view of mission was given a Christological basis at the CWME Melbourne conference in 1980 by using the imagery of centre and periphery. Matthey summarises it as follows:

Jesus is par excellence the one who breaks through walls built by humankind to limit God's sovereignty, grace, love and healing power'.... It is the specific charisma of a missionary church and of evangelists to discover in each cultural and economic situation what are the barriers, the limits, the walls that define who is at the centre and who at the periphery.... The churches' mission ... is to overcome limits, to break walls and boundaries, to go out to the 'periphery' and live with people there, which is more than to declare oneself in solidarity with them (Matthey 1980: x, xi, xiv).

There is much merit in this view of mission, even though it is still conceived from the centre ('mission is to ... go out to the periphery'), and therefore from a position of power. Little thought seems to be given to the possibility that mission may begin at the periphery, among the poor and oppressed, or that the 'marginalised' may in fact be the centre of history, as I have suggested earlier. Apart from this reservation, I agree with the main thrust of the view of Matthey that the discernment and breaking down of divisive and oppressive walls between people is

central to Christian mission. Breaking down walls! is therefore an apt description of liberating mission (15).

Inspired and challenged by Black Theology, I therefore propose that mission in South Africa be understood primarily as combat for the sake of liberation. In the words of Spindler, mission is 'combat for the salvation of the world' (16). It takes up the 'antagonistic' motif of the irruption of God's eschatological reign through the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Following in his footsteps and empowered by his Spirit, Christians engage in a 'life and death struggle against the demons and idols that usurp the place of the living God and destroy the life of God's creatures' (Kritzinger, JNJ 1987:25).

In choosing 'combat for liberation' as the key paradigm instead of 'crossing frontiers', I am not suggesting that frontiers need not be crossed in mission. Many frontiers are indeed crossed by Christians in their missionary involvement. What I am saying is that a definition of mission as primarily crossing boundaries does not do justice to the South African situation. As with the 'vertical/horizontal' distinction which I have discussed above, this image also suggests that people are on the same societal level, having merely some boundaries between them that need to be crossed. This overlooks the serious racial and class divisions of South Africa, which create vertical relationships (and therefore 'ceilings') between human beings. Many frontiers are crossed in the process of combatting society's idols and demons, but this formal definition of 'frontier-crossing' does not capture the essence of the missionary enterprise. Its essence is participation in the establishing of God's reign, which means launching a frontal attack on the house of the 'strong man' (Mark 3:27) and setting free all those held in bondage by him. This makes it clear that mission as re-evangelisation also takes place within the church, where no visible frontier is crossed: Wherever any barriers hinder the realisation of God's liberating reign, the struggle for life must be waged, and these obstacles to God's

justice be removed. This gives central missiological importance to the vision of the prophet Isaiah, quoted by John the Baptist by the river Jordan:

In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be filled up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isaiah 40:3-5).

In the previous three chapters I have examined some of the aspects of a Christian mission to combat the idols of race, class, state, land and patriarchy in South Africa. In this concluding chapter I want to emphasise that this combative dimension must remain a permanent feature of Christian mission, even when major political changes will have taken place in South Africa. It is therefore not political in the narrow sense of the word, by merely being opposed to the present apartheid system. It fosters a prophetic lifestyle which will constantly read the signs of the times, identify the idols of every specific situation, and develop a relevant liberating praxis for that context. This is a critical reminder to Black Theology and to any other liberating approach to theology that a smug and self-congratulatory 'anti-establishment establishment' does not serve the cause of God's justice in the world. Constant vigilance and self-criticism is necessary to avoid becoming enslaved to mirror images of the idols one is combatting in the name of liberation. In the heat of the political struggle for a new South Africa it will be the responsibility of a truly liberating missiology constantly to discern the danger of new idols rearing their heads, which will eventually also demand human sacrifices. Not only the human heart but also human society is an 'idol factory', continuously pro-

ducing new forms of bondage and oppression (17). It is therefore essential that a liberating missiology give attention not only to combat but also to conversion in all its dimensions.

By conversion I mean the personal dimension of liberating change in society. In my opinion it is not helpful to speak of the conversion of societal structures. The term should be limited to the dimension of personal change in the overall process of human liberation. There is a dialectical relationship between combat and conversion: No Christians would have been willing to combat the idols of death unless an inner change had taken place in their minds; on the other hand their minds would never have changed unless exposure to the struggle against evil had 'converted' them. There is therefore an ongoing dialectic, through which further meanings of conversion and better strategies for combat emerge together in the praxis of liberation. In other words, conversion does not 'fall from the skies', but is elicited by exposure to the suffering and combat of the oppressed. Subsequently it is strengthened and deepened by a life of solidarity with that struggle. The Spirit who sustains and empowers the oppressed to continue their struggle also draws other people into it. This implies a conversion to struggle, not only for white people, but also for black people who have been passively accepting their oppression. This means that conversion is not understood primarily as the entering into personal salvation, but as the beginning of a life of service and commitment. The view of Barth that the accounts of 'conversion' in the Bible are actually accounts of 'calling' (Berufung) is pertinent here (18). The Spirit of God calls and draws human beings into a life of discipleship, which is primarily characterised by action for the realisation of God's reign in history, not by the enjoyment of personal bliss. In terms of my own terminology, I call this 'conversion to combat'.

A number of qualifications need to be made to clarify this position. By this view I do not suggest that 'conversion to

combat' is all that Christian conversion entails. Conversion is a multifaceted and ongoing phenomenon, encompassing different 'turnings' and 'callings'. The view of Costas (1980:173) is instructive in this regard. He describes conversion as a 'dynamic, complex, ongoing experience, profoundly responsive to particular times and places and shaped by the context of those who experience it'. He describes his own pilgrimage of successive conversions to Christ, to culture, and to the world, which he sees as part of an ongoing eschatological adventure 'where one is confronted with ever new decisions, turning points, fulfillments, and promises which will continue until the ultimate fulfillment of the Kingdom' (Costas 1980:182). In terms of this dynamic understanding of conversion, I see the 'conversion to combat' demanded of Christians in South Africa today as a new turning point in their pilgrimage of faith, not as the only or the final one. It may be that some people who had not been Christian believers enter the Christian movement at this point; but that will probably be the exception rather than the rule (19). This call to conversion is part of the re-evangelisation of the church, which means that people who already identify themselves as Christians are called upon to make a new turning, to undergo a new conversion, in the light of the urgency of the South African situation.

Another comment may be helpful to clarify the understanding of conversion proposed here. It relates to the three levels of domination in a capitalist social formation, namely the economic, political, and ideological. Combat for liberation does not take place only at the economic and political levels of domination, but also at the ideological. At that level there is the struggle for more human values and perceptions of reality, in other words, the need for conversion to a new understanding of human life. In other words, the call to conversion functions at the ideological level as an attempt to create a new perception of humanity. It aims to resocialise Christians who have been taught since childhood not to 'mix religion and politics', and to believe in Jesus

Christ merely to 'go to heaven'. Assmann (1976:139f) has underlined that the theological contribution to liberation lies primarily at this level of 'breaching the superstructure', since many obstacles to change are found precisely at the 'superstructural' level of racist and capitalist values, which are legitimated by theology. The major impact of Black Theology has been at this level: undermining the legitimacy of the racial-capitalist state in the minds of black people by pulling out the theological supports from underneath it. This is what Mosala & Tlhagale (1986a:vii) has described as the effort 'to draw the liberation struggle to the very centre of capitalist ideology, namely, the Christian theological realm'. As I have pointed out in chapter six, the same theological struggle must also be waged by white Christians, so that the call to liberating conversion can be heard clearly by the white community.

The inclusion of chapter six in this study emphasises the urgency of finally burying the colonial stereotype that mission is done by whites among blacks. For this reason too the 'frontier crossing' definition of mission is to be avoided, since in practice (due to the long history of white-to-black mission) it reinforces the stubborn stereotype that mission happens only 'out there' among 'other people'. Missiology in South Africa therefore needs to develop a definite vision of liberating evangelism in the white community. The recent publications of Newbigin (1984, 1986), which are devoted to the question 'Can the West be converted?', can serve as stimulus in this regard. His view that the contemporary Northern world presents 'the most challenging missionary frontier of our time' (Newbigin 1986:20) applies mutatis mutandis to the re-evangelisation of white South Africans. The particular 'idols' are different in the two situations, but the challenges are equally daunting and urgent. It is my conviction that the development of an incisive and credible missiology for white liberation will make an eventual rapprochement with black theologians a possibility, not as a 'short cut' to a superficial 'reconciliation', but as a convergence between white and black

theologians committed to the same struggle for justice and humanity in South Africa.

A final comment on the relationship between combat and conversion concerns the distinction between the sinners and the 'sinned-against', which has become common in missiological circles (see Fung 1980). Fung points out that a person is not only a sinner, but also someone sinned against by others: 'man is lost, lost not only in the sins of his own heart but also in the sinning grasp of principalities and powers of the world, demonic forces which cast a bondage over human lives and human institutions and infiltrate their very textures' (:85). Because of this, the Gospel should not only call on people to repent of their sins, but also 'to resist the forces that sin against them', that is, enter into combat. The distinction between conversion and combat can therefore be related to the fact that people are both sinners and sinned against at the same time, and that the Gospel addresses them in both these dimensions of their existence. It is my conviction that black theologians are correct in assigning priority to the empowerment of the sinned-against. Christian preaching which addresses sinned-against sinners only as sinners can worsen their oppression by heaping added burdens on them (20). According to Makhathini (1973:15), the message of Black Theology is: 'Black man, you are grown-up, stand on your feet and get counted'. This call to get up out of the dust is the good news of Jesus to the poor and downtrodden. One can only call on people to turn around (repent) when they are standing on their feet! This 'empowerment to stand' leads directly to empowerment for combat against the causes of suffering. The evangelical call to self-acceptance and to combat is the unique contribution of Black Theology to a liberating missiology.

However, it is appropriate to raise the question whether in Black Theology this call to self-acceptance and combat does not sometimes overshadow the call to conversion, thus creating the impression that white power structures are the sole source of

problems in the black community. A truly liberating Christian ministry will have to find a healthy correlation between God's empowerment of the sinned-against to combat the sinful structures loaded against them, and God's call to sinners to turn away from their own sins (21). This correlation cannot be formulated abstractly for all situations; it will have to unfold dialectically within a concrete situation of struggle, as the Spirit of life grants 'in one Breath' both the power for combat and the humility for conversion.

7.5 AGENTS OF MISSION

A final question concerns the agents of this liberating mission. Black theologians have admitted that their message has not yet gripped the black masses of South Africa. Their support comes mainly from black academics, church ministers, and theological students. Boesak (1981:187) contends that the banning of Black Theology publications and supporters has been partly 'successful', since it has given the churches an excuse for evading the challenge of Black Consciousness: 'The result is that a theology relevant to the needs and struggle of black people is being done only by "pockets" of concerned and prophetic Christians -- vulnerable, frowned upon by the church leadership, and wide open for intimidation by the authorities'. It would be a serious mistake to underestimate the influence of Black Theology, but it would be true to say that it is only advocated openly by a relatively small number of black Christians (22). This is even more true of white theologians who are likely to support the view I have proposed in chapter six -- it will be a small group of Christians on the edges of the dominant churches. Villa-Vicencio (1988:193) calls it an 'alternative church', which 'exists within the institutional churches, but one which is marginalized by the dominant tradition of these churches.... It is predominantly a community of Christ's followers located on the margins and outside of the dominant ecclesial and social structures' (:192).

In different ways black and white theologians who are committed to liberating praxis and theology therefore make up minorities in their respective Christian communities. This should not be seen as only negative, however. They are creative 'abrahamic minorities' (Camara 1974), who can prove very effective in the long run to 'combat statements and practices that are incompatible with the gospel, and to open breaches through which the practices of Jesus and the dynamic ecclesiality of those who follow him can surge through' (Casalis 1984:151). Such small communities go against the grain of dominant church tradition, thus developing a counter-theology and counter-culture which prophetically challenge the status quo. They are in most cases not intent on breaking away from the established churches, as I have indicated in chapter five, but see it as their 'evangelical mission to transform and revitalize the dominant church' (Villa-Vicencio 1988:212).

When considering the personal and ecclesial dimensions of liberating mission, it is clear that these small 'pockets' of Christians will be the principal agents of change. They call other church members to active involvement in the struggle for justice, and to a church life which is directly related to this struggle. However, when it comes to the political and economic dimensions of liberating mission, that is, the actual combat against evil societal structures, Christians are not alone. The struggle for liberation is a common human endeavour, not a specifically Christian one. This has serious implications for missiology, since Christian mission has traditionally understood itself as the bringer of salvation and renewal to a lost world. However, in the struggle for justice they discover allies and comrades among people of other faiths and of no faith, who share their concern and commitment for the creation of a new society. This calls for a new 'theology of religions' which grows out of the praxis of liberation. Most Christian theologians committed to liberation operate with an 'exclusivist' or 'inclusivist' theology of religions, which means that they see Christ as the

moving force in the history of salvation/liberation (23). Often people of other faiths who participate in the process of humanisation are seen as signs of Christ's presence, even though they are not aware of being such signs. This 'inclusivist' stance makes others into 'anonymous Christians', who are theologically co-opted (without their consent) into a Christocentric view of history. In an 'exclusivist' stance people of other faiths are simply invisible, as if they are not involved in the real struggle for freedom. This is, for example, the accusation of Esack (1986:2) against the Kairos Document:

The Kairos theologians ... have not understood the universal nature of what they have produced and so they offer it only to Christians. Their inability to do so does not stem from a 'Christian humility' or a fear that adherents of other faiths may reject it. It comes from a deep rooted Christian (European) arrogance that leads to ignorance of other faiths and indifference to the possible contribution of their adherents to the creation of a just society. The Kairos theologians perpetuate the Eurocentricity that the Church had always been victim of.

Leaving aside the question whether this criticism of the Kairos Document is valid (24), it is certainly true that liberation theologians often create the impression that other faiths simply do not exist. This criticism could also be levelled at Black Theology in South Africa. It is true that African religion and culture occupy an important place in Black Theology, but other faiths such as Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism never feature in the writings of black theologians. In the light of the involvement of many Muslims and Hindus from black communities in the struggle for justice, this absence is surprising. The question arises whether the view of Mofokeng (1983:235) escapes from an 'inclusivist' view of history:

Jesus Christ, the Lord of history and time rose and lives as the eternal event of liberation amongst the oppressed in the most intimate community with them.

If Christ is indeed the 'eternal event of liberation amongst the oppressed', then people of other faiths are also 'anonymously' connected to him when they become involved in action for liberation. The following statement by him makes more room, however:

Jesus stood in the prophetic tradition which is the liberative current inside the totality of the history of Israel in her relationship to God (Mofokeng 1983:253).

If one interpreted the 'prophetic tradition' as including the 'liberative current' in other faiths, this statement could become a starting point for a liberation theology of religions (25). This implies that the 'dividing line' in a theology of religions does not run between the Christian faith and other faiths, but through them all. The authentic presence of God in any religious tradition will then be determined by the activity of the prophetic Spirit, who inspires and empowers believers to act in liberating ways in history. The implications of such a view for Christian theology are far-reaching, but it does present a credible way to avoid exclusivism, inclusivism, and relativism when cooperating with people of other faiths for justice in the world (26). Whether this proposal proves to be useful or not, it is my contention that the theology of religions should be a central concern of black and white theologians committed to liberation.

7.6 CONCLUSION

In this study I have tried to show the relevance of Black Theology for a liberating understanding of Christian mission in South

Africa. It has proved to be an intense and demanding encounter with a world of discourse and action normally ignored or summarily rejected by white theologians. Due to the many barriers separating black and white in South Africa, my interpretations and assessments of Black Theology will not be beyond criticism. As I have said in chapter one, this study does not claim to make a contribution to Black Theology. It attempts to listen attentively to the views of black theologians, and to pick up impulses from them for a liberating conception of Christian mission.

Whether I have succeeded in interpreting their views in an acceptable way will depend on whether they will be able to recognise themselves in my descriptions. At any rate, it has been an enormously challenging and enriching exercise, which has cured me of any attempt to design a neat theological thought system to 'fit' the South African reality. The brokenness and dividedness of our country runs so deep that no theological system can 'cover' the whole of it. At this point in our history we as theologians need to stay 'close to the ground', concentrating our efforts on analysing what is going on in and around us, and designing prophetic ministries to liberate ourselves and our communities from the different forms of bondage which hold us captive. The abiding relevance of Black Theology is that it constantly reminds us that all is not well in our land, and that a theology which does not grapple with the brokenness of its context has lost the right to be called by the name of Jesus Christ. It challenges us to abandon the 'pious' language of the teacher of the law in Luke 10:37, who spoke of the Samaritan in vague terms as 'the one who showed mercy' (see Betto 1988:26). Our theological language will have to express clearly the raw and ugly realities of our situation, and to uncover the contradictions inherent in it, rather than to cover them with pious and nice-sounding generalisations (27). The following poem by Assmann (1983:201) expresses such a theological approach:

Let us not be told afterward
that there are no minerals
because they appear only in impure gangue
that the reality is always there,
available and transparent,
and that it is useless to try to unveil hidden things;
that to engage in science is to classify
what is evident to everyone,
and that it is a waste of time
to probe opacity;
that there is no truth in
what cannot be generalized.
Because praxis establishes its consistency
in the cradle of the particular,
and, multiplying differences,
it destroys the identity
of the perpetual state of affairs.

Whether my proposal of a liberating ministry to the white community in chapter six is a viable and meaningful exercise remains to be seen. The real test is not whether it appears interesting or controversial, but whether it can set in motion a movement among white people of deeper identification with Africa and with the struggle of the black majority; whether it can help to widen the breach in the ideological superstructure of white South Africans and thus enable them to become more whole and less fearful human beings.

Finally, whether my study has been an authentic human endeavour, as opposed to a mere academic exercise, will be determined by the consequences it will have in my own life. The truth needs to be done, as much as it needs to be understood. Except for his sexist use of language, I am in full agreement with Gutierrez (1974: 308):

[All] the political theologies, the theologies of hope, of revolution, and of liberation, are not worth one act of genuine solidarity with exploited social classes. They are not worth one act of faith, love, and hope, committed -- in one way or another -- in active participation to liberate man from everything that dehumanizes him and prevents him from living according to the will of the Father.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 7

1. A liberating missiology should not only concentrate on liberating religious initiatives (such as Black Theology and in some sense the African Independent Churches), but on the whole spectrum of social, economic and political initiatives that form part of the liberation project of the oppressed. In this regard the historic 'liberation movements', the Black Consciousness movement, as well as recent developments within them, will occupy a central place. A special contribution is made by Motlhabi (1984,1988) in this regard.

2. The reconception of the doctrine of providence is an urgent task for Reformed theologians in South Africa, since it has been used so successfully to justify oppression and dispossession. The work by Beker & Deurloo (1978) is very useful in this task of reinterpretation.

3. The statement comes from Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses. See the translation in Neil (1974:167): 'The glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God'. The intimate relationship between worship and politics becomes clear at this point (see also Avila 1981:104): 'To attempt an ostensibly apolitical liturgy in a world essentially political is absurd -- unless one wants to banish the Eucharist from history. In this case a withdrawal from the world has been adopted'.

4. Villa-Vicencio (1988:218) lays great emphasis on worship and spirituality as the area in which the 'alternative church', living by Matthew 25:31-46, can help to renew the dominant church: 'If worship is the major character-forming event of the Christian community, the issues of the day with which Christians are expected to wrestle need to be brought into the place where Christians relate the sacred symbols of their tradition to the events of their daily lives. If this integration does not take place within worship, there is little chance that it will happen outside of worship'.

5. In North American Black Theology there is much emphasis on the songs and sermons of the black church. James Cone (1972) has devoted a whole book to it: The Spirituals and the Blues. In God of the oppressed he says: 'How have black people understood their history and culture, and how is that understanding related to their faith in Jesus Christ? The place to go for answers is the black sermon, prayer, song, and story' (Cone 1975c:10). This has not yet been done in South African Black Theology.

6. The term 'womanist' was coined in North America by Alice Walker to describe the efforts of black women to speak up for themselves. It emerges from the realisation that the experiences of black women are so different from that of white women that a term other than 'feminist' is needed to express it: 'Black women must do theology out of their tri-dimensional experience of racism/sexism/classism. To ignore any aspect of this experience

is to deny the holistic and integrated reality of Black womanhood' (Grant 1986:201).

7. The purpose of this dictum was to reject and overcome the one-way traffic from the affluent white 'Christian' North to the poor black 'pagan' South of the world. See the discussion in Saayman (1984:26-31). The colonialist presuppositions inherent in this attitude is still common in South Africa, and need to be removed. I contend that the initiative of black Christians are crucial in this regard.

8. This phrase has become common since its use by the Latin American bishops at their conferences of Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979). For a detailed discussion of this theme in Latin American liberation theology, see Gutierrez (1983).

9. Casalis (1984:149) states this clearly: 'But now the word "marginal" changes sides; "marginal" is anything unrelated to the lives of the people, anything aside from or neutral toward concrete class struggles.... Institutions of any and every kind take themselves so seriously and have such an instinct for conservatism and self-preservation that they easily come to consider themselves as the center of reality and define marginal in relation to that self-center'.

10. Mazamisa (1987) has pointed out that especially the parables of Jesus have this destabilising effect on their hearers. However, it is true of the Gospel narrative as a whole.

11. Most black theologians use only generalisations when referring to white missionaries. One exception is Mokoka (1984), who devotes 16 pages to an analysis of the missionary approach of Father Gerard among the Zulu. Intensive historical research by black theologians is necessary in order to heighten the credibility of their critique of white missionaries. See also chapter 4 note 2.

12. Nolutshungu (1982:157ff) gives a number of reasons for the 'poor showing of Marxism' in early Black Consciousness, which applies also to Black Theology. He mentions the (distorted) understanding of the USA soul movement, the role of Afrikaans lecturers at tribal universities, the state censorship of Marxist literature, the role of Christian churches (traditionally 'anti-communist'), and the distrust of Marxism as a white ideology.

13. The work of Govender (1987a) makes an important contribution to this by 'opening up' the Marxist tradition to theologians.

14. This definition became popular through the title of the Festschrift in honour of Bengt Sundkler, The church crossing frontiers. The editors state that this phrase captures the essence of Sundkler's theology of mission (Beyerhaus & Hallencreutz 1969:xix). In his contribution entitled 'The ministry of crossing frontiers', Beyerhaus makes this theme central to his understanding of mission. Bosch (1980:17) has also made this

a central notion in his definition of mission: 'Mission has to do with the crossing of frontiers. It describes the total task which God has set the Church for the salvation of the world'. See also (:248): 'Mission is the Church-crossing-frontiers-in-the-form-of-a-servant'.

15. This theme is reflected in the titles of two books that deal specifically with racism: Verkuyl (1973) and Programme to Combat Racism (1986).

16. The title of Spindler's book is La mission, combat pour le salut du monde, and he systematically develops the 'combat' motif in Christian mission.

17. The term was coined by Calvin in his Institutes I,11,8: 'Unde colligere licet, hominis ingenium perpetuam, ut ita loquar, esse idolorum fabricam' (in Barth & Niesel 1957:96).

18. Barth discusses this in Kirchliche Dogmatik IV/3: 'Thema wird die persönliche Geschichte der Berufenen und deren glückliches Ergebnis nirgends.... Allen biblischen Berufungsgeschichten ist das gemein: Berufenwerden heisst einen Auftrag bekommen. Und Berufensein heisst für die nach diesen Geschichten Berufenen: Existenz in der Ausführung dieses Auftrags' (Barth [sa]:656,658). I do not share the whole framework within which Barth discusses the 'calling' of Christians, but I heartily endorse his criticism of the self-centred individualism of the dominant Christian experience. On this point see also Bosch (1980:225f).

19. The second edition of the Kairos Document, contains the following interesting comment in its Preface: 'The document also had a mission dimension. Many of those who had abandoned the Church as an irrelevant institution that supports, justifies and legitimizes this cruel apartheid system began to feel that if the Church becomes the Church as expounded by the Kairos Document then they would go back to the Church again. Even those who would consider themselves to be "non-Christians" in the conventional sense began to say that if this is Christianity they could become Christians' (Kairos Document 1986:iii). This shows the evangelising potential of authentic prophetic witness. On this point, see also JNJ Kritzing (1988:138).

20. The view of Pannell (1974:208) is important here: 'if the King sends a messenger to the poor and the psychologically oppressed, surely this is cause for a radical re-appraisal of one's selfhood. It is for this reason that the messenger must be careful what he says about sin in calling men to repentance. It is not good news to black men to be told that "black" is synonymous with evil in Scripture. It is not of course, but many believers do not know the difference between Western culture and Scripture. That all men are sinners is scripturally sound, but that they are ipso facto of no value is blatantly unscriptural'.

21. Ntwasa (1971a:6) formulates it clearly: 'the Gospel of hope for the condemned sinner cannot be divorced from the ethic of

hope for the displaced victim of oppression'. Casalis (1984:103) calls this the 'indispensable dialectic of conversion and revolution'.

22. When I say that black theologians constitute a minority in the black community I do not imply that the number of black people who support liberation are a minority. What I am saying is that the number of black Christians who consciously develop new hermeneutical approaches to Scripture in the light of their political struggle are a minority.

23. These terms (together with 'pluralism') are used by Race (1983) and D'Costa (1986) to typify the three basic responses of Christian theology to the challenge of religious pluralism. For a representative 'inclusivist' view, see Comblin (1979a:64): 'The persons who serve as signs of Jesus Christ, as signs of charity and freedom, need not be Christians or Catholics They may be authentic signals of his presence even though they fail to acknowledge him after hearing his word' (emphasis added).

24. It is true that the Kairos Document (1986:15) declares that the Gospel is not 'an alternative solution to our problems as if the gospel provided us with a non-political solution to political problems. There is no specifically Christian solution. There will be a Christian way of approaching the political solutions, a Christian spirit and motivation and attitude. But there is no way of bypassing politics and political strategies'. This is said with reference to political realities and strategies, not people of other religions, but it is possible to extrapolate from the one to the other. However, one has to recognise that the Kairos Document was drawn up by Christians for Christians, as a challenge to the church. It does not address the possibility of inter-religious action for justice, except to say in the second edition: 'It is the KAIROS or moment of truth not only for apartheid but also for the Church and all other faiths and religions' (Kairos Document 1986:1). To this it adds a footnote: 'What is said here of Christianity and the Church could be applied, mutatis mutandi (sic), to other faiths and religions in South Africa; but this particular document is addressed to "all who bear the name Christian"' (Kairos Document 1986:33 n.2). With a number of Christian leaders very prominent in the media as spokespeople of the black struggle, there is a real temptation to see the struggle as an essentially Christian one, and to ignore the contributions made by people of other faiths.

25. Paul Knitter (1987) has made an interesting contribution in this direction, not from a pneumatological starting point as I do here, but from what he calls a pluralistic, nonrelativistic viewpoint. In calling for a 'liberation theology of religions', he contends on the one hand that 'a preferential option for the poor and the nonperson constitutes both the necessity and the primary purpose of interreligious dialogue' and on the other that liberation theology will only be able to break out of its regional confines if it takes seriously the experience of the world religions (Knitter 1987:179,181).

26. The theological problem areas that need to be clarified in such a pneumatological approach are the implications for trinitarian doctrine, the relationship between the Spirit and Jesus, and the connection between Jesus and the coming of God's reign. However, I am convinced that an approach to the theology of religions from the perspective of liberation theology will open up new perspectives.

27. This raises the question of the relationship between the particular and the universal in theology. It is my view that the universal relevance of a theological approach is not something which can be added to its particular relevance in its own time and place. Its universality (if any) is contained in its particularity. This means that a theology does not consciously or intentionally address other contexts. However, if people from other contexts discover in it something which is relevant for their situation, that element of universality will flow from the fact that it has been an authentic contextual theology in the first place. This view was also expressed at the Bangkok Conference of the CWME: 'The universality of the Christian faith does not contradict its particularity. Christ has to be reponded to in a particular situation. Many people try to give universal validity to their own particular response instead of acknowledging that the diversity of responses to Christ is essential precisely because they are related to particular situations and are thus relevant and complementary' (Bangkok 1973:189).

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