

BLACK THEOLOGY AND APARTHEID THEOLOGY:
AN INVESTIGATION INTO EPITHETON THEOLOGY

by

ZACHARIAS PETRUS LE ROUX

submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER : PROF E VAN NIEKERK

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Summary :

Black theology and apartheid theology are theologies making use of an epitheton. The use to which the epitheton is put in these theologies is of crucial importance, that is, they are couplet theologies being used in a subjective genitive fashion. The question is whether the couplet becomes a theology of/concerning the epitheton or is it used in an objective genitive fashion.

When the epitheton is used in the objective genitive sense it of necessity has to generate an epistemological break in order to distinguish it from orthodox theology. This in turn necessitates a conscientisation of a contextually predicated theol-

ogy. The theology becomes reductive. In this way an epitheton theology forming part of a couplet becomes attenuated and diverges from orthodox theology in the construction of its theology. This can lead to the espousal of heretical teachings.

Conclusion:

The conclusion arrived at is that an epitheton theology, in the objective genitive sense, for the purpose of advancing a particular secular base or pseudo-theological base for Christian society, once it has gained a life of its own, will lead to heresy unless erroneous or sinful teachings are confessed and repented of.

Key Terms: Black theology; conscientisation; contextualisation;; couplet theology; epitheton theology;; epistemological break; heresy; liberation theology; Marxism; racism; politics.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

Apartheid theology must surely be second only to black theology, a theology congruent in certain respects to liberation theology, the most widely discussed theology of this last half century in South Africa and other parts of the world.

What holds theologically true for apartheid theology and black theology holds true for liberation theology on which the latter is partially built. What R M Nash (1989: viii) stated about liberation theology concerning its brief history in which it has been relatively immune to any serious concentrated and systematic critique can as a provisional statement be attributed to apartheid theology and black theology. Indeed apartheid theology and black theology have not been exposed to radical criticism. As loose conglomerates they have however been exposed to a lot of propaganda.

The purpose of this study is critically to investigate apartheid theology and black theology as epitheton theologies. The Chambers English Dictionary describes epitheton as 'an epithet, an adjective expressing some real quality of the thing to which it is applied, a descriptive term'. To my mind every epitheton theology is highly problematic.

1.2 South African Background

DRC (Dutch reformed Church) theological practise has been typified as apartheid theology while black theology has been labelled a non-orthodox, violence engendering theology by opponents. The theology practised by the DRC up to quite recently had been declared a heresy by certain church councils and also by influential writers who are the main protagonists of black theology. The ascribed sinfulness of the DRC practice, it is stated lies , *inter alia*, therein that its fundamental irreconcilability with fellow Christians results in dividing the Body of Christ on the grounds of race.

Protagonists of apartheid theology have written their apologetics mainly in the Afrikaans language. It seems as if it was intended only for internal South African consumption. In retrospect the use of the Afrikaans language seems to have been culturally dictated. This has been a short-sighted approach as the campaign was waged on the international stage where the English language is the *lingua franca*. Similarly, critique of black theology by the DRC and its apologist-theologians was mainly done, if done at all, in the non-international Afrikaans language.

The protagonists of black theology have written their opposition to and their critique of DRC theology in the internationally accepted language, English, which then became available for both internal consumption in South Africa and for influencing the political and religious world internationally. This in retrospect was the correct approach by the antagonists of apartheid theology and resulted in international pressure, mounting to a concerted concentration,

against apartheid theology, that is, against the practises of the DRC. This resulted in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) (1982 and 1997) pronouncing that any theological legitimation of apartheid theology was a sin and the continued theological support thereof a heresy. No similar criticism was levelled against black and/or liberation theology.

1.3 Relevance of the Study

Heresy, which as a concept seemed to have been impliedly shelved through non-use, has near the end of the 20th century apparently been resuscitated by the World Council of Churches and some other church councils. Prior to this resuscitation the impression gained ground that as long as Christian 'jargon' is used the theological content of such 'jargon' passes the test as it would be more or less assumed to be of a Christian content. This, bolstered by a desire for ecumenism, has in effect made the concept of heresy, or Christian theological non-conformational, to be indeterminate and nebulous. This caused questions to be asked. For instance, ought perceived continuing racism be declared heretical? Ought continued sinning be declared heretical? Such are some of the questions coming to the fore.

A closer theological study in regard to black theology and apartheid theology becomes relevant in order to compare and review their diverse approaches regarding the development of their theologies with special regard to the role that the reductionist adjective or epitheton play a determinative role in these theologies.

No known study has been undertaken to compare apartheid theology and black theology and from a perspective where the adjective or epitheton of these theologies had been critically and differentially researched.

1.4 Problem

At the beginning of this study the intention was to compare black theology and apartheid theology as to their respective heretical content. This would then have necessitated

- a) constructing a matrix of the concept 'heresy'.
- b) a construct of black theology and also
- c) a construct of apartheid theology.

My main problem lies in constructing a matrix for heresy, which of course is a constructed theology in the abstract. Such a matrix could probably suffer from the inherent danger that a subjective approach to this vast field will be put forward in a reductionist way, depending on the theological world-view of the researcher, *in casu*, a Reformed theological world-view. An acceptable matrix which is pertinent to this day and age could not be discovered. Such an approach would have compared heresies and theologies. The original approach of comparing some of the approaches of the two theologies with one another and in the context of heresy was abandoned.

To compare epitheton theological constructs with one another would be more correct epistemologically, that is, to compare their respective approaches for constructing their theologies. In particular to discern the weaknesses in their approaches and to suggest, without using the matrix of heresy as basis, a

way by which to determine the acceptability of a resulting theology, particularly an epitheton theology.

1.5 Method

Reformed theology does not use the epitheton 'reformed' as the foundational base of its theology; it is a theology of the Reformation and not a theology for Reformation.

The tendency in reformed theology is to be self-correcting and to be open to biblically based critique; the fact that this at times had not happened does not abrogate the existence of this tendency which flows from its approach that the Bible is the *norma normans* of its theology. Thus its theology is not the rationalisation of theological positions previously. Consequently reformed theology is more open to the different facets found in Church and human society and, as a corollary, the tendency is not to be reduction-specific in regard to socio-economic, political, race or gender facets.

The base of reformed theology is not intended to be materialistic, pseudo-theological, experiential or reductive. But is intended to be based on biblically based revelation.

It becomes necessary to make an appraisal of both black and apartheid theology.

In appraising black theology one has to bear in mind that black theology, a form of liberation theology, is the nomenclature assigned to a conglomerate of statements of a theological nature gathered together in a non-systematic way and presented as such. It is assumed that black theology and

liberation theology are similar in design and purpose except where differences between them are clearly stated by the respective theologians. Black theology which, in South Africa, came particularly to the fore post World War II, does not represent the teachings of a particular church or denomination but that of particular apologist-theologians. It can be seen as a theological movement. Attention to black theology will be paid in Chapters 2 and 3.

The Dutch Reformed church (DRC) also known in the Afrikaans vernacular as 'Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk' (NGK), is the denominational home of about 42% of the white population of the Republic of South Africa. 'The Dutch Reformed Church is a direct continuation of the Reformed religion of the first white colonists who came to South Africa in 1652. As the church representing the greater majority of the Dutch speaking (and later Afrikaans speaking citizens of South Africa) its very existence is inseparable from our country's chequered history' (DRC Synod 1974:5)

Hence the DRC will in this study be considered to be the main exponent of apartheid theology, or white South African theology. It is further assumed that apartheid theology is the theology which was propounded by the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). The abbreviations DRC and NGK will be used interchangeably as the occasion arises. Chapter 4 will set out a construct of apartheid theology

Chapter 5 will, in conclusion, compare the two epitheton theologies and a way in which to evaluate the acceptability or otherwise of constructed theological approaches of 'epitheton' or 'genitive' theology will be discussed and a suggestion

arrived at. Black theology and apartheid theology are accepted as being representative of such approaches.

1.6 Perspective

No one approaches a study of a theological nature with a mind which is as a *tabula rasa*. The best that one can do is to be aware of this fact and then try to be objective in one's study of the subject matter. Also, in selecting which statements and historical developments to use as bases for constructing theologies to be compared and critically studied one has to consider how relevantly these could bear on the present study.

This study is done from the perspective of a white South African who has a Reformed theological background.

BLACK THEOLOGY: PROLEGOMENA

.... do not show partiality to the poor

(Leviticus 19:15)

2.1 Introduction

There is no acknowledged theological hierarchy that can speak authoritatively on behalf of black theology and a lesser extent to liberation theology. There is a multitude of authors, claiming to be black and liberation theologians, who express their interpretation of what theology is and how it should function in practise without setting out a systematic dogmatic framework in which this is to take place. Black theology could therefore be seen as an unstructured and unsystematic multi-denominational approach to theology. The very presence of so many and diverse insights that are put forward make black and liberation theology into socio-politico-economic theological philosophies which are advanced as theologies for all seasons and for particular classes of people.

Black theology in South Africa is many faceted , if not more so, as 'liberation' theologians take over , adapt and attempt to refine a liberation theology to suit a particular

contextual view in South Africa. However South Africa is continually changing socially, economically and politically.

Black theologians have tried, and some still try, to freeze South Africa and its theological developments into a time frame which, while it could have the result of being emotionally stirring and politically suited for their purpose, is no longer a reflection of the world that the people of the South live in and experience day by day. Indeed black theology is becoming more and more apologetic and at times more radically racially inclined because it finds that these are the only ways in which it could remain relevant in a world in which , to a large extent, accommodation of the responsible theologically founded arguments of liberation theology have already been accommodated.

It is then to be understood that when black theology is referred to that it must be seen in the light of a multifaceted approach which often contains only implied principles. No one author or theologian could claim to speak on behalf of black theology in all its diversity.

'It is not easy to categorise South African black theology at this stage for ' not all theologians who happen to be black necessarily share the same views or belong to the same school of thought' (Nicolson 1990:199).

'Black Theology understands itself as a South African variety of Liberation Theology, focusing upon the question of political, economic, cultural and spiritual liberation among blacks. In this connection one aspect of cultural liberation is of

particular importance, namely, liberation from the universal claims of Western Theology. These claims are understood as a racist attempt to dominate Christians from other cultures, a form of intellectual autocracy. (Frostin 1985 : 128)

Black theology is expressed within the framework of liberation theology. While all expressions of liberation theology are not identical there is no total division ' between black theology in South Africa and in the United States of America; between black theology and African theology; ... between black theology and Latin American theology of liberation. As a matter of principle we have therefore treated all these different expressions within the framework of the theology of liberation.' (Boesak 1977:7)

In this study the approach of Boesak will be followed treating black theology within the framework of the theology of liberation. Black theology and liberation theology will be treated as compatible and interchangeable unless otherwise stated.

2.2 Phased development

The roots of black theology probably go back to Marcus Garvey (1887 - 1940), a Jamaican. He is seen as the forerunner of black Muslim and other black protest movements in America. (Arscott 1986 : 137)

Liberation theology as we know it today had its origination, a powerful renaissance, in South America. Segundo (1984: 321-327) discerns two phases in the development of Liberation

Theology in South America. He discerns the phases as being prior and subsequent of the 1970's. For him the only methodological feature that Liberation Theology has, is that it starts thinking in an existing context. Its methodology is not a systematic listing of theological problems which, by being linked to an inner logic for the sake of being orthodox, is then be able to supply credible answers to every problem so cerebrated.

Thinking in a particular existing context there is a commitment to start thinking both

- i) for the sake of the poor and oppressed and
- ii) from a consideration of their 'praxis' every time when it is perceived that this praxis is linked via theology to oppressive mechanism of the accepted culture.

This study of praxis has as its aim the reformulating of a Christian theology which would be capable of transforming this perceived oppressive praxis into a liberating praxis, that is, liberation from oppressive mechanism of the culture. In this sense it is called an orthopraxis (Segundo 1984:322). Orthopraxis is thus seen to be a praxis whereby an oppressive theological praxis is transformed by Christian theology, into a praxis freed from oppressive cultural mechanisms.

From the beginning of the 20th century till about 1964 the State Universities in Latin America were controlled by a students' movement working in conjunction with faculty members and groups of professionals. After these universities gained political autonomy and more academic freedom, students were taking more and more cognisance of the social consequences of the Christian faith. This came about as a result of using the

option of studying the social function of ideologies - not the studying of theology *per se*. The conclusion was arrived at that the whole culture was working to the benefit of the ruling classes. This is seen as the first phase of development.

L Boff (quoted by Segundo 1984:322) says:

'... the aim of this first theology of liberation from the beginning was to re-make to the extent of what was possible for us the whole of theology. Being faithful to both, orthodoxy and orthopraxis, we felt the necessity of *de-ideologising our language and our message about God, the church, the sacraments, grace, sin, the meaning of Christ and so on.*' (Italics added).

Regarding the first phase of liberation theology

- a) Its origin lies in the new conversion or change by the middle class grouping of their evaluation of the role of the oppressor class. The locus was this middle class who perceived themselves as belonging to the oppressor class.
- b) has as its methodological trend the suspicion that the customary way of understanding the Christian faith in Southern America is distorted at all levels of the society by an ideological bias which perpetuated and justified the status quo.
- c) had a long-term aim of providing the church's pastoral activities with a new and de-ideologised theology which would be capable of speaking about common themes of the Christian faith as they were at the beginning of the Christian era(an intended *ad fontes*). This is deemed to be

a revelation of the humanising and liberating will of God and of the very God's own being.

d) decided to de-ideologising language and the message about God: This eventually necessitated a 'new' vocabulary, a new language, in which to articulate liberation theology.

The second phase of Liberation Theology ushered in a new context for theologising: the context being the common people as represented by populist movements. Hence a departure from

a) the intellectual foundation for theologising and

b) the simplistic view that third world countries are simply only economically underdeveloped and poor. (Segundo 1984:323)

Intellectuals (and by definition theologians are included) underwent a change, a conversion, in their political perception of the people in the country which in turn influenced the context in which they viewed theology. Segundo suggests that

' ... this conversion of intellectuals and, hence, of theologians ... had its roots in a painful experience intellectuals often have. In Latin America and everywhere else they try to think and to create ideas for the common good. They sometimes speak against their own interests in the name of a voiceless people supposedly incapable of recognising where their actual interest is. And finally they discover that they are not only not understood by the people for the sake of whom they have tried to think and to speak but also that the main streak of history cuts them off from popular victories. Conversion means, then, for many intellectuals a kind of self-negation'. (1984 :324)

The fact is that the common people had neither understood nor had they welcomed anything from the first phase of Liberation Theology. It was a middle class movement. So the perceptions became prevalent that if theologians wanted to be part of the growth of liberation theology - to be organic in the sense of being useful in understanding and feeding the popular faith of the common people - they were obliged to learn how the lower economic classes, the oppressed, lived their faith. The function of the theologian had now become

- a) to structure and unify for the people, the lower class, an understanding of the faith
- b) to defend and to give grounding for the practises that emerge from this faith.

The 'lower class' understanding of the faith and their praxis concerning it became the touchstone. Thus, clearly, for the liberation theologian, the study of these practises had to receive priority. Thus: First praxis then dogma. Hence an *ex post facto* apologetic emerged.

Small wonder that a confusion of ideas now becomes apparent. Leonardo Boff, as quoted by Segundo (1984 :324) stated firstly that theologians must 'relocate in the mind of the (common) people the cross in its true place'. This would be in accord with the liberation theology of the first line or phase of liberation theology in Latin America, supposedly being *ad fontes*. But then Boff is also quoted as saying:

'In a church that has opted for the people, for the poor and for their liberation, the principal learning of theology comes from the contact with the (grass-roots) people. Who evangelises the theologian? The faith

witnessed by faithful people, their capacity to introduce God in all their struggling, their resistance against the oppression they customarily have to suffer.' (1984:324)

Here one finds a contradiction between the claim of having been evangelised and taught by the poor and the pretension of relocating in peoples mind the true meaning of the cross and suffering. A confusion of incompatible ideas. This confusion of ideas have not yet been resolved.

Concerning the second phase one discerns that

- a) it assumes as an hypothesis that the experience of the poor leading to their 'praxis' of Christianity is the norm of and for orthopraxis. At the same time it is admitted that this praxis, a theological reductionism, has not preserved Christian values. An apologetic is advanced that this is so because of the holistic unitary world view the poor have of their existence. The fact that the discarding of Christian values makes such praxis suspect as an orthopraxis is strangely not mentioned.
- b) the 'poor' and the common people are inexplicably mystically identified with one another. Also rather mystically the poor, now seen as the common people, are accorded the status of teachers of orthopraxis. Also further mystically the locus of conversion is at the place where the poor practise their religion.
- c) the role of the Holy Spirit in the working of conversion of sinner is now confined to one locus only. The locus of conversion becomes now not the heart of the individual, his or her personal relationship with God. To suggest even in a reductive fashion that this - the stated locus of conversion, the place where the poor practice their religion

- is the only place where conversion can be found is adjudged heretical. But this cannot be correct for the 'Spirit blows where he wills'.

To imply that the 'poor' have been elected by God to be endowed with a special wisdom or revelation which others do not have is a veiled throw-back to gnosticism and Romanticism. In any event : How poor is poor and what is the economic norm? What are the economic norms?

2.3 Liberation theology: Multifaceted

As regards liberation and black theology, Cone's main themes are reflected in the statement of the National Committee of Black Churchmen, issued during the height of the debate about the 'Black Manifesto', which demanded reparations from white churches: 'Black Theology is a theology of black liberation. It

seeks to plumb the black condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, so that the black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievement of black humanity ... The message of liberation is the revelation of God as revealed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Freedom is the gospel. Jesus is the Liberator!' (Neuhaus 1989:223)

'Black Theology understands itself as a South African variety of Liberation Theology, focusing upon the question of political, economic, cultural and spiritual liberation among blacks.' (Frostin 1985 : 128)

Williamson (1975:7) puts it succinctly as follows: 'The

theology of liberation came into prominence with the World Conference on Salvation Today held by the World Council of Churches in Bangkok early in 1973. Its message is very simple: salvation is liberation. Liberation from what? From injustice, from every form of oppression" and exploitation, from everything that prevents man from being "truly human." Although the theologians of liberation acknowledge personal sin, they ascribe its existence to oppressive political and social structures; these alone produce and perpetuate it, they say. Guilt is fundamentally social; consequently no liberation from individual sin is possible except through the overthrow of these oppressive structures that make it inevitable.

Liberation theology began with the end of World War II. What Bangkok did, however, was to put the weight of the World Council of Churches behind it and thus confer upon it a measure of respectability. It is the ultimate expression of social activism, reaching a point that few American social activists are as yet ready to embrace but that its proponents claim to be the future of the Church.'

Liberation theology as a 'genuine' liberation theology has at least four characteristics says Deutsch

- i) a theology based on the concept of a liberating God as seen in the Exodus as a paradigm for liberation
- ii) a liberatory vision of justice and social, economic and political participation by all
- iii) liberation for the poor by insisting on power and an identity for them

iv) liberation by bringing about structural change in the *status quo*.

This kind of liberation does not, in particularities, identify liberation and salvation. However salvation will include such liberation. The focus is thus on socio-economic-political liberation as an indispensable element of salvation. (Deutsch 1981:193)

One can but agree with the summation given by Bosch (1991:432) namely:

'The theology of liberation is a multifaceted phenomenon manifesting itself as Black, Hispanic, and Amerindian theologies in the United States, as Latin American theology, as feminist theology, South African Black Theology and various analogous theological movements in other parts of Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific.'

One of the facets of liberation theology is that it uses a Marxist base.

2.3.1 Marxist base

Economic laws, translated into socio-economic-political concerns has, for Marx, a historic character. 'It is the ultimate aim of this work (*Das Kapital*) to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society' (Frostin 1988:213 note 87-88). And 'in order to examine the connection between spiritual production and material production it is above all necessary to grasp the latter itself not as a general category but in definite historical form ... Different kinds of spiritual production correspond to the capitalist mode of production of the Middle Ages. If

material production itself is not conceived in its specific historical form it is impossible to understand what is specific in the spiritual production corresponding to it and the reciprocal influence of the one on the other.' (Frostin 1988: 213 note 89)

Regarding the influence of Marx, Gutierréz opined that '... it is to a large extent due to Marxism's influence that theological thought, searching for its own sources, has begun to reflect on the meaning of transformation of the world and the action of man in history' (1973:9). Using broadly Marxist assumptions he suggests that 'Theology if relevant to the struggle must deal with such matters as the building of a just society "on new relationships of production", the ending of domination by "some social classes" and the ending of "low-cost conciliation"'. (Kee 1990:171)

Frostin (1988:181) mentions that '... in black theology we find references to Marxist concepts and also occasional quotations from Marx ... the influence of Marxist analysis for black theology ... is increasing '.

The social concern evidenced by liberation theology leads to a contextuality in its theological approach.

2.3.2 Contextuality

The theology of liberation has a strong social concern and rejects both the tendency to interpret the Christian faith in 'otherworldly categories and excessive individualism'. However, in spite of its critique of the West and Western earthly prosperity, both theological tributaries, the social

concern over against the individualism approach, appear to be anthropocentric rather than theo-centric..' (Bosch 1991:438). An excessive horizontalism is being espoused in its contextuality.

A rejection of all claims of universal validity by any theology - causing an epistemological break - is implied in the assertion of the contextuality of theology. The contextuality of religion implies that each is stamped by its own context. It becomes necessary to analyse its role in divergent social situations and the conflicts in the world in which we live. The focus or emphasis here being the social character of knowledge to the degree that sociology of knowledge is replacing classical western epistemology (Frostin 1985:134-135). This is a form of conscientisation. Conscientisation is relevant to the situation. An epistemological break, contextuality and conscientisation go together like 'love and marriage and as a horse and carriage'.

The new kind of Christian identity which emerges from contextual liberation theology is sensitive to three areas:

a) Context:

Marxist social analysis is called upon to make an examination of the contextual situation. Although it should be known that Marx deemed all religion as an inversion of reality, an ideology and as anti-materialist, nevertheless, liberation theology notwithstanding starts off from the same point of departure namely, the materialistic content experienced in the situation.

Apparently, by using such a point of departure, it is hoped to by-pass Marx's ~~the~~ approach to theology as being an ideology by stating that the situation, as a perceived reality, is reflected upon in the light of Scripture (Schreiter 1986:3). But manipulation of a contextual interpretation can easily be engineered. To use Marx's theory even in part when his point of departure is anti-theology needs great care. For, as Marx~~s~~ said, once one allies oneself to theology or religion then theology or religion has to have the final say in all matters regardless of context and/or experience.

b) Procedure:

In cultures where decisions are made on a communal basis, theology seems to develop ~~is~~ much the same way. The community ⁱⁿ takes much more responsibility in shaping the theological response. This communal decision and interpretation is often taken by the 'religious' adviser temporarily present in the base communities. The real danger is that the majority might not even be Christians. The Christian religion is not a democratic religion in which the majority vote rules. It has a King who has a Kingdom. There is no procedure for voting against the commandments of God.

c) History:

Special attention is given to history in a diachronic way, e.g. that slavery had been condoned in a previous epoch. In this way a 'past' sinfulness is attributed to the contemporary church. In this way apples and pears are compared and the

positive contribution of Christianity and the church are not mentioned e.g.

- that while in non-Christian lands slavery is still practised it had been ~~pro~~scribed by Christians in Christian countries *e*
- that the work of the church in the upliftment of the poor, both in the economic and marginalised sense, and the poor in spirit has been outstanding considering the resources at its disposal.

Indeed the church's critics can not point to similar practical assistance given by themselves to these persons they are conscientising.

Ethno-theology focuses on the cultural aspects of society. The ethno-graphic approach is concerned with identity in society, e.g. there arises a need for black power to reconstruct an identity which is thought to be inferior or which, it is claimed, had been denied members of the community.

Black theology and liberation theology are ethno-theologies where they focus on the ontological usage of 'black' in

- specific cultural areas e.g. the marginalised
- the social and political areas
- using cultural traditions to come to decisions.

The weaknesses of a contextual approach to theology include that:

- a) normally the solution to the posed problem is seen a particular project and a full dialogue with the Christian faith is not carried through for the sake of retaining some harmony in the project-dialogue

- b) the primary concern with identity and the stability of the community cause other conflictual factors in the environment to be overlooked.
- c) It can easily become a prey to cultural romanticism and fail to see sin in its own historical experience e.g. taking the heads of ones enemies or the murder of Piet Retief and his company in Natal
- d) the communities, being in a state of development, are hardly ever able to undertake a social analysis . This is done for them by non-resident non-culturally incorporated experts. The result is that factually the communities are largely excluded from the process of adaptation of the theology. (Schreiter 1986:14)

Black theology especially concentrates on the dynamics of social change and on discontinuity with 'Western' theology in the form of an epistemological break. The broad approach is that

- the lived experience is analysed to uncover forces of oppression, violence, struggle and power (false relationships)
- there is concentration on the conflictual elements
- by using Marxist oriented social analysis Christians search to find echoes in the biblical witness to enable them to understand and find direction for the future and the need for change.

The weaknesses and shortcomings of the contextual-epistemological-break approach are

- people are better at listening at the 'cries' of people than to the biblical witness

- the Marxist model of social analysis with its class differentials is based on the premise that 'all religion is an inversion of reality' and therefore ideology, and is not therefore a scientific foundation by which to analyse the religion of the whole of society
- reflection takes place AFTER action had taken place rather than making reflection the basis for action. To acknowledge a wrong action is not easy - it is often rather rationalised
- concentrating on the ills of society makes for failing to see the manifestations of grace and blessings within it
- it is difficult to safeguard the intensity of the struggle from fanatic apocalypticism and being sceptical about the emergence of a just society and interpreting things as the signs of the times of the last days. (Schreiter 1986:15)

Boesak and Bosch mention certain dangers inherent in contextual theologies. Boesak (1977: 143) warns that the 'danger of contextual theology being overruled by the situational experience and as a result succumbing to absolutist claims is very real'. Bosch (1991:426 et seq) mentions several dangers inherent in contextual theologies. Both the dichotomous elements of reductionism and absolutism become apparent :

a) Theo-anthropomorphism:

Where God is identified as being active in and captive to the historic process God's will and power too easily becomes identified with the will and the power of Christians on the one hand and with the social change they themselves initiate on the other. Kelsey (1975:180) mentions that 'continuing philosophical discussion has not as yet persuaded any large number of students of the matter that the concept " God's

action in history is intelligible". The argument being *inter alia* that this would presuppose that one knew what the concept 'God' means and how to identify his particular 'action'.

Echoing Niebuhr (1959:9f) Bosch (1991:427) mentions that 'It is difficult, if not impossible, to fit Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jesus and others into a system determined by social factors; there is in Christianity a revolutionary and creative strain which does not allow it to be reduced to a human, albeit Christian project'.

A reductive approach to theology limits God's revolutionary creativity to mere human projects.

b) Relativism:

Contextual theology suggests that the nature of all theology is supernatural and experimental and contingent. However this should not lead to an 'uncritical celebration of an infinite number of contextual and often mutually exclusive theologies.' (Bosch 1991:427). All Christians share certain faith traditions and these should not only be respected but are also be preserved; they have earned a legitimate preference in interpretation. 'We therefore - along with affirming the essentially contextual nature of all theology - also have to affirm a universal and context-transcending dimensions of theology.' (Bosch 1991:427)

c) Absolutism:

Absolutising a particular relativised contextual theology leads to universalising it, making it applicable to all and demanding that all others should submit to it. A new theological imperative is so created; this absolutism elevates

itself to gospel status. It becomes a requirement for salvation.

d) Sacralisation :

Many so-called signs of the times have been discredited e.g. Nazism, apartheid, etc. Black theology is still relatively new on the scene yet 'compassion and commitment is no guarantee that one will not produce bad sociology, practise poor politics and pursue debatable historical analysis.' (Bosch 1991:429). There is the danger that Christians tend to sacralise the sociological forces of history that are dominant at any particular time regarding them as inexorable works of providence and even redemption.

When exponents of a particular theological contextualisation claim 'special or privileged knowledge of God's will and denounce those disagreeing with them as suffering from a "false consciousness"', anything they may say is regarded with an hermeneutic of suspicion as they in any event do not have this privileged knowledge of experientially gained insight. The importance of the text is downgraded. The message of the gospel is not viewed as something that we bring to the contexts but as something we derive from the context". (Bosch 1991:429-430). In essence it becomes a reductionism leading to Gnostic absolutism.

e) Spawning of sects:

There is no praxis without theory. The dynamics of particular contexts always involve issues of truth, justice, epistemology. etc., that is, abstract issues, theories. Bosch (1991:431) states that 'All praxis is dependent on a "quite

specific highly schematised and synthetic social dogma". The question then becomes which theory is sufficiently true so that a praxis ought to be carried out in the service thereof. 'Where some such (doctrinally orthodox) agreed upon faith tradition is completely absent, contextualisation just spawns a new sect of fideist politics and renders theological discourse useless.'

If an epistemological break is not clearly and unequivocally circumscribed an agreed upon faith-tradition is impossible and fideist politics is the resultant.

f) Distortion:

If contextual theology is seen simply as the relative accentuation of the poles of praxis and theory this could lead to a distortion of such theology. Love, worship, awe and mystery are all essential building blocks of the Christian faith. These aspects free Christians from localised practises, from absolutist claims of contextual loyalties and from conventional conscientised social conditions.

2.4 Marxism

2.4.1 Religion

Religion occupies a central place in Marx's thought. (Kee (1990:187)). Marx's theory of religion is that it reverses reality. This theory he took over from Feuerbach. Kee (1990: 42) describes it as follows:

'Feuerbach's philosophy is based on the recognition of a dialectical movement ... within human consciousness. He

applied it first to religion, but its lasting importance has been in its application to other social phenomena. In fact the dialectical movement appears in two forms in Feuerbach's analysis of religion ... The reductionist form comes first ... The movement is not peculiar to religion, but for Feuerbach it is well-illustrated by religion. Man projects aspects of his being, for example, ideals or desires, away from himself. These become objectified as the attributes of God. Since this is an unconscious activity, man is not aware that these attributes are actually human. The attributes now belong to God and not man, and in their alienated and reified form act back on man to control and govern his life. In this reductionist interpretation of religion there is a reversal of reality: man the subject has become the object, while the human predicates have become the divine subject. Alternatively it is a reversal of the order of man and God: man the subject and creator has now become the subject of God, his creation.'

Rephrasing Marx : Projecting socio-economic-politico emancipation desires of the poor away from self so that these desires now belong to God is a reductionist approach and a reversal of reality. Is all reductionism not a reversal of reality in this sense?

Where social control by religion is used to reconcile 'what is' with 'what ought to be' religion performs for Marx the function of legitimation and of convincing people that the world is as it ought to be. Marx wrote : 'Religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the

oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people'. 'The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a fight against the world of which religion is the spiritual aroma' (Kee 1990: 32). Marx wrote, regarding politics, religion and the secular powers 'Once you introduce religion into politics, it is intolerable, indeed irreligious, arrogance to want to determine secularly how religion has to act in political matters. He who wants to ally himself with religion owing to religious feelings must concede it the decisive voice in all questions ...' (Kee 1990: 26 & 27).

In Marx's view any religion is only an interpretative theory:

'Is liberation theology a theology which liberates or is it theological reflection on a liberating movement? The fact that it is reflection on a real movement does not guarantee that it is not itself an ideology. It is being radically changed in the light of experience, but it does not initially arise from that experience. In the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach Marx distinguishes between interpretative theories of reality which are brought to the world and those which arise out of engagement with the world. *Unfortunately ..(for some) ... liberation theology still belongs to the former category. It is an interpretative theory ...* In Marx's terms, no matter how it (e.g. liberation theology) is reconstructed to express contemporary experience, that experience must be fitted in a Procrustean way within a (religious) system which is in essence pre-Enlightenment. No theology can decide where it stands in relation to reality: reality decides that spite of all pretentious claims.' (Kee 1990: 193-194) (Italics are my additions)

In its rhetoric liberation theology submits all religion to the scrutiny of Marxist analysis however, ; in fact it preserves its own theology as a no-go-area which is beyond examination. It is in good standing with self-styled Marxists throughout the world in its denunciation of European capitalism'. (Kee 1990:ix)

2.4.2 Base and superstructure

For Marx, when considering religion, the starting point is empirical and not merely contemplative. For where in earlier times religion was the base of society and the economic and social relations therein part of the superstructure, the new situation in theology, per Marx, is that religion must operate within the humanist context which religion no longer controls, as its base. As only a part of the superstructure built on the base of economic relationships theology must now take account of the aspirations and struggles of the masses.

Theology cannot, apart from or above these struggles, simply issue reformist calls based on general moral principles. To be relevant where it is no longer the base but only part of the superstructure of society, it must now consider 'new relationships of production' and the ending of the domination by 'some social classes ...' (Kee 1990 :170). This becomes necessary because the real foundation of society is the material forces of production that constitute the economic base, the real base, of society. In the following passage he conveniently summarises the position. 'In the social

production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will,

namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material force of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life.' (Kee 1990:97)

Religion is but one part of such of a superstructure.

Kee (1990:109) further distinguishes between two aspects of historical materialism:

- a) The material: This relates, or connects, the social superstructure and ideological (e.g. religious) formations to the material base that is, the mode of production.
- b) The historical: This relates the progression of one mode of production to the next, that is, from epoch to epoch - this is viewed as a theory of history.

When liberation theology makes use of Marx's theories, it becomes clearer in view of the above why it has to change its base of religious production from orthodox revelatory theology to a base of an experiential superstructure founded on the secular struggle of the masses. Religion then becomes part of the superstructure necessarily impregnated with the deductions made by the 'people' from the theologically assumed (and scientifically unproved) economic-production base.

The world, for Marx, cannot be reinterpreted by a change in ideology. The distinction is not between theory and action but between the false and real base of society. The real base is

the mode of production and only when it is replaced with a new mode can there be any fundamental change in the social world built upon it.

'The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure. In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic - in short ideological - forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.' (Kee 1990:101)

A most important distinction is here made between the base and the superstructure:

- a) The superstructure (wherein religion is now located) is governed by human consciousness, intention and will and is therefore open to ideological interpretation and misinterpretation.
- b) The base, the new mode of production and its relation to previous modes of production can be analysed, says Marx, as if they were the proper subjects of natural science (Kee 1990:101)

The methodological starting point - the mode of production - is empirical and not merely contemplative. Empirical in the sense of man's efforts at labour and his social experience. the interpreted socio-economic-political experience, is translated into theological constructs situated in the superstructure. What is produced there is patently dependent on the interpretation of these experiences, conscientised or

otherwise; a correlation with black theology methodology is patent. An inversion of reality now takes place: The product, the theology empirically produced, becomes the measure for man to live by. The selfsame objection lodged by black theology against orthodox Christian revelation as being an inversion of reality, now has taken place within black theology albeit in a different guise. One finds that one has a distinction without a difference.

Clearly Marx's proposition that all theology (religion) is an inversion of reality would apply also the black theology even though black theology uses as its theological base the experiential economic-social-political input of 'the people'. Thus, in order to avoid Marx's condemnation of all theology it is forced to use Marxism as selectively as it acknowledges that it uses also some parts of the Bible selectively - a use Marx would abhor.

However can such an historical materialist analysis claim to be scientific be akin to an analysis of the natural sciences?

' ... we can say that there is a qualitative difference between man and nature, and that there is a corresponding difference between the social and natural sciences ... In short, the decisive element is human freedom. This means that the social sciences cannot proceed by the methods of the natural sciences. For example it is not possible simply at will (or budget) to reproduce social situations for measurement exactly. And it is not possible to predict future behaviour exactly.' (Kee 1990 : 99)

In short, the question is whether historical materialism is not simply an interpretative theory arising within the social

sciences, or is it a scientific law propounded within the natural sciences as Marxism claims? It is the former.

Undoubtedly Marx viewed his theory as a natural law. This is clear from the Preface of *Capital* as quoted by Kee (1990:101): '... it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science...'. Kee (1990:101) further mentions that the natural laws of capitalist production, is remarked upon by Marx as 'It is a question of these laws themselves, of their tendencies winning their way through and working themselves out with iron necessity' that he must be referring to science or a pseudo-science. This also confirms his attitude to economic 'laws'.

Marx considers that this natural science has no room for human freedom of decision. Engels bears out Marx's interpretation that his laws have the same validity as natural laws. 'It was precisely Marx who had first discovered the great law of motion of history, the law according to which all historical struggles, whether they proceed in the political, religious, philosophical, or other ideological domain, are in fact only the more or less clear expression of struggles of social classes, and that the existence of and thereby the collisions, too, between these classes are in turn conditioned by the degree of development of their economic position by the mode of their production and of their exchange determined by it. This law, which has the same significance for history as the law of the transformation of energy has for natural

science - this law gave him here, too, the key to an understanding of the history ...' (Kee 1990:102)

The question is not whether human freedom is significant in history; the issue is an ontological not an epistemological one. The question is: Can Marx establish an objective structure which exists independently of human freedom? He has not.

Consider Marx again when he says ' The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and oppressed class, and for the latter all that they have to offer is the pious wish that the former may be charitable' (Kee 1990:86). Can one then conclude that where this is not of necessity so preached that one is not dealing with Christianity? This would really label black theology as non-Christian per Marx!!

The problem for black liberation theology is that it cannot accept Marxism in its entirety and has to be just as selective concerning its acceptance of the teachings of orthodoxy.

The world, propounds Marx, cannot be reinterpreted by a change in ideology for the distinction is not between thought and action, but between the false and real basis of society. The real basis is the mode of production and only when this is replaced can there be any fundamental change in the social world built up upon it.

For black liberation theologians historical materialism contains three problematic elements in that:

- a) Rejecting a religious or philosophical foundation it provides a 'natural' secular basis for understanding societal life independent of the will of man.
- b) Epochs are defined by an historical reference in which each is characterised by a different mode of production.
- c) The historical sequence must be progressive in both moral and economic terms.

This account of history does not postulate a salvation-history. For Christianity God guides history towards his eschatological goal. Marx rejects both religion and idealist philosophy. He rather envisages a man-made 'just' society without any oppression based on economic relationships to be aimed at. (Kee 1990:107). Morality is reduced to an economic base. A just society is what 'ought to be'. However the word 'just' is extremely vague and depends on the ethical world-view of the society concerned. In effect Marx expounds no defined ethic.

The following is important in considering a 'scientific' approach to the human sciences such as sociology and theology.

a) König:

König (1982:22-33) discusses *inter alia* the 'method of theology.'

The method used in studying a situation or a phenomenon is determined by the nature of the object of the research. A predetermined epistemology is fatal. As is a predetermined epistemological break.

One has to distinguish between:

- a) The exact or phenomenological method of experimenting, systematising and theorising to establish a law that explains the facts observed; that it is a good theory, that it works. On this basis a prognosis can be made, for example, concerning the world population and its physical demands for food and water seen globally, and
- b) The human sciences, theology included, use the interpretative, hermeneutic method to understand, to gain insight. 'Here experiment and prognosis have hardly any place because the area of investigation shifts to unique events, to man and his relationships in history' (König 1982:31). Where Jesus is accepted as the truth, as the revelation of God in him, theology need not search for the 'truth'; it is a given. 'Theology can then only investigate this given revealed truth' (König 1982:34) . 'That Jesus is the truth means that we can trust him, that he is trustworthy and genuine, that God really does love us as Jesus said and that Jesus' love is God's love. Ultimate truth, the basic truth that governs our life is linked, then , with a person who is the same yesterday, today and forever.' (König 1982 :35)

Thus an important conclusion as far as theology is concerned has been reached: This signifies that epistemologically with respect to theology the base on which a superstructure is built is Jesus the Christ'. The base is not materialism nor experiential insights derived from discussing the 'object of theology'.

Thus one comes to the interface between ' what do we believe' and 'what do we do'. We have to believe 'the truth', Jesus, and do the truth as given, namely, 'love God and love your

neighbour'. Believing is doing and doing is loving/trusting/obeying God. What comes first? The doing or the believing? The praxis or the reflection?

'Seeing that theology is so closely associated with faith, it is important to know what faith is. Faith is the total commitment of yourself, your thinking, and your will to the Word of God. Faith is obedience (Rom.1 : 5); this means taking captive every thought you cherish and making it obedient to Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 10: 6). Faith is opposed to every kind of self-glorification (Rom. 3 : 27). In Rom. 10:13-17 we find the basic connexion between faith and the Word of God. A careful reading of these verses reveals the sequence: faith, hearing, preaching Word of God. If we reverse it, the sequence begins with the Word of God, which is preached by the Church, is heard by its members (or by pagans)'. (König 1982:168)

On confessing that Jesus is Lord and believing that God had raised him from the dead you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified and it is with you mouth that you confess and are saved. (Rom. 10:10-11)

The 'believing' comes before the 'doing'.

Scientific theology itself is defined as ' the methodical, critical reflection on what the church proclaims and which is accepted in the act of faith' (König 1982:169). There exists a legitimate preference for its proclamation of the Word.

b) Ratzinger

Ratzinger (1984:11-14) also discusses Marxism from the supposed scientific point of view that it advances.

Ratzinger describes the Marxist approach as follows:

- i) An intolerable and explosive situation requires effective action.
- ii) Effective action presupposes a scientific analysis of the structural cause of poverty.
- iii) Marxism now provides us with the means to make such 'scientific' analysis, it is said.
- iv) Thus the answer is simply to apply his analysis to the third world (and South African) situation.

Everything that is called 'scientific' is not necessarily scientific at all. The borrowing of a method or an approach to reality should be preceded by a careful epistemological critique. *This essential preliminary epistemological critical study is absent from the theology of liberation.* For Marxism the 'ideological principles come prior to the study of the social reality and are presupposed in it. Thus, no separation of the parts of this epistemologically unique complex is possible.' (Ratzinger 1984:12)

'It would be illusory and dangerous ... to accept elements of the Marxist analysis without recognising its connections with the ideology, or to enter into the practise of the class struggle ... Thus in the case of the class struggle it cannot be taken as the equivalent of 'severe social conflict in an empirical sense' (Ratzinger 1984:12).

One has to recall, says Ratzinger, that 'atheism and the

denial of the (individual) human person, his liberty and his rights are at the core of Marxist theory ... this misunderstanding of the nature of the person leads to a total subordination of the person to the collectivity and thus to the denial of the principles of social and political life which is in keeping with the human dignity.' (Ratzinger 1984:12)

It is necessary that a critical examination of the analytical methods borrowed from other disciplines be carried out in a special way by theologians for 'It is the light of faith

which provides theology with its principles ... the ultimate and decisive criterion for truth can be the only criterion which is itself theological. It is only in the light of faith and what faith teaches us about the truth of man and the ultimate meaning of this destiny that one can judge the validity or degree of validity to what other disciplines propose, often rather conjecturally ...' (Ratzinger 1984:12)

One has to bear in mind that any hypothesis corresponds to a particular viewpoint which will high-light certain aspects of that reality while leaving others in the shade. 'This limitation which arises from the nature of human sciences is ignored by those who under the guise of hypothesis recognised as such, have recourse to such an all-embracing conception of reality as the thought of Marx.' (Ratzinger 1984:13). This hypothesis is incompatible with the Christian vision of humanity. In fact this all-embracing ideological core borrowed from Marxism ' exercises the function of an determining principle ... in virtue of its being describe as "scientific", that is to say, true necessity.' (Ratzinger 1984:13)

Ratzinger highlights inter alia the following components of the Marxian argument.

- a) The only true consciousness is the partisan (to the struggle of the proletariat) consciousness.
- b) The concept of the truth is in question and it becomes subverted to 'There is no truth ... except in and through the partisan praxis' (Ratzinger 1984:13).
- c) The particular praxis and truth that comes from it are partisan praxis and partisan truth because the fundamental struggle of history is characterised by 'class struggle'.
- d) To enter into the class struggle becomes an objective necessity which is seen as the dialectical opposite to the relationship of exploitation.
- e) This implies that society is founded on violence as the fundamental law of history is the law of the class struggle.
- f) Hence the class struggle by historical law is an objective necessity.
- g) Therefore the conception of truth goes hand in hand with the affirmation of necessary violence and of political amorality.
- h) Within such a perspective any reference to ethical requirements calling for reform makes no sense.

For Marxism 'the class struggle is the driving force of history. History becomes the central notion'. Thus while it may be affirmed that God makes history it is added that there is only one history 'one in which the distinction between

history of salvation and profane history is no longer necessary ... thus there is a tendency to identify the Kingdom of God with the human liberation movement and to make history itself the subject of its own development as

a process of the self-redemption of man by means of the class struggle.' (Ratzinger 1984:13)

2.4.2.1 In sum

'Concepts uncritically borrowed from Marxist ideology ... are at the basis of the new interpretation (hermeneutic) marked by rationalism which is corrupting whatever was authentic in the generous initial commitment on behalf of the poor.'
(Ratzinger 1984:12)

Empiricism and the inductive interpretative of the experiential is of necessity bound to the history of a person who has one life span only. This of necessity denies or neglects the validity and contribution of the personal experience of others who have preceded the person. This can hardly be considered to scientific. It can rather be seen as being emotional, and inexplicably intuitive. Hulley (1984:177) says in the above regard: 'We cannot lightly dismiss the collective moral wisdom from previous generations into which we enter, but in the end we may still say 'Here I stand can do no other, so help me God'. History will be the judge. Men like Luther and Wilberforce have been vindicated by history, but we need to keep our feet on the ground. History has adjudged more to have been wrong or perhaps even to have been cranks.'

Historical materialism has not proved itself to be scientific. For the theology the only proper base upon which to build a superstructure for society is Jesus the Christ.

2.5 Liberation/Salvation

2.5.1 Overcharged

Liberation is understood by Gutierrez as a process, 'the movement of awareness of freedom to the achievement thereof'. It is as movement an ongoing process with the goal being 'the continuous creation, never ending, of a new way to be a man, a permanent cultural revolution'. (1973:9). ' ... From the beginning the theology of liberation posited that the first act is involvement in the liberation process...' (Gutierrez 1984:200).

Boff & Boff (1992:90) mention that liberation is the 'powerful and irresistible aspiration of the poor'. Thus, liberation theology places the stress on social-historical liberation and further sees political liberation as an aspect of Christian liberation. It becomes a theology for liberation.

Liberation is viewed by Boesak as liberation from white domination while for Freire (1977:125) liberation means overcoming all limit situations, that is, situations limiting the individual in the self-fulfilling of self. (McCann 1981:169). Rather, for black theology, some version of Marxist social theory and its conception of socio-economic and political liberation is necessary. For 'The issue for us is survival. The root of the problem is human sinfulness which nurtures monopolistic capitalism...' (West 1983:72-73). Liberation has as its praxis the transformation of history from the view-point of the oppressed and the poor of this world (Gutierrez 1983:50).

It is small wonder that liberation is seen by black theology as a complex issue. Liberation theologians are not at one with the interpretation of 'liberation' although the word is freely and often used in their writings. It therefore comes as no surprise that these theologians either tend to read the Bible, even its most apolitical parts thereof with the aid of some socio-political-economic key supplied by Marxism or to ignore those parts that cannot be read in this way as being of no relevance to the cause of 'liberation'. When they do this it is a manifestation of ideological dogmatism which horizontalises 'liberation'. It then effectively equates liberation with salvation which, although theologically unsubstantiated, makes it easier for the 'people' to understand - it is a way of by-passing the complexity of the concept of 'liberation'.

The Pelagian approach that propagates the dogma that a human being can accomplish an own salvation by an own action and own power is manifested and is covertly present.

Salvation and liberation are intertwined. '... Liberation Theology focuses on social-political-economic liberation as an indispensable element of salvation, but it does not get the two confused ... '(Deutsch 1981:193).

Thus, says Deutsch, salvation has two indispensable tiers :

- a) A first tier; social ethical, politico-economic liberation. Just about any kind of liberation is included herein. This leads to the next tier
- b) A second tier : A salvation the locus of which is found in the religious praxis of the poor

While this kind of liberation does not in all aspects identify liberation with salvation, salvation remains an indispensable part. The main focus is thus on socio-economic-political liberation as an indispensable element of salvation. (Deutsch 1981:193)

The question is: Should the first tier be achieved and should the poor then disappear from society, where is the locus of salvation then to be found? It seems as if the saying '*extra eccelsia nulla salus*' is turned around to read '*extra "poor" nulla salus*'. Does the poor as a group become the congregation forming the church?

At Bangkok in 1973 the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches (CWME) confirmed a new emphasis. 'Salvation' was now translated as 'liberation' and vice versa (Bosch 1991:396). Salvation, like liberation, came to be defined exclusively in worldly terms depicted as manifesting itself in

- i) economic justice against exploitation
- ii) pro human dignity and anti oppression
- iii) for solidarity in the approach against alienation
- iv) for hope as against despair in the personal life of peoples.

Identification of liberation with salvation has now become so close that a difference is hardly indiscernible. It has become a distinction without a difference Deutsch's comment notwithstanding.

For Gutierrez liberation theology correlates 'salvation' and 'liberation' and seeks to construct a theology based on a correlation of the themes of 'liberation' and 'salvation'.

However if liberation , as salvation, is the free gift of God (Gutiérrez 1983:159) in what sense must liberation still be won? This is a major difficulty in correlating the themes of 'salvation' and liberation' (McCann 1981:194). More theologically acceptably Gutiérrez mentions that the purpose for which Jesus was sent was for the radical liberation of men. He was sent ' so that he might come to liberate all men from all slavery to which sin has subjected them ...' (Gutiérrez 1973:176).

2.5.2 Paradigmatic hermeneutic

To demonstrate how liberation theology arises from social praxis, Gutiérrez (1973:159) uses the Exodus episode as paradigmatic. ' Only the mediation of this self-creation - first revealed by the liberation from Egypt - allows us to rise above poetic expressions and general categories and to understand in a profound and synthesising way the relationship between creation and salvation so vigorously proclaimed by the Bible. The Exodus experience is paradigmatic'

For black theology theologies the point to such paradigms is to allow the base communities (the poor and marginalised people) to legitimate their praxis as part of an ongoing historical presence of God in the midst of 'his people'. Thus the Exodus paradigm is crucial for understanding all other narratives of the Bible.

For orthodox Christianity if anything in history could have paradigmatic status it would be the cross of Christ, the suffering Messiah with the Exodus-event and the prophets being subordinated thereto. (McCann 1981:203)

Berkhof (1990:57) with regard to the Exodus mentions: 'Liberation theology views these experiences as the real (and only) entrance to the salvation event which is founded on the Exodus out of Egypt ... '

The Exodus is a favourite theme of Desmond Tutu.

'God is God who is always on the side of the oppressed to lead them out of all that enslaves them and makes them less than what he intends them to be, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.' (Tutu 1976:6)

'However, Tutu does not make the distinction that Segundo does between God leading the people of Israel out of Egypt and God enabling Moses to lead the people. It is not clear whether Tutu envisages God intervening directly, and this is not really clarified by many other black South African writers either. It is not clear, to me at least, how Jesus fits into the exodus paradigm in this theology. There is much emphasis on his identification with the poor; but if he is one of the poor, how is he also a Moses? In fact, since the black people are still oppressed, the liberation into the promised land is something that lies in the future rather than something which Jesus has already accomplished.'

(Nicolson 1990:207)

Regarding the Exodus event Ratzinger (1984:13) writes that the new hermeneutic inherent in liberation theology leads to an essentially political reading of the Scriptures. ' This is a major importance given to the Exodus event in as much as it is a liberation from political servitude. The

mistake is ... in making this one dimension the principal of exclusive component. This lead to a reductionist reading of the Bible.'

Ratzinger continues and states that in this way one places oneself in the perspective of a temporal Messianism which is one of the most radical expressions of secularisation of the Kingdom of God and its absorption into the immanence of human history. In giving this priority to the political dimension one is led above all to misunderstand the person of our Lord Jesus Christ and thus the specific character of that true salvation, that is, in all liberation from sin which is the source of all evils.

2.5.3 Comment

True liberation is above all else liberation from sin (Ratzinger 1984:11-24). Personal spiritual liberation is the prerequisite of genuine social-structural liberation. (Nürnbergger 1988:185). The socio-structural enslavement which necessitates liberation is in part the result of the abuse of power, the egoist human craving for power and privilege ... The believer is not free to do whatever he or she wishes to do in this regard. There are bounds (Nürnbergger 1988:186).

Paul sees the salvation as a process beginning in this life which commences with an encounter with Jesus Christ. A process which will be completed in the end times (Bosch 1991:393). It was with the Enlightenment that salvation became to mean liberation 'from religious superstition, attention to human welfare and the moral improvement of humanity. Salvation now became to be seen not as the result of some internal spiritual

change but as the termination of perverted and unjust structures (Bosch 1991:396).

Bosch (1991:446) needs to be quoted in full:

'Liberation and salvation overlap with each other to a significant degree, but they do not overlap totally. We should not deceive ourselves into believing that everything lies in our grasp and that we can bring it about, now; we would then, also, diminish "the importance and decisive character of the, next generation" (Segundo 1986:160). Paul's (and Segundo's) is a "spirituality for the long haul" (Robert Bilheimer, reference in Henry 1987:279f), not that of Pelagius who believed that "we have the power of accomplishing every good thing by action, speech, and thought" (Pelagius, quoted in Henry 1987:272). *For the Pelagian, true justice and true unity can coalesce fully in this world if we just try hard enough* (italics added) (:274; cf Gründel 1983:122). But the hope that human beings can shoulder the burdens of the world is an illusion that leads them through anxiety to despair (cf Duff 1956:146, summarising a report of the Advisory Committee on the theme of the WCC Evanston Assembly) ... It is easy for those whose cause is just to blur the line between what they are working for and their own reputation and glory. Work for justice can easily slip into a kind of ideological dogmatism, with the result that we may be perpetrating injustice while fighting for justice (Henry 1987:279)'

For Kirk (1956:131) the starting point for understanding the biblical view of liberation is its analysis of the cause/reason for the necessity of liberation. The fullness of

liberation arises out of a correct assessment of both the causes and symptoms of oppression (Kirk 1956 :134). He mentions two issues:

i) While the Old Testament has a concept of salvation which is rooted in the present world, the new Testament speaks of a final eschatological salvation and is not fundamentally concerned with liberation in social terms. In the New Testament liberation is offered to all persons without discrimination. 'It is vitally important to bear in mind that the "enemies" that Christ told his disciples to love unconditionally were political and national ones.' Liberation may not be directly equated with any particular political action - all of which are ambiguous in terms of the final liberation of the Kingdom ...' (Kirk 1956 :135).

ii) Christian opinion through the ages has oscillated between individual and the institutional church's notion of salvation. In the first mentioned everything depends on individual free-enterprise and risk-taking. In the second everything depends on the Church as institution, But 'both models are not entirely adequate'.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI reads:

'We must . . . say the following about the liberation that evangelization proclaims and endeavours to bring about:

a) It cannot be limited purely and simply to the economic, social, and cultural spheres but must concern the whole person in all dimensions, including the

relationship to an "absolute" and even to the Absolute, which is God.

b) It is based, therefore, on a conception of human nature, an anthropology, which can never be sacrificed to the requirements of some strategy or other, or to practice, or to short-term effectiveness. (Gutierrez 1988:xli)

Segundo states the problem more correctly where he says that liberation theologians have tended to read the whole Bible even its most apolitical parts with the aid of a political key or to slight those parts which could not be read in this way (1986: 169 - 171)

Deutsch comments that

'We find that Black Theologians virtually overcharge the concept of Liberation Theology by making it imply and include just any kind of liberation; the liberation of man from himself, from exploitation and oppression by others and from defilement by a sinful government, from self-pity and from the anger and bitterness which seeks nothing but revenge...' (1981:193).

Whatever the word 'liberation' signifies in liberation theology it is, firstly, not clear what it means and secondly that a very large segment of Christianity is against an all-embracing concept which overloads the concept and which is more emotional than descriptively meaningful.

2.6 Epistemological break with 'white' theology

Tutu in a lecture (Versöhnung ist unteilbar. Wuppertal 1977 pp 18f translated by Frostin 1988:22) stated :

'Black Theology (is) a refutation of the silent claims by the white man to *ipso facto* give his values and measures universal validity. This claim is virtually never articulated explicitly, but is regarded as self-evident. Ultimately, there is no need to speak about that which is obvious. What the West has proscribed with genuine academic excellence is usually approved universally. The agenda of our life is too often determined by the white man. We have to play a game wherein the rules are decided by the white man and in which he often assumes the role as arbitrator as well. In his rather exaggerated dread of his own emotions, the Western man has proclaimed the law that to be really scientific, one must be restrained, unemotional, detached and objective. In attempting to attain these objectives so highly prized in the West, we (the blacks) distorted our own nature and found that something did not add up in the final results. God has created us as we are, a people unashamed of its God-given emotions. Our scientific strivings must make room for subjectivity, for commitment, for the intuitive comprehension of matters which are hardly comprehensible for the alienated objectivity of the non-committed.'

For black theology 'scientific' strivings

- a) are to be subjective (hence objectively untestable);
- b) there is to be a commitment (which is emotional);
- c) it is to be intuitive (hence objectively irrefutable and spiritually inexplicable).

Yet Tutu claims black theology to be scientific. It seems that Tutu is propounding a new definition of what 'scientific' is: On analysis the intuitive emotional nearly mystical approach is advanced as scientific by a black liberation theologian.

However, nowhere is 'white' theology refuted as being either unscriptural or illogically unscientific.

It appears that the aim of Tutu is to protest against a 'hegemony postulate' without proving that such a postulate exists. The existence of such a postulate is repeatedly assumed without proof as if by repetition it ought to become logically acceptable. The aim is to create a black cultural emotional intuitive apology for liberation. It must clearly be understood that criticism is directed not only against Western Academics but also against black South African fellow citizens who have accepted the silent claims emanating from 'white centres of power'. This argument is more cultural-political-emotionally oriented than theologically convincing.

It is difficult to follow what Tutu intends to convey. On the one hand he says that they (black people) are unashamed of their God-given emotions which are incomprehensible to the non-committed. On the other hand he states that they, although unashamed, still distorted their own nature! This distortion of a kind of generalised non-descriptive black nature is in any case located not in the western theological values but in their own nature, says Tutu. One perceives the approach to liberation theology which Segundo mentions as the first phase : a re-evaluation of the , 'oppressor class' here implied by Tutu.

This attitude of Tutu is a typical 'take-it-or-leave-it' one. It is dogmatic and advances no argument for its conclusions. In a sense it smacks of theological arrogance and condescension. Tutu makes no case for the argument that is advanced by him.

Black theology also levels charges of racism against whites only. It covertly assumes that there are no black racists - that the mass of black peoples are a kind of 'holy nation.'

'The charges of racism are directed not only against the white South Africans, but towards *all whites who claim universal validity for their epistemologies, their scientific standards and their theologies.* (Italics added)'... This criticism evolves from a postulate in black theology which is essential for understanding the relevance of the South African case study in this essay: black theologians insist that the black-white relations in South Africa reflect the global relations between developed and developing countries.This line of thought has vital consequences for the interpretation of Western Theology: it is largely understood as a dimension of the "white power structure" as is the white theology of South African theology.' (Frostin 1988:132)

Again this approach is reminiscent of the first phase of liberation theology as set out by Segundo: a suspicion of white theology which requires such a new conversion to faith.

Some black theologians exclude white Christians from any possibility of salvation. All white Christians are assumed to be in league with the powers of evil and hence heretical. With facile ease the assumption is made absolute that therefore the subjective theories of black theology are correct, which is a *non-sequitur*. Echols (1984:31) states that: '...White Theology and the church have been enemies rather than allies of God. They belong to the principalities and powers of this world against which the people of God must contend as

they identify and participate in God's struggle for human liberation.'

From the above it appears that apartheid theology is not alone in being classified as an enemy of God, that it is a heresy. Nor is it alone in being racist for it appears that as soon as a white person claims universal validity for an epistemology, scientific standards or theology then such a person is a racist! *Mirabile dictu* ! A new definition for a racist has been coined covertly which, by definition, excludes any black person from being a racist! This is proof of spiritual and racial pride, arrogance and condescension and of being racist in its origin. However, using the same norm, the fact is that black theology liberation theology, albeit directly or indirectly, claim for its theology a universal validity. An *ipse dixit* leads to absolutising black theology and declaring that all white theology is Satanist. By Echols' definition black people and white people are irreconcilable. This is a heresy for it is stated that salvation by means of 'white' theology is impossible.

One must guard against including into orthodoxy doctrines that have not been proven to be acceptable into orthodoxy. Christian Protestant orthodoxy is not the aggregate of all doctrines and/or praxis which claim to be Christian. If this was so then every doctrine claiming to be Christian has to be added to orthodoxy to obtain an aggregate orthodoxy and so orthodoxy becomes distorted. Such a kind of 'aggregate approach' might be pseudo-ecumenical but is 'the death in the pot' for orthodoxy. The faith once delivered by the apostles is the norm to be used and all claims have to be evaluated against it. Having stated the above it is clear that an

emotional intuitive approach, a mystical approach - which is in essence a Romantic personal revelational claim by a 'committed' person (presumably committed to the liberation of the poor) - needs to be measured against norms before being considered acceptable as Christian doctrine. This is the case concerning the statements made by Tutu which at this stage can only be accorded the status of personal statements by a certain bishop. Statements made by holders of high clerical office is no infallible measure of orthodoxy. Tutu has not referred to any biblical norm for his opinions. Indeed a suspicion arises that these statements, unfounded and unscientific as they are, are intended to advance at all costs the cause of black theology.

One notes that white theology, undefined, is deemed heretical. Only whites are racists but not a single black person! This is an absolutisation and sacralisation of black theology and the ethics of the specie black person. Precisely the danger that Bosch warns against. This is creating an idol of black theology and is sinful. In general condemning white persons as a class is certainly not loving one's neighbour as oneself and is sinful. If the continuance in sin is heretical, as stated by the WARC (Van Zyl 1997: 19) surely this unconfessed sinfulness is heretical.

2.7 Conscientisation

Black theology, as an articulation of black consciousness in the religious realm, became one of many projects of conscientisation. Conscientisation '... continues to play an important role in the ideological formation of the black political agents . This is evidenced by the successful

leadership of archbishop Desmond Tutu, Alan Boesak and other black pastors.' (Mofokeng 1987:22). In the light of the above Tutu and Boesak can be seen as as protagonists of black political theology.

In the earlier stages of black theology the interlocutor was the ontologically black community. In later black theology the interlocutor is the black person seen as a type, as a socially and economically oppressed person-type. This particularist approach places black theology in the sphere of having a material base for its theology so following the Marxist lead. Consequently it realised that capitalism is to be addressed theologically, to be combated socially and politically and to be eradicated together with racism. Thus for black theology capitalism and racism go hand in hand (Mofokeng 1987:24). This surely is a *non-sequitur*.

2.7.1 Class consciousness evangelisation

Conscientisation, a term popularised by Freire, implies that 'the level of consciousness of the people must be raised so that they become aware of the true state of affairs around them ... The conscientising process takes place not through the imposition of ideas(indoctrination) but through unceasing dialogue.' (Kritjzinger 1988:47)

'There can be no conscientisation without a radical denunciation of dehumanising structures, accompanied by the proclamation of a new reality to be created by men.' (Freire 1970: 46)

The problem is that the 'poor and oppressed' do not seem to realise their condition. Therefore the poor must be made aware that their status is not what God intended for them. They have to be conscientised - their class consciousness is to be aroused. They must not see their position as inevitable. They must rebel against their situation: 'The poor nations of the world, with their banners of nationalism and self-determination - what are these if not rebellion on the part of the oppressed and their refusal to move ahead according to the logic of the oppressor?' (Alves 1972:69)

Tutu, *supra*, echoes this sentiment when he declares that 'Black theology is a refutation of the silent claims by the white man to *ipso facto* give his values and measures universal validity.' (*Versöhnung ist unteilbar*. Wuppertal 1977 pp 18f translated by Frostin 1988:22)

McCann (1981:165 et seq) sets out Freire's (1970: 70 et seq) theory of conscientisation as being fundamentally three things:

- i) A description of a practice of a literary training program designed to trigger a social awakening among oppressed people.
- ii) A revolutionary theory of education derived from this practice.
- iii) A global perspective on history as a whole - what is called the dialectical vision - which grounds the substantive values that inspire both the practice and the theory of the oppressed.

McCann, in suggesting that conscientisation threatens to eliminate theological reflection, is interested primarily in

the third meaning, the dialectical vision and its subversive implications for theology as such.

ad i)

The educational practice of triggering a social awakening promotes dialogistic action. The approach is not that the teacher knows and the students are simply informed, that is, the teacher active and the students passive (a verticalism), rather, the approach seeks to 'humanise' the process by transferring the process into a common effort (a horizontalism). The teachers become co-ordinators while the students become participants. The participants' own perspective on life becomes the context in which the posing of the problem continues.

The result is an education process in which the teachers no longer dominate. This means that conscientisation is no longer a technique for literacy training but a praxis based on a revolutionary theory of education.

Ad ii):

As a revolutionary theory of education, conscientisation stems from an awareness of the dialectical relationship of domination and freedom. 'Problem-posing ... also (for) men to overcome their false perception of reality. The world - no longer something to be described by words - becomes the object of that transforming action by men which results in their humanisation' (Freire 1970:74). Thus by locating the seat of their decisions in themselves and in their relations with the world and others, men overcome, whether in an ethical way or not, the situations which limit them - the so-called 'limit-situations' (Freire 1970:89-90)

ad iii):

The dialectical vision that grounds this theory pictures the whole of history as a struggle for liberation. The dialectical vision sees the new man emerging from the struggle between oppressors and the oppressed in history, a struggle which is best understood as a conflict over limit-situations. For Freire (1970:41) the 'pursuit of self-affirmation ... is nothing other than man's ontological and historic vocation to become more fully human; to insist on the reality of limit-situations is willy-nilly to oppress and dehumanise'.

The dialectical vision in other words sees history as a struggle for freedom without defining the content of that freedom save as overcoming all limit-situations. The untested feasibility of this vision is a process, pure and simple. Its content is realised only by participating in it.

Gutiérrez (1973:116) explicitly states: 'This awareness of being oppressed but nevertheless being masters of their own destiny is nothing other than the consequence of a well understood evangelisation.'

This view of the correlation between the process of conscientisation and evangelisation implies that the liberating God of the Bible is identified with the struggle of the oppressed. If religion is the opium of the people, this impression is not overcome by the God postulated by the dialectic vision (McCann 1981:171). The struggle becomes the panacea, the opium anaesthetising the ills of society in an expectation of overcoming them.

If a conscientising evangelisation is to be theoretically and theologically coherent then biblical Christianity and Freire's dialectical vision ought to be virtually identical. The problem however is that conscientisation in principle recognises no genuine limit-situations - all of them are problematical as all of them are seen to be 'obstacles to liberation'. In short, Freire's theory extends Marx's critique of traditional religion to the whole question of hermeneutics in such a way that hermeneutics is transformed into a praxis - that is into a conscientised evangelisation (McCann 1981:172). Goba talks about 'praxis' as a new mode of hermeneutics and calls even theology itself praxis. (In Deutsch 1977:195)

If in principle it is accepted, as Freire does, that there are no limit-situations it is difficult to see how the theologian is to understand fundamental relational aspects in biblical Christianity. For example: How is God's relationship to this world as its Creator to be understood if not in the limit-situation of a person who is in the world as a created being and by definition, limited thereto? Further also, how is humanity's theological identity as a creature 'made in the image of God' to be understood if not in relation to being human and to being some kind of limited image of God?

Consequently as conscientisation has no criteria - none is put forward - for distinguishing between genuine factual limit-situations and illusory ones, the indoctrinated ones, and no criteria for distinguishing limits that summon persons to worshipful contemplation rather than to political action then the religious basis of liberation theology is jeopardised. (McCann 1981:179)

If conscientisation is as radical as it appears to be and acknowledges no limit-situations it is questionable whether it can ever yield constructive results in theology.

2.7.2 Incompatibility of Visions

Radical liberation for Gutierrez means 'It is the same God

who, in the fullness of time, sends his Son in the flesh, so that He might come to liberate all men from all slavery to which sin has subjected them: hunger, misery, oppression, and ignorance, in a word, that injustice and hatred which have their origin in human selfishness. Christ introduces us by the gift of his Spirit into communion with God and with all men.' (Gutierrez 1973 : 176)

McCann (1981:182-183) insightfully states: 'This is what Gutierrez means at an ultimate level by "radical liberation". These theological affirmations are rooted in a particular Christian religious vision, namely, the orthodox Catholic vision of the Incarnation. Gutierrez's vision rests not on the single assertion that 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ' (John 1:14), but on a series of assertions that 'in many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets ; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son' (Hebrews 1:1-2). These 'many and various ways' represent a series of 'epiphanies', or historic encounters, between the divine and human persons beginning paradigmatically in the Exodus of Israel from Egypt and culminating in the Incarnation of Christ. Given this emphasis on salvation-history, it is appropriate to say that Gutierrez's theology is rooted in an 'epiphanic vision'. For him a conscienticising evangelisation

encourages the oppressed to experience and to cling to this epiphanic vision in their struggles for liberation.

The question, however, is whether this vision is compatible with conscientisation. Conscientisation is based on a dialectical vision. There is a strong suspicion of incompatibility. The tension between Gutierrez's epiphanic vision and Freire's dialectical vision is based on the fact that an orthodox understanding of the Incarnation simply cannot be reconciled with a 'dialectical history'. The fact is, either Christ is the definitive epiphany of God who drives history forward to salvation, as orthodoxy believes, or he is simply a symbol of human hope for liberation in the dialectical process used in the struggle for freedom in which all limit-situations are overcome. (cf. McCann 1981:185)

These diverse visions, the epiphanic and the dialectical, play an important part in the concepts of liberation and salvation.

With the epiphanic vision a point of departure is provided. Liberation theology correlates liberation and salvation in a new kind of salvation-history because ' its purpose is not simply a contemplation of the mighty acts of God as portrayed in the Bible but the recognition of these acts as a process in which basic communities (the people) participate, a process whose goal is the creation of a new man.' (Gutiérrez 1973:146). For Gutiérrez liberation theology is simply a theology of history. There is no theological anthropology nor Christian interpretation of human nature, ' Human history then is the location of our encounter with Him (God) in Christ.' (Gutiérrez 1973:189). History is claimed as the point of departure. ' Thus the new kind of salvation-history must

allow the base communities to identify their praxis with the series of epiphanies they find in the Bible. Biblical history then become paradigmatic for them to understand their struggle. Thus this kind of salvation-history provides a method or code by which the limit-situations of oppression are identified and are overcome. Importantly, this is however only possible if this salvation-history can serve to correlate the themes of 'liberation' and 'salvation'. (McCann 1981:187)

Factually the most basic limit-situation is that of the world-vision which recognises God as the primary subject of history. When God is confessed as really acting in history this necessarily defines limits to human thinking, influence and doing. However, there is a conflict between this approach and the world-view which casts man in the role as the primary subject of history as is done in the dialectic vision. In that case when once 'limit-situations are identified they must be decoded, treated as obstacles to liberation for a consistent application of the logic of conscientisation would have to criticise them as a final residue of oppressor consciousness' (McCann 1981:198). Indeed to rely in the final analysis even on a liberating God for help in the struggle is to prevent the emergence of the aspired to new man. Then the 'opium of the people' has not yet worn off completely. The 'new man' represents the collective image, an unidentified aggregate, of the oppressed, who, having overcome 'the fear of freedom', stand fully committed to a process of permanent liberation (Freire 1970:40).

Why are factual limit-situations not recognised as genuine? To recognise limit-situations as genuine would create the

possibility for a constructive philosophy of religion - it would no longer be 'the 'opium'. It would also mean

- a) abandoning the dialectical vision - the struggle by humans for total liberation and
- b) the critique of religion founded upon it.

Conscientisation dare not be formulated as having limitations and still remain conscientisation. Conscientisation is forced to fly in the face of theology which regards God as the primary subject of history: it becomes anti-religious.

While for orthodox theology God is a Hidden God who acts in history in a hidden manner through human agents who have opened their hearts to him in repentance, humility and faith, his activity is never known with certainty. On the other hand, the theology for liberation affirms that God's relation to history is not hidden but is directly manifest in the struggles of the oppressed. Thus for liberation theology God is revealed in the Exodus which serves as a paradigm for all other epiphanies only insofar as they manifest that he espouses the cause of the oppressed and their struggle for liberation. A reductive epiphany only is acknowledged. God's active presence in history is dialectically understood. It is postulated that it can only be known through participation in the struggle. Thus it is argued that the meaning of history and the activity of God therein, becomes that of a hidden God only for those who refuse to act in solidarity with the oppressed.

The differences in paradigm between orthodox Christianity and liberation theology result in two different perspectives of history taken as a whole.

For liberation theology history is a struggle in which the promises inherently 'seen' in the Exodus paradigm are ultimately to be fulfilled through the work of Christ seen as the Liberator.

For orthodox Christianity history is an interim interval in which the conflict between grace and pride confirms the paradoxical logic of the cross which illustrates the limit-situation of the salvation by God through Jesus Christ, a salvation which humankind itself cannot engineer. The cross as the paradigm of salvation is a direct pointing to the plight of sinful humankind as it is confronted by the Hidden God as only God can alleviate this helpless sighing for forgiveness of sin.

McCann (1981:204) states that for Gutierrez, on the other hand, the theology of history '... is a narrative proclaiming God's liberative role in overriding limit-situations of oppression. By conscientising this narrative the basic communities are allowed to identify their aspirations with the fulfilment promised by Christ the Liberator.'

2.7.3 Comment

An analysis of liberation theology brings the following critique to the fore with regard to conscientisation:

i) History: A critical study of history challenges theology to be intellectually honest. Theology is not a paraphrase of history. Liberation theology does not explain the reasons for understanding or accepting salvation-history as paradigmatic of real history. On the contrary 'He

(Gutiérrez) accepts as historical fact a conscientised re-description of biblical history. Salvation-history is modified by the assertion that salvation consists in an ultimate liberation in history' (McCann 1981:205). The conflict between the dialectic and epiphanic visions remains unresolved.

ii) Transcendence: For orthodox Christianity the nature of religious transcendence is characterised as vertical. Living in the 'already but not yet', the paradoxical relationship of the temporal and the eternal in an attitude of repentance, humility and faith. But if God's relation to this world is realised primarily in his power to act on behalf of his people in this world then religious transcendence is primarily horizontal. 'A new kind of transcendence is realised: God reveals himself as a force in our future and not as an a-historical being.' (Gutiérrez 1973:165). Thus the role of God is domesticated to serving only his 'people' without specifying clearly who they are. Equally for black liberation theology religious transcendence means God participating in the struggle for liberation in history. A horizontal, not a vertical, kind of 'transcendence'.

iii) The 'poor': Vatican II understood 'the people of God' to indicate the mission of the church throughout history: The church is called to be the 'people of God' who are drawn from all nations and historical epochs united in their loyalty to the gospel.

How does liberation theology interpret the 'people of God'? Firstly, the 'people of God' is identified with the

'anawim' whose poverty consists in social deprivation or in a religious spirit of humility or both. Secondly, the term then undergoes a conscientisation so that its meaning is established with reference to the semantics of the struggle for liberation. In leftist political semantics 'the people' signifies the lower classes, the oppressed.

This shift from the rather abstract use of the phrase 'people of God' by Vatican II exemplifies black liberation theology's political hermeneutics of the gospel. In so doing the theological vocabulary of liberation theology acquires a new relevance as the meaning of 'the people of God' is made explicit and concrete albeit rather mystically in the 'poor'.

iv) The theology of liberation as expounded by Gutiérrez moves simply from praxis to theology without a break to circumscribe its ethics/norms. The neglect of theological ethics is remarkable. Indeed it deliberately rejects the possibility of theological ethics as incompatible with a 'critical reflection on praxis'. It concentrates rather on the problem of social action. Why is this so?

v) As regards the silence maintained regarding ethics the following are mentioned:

To give either a theological or ethical interpretation of any normative structure presupposes a transcendent perspective which is incompatible with conscientisation which denies any limit-situations.

Liberation theology understandably tends to maximise the range of options available for praxis. A more definitive circumscribed evaluation of these options set forth in an abstract philosophical mode of analysis of ethics, is regarded as a threat to the critical prerogatives of the

communities actually involved in praxis to act freely in accordance with their world-view. Such evaluations as are presented must remain *ad hoc* and open-ended to avoid subverting the 'unity' of praxis. Therefore a rejection of the procedures and assumptions of theological ethics is a significant feature of liberation theology. (cf. McCann 1981:211)

The 'oppressed' classes are accorded a special ecclesiological identity and function. The poor are not regarded as objects of evangelisation or of the church's preferential love but as 'subjects who evangelise and build up the church' (Richard 1978:42). It is they, not a systematic theology, who not only determine the church's agenda for ethics, for social justice and for peace but also the very definition of the church and its membership.

vi) Marxism: Marx has to a large extent influenced liberation theology. (Gutiérrez 1974:7). The content of the new theology does not come from any received (revealed) spiritual knowledge but from the Marxian concept of praxis of the involvement of the oppressed in the historical process of change - a dialectic visions (Gutiérrez 1974: 13). Indeed salvation is not some otherworldly condition: it is the practical construction of social justice in the existing world (Gutiérrez 1974:151).

vii) Revolutionary intent: One of the fruits of conscientisation is revolution. While liberation theology stresses the importance of education it is a very ideological education 'intended to make the workers and peasant conscious of just how oppressed they are ... This education is known as conscientisation ... At its centre is a distinction between education for domestication ...

and education for liberation that the masses might create not an armchair revolution but a real one.' (Freire 1970:41) (cf Norman 1989:134)

A package of literature - called the Conscientisation Kit - compiled by the World Council of Churches in May 1975, with reference to the pedagogical debate - states that Freire's writings are pregnant with revolutionary intention: 'Conscientisation is never seen as having strictly educational objectives. It is always seen as enabling people to take political charge of their own history'. (In Norman 1989:134).

'To put it bluntly, despite the heavy use of technical language to describe conscientisation, it is ordinary political indoctrination'.(Norman 1989:135)

viii) Regarding an envisaged subversive conscientisation by liberation theology, Ogden (1979:26-34) opines that liberation theology does not distinguish between witness and theology. He mentions five points where theologies of liberation have failed.

- a) They are more witness to experience than they are to theology
- b) They focus on the existential meaning of God-for-us without at all dealing adequately with the metaphysical being of God-in-himself.
- c) They tend to confuse different forms of liberation - namely redemption and emancipation.
- d) They have a too restricted understanding of the various forms of bondage from which men and women and fellow creature need to be emancipated. They do not in this sense acknowledge limit-situations.

e) The process of conscientisation begins with subversion. The transcendence of God is knowable only in action. Therefore subversion must lead to active revolution. This revolution has a goal. 'The goal is not only better living conditions, a radical change of structures, a social revolution; it is much more: the continuous creation, never ending, of a new way to be a man, a permanent cultural revolution' (Gutiérrez 1973:32). Indeed says Alves (1973:127)' ... rebellion is the presupposition of every creative act'. Creation begins with negation, negation of the state and of the law: 'Completely opposite to the defence of the *status quo*, the realisation of justice not only subverts it, it also demands that we abolish the State and the law.' (Miranda 1974: 38)

This continuous escalation of violence applies to all regimes and is to be world-wide in scope: 'The insurrection of authentic Christianity against all law and all civilisation which has ever existed in history is a subversion which knows no ends.' (Miranda 1974 :189)

Thus, conscientisation must lead to subversion which leads to a continual rebellion which leads to continual violence - this then is the fruit of conscientisation: Anarchy in the secular and politicisation of the spiritual.

Concerning 'leadership courses', Boff (1987:70 Note 4) writes that 'What the church as such is doing is the initial priming.

In the area of conscientisation it provides an initial critical access to social reality. In the area of organisation it creates a whole mystique of unity. In the basic Christian communities it gets social organising efforts going. The rest of the job has to be the work of persons in areas that are extra-church - but not extra-kingdom - that is, in profane or societal (but not extra-faith) areas.'

One notes that it is not the church that does the final priming, the final priming later made is not necessarily theological. In practise the person with the higher education raises the consciousness of the lay leadership concerning 'social reality' using the tools of social sciences. People now go about their secular tasks having an ideological awareness. It is not easy to see how extra-church is not extra-kingdom and how a societal area is not an extra-faith area. It is not clear what Boff intends to convey.

In conclusion Norman (1989:135) insightfully states that ' ... to put it bluntly despite the heavy use of technical language to describe conscientisation, it is ordinary political indoctrination.'

2.8 Epistemology

Epistemology is that branch of philosophy which is concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge, its presuppositions and basis and the general reliability of claims to knowledge. (Frostin 1988:200 note 13)

For Liberation Theology to put forward its 'new way of theologising' it became a necessity to engineer an epistemological break with orthodox Christian theology. Contextual theologies claim an epistemological break when compared to traditional theologies. Contextual theology is a theology from below, from the underside of history, its main source (apart from Scripture and tradition) is the social sciences and its main interlocutor the poor or the culturally marginalised; its emphasis is on the priority of praxis (Bosch 1991:423).

2.8.1 Epistemological break: Some features

Some of the features of an epistemological break are contextuality, concept preparation, conscientisation and the use of an hermeneutic key in interpretation.

The word 'contextualisation' was coined in the 1970's and became a blanket term for a variety of theological models. Bosch (1991:424) mentions several features of the new epistemology now emerging from contextual theologies in casu black theology such as :

- a) A suspicion - not an acceptance- of every other theology
- b) a changed world-view will result, namely according to the now new adage *vox victimarum vox dei*. The world has to be changed to be in conformity with this 'new' world-view.
- c) A commitment to transform human history or the experiences discerned in human history is a necessity. Herein theology has to play a major part *via* conscientisation.
- d) It is assumed that theology can only be done in tandem with the *vox victimarum*. This is an echo of Segundo's second line of liberation theology - let the poor 'teach' the teachers.

- e) Praxis - doing theology - is the way change is to be brought about. Only in 'doing' (in distinction from reflecting) is a knowledge of theology attainable.
- f) The Bible needs to be reinterpreted. The starting point of the 'hermeneutic circle' is to be the experience of the poor as evidenced by their praxis.

The result is that in the 'best of contextual theologies it is therefore no longer possible to juxtapose theory and praxis, orthodoxy and orthopraxis as orthopraxis and orthodoxy need one another, and each is adversely affected when sight is lost of the other' (Bosch 1991:425).

Frostin (1985:137) understands that the epistemological break can be characterised as having four points:

- a) The contextuality of theology: This implies the rejection of all claims to a universal validity raised by any theology
- b) The dialectic between theory and praxis: ' ... there is another way of knowing the truth - a dialectic one. In this case, the world is not a static object that the human mind confronts and attempts to understand; rather, the world is an unfinished project being built. For Torres again (In Bosch 1991:424 quoting Appiah-Kubi & Torres 1979:5) 'knowledge is not the conformity of the mind to the given, but an immersion in this process of transformation and construction of a new world.' For Bonino (1975:88) ' ... there is no knowledge except in action itself in the process of transforming the world through participation in history.'
- c) Solidarity with the poor. Hence the epistemology proposed seeks to develop a theology that speaks with the voice of

the poor and marginalised in history. A theology for the poor.

d) In the methodology adopted action/reflection, involvement/contemplation constitute a single process.

Accordingly the epistemological break results therein that the experience and praxis of the poor and marginalised of society becomes the 'material centre' of the Bible. However in this approach one finds that the authority of the Bible is not highly rated as neither the 'suspicion' nor the 'material centre' is tested against its precepts. No case is made for the acceptance of this epistemology - it is given on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

There is an assumption latent in the epistemology of black theology. In so far as it does not aspire to understand the world but rather to change or revolutionise it from secular base, it assumes that Marx's criticism that all religion is by nature ideological and an inversion of reality does not apply to black theology. However Marx's critique applies to all theology, including black theology. What has transpired is that the sacred perspective has been replaced by a secular perspective, a religious issue transformed into a secular issue. If this is so then the question becomes what is the place of theology in black theology? It then becomes a theology of the non-theological.

Directive insight: The following insight becomes directive. Liberation theology considered as a theology of liberation is a 'genitive' theology as is theology of the feminine and as is theology of the black person. But is this genitive used as a subjective or as an objective genitive? That is, is it for

example, a theology of liberation (subjective) or a theology for liberation (objective). The one use is descriptive of a theology while the other use is a reductive use namely a use for liberation (Kautsch 1985:416). The situation is that while the intent of a genitive/epitheton is assumed to be, and professes to be, of the first type, in liberation and black theology it really becomes of the second type and hence the epistemological break is in a sense engineered.

The question has to be asked: Has there indeed been an epistemological break? And if so to what extent? It is not at all clear that such a break had taken place. Gutierréz (1988:xliv) quotes with approval what Pope John Paul II said:

'Liberation theology is not only timely but useful and necessary. It should be seen as a new stage closely connected with earlier ones, in the theological reflection that began with the apostolic tradition and has continued in the great fathers and doctors, the ordinary and extraordinary exercise of the church's teaching office, and, more recently, the rich patrimony of the church's social teaching as set forth in documents from *Renum Novarum* to *Laborem Exercens*.'

Gutierréz (1988:xliv) goes on to say that 'Liberation theology is in fact "a new stage" and, as such strives to be in continuity with the teachings of the (Roman Catholic) Church.' Bosch (1991:447) agrees that liberation theology is not a new theology but that it is a new stage in theologising and as such it is both continuous and discontinuous with the theologising of earlier times. Louvain (1971:213) in its Faith and Order Paper No 59 mentions that '... the committee

welcomes the indirect reference to the activity of the Holy Spirit without which the Christ-event cannot be properly interpreted. The Holy Spirit was active in the development of the post New Testament process of interpretation and the present day proclamation. Nevertheless the activity of the Holy Spirit both then and now , or stated differently, the authority of Scripture and the authority of the word preached and heard today, need to be further clarified as to their relationship to one another'

The fact is that the Bible is a unique book and cannot be forced to fit into even a generally prevailing thought nor into the doctrine of any particular church denomination. ' It is a critical court of appeal to which the church must constantly refer and from whose judgement not even the developments taking place in our world is exempt.' (Mofokeng 1987:22)

The consensus seems to be, as regards an epistemological break, that there could be some discontinuity with tradition. But surely then the onus would then be on those differing to show that a tradition that is questioned is not in accord nor in continuity with the teachings of the Spirit over the ages. The legitimate preference is to be applied. A simple *ipse dixit* simply stating a suspicion surely would not suffice as this would be not only to act as judge in an own cause but also further to imply that the Spirit did not speak to those who formed and formulated the tradition. The Bible should be used as a court of appeal. This has not been done by liberation theologians. Thus where such an epistemological

break is posited by black theology's theologians it should be looked at with a serious 'hermeneutic of suspicion'.

There appears to be an ambivalence in the application of the 'epistemological break' - there is continuity and discontinuity in its application. This is further underlined by Ratzinger (1985: 61ff) who states perceptively that the epistemological structure of liberation theology depends on the particular type of liberation theology, for example, whether political or revolutionary liberation theology, etc. Is it a theology of political liberation or a theology for political liberation?

Ratzinger (1984:11-14) mentions the following in analysing the methodology leading up to the 'epistemological break' (translated by me from Dutch):

a) On account of the gulf, perceived to exist by Black theology's theologians, between the 'Jesus of the faith of the church' and 'the historical Jesus' the historical reliability of the gospel as preached by the church is brought into doubt. A 'break' thus occurs. Thereby the church loses its teaching authority and its theology becomes scientifically suspect. It is argued that the true understanding of historical texts do not only require an historical interpretation but that each and every historical interpretation of a text embodies a prior choice (at least of what to interpret) which had been made. The intention is to actualise the historical Jesus in the present is the intention as the gulf perceived between Jesus of the classic tradition and the actualised (historical) Jesus remains unbridged - a 'break' with the past is necessary. Further, this 'new' hermeneutic now wants to actualise the historic

texts so that the text is interpreted in an existential sense.

b) This engineered epistemological 'break' has been assisted by the new philosophical climate of the 1960's which considered only Marxist historical and social analysis as scientifically valuable. Thus, henceforth, it is argued, a new world-view is to be actualised because the world is to be interpreted in the light of an ongoing class conflict resulting therein that the only choice left is between Marxism and capitalism. It is due to this 'break', and the acceptance of Marxist social analysis that the only choice is between capitalism and Marxism. For black theology the 'poor' takes the place of Marx's 'proletariat' and Marxism becomes to be accepted as a legitimate way of interpreting the Bible. The maxim of this new ideology thus becomes that the class conflict is an undeniable fact and that neutrality on this aspect becomes impossible. This apparent scientific and hermeneutic point of departure leads to the acceptance of the nation, the congregation, the experience and history as the determinative criteria, thereby replacing the teachings of the universal church as criteria. Along this way it becomes possible, it is argued, to let the biblical horizon merge with the Marxist historical point of view.

In this way the 'break' leads to a reductive Marxist interpretation of the Bible.

On comparing the above with what Tutu (*Versöhnung ist unteilbar*. Wuppertal 1977 pp 18f translated by Frostin 1988:22) said, namely that ' Black theology is a refutation of the silent claims by the white man (as a class) to *ipso facto* give his values and measures universal validity..', one

notes that this is precisely what Marxism does. Marxism's own 'silent claims' of universal validity in this regard is not refuted by black theology but rather acclaimed. It seems that this is simply a case of the pot calling the kettle black. Tutu goes on to say that certain matters are 'hardly comprehensible for the alienated objectivity of the non-committed (as a class).' In a strange turn of phrase he juxtaposes his own 'intuitive comprehension' with and 'alienated objectivity' - however vague that might be.

As regards the claim to universal validity levelled at 'whites' one notices black theology claiming to be of a universal validity in a sense, namely, by implying that all whites who claim universal validity for their epistemological standards and their theologies are racist (cf Echols 1984:31). If anything the claims made by black theologians against a so-called white 'hegemony postulate' can in truth be levelled against black theology where it claims the same for itself. The attempt to blur its own attempt at creating a hegemony by attacking a perceived 'white hegemony' is unconvincing and speaks of a lack of depth in the critical evaluation of its own stance. If the above is true, then applying the same argument advanced by Tutu to black theology, black theology is racist and so is Marxism!

Frostin (1985:133) mentions that in his estimation one could not avoid analysing the epistemological revolution, *epistemologica ruptum*, if one were to understand the Third World theologies. Then, however, he goes on to say that this does not, however, imply a 'total rejection of Western intellectual tradition. Continuity and discontinuity appear perhaps most evident in distinguishing between a

macro-level and micro-level in the choice of scientific methods. On the macro level, i.e. the understanding of science and the choice of epistemology, there are fundamental differences. On the other hand, a study of the exegetical, historical and systematic-theological arguments from the micro-level reveals a rather strong continuity (even despite the greater emphasis in Third World theologies on sources and methods from the social sciences).'

Obviously a 'new theology' in contradistinction to ' a new way of doing theology' of necessity has to have an epistemological break' to legitimise its existence. But then this in turn must be legitimated by biblically based theological argument and not simply advanced as an *ex cathedra ipse dixit*, as black theology attempts to do.

The fact is that nowhere is it stated up to what point there is a continuity with Western theology and from which point a discontinuity ensues.

2.8.2 Comment

One notices a dichotomy. It is not possible to ascertain the unequivocal position taken up by black theology's theologians on the macro-level especially when Tutu (*Versöhnung ist unteilbar. Wuppertal 1977 pp 18f translated by Frostin 1988:22*) says ' Our scientific strivings have to make room for commitment for the intuitive comprehension of matters which are hardly comprehensible for the alienated objectivity of the non-committed' . The same applies to the micro-level when an epistemological break is predicated and when different

points of departure in theologising are insisted upon by Liberation Theologians. Is it a movement micro-level (intuitive) to macro-level (objective), bottom to top? Or macro to micro? Or is the intuitive kept independent of the objective?

It seems that the 'epistemological break' is a break 'for all seasons', to satisfy all possible arguments and to cater for all tastes. As Ratzinger (1985: 61ff) puts it, it can be continuous or discontinuous depending on the particular view and the particular type of liberation theology the person asserting an espousal of an epistemological break.

However vague and ambivalent the concept of an epistemological break is, it is an absolute necessity in the attempt to legitimise black theology as a 'new' theology *vis-a-vis* orthodox theology, the theology of the Christian religion 'everywhere and universally accepted'. However in this it has not succeeded. It seems as if the epistemological break postulated is just that, namely, a postulation. In practise such a break is very hard if not impossible to discern. Neuhaus (1989:223-224) states that the rhetoric of an epistemological break must be discounted:

'Although both Cone and Gutierrez frequently, and carelessly, represent their views as something "entirely new" and liberation theology as a "complete break with the past," such rhetoric must be discounted in view of their evident consciousness of themselves as members of a continuing community of theological reflection'.

In the result the epistemological break is wittingly ambivalent. The epistemological break, as apparently is

intended and used, now becomes an excuse, a vehicle, a basis for, conscientising the 'people'. It becomes a theology FOR liberation.

2.9 Vocabulary redefined

Theoretically an epistemological break requires either that new words be coined to express new concepts or that established words be given a new meaning, or both. This is just what has happened - a certain co-optation of orthodox vocabulary by black theology has taken place. Further, as is to be expected, certain faith concepts are downplayed and others accentuated.

Consequently black theology, has evolved a certain own vocabulary. This new vocabulary makes the understanding of liberation and black theology more problematical as the unsuspecting uninformed reader might think that he/she understands the meaning of the word or concept used while indeed it has a more specific and different black theology oriented meaning. To make confusion in this regard more confounded is that a word or concept might be used in the sense of the black theology vocabulary while at other times, without specifically specifying it , the word or concept might indicate the concept as used in the orthodox traditional Christian understanding.

2.9.1 Virgin Birth

As black theology realised that it could not do theology as usual, it decided that it would not deal with theological

concepts that are troublesome for black theology. These are labelled as being irrelevant to black theology, for instance, matters such as the virgin birth of Christ. These are all '... irrelevant to the Black experience. Rather black theology tries to show that God is not a sectarian God ...' (Maimela 1984:46). However, contrary to what Maimela states, black theology then immediately proceeds to make God a sectarian God in the sense that he is presumed to be class conscious and that he accords the poor privileged consideration. A conscientised approach is used by black liberation theologians is, *inter alia*, to cast 'suspicion' on the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Hence Luke is labelled as 'not only a mere distorter of facts of tradition, he is a shrewd ideologist' who writes for 'organic Christians'. (Mosala 1990:168). Therefore, Mosala argues, Luke's facts are incomplete and ought to be viewed with suspicion (1990:164). Indeed the question on whose side Luke is, is of pivotal importance for black theology (Mosala 1990 :165). Clearly, says Mosala, the Lucan discourse of the birth of Jesus Christ ' is an attempt to depict Jesus as an acceptable figure to the ruling class ... in which the priestly class has given its legitimation to the birth of Jesus ...' (Mosala 1990:166). For the oppressed and the exploited ' Luke's co-optation of Jesus in the interests of the ruling class is an act of political warfare against the liberation struggle ' (Mosala 1990:171) for Mary (who is) ' probably a single mother from the ghetto's of colonised Galilee needed the moral clearing of the ruling class' (Mosala 1990: 167).

Apparently, although the virgin birth is seen to be irrelevant *qua* virgin birth it is of grave concern to black theologians as 'the hope that Mary might have inspired in the hearts of

millions of single mothers under conditions of modern monopoly capitalism was first dashed by Luke in his gospel.' (Mosala 1990:169)

It is clear, as Boshoff (1980:123) mentions, that the virgin birth is 'irrelevant for black theology as it should not weary itself concerning the truth but rather with the necessary practise thereof. Classical theological questions such as spiritual inspiration, the virgin birth, the Trinity, etc., do not bring any relief to the oppressed.' (Translated from Afrikaans).

Nicolson (1990:206) quotes Chikane as stating that for black theology the incarnation (no mention of the virgin birth is made) really means 'identifying with humanity. It means identifying with humanity's weakness, suffering and pain. It means identifying with the struggles of the people.' (cf Chikane 1976:6)

A secular emphasis on the virgin birth becomes espoused.

However, contrary to the posited irrelevance of the virgin birth, the virgin birth is indispensable for understanding the capacity of the God-man Jesus as the one and only One able to fulfil the covenant God made with humankind. By simply considering it to be irrelevant to its experience, black theology is negating one of the cornerstones of the Christian faith. If the virgin birth becomes irrelevant the question why should the whole Apostles' Creed not be irrelevant because of non-experience, for example, of the resurrection? If then the virgin birth is irrelevant to black theology's theological considerations how can one argue that its praxis is Christian?

It could bear a Christian personality but there is no personal Christianity.

Surely not all things not experienced are irrelevant. Pope Leo, stated (circa 449 AD concerning Euthyches):

"He did not realise what he ought to hold concerning the Incarnation of the Word of God, and he had not the will to seek out the light of understanding by diligent study in the wide range of Holy scripture. But he might at least have received with careful hearing that, common and universal confession, in which the whole body of the faithful acknowledge their belief in GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY AND IN JESUS CHRIST HIS ONLY SON OUR LORD WHO WAS BORN OF THE HOLY GHOST AND THE VIRGIN MARY. For by these three statements the devices of almost all heretics are overthrown ... The same only-begotten, eternal son of the eternal Father was born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary ... he could not overcome the author of sin and death, unless he had taken our nature and made it his own, whom sin could not defile nor death retain, since he was conceived of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of his Virgin Mother whose virginity remained entire in his birth and in his conception..'(Ep xxviii to Flavian. 13th June 449. Quoted by Bettenson 1990 : 47-48)

The importance of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth can hardly be overemphasised. In orthodoxy it is a *status confessionis*. It is an essential and pivotal part of the doctrine and teaching of the Catholic Church. Simply because it does not appeal to a group of people 'claiming to be Christian' it cannot be cast aside or omitted as being irrelevant. In this

regard the following must be underlined for the cogency thereof:

'It is a fallacy to suppose that by omitting a subject you teach nothing about it. On the contrary, you teach that it is to be omitted, and that it is therefore a matter of secondary importance. And you teach this not openly and explicitly, which would invite criticism; you simply take it for granted and thereby insinuate it silently, and all but irresistibly.' (Martin 1989:58 quoting Neuhaus 1986:2)

Gayraud Wilmore, as quoted by Neuhaus (1989:223), stated that the black religious experience has its own integrity which need not in any exclusive sense be related to Christianity at all. Further still. Maimela is undoubtedly well aware of the importance of the doctrine of the virgin birth to Christians through the ages. For

- i) The virgin birth places Jesus the Christ in a class of his own. His birthing is different to that of other people just as was the 'birthing' of Adam and Eve different to that of the rest of humankind.
- ii) Focusing on the virgin birth must lead to a consideration of WHO Jesus is. This must lead to faith in a person - the person Jesus Christ. On the other hand by not focusing on the WHO one necessarily must then focus on the LIFE, on the WHAT Jesus did, the Jesus of history. This could explain why for black theology there is accent on the deeds of Jesus Christ as man at the expense of his Divinity.

Pope Leo is undoubtedly correct in his analysis of the importance of the virgin birth.

By considering the virgin birth as being irrelevant does black theology espouse an egalitarian approach? This is perhaps the nub of the matter : The black approach is not one of egalitarianism: ' The more inclusive a concept of liberation is the less distinct it is. It loses its focus, its sting, and thus its motivating power" and ' ... liberation theologies are in general characterised by a philosophical frame of reference with a strong egalitarian tendency: black and white are equal, man and woman are equal, and economic differences are to be levelled out to make room for justice and equality. It is, therefore not a little self-contradictory if liberation theologians in South Africa look for orientation in traditions that have no egalitarian implications: e.g. African tradition religion and morality and the concept of the sabbatical year in the Old Testament' (Deutsch 1981: 193). For 'the Sitz-in-Leben on traditional religion was certainly not an egalitarian society; it was rather characterised by a hierarchical and feudal order largely determined by kinship, age and sex' (Deutsch 1981:194).

Thus if the advancement of egalitarianism was the object in relegating to irrelevancy the importance of the virgin birth it was misplaced.

2.9.2 Atonement

The doctrine of atonement is not part of the vocabulary of black liberation theology. Apparently the perception among theologians of black theology is that 'it is no longer serviceable for theology in our time' (Maimela 1987:87). After setting out three types of atonement theories Maimela makes

an evaluation of them and accepts none of them as being in line with black theological thinking. The three types are briefly discussed below.

2.9.2.1 Ransom theory

Although the ransom theory of atonement is attractive for black theology, says Maimela (1987:93), black theology has qualms about it in that ' it fails to focus attention on the concrete political structures that make for human suffering and fails to say anything about God's empowerment of the oppressed people it fails to acknowledge that the war against evil was just begun by Christ's resurrection and must continue until all evil forces are vanquished and until freedom and self-realisation have become the common property of humankind.'

That there was a 'ransom' given is clear. (Matt 20:28, Mark 10:45, 1 Tim 2:6 Heb. 9:15, etc.)

2.9.2.2 Anselm

As regards the Anselmian 'satisfaction theory' (sic Maimela), this is criticised as arbitrarily overemphasising the death of Jesus Christ on the cross at the expense of the soteriological significance of the whole life of Jesus. Black theology is troubled 'by the picture of God that is portrayed by the satisfaction theory of atonement. This is so because it is a view suggesting that God demands the death of an innocent person (sic) in order to uphold his honour and justice' (Maimela 1987:91). For , says Maimela , 'such a picture of God

2.9.3 Sin

When Gutierréz refers to the Fall and the topic of original sin he states that

'Sin is regarded as a social, historical fact, the absence of brotherhood and love in relationships among men, the breach of friendship with God and with other men, and, therefore, an interior, personal fracture ... Sin demands a radical liberation, which in turn necessarily implies a political liberation. Only by participating in the historical process of liberation will it be possible to show the fundamental alienation present in every partial alienation. (Gutierréz 1973:175-176)

This notion of sin depends upon a vision of the social relationships constituting human history. The 'breach of friendship with God and with other men' is attributed not to an alleged fault in human nature, but to a 'fundamental alienation' produced historically by oppressive social structures. (McCann 1981:189)

' Sin 'is a collective, a community concept which manifests itself in a refusal to love one's neighbour, a refusal to have fellowship with one's neighbours and therefore a refusal to have fellowship with God ... To sin is to deny that which makes for life of the community, here and now. ' ... a state of absence of brotherhood and love in interpersonal relations. Only because sin is real in this concrete and social sense is it possible for sin to become secondarily an interior

personal or subjective fracture of one's life' (Maimela 1987:94-95).

'To sin is to deny that which makes for life of the community, here and now'. This sentence begs the question: What makes for life of the community? Does this community consist of rich people and of poor people, of scoundrels and saints? This sentence is not helpful.

'In the light of ... evidence that sin and its consequences for human lives can be overcome by ordinary human beings whom God empowers (referring to St Francis of Assisi, Wilberforce, Albert Schweitzer and Mother Teresa) it seems reasonable to believe that Christ is the hope even for the African humankind' (Maimela 1987:119). Undoubtedly Christ is the hope of ALL humankind. The African humankind is not a special or exclusive 'variety' of humankind - it is part of the human race.

However the teaching that sin can be overcome by ordinary human beings is Pelagian in concept and expression and is thus heretical. The phrase 'whom God empowers' which could here be used as a kind of escape mechanism does not help; it is by the power of God that the power of sin is negated and not by power transferred from God to the human being.

Ironically if what Maimela says is a correct interpretation of 'sin' then to deny apartheid theology, which makes for the life of the community, as seen by the community being served, is a sin!! To deny that which makes for the life of the community surely depends on what is being denied, for example, is witchcraft not to be denied? And what is meant by 'life'?

Maimela attempts to identify African theology with Christianity in an *ex cathedra* way - this is not convincing.

Liberation theology located sin in the structures rather than in the human heart. Secularist theologians were optimistic about the future and humankind and were, for this, indebted to the Enlightenment world-view. The difference between the liberation theologians and secular technologists was perhaps only that, whereas the technological humanists considered all people to be essentially good, liberation theology tended to believe that only the poor and the oppressed were innately good - the rich and the oppressors, however, were evil. (Bosch 1991:444). This is being judgmental on the rich.

For black theology 'sin' is not primarily personal - it is primarily a collective communal concept. If what the Bible says is reality this is a reversal of reality for in the Bible personal sin is taken as the root of evil in this world. Undoubtedly Maimela is aware of this. The question then becomes : Why then this reversal of the locus of sin and the attempt at making sin primarily communal? It appears that the 'class' concept requires such an inversion otherwise the 'oppressors as a class' could hardly be called sinful and identified as the institutionalised evil force. This purported genesis of sin is a new grafting on which absolutises a non-biblical standard or concept. Gutierréz (1973:175) adds to a dichotomy when he says that sin is regarded as an 'interior personal fracture' and it is regarded as a social and historical fact. (No explanation as to the genesis of its historicity is given.) However in order to overcome this 'interior personal fracture', that is, to overcome the 'absence of brotherhood and love in relationships

with other men' and 'the breach of friendship with God and other men', a political liberation is required. It seems that he considers 'political liberation' as a panacea for all sin.

In discussing the philosophy of Richard Hooker (1554 - 1600) Morris (1935:545) mentions the following illustration:

'From the intolerable burden of the sense of sin the Puritan had found one way of escape. After saying, " God be merciful to me a sinner," he noticed that other men were not acknowledging their sins, and so he went on to say, " God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." The publican had become a Pharisee. The sense of sin had been replaced by a sense of being Elect. (My underlining)

In the sense of the poor being the elect of God, as espoused by black theology , sin has been replaced by a sense of being part of the community of the Elect ? It is well to bear in mind what Bishop Alpheus Zulu said, namely, that the statement that 'God was on the side of the oppressed' cannot simply be turned around to signify that 'the oppressed are on the side of God'.

Medillin (quoted by Gutierrez 1988:65) states concerning sin that ' at a deeper level considering that the problems are rooted in the structures of capitalist society which produce a situation of dependency, it is stated that 'it is necessary to change the very basis of the system,' for 'a true solution to these problems can come about only within the context of a far-reaching transformation of existent structures.' Thus 'we are led to direct our efforts and actions toward the building of a socialist type of society that would allow us to eliminate all forms of man's exploitation of fellow man'.

Black theology requires that the base structure of society is to be of an undefined socialist-materialist one on which a superstructure of a black liberation theology, a theology which expounds a particular form of sin, is to be erected.

The class concept and the political commitment to socialism is ever present - rather forced at times - in the thought-world of black theology. Sin is defined as hunger, misery, ignorance and oppression. But surely these are matters of a socio-economic-political and not primarily of a theological nature. Gutierrez continues his exposition stating that 'sin' is also injustice and hatred the origin of which is found in human selfishness. Sin is not seen to be the transgression of the commandments of God or of inherent individual vice. Sin is not seen in the sense that all have sinned. A direct contradiction of the above is found in Romans 3:22 - 24 one reads : 'This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus'. As far as human structures are concerned there is therefore no difference who builds them whether black or white for all will be erected by sinful people.

At Medellin in 1968 the traditional notion of sin, namely as being a form of individual transgression of the divine law, which had served over the ages, was expanded and 'institutionalised violence' is now referred to as a 'situation of sin.' There was also a call for a 'conscious-raising evangelisation' so that people would be enabled 'to become agents of their own advancement'. (Berryman 1987:23)

Without clarification and without reference to Scripture as a warrant, one finds that a new concept of sin is advanced which is linked to conscientisation. The liberation theology bias is clearly apparent. But conscientisation as set out by Freire advances 'institutionalised violence'! If this is the case then is black theology, having conscientisation with its institutional violence concept as an indispensable prerequisite, is in a 'situation of sin' all the while insisting on remaining therein!!

Surely the 'sin' and 'slavery' referred to by Gutierrez applies to unbelievers, for Christians are no longer slaves to sin :

'Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey - whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. (Romans 6:16-18)

Bosch (1989:416) succinctly and correctly remarks that since only persons - individuals - can respond to the gospel, it is confusing the issue to talk of 'prophetic evangelism' as the calling of 'societies and nations to repentance and conversion' (Watson 1983b:7) or to say that the 'call to conversion, as a call to repentance and obedience, should also be addressed to nations, groups and families'. Principalities and powers, governments and nations cannot come to faith - only individuals can.

No one is righteous, yes no one. (Romans 3:10). Sin is clearly personal.

All in all it seems that black theology as a result of its reductionist conscientised epistemological break, declines to see 'sin' as a personal fracture. It is understood ' as a political and economic ... reality, the struggle for political and economic liberation.' (Kritzinger 1988:181)

Ogden (1979:84-87) mentions that God's love may be deemed to have two essential aspects, namely, firstly, the ultimate acceptance of us ALL and ,secondly, that his actions are directed towards ALL others as predicated by such unlimited acceptance. From this one could say that essential to the historic Christian witness is the redemption from sin promised by God. The following passage is quoted and is clarified by the addition of certain words which are enclosed in brackets

'What is properly meant by "sin," in the sense of the word agreeable to the witness of Scripture and the apostles, is not moral transgression, however true it is that such transgression is the inevitable consequence of sin. Rather, sin is just this rejection of ourselves as the creatures (created by a living God) we know ourselves to be, the root of which always lies in our having rejected the gift (of redemption) and the demand (to accept this is faith) of the Creator that never cease to encounter us in our awareness of our (sinful) selves. In this way, sin at its root is our rejection of God's acceptance of our lives (and in faith of his redemption) and (similarly) of all lives, even as (by) faith, as we have seen, is our acceptance of God's acceptance.' (Ogden 1979:86)

Billy Graham (1971:41-42) mentions five words as descriptive of sin. One aspect thereof is that unbelief in the Word of God is an insult to the truthfulness of God.

On the whole 'sin' is used by black theology to justify as its primary purpose a class structure and a political ideology. The Bible is not at all referred to directly as an authority for an exposition of its conception of 'sin'. To add to the Word of God for ideological and political purposes when this is unsubstantiated by the Word, is to cause uncertainty in the minds of fellow Christians.

Where the base of societal structure is materialist-secularist while theology and sin are relegated to the superstructure built on this base, sin of necessity has to be defined congruent to its use in the base structure. The sin concept becomes deformed to be more materialist-secular. It leads to heresy.

2.9.4 Conversion

For liberation theology 'To be converted is to commit oneself to the process of the liberation of the poor and oppressed, to commit oneself lucidly, realistically and concretely '... Our conversion process is affected by the socio-economic, political, cultural and human environment in which it occurs. Without a change in these structures, there is no authentic conversion' (Gutiérrez 1988:118). Further, Christians have to seek more 'conversion to the neighbour, to social justice, to history' (Gutiérrez 1998:118). This can but mean that a change of structures (based on a secular basis) is a prerequisite for

conversion as is a conversion to the neighbour, a conversions to people! No biblical authority is mentioned for this basic liberation theology approach.

Freire states that a few rich people feel considerable sympathy for the poor and are appalled at their own status as oppressors, 'but it does not necessarily lead to solidarity with the oppressed' (1970:34). For this to happen, there would have to be a genuine conversion experience: 'Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth. Those who undergo it must take on a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were. Only through comradeship with the oppressed can the converts understand their characteristic ways of living and behaving, which in diverse moments reflect the structure of domination.'
(Freire 1970:47)

Another word for this conversion is 'insertion', which 'means accepting the ordinary conditions of life endured by the populace being studied' (Goulet 1974:58). Anything short of this conversion or insertion or new form, of existence is but reformism, which 'by its very shallowness ... perpetuates the existing system' (Gutiérrez, op. cit., p. 48). Either it is that, or it is reconciliation, which is unacceptable at this stage for 'To preach reconciliation now, at a time when established structures support paternalism, privilege, and exploitation is not only to commit vicious hypocrisy; it is also to place the church in a non-historical posture which can only benefit the *status quo*' (Goulet 1974:125). It seems that for the secular-based approach of black theology and liberation theology the sin-problem lies within the established secular structures.

The poor are God's chosen people. 'The human areas that are poorest in every way' says the Italian Enzo Gatti, 'are the most qualified for receiving the saving Word. They are the ones that have the best right to that Word; they are the privileged recipients of the gospel; they are the ones whom Christ and Paul would unhesitatingly seek out in proclaiming salvation' (Gatti 1973:43).

Goba (1988:78f) says that 'to 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 systems'. (cf Kritzinger 1988:181)

Hence, liberation of the poor is identified with conversion. Or put differently, conversion is identified with the liberation of the poor. The theology of liberation becomes a theology for the liberation of a class.

Billy Graham (1971:95 et seq) correctly states that conversion involves the total conversion of mind, affection and will towards Jesus Christ as Saviour. It involves the realisation that one, personally, is a sinner and that one has personally accepted Jesus Christ, who died on the cross, as Saviour; then a new divine nature is implanted by the power of the Lord the Holy Spirit. Then 'There will be a reverential fear of God, a constant gratitude to God, a dependency on God and a new loyalty to him.'

These aspects are certainly not mentioned by liberation theologians in their setting out of the meaning of 'conversion'. In no way can conversion be equated with

liberation of the poor IF the Bible is taken as the norming norm.

Again one finds that a conversion that is located , by black theology, in the superstructure is equated and made congruent in concept to a secular concept located in the supposed base structure on which society is built.

2.9.5 Salvation

Black theology teaches that salvation 'of the individual is incomplete without simultaneous creation of new relationships, relationships which will not simply drop from the skies some day but will have to be created through the sweat and labours of believers' (Maimela 1987:119). Also, for (ontological) black people: '... there will be no salvation and new world before the socio-political conditions are transformed ...' (Maimela 1987:107).

Miranda states: 'In fact, the absolute impossibility of salvation for the rich is something which no primitive Christian community ... would have dared to assert if it were not basing its assertion on the authority of Christ himself' (1974:18). Miranda states unequivocally that it is impossible for a rich man to be saved.

Berryman (1987:55) mentions that for salvation ' the criterion is not whether one considers oneself to be a Christian or not - one might even be an atheist - but whether one has served the needs of others'. The implication is that salvation is or can be obtained by ones deeds. This is Pelagian. Black theology sees the 'work' of Christ on the

cross as in need of additional indispensable human assistance: Christ plus our own sweat plus our serving the needs of others. This is adding a human contribution for human salvation to the atonement of Christ; it is unscriptural and an on-grafting on of a skewed teaching. It demeans the atonement of Christ and adds a category of 'human enterprise' as a precondition to the spiritual salvation of humanity. It disregards the words spoken on the cross that 'it is finished'.

Gutiérrez declares that the Theology of Liberation is a theology of salvation in the concrete, historical and political conditions of our day: 'Salvation is not something

otherworldly in regard to which the present life is merely a test. Salvation - the communion of human beings with God and among themselves - is something which embraces all human reality, transforms it, and leads it to its fullness in Christ. Thus the centre of God's salvific design is Jesus Christ, who by his death and resurrection transforms the universe and makes it possible for the person to reach fulfilment as a human being. This fulfilment embraces every aspect of humanity: body and spirit, individual and society, person and cosmos, time and eternity. Christ, the image of the Father and the perfect God-Man, takes on all the dimensions of human existence.' (1988:85)

Gutiérrez sees salvation as communion with God and man. It is not clear what is meant by 'communion': Is it the eucharist? Is the communion with God of the same quality as the communion with man? Is prayer to God (communion) equal to salvation? Does salvation embrace and transform ALL human reality? Does

salvation lead ALL human reality to fullness in Christ? What is meant by fullness in Christ? Reading these words penned by Gutierrez one feels spiritually impressed initially but as soon as one starts analysing what he is saying one finds oneself in the realm of wonder - wondering what he is trying to say and where he relates his statements to Scripture. He quotes no Scripture for his statements in the above regard. They are not in accord with Scripture: Salvation is a gift of God to those only who accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Ephesians 2:8-9 : 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no-one can boast'.

Williamson (1975:11) gives the following insightful overview:

'It follows from the position taken by the liberationists that salvation is by and through politics. Alves, for instance, speaks of "the ongoing politics of God" and "the politics of the Messiah." Segundo adds his word: "In the domain of time, then, salvation is a 'political' maturity. It is the maturity of 'political being' that every human being is". Alves explains that "the creative event cuts its way through the social inertia by creating a counter-culture. In the Old Testament, the community of Israel was a counter-culture ... The early Christian community was a counter-culture. Or more precisely, an underground counter-culture" (Alves 1972:68). The counter-culture creates a new man: "This is why the new consciousness believes that the new man and the new tomorrow are to be created in and through an activity which is political in character' (Alves 1969:16).'

'....to participate in the process of liberation is already in a certain sense a salvific work' (Gutiérrez 1988:46).

'While redemption from sin in one thing, salvation from sin is something else, what is properly meant by "salvation" is the process that includes not only the redeeming action of God himself but also the faithful response to this action on the part of the individual sinner. As Augustine put it, "he that made us without ourselves, will not save us without, ourselves." we are saved by grace - by God's' redeeming acceptance of our lives into his, notwithstanding the fact of our sin ; but we are saved through faith - through our own trusting acceptance of God's acceptance, whereby his redemption of our lives becomes our salvation.' (Ogden 1979:87)

Salvation is replaced by the notion of liberation. The notion of emancipation is a basic approach of liberation theology. Once more a reductionist approach to salvation is found. This is only to be expected when the superstructure of society, as is assumed by black theology, is to be based on a reductive secular base of society.

Bosch (1991:397) agrees that it is a heretical conviction that we can bring about salvation by our own good works - it is clearly Pelagian. Bosch quoting Beinert further agrees that

'The indispensable Christological element of soteriology is not (always) made sufficiently clear ... The inescapable result of much of the modern paradigm is that the world's needs and solutions are being portrayed in terms which, to an extent, are independent of Jesus Christ ... It is Jesus Christ who "accomplishes all

salvation. No one can complete his work if he does not achieve it himself'. (Bosch 1991:398)

Indeed 'Salvation is a vertical relationship ... which issues in horizontal relationships ... The vertical must not be displaced by the horizontal. Desirable as social amelioration is, working for it must not be a substitute of the biblical requirements of/for "salvation"' (McGravan 1973:31). Salvation does not come but along the route of repentance and personal faith commitment. (cf Bosch 1991:400)

'Salvation is not to be seen as a rescue from the powers of evil, nor as a rescue from our economic plight or poverty "Though it is true that these things may prevent us from being saved." Salvation is essentially being "in Christ" : it is the reproduction of the character of Jesus in his disciples.' (Nicolson 1990:233)

Hickling (1975:42) states 'This, in the fundamental language of human personality development, is what salvation means. It is both a more exact and a more demanding conception than the one implied in the irreducibly mythological and dualistic conceptuality of deliverance from the present dominion, and ultimate overthrow, of the powers of evil.'

Vree (1989:210 - 213) succinctly, insightfully and in my opinion correctly states:

'Were one to say that the kingdom is political liberation and that liberation is the product of human action, one would all too easily fall into the classical Pelagian heresy - that is, one would be saying that man is saved

by good works, not grace. To say that is to deny the salvational significance of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross and his second coming. It is to deny that God in Christ is the source of salvation. Without Christ, there is no authentic Christianity. Hence, it is impossible for a Christian to equate liberation with salvation.' (Vree 1989:210-211)

'The problem for any theology of liberation is to talk of salvation as a gift without inducing passivity and indifference to politics - which is frequently what happens. So Gutierrez's problem is twofold: How can man's political liberation be seen to be a part of a salvational process which finds fulfillment (sic) in God's kingdom without opening the door to Pelagianism? And how can one talk like a Christian out of one side of one's mouth, and like a Pelagian out of the other, without choking on the law of non-contradiction? ... Let us hear what Gutierrez (1973:36-37) has to say: He sees man "assuming conscious responsibility for his own destiny." The result will be "the creation of a new man and a qualitatively different society". And yet Gutierrez also says that, "The Bible presents liberation - salvation - in Christ as a total gift ..." ... But how can the integral salvational process be a product of both men's "conscious responsibility" as well as a "total gift" from Christ? Is liberation-*cum*-salvation something humans must go out and earn for themselves or not? If so, then it cannot be a "total gift". If not, then it is something humans are not fully responsible for. Gutierrez does not seem to know whether he wants to be a Christian, a Pelagian, or both. If it is possible to grant that

Gutiérrez avoids complete capitulation to Pelagianism, it is not possible to grant that he escapes logical contradiction.' (Vree 1989:211)

'But perhaps what Gutiérrez wants to say is that man must initiate his liberation while God will have to finish it by turning liberation into salvation. This is the most generous interpretation I can come up with. Says Gutiérrez: "without liberating historical events, there would be no growth of the kingdom. But the process of liberation will not have conquered the very roots of oppression and the exploitation of man by man without the coming kingdom, which is above all a gift". Gutiérrez is trying to protect man's autonomy and free creativity as well as God's sovereignty. But Gutiérrez actually succeeds both in truncating man's autonomy (because man cannot finish what man has started) and compromising God's omnipotence (because God cannot start what God alone can finish). For Gutiérrez salvation is obviously contingent on man's prior action. Gutiérrez wants to affirm that the coming kingdom is above all a gift, but one must conclude from what he has said that the coming kingdom (which he described as the "complete encounter with the Lord" which will "mark an end to history") is first and foremost a product of human action. Enter Pelagius! ' (Vree 1989:212)

Vree has been quoted at length. His analysis is acceptable. The approach to salvation by liberation theology is heretical. This Pelagian postulated heresy stems from the use of a reductively constructed base of society

2.9.6 Violence

As in Marxism the concept of violence plays an important role in the theologies of liberation. While the West usually distinguishes between law enforcement and violence - one is legal, the other illegal - this distinction does not hold for the liberationists. Some of them distinguish between violence by public authority and counter-violence by private persons, but most of them do not even bother. In any case, the liberationists hold that violence is necessary (Williamson 1975:10).

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has been ambivalent in its approach to violence. Smith (1977:18) states:

The WCC insists on regarding "liberation" movements as "instruments of peace, human dignity, equality and justice". It is not surprising, therefore, that it has never rebuked them for their atrocities. Nor is it surprising that it makes grants to terrorists without requiring, as a condition of acceptance, that all terrorist practices should cease. As if to complicate the issue, the WCC has made a quite explicit condemnation of terrorism. The report in which it appears was the result of two years' study so it may be assumed to express the WCC'S considered judgement:

There are some forms of violence in which Christians may not participate and which the churches must condemn. There are violent causes - the conquest of one people by another or the deliberate oppression of one class or race by another - which offend divine justice. There are violent means of struggle - torture in all forms, the holding of innocent

hostages and the deliberate or indiscriminate killing of innocent non-combatants for example - which destroy the soul of the perpetrator as surely as the life and health of the victim. (WCC : 1973)

The WCC condemns terrorism and asserts that a Christian may have no part in it. At the same time, it gives its approval to the political goals of African terrorists, blandly ignores the brutality of their methods and glosses over the contradiction by calling them "liberators".' (Smith 1977:18)

The ambivalence of the WCC, well-hidden under rhetoric, is nevertheless further visible from the following:

'... the fact remained that the WCC had committed itself to the liberation movements and their struggle. It appeared to be a sign that the leaders of the WCC had given up hope on the churches' own struggle for change through working for justice and reconciliation..... It also meant that the WCC had identified itself with those engaged in warfare ...' (de Gruchcy 1990:130).

Further ' The WCC had provided Christian legitimation (sic) for organisations committed to the violent overthrow of South Africa' (de Gruchy 1990:131). This 'double tongued' approach, if not hypocritical approach, of the church leaders leaves one aghast. But it remains necessary to speak the truth in love. As de Gruchcy comments (1990:141) it was 'pointed out that the churches who now spoke about conscientious objection were the same as those who supported the WCC grants to "terrorists".'

It seems that reconciliation between peoples was considered to be impossible and despaired of by the World Council of

Churches - this is the same accusation of 'sinfulness' that was hurled at the Dutch Reformed Church in its practice! The WCC then resorted to the weapons of the secular powers and took up the baton from the 'liberation forces' to join them in the relay race in a terrorist war against the peoples of South Africa while at the same time pretending or postulating a conscientious objection against violence.

The legitimisation of violence in the rhetoric of black theology is advanced by using the concept of 'institutional violence'. The liberationists hold that constitutional regimes based on universal suffrage are just as oppressive as dictatorships! Their oppression is only disguised somewhat. This approach is made more apparent when Freire (1986:41) says 'Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognise others as persons - not by those who are oppressed, exploited, and unrecognised.'

It seems that for black theology a certain sanctified aura clings to subversive violence; the laws of God are suspended for a while during a time of transition as man, in this time frame, is absolved from brutality. Alves (1972:155) adds: 'Man is absolved from inhumanity and brutality in the present as the time of transition, the time which does not count'.

Clearly, the effect of these attitudes by liberation theologians is to escalate violence. One could go so far as to say that liberation theology is a protagonist of violence; a violence that breeds counter-violence.

Boesak (1977 :133-134) however quotes J.R. Washington as saying 'Violence is the only way to power for good. Every and

any means is justified: if the end does not justify the means nothing does.' In opposition to such an attitude Roberts replies: 'It (using every and any means) may be applauded by black militants who have an ear for inflammatory rhetoric but will hardly do for a sound basis for Christian ethics in the area of race.' Jones (1974:71) as quoted by Boesak (1977:137) pleads for non-violence as the only Christian response when feeling threatened by violence perpetrated by white persons. Boshoff (1980:22) mentions with regard to Martin Luther King (Jnr), a protagonist of non-violence, that his ' philosophy can be summed up in six points. In particular that one should direct one's attack against the forces of evil rather than against the perpetrators thereof.

In the 'Rapport' newspaper Kane-Berman, chief executive officer of the Institute for Race Relations mentions (translated from Afrikaans) that at a conference held at Lusaka by the WCC during May 1987, attended by 30 representatives of the SACC (South African Council of Churches) a statement was issued to the effect that 'while remaining committed to peaceful change we recognise that the nature of the South African regime which wages war against its own inhabitants and its neighbours compels the (liberation) movements to the use of force along with others means to end oppression.' (Hofmeyr, Millard & Froneman 1991:389). The bias against 'white', not theological insights, seems to be the cohesive factor (Smith 1977:32).

Two months later the statement made at Lusaka was accepted by a large majority of members of the SACC. A proposal that nobody could be 'forced' to choose violence was overwhelmingly defeated. Further the WCC, committed itself to 'movements of

liberation operating to bring an end to the illegitimate regime in South Africa and Namibia' (Hoymeyr, Millard & Froneman 1991:391). This statement was also endorsed by the SACC.

Commenting on the above Tingle (1992:127) writes:

'The adoption of the Lusaka Statement was of great significance. In the first place the SACC had, in effect, made a policy statement supporting the liberation movements' use of violence for the first time. This meant that it had given up the right to stand above the political conflicts, judging the action of *all* groups by Christian moral standards. For how could it call a halt to the liberation movements' use of violence if it had said that they had no choice in the matter but were "compelled" to adopt violence? Indeed, whilst the Institute for Contextual Theology, for instance, has been ready to blame the security forces and/or Inkatha for the spate of violence which has rocked South Africa since 1989/90, both it and the South African Council of Churches have done little if anything to condemn the violence perpetrated by the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress and associated groups.'

Small wonder that Burnett, the Archbishop of Cape Town, confessed in December 1990 that 'We (the churches) manipulated scripture for our own ideological purposes and it maybe that we carry a measure of responsibility for the terrible destruction of authority and the random murder among young persons, including police officers. We also have to confess this.' (Kane-Berman 1997:17)

Smith (1977:32) mentions the following: 'The WCC's 1969

Consultation on Racism was an important step in setting up the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) which dispenses grants to African terrorists and Black Power groups ... Pauline Webb, vice-chairman of the WCC, reporting on the Consultation, said, "The voice of God happened to us ... We became aware of the voice of God's judgement on the evil of white racism allied with political and economic and military power". But the WCC did not, it seems, become equally aware of the evil of Black racism. On the contrary, it was busily engaged in providing itself with the means of encouraging Black Power.'

Clearly this is a negation of the belief that reconciliation between peoples are possible on the basis of the Bible. Archbishop Bill Burnett of Cape Town stated in December 1990 that 'we (the SACC) had for ideological reasons fiddled with Scripture ... ' (Kane-Berman 1997:17).

The fruits of the espousal of violence have become bitter. To espouse violence under the banner of Christ's teaching is surely a travesty of Christianity. Such espousal is traced to the fact that the base structure of society is no longer one based on revelation from God but on a reductive rationalised secular materialist base where violence is acceptable . Of necessity this is to be reflected in the superstructure.

'Walter Wink has explicitly examined the situation in South Africa. Wink correctly argues that Jesus encouraged the use of all sorts of ways of subverting and disempowering an oppressive regime as a constructive non-violent strategy, but never countenanced the use of

violence. In brief, Wink sets out to show that Jesus' method was to embarrass his opponents, or shame them into changing their approach, or use humour, while at the same time retaining a recognition of the humanness and of some latent good in his opponents.' (Nicolson 1990:226)

'Many blacks, including Christians, have the perception that there are no options left but violent revolution or guerrilla attacks. Many churches appear to agree with them, or at least to concede that violence in South Africa cannot be rejected out of hand. If Yoder and Wink are right about Jesus' own stance - and I think it would be very difficult to refute that - is this not yet another instance of New Testament perception which cannot work in our own time?' (Nicolson 1990:227)

Some black theology theologians are committed to non-violence (for instance, Desmond Tutu and Allan Boesak). In this vein, the Melbourne CWME Conference asserts that "Jesus of Nazareth rejected coercive power as a way of changing the world" (Section IV.3; WCC 1980:209) whilst EN 37 (Evangelii Nutandi-Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul 1979) declares, 'Violence is not in accord with the Gospel.' The 'spiral of violence is an all too well-known spectre in many parts of the world. This alone makes non-violent strategies such as those of Ghandi and Martin Luther King worthy of serious consideration.' (Bosch 1991:442). Christians should always remain open to the 'possible impossibility' that the "enemy" may change into a friend and that the oppressor may be persuaded to pursue another course (de Gruchy 1987:242). The encyclical '*Pacem in Terris*' ends with the rejection of violence and revolution. If such strategies are incapable of

establishing God's order the conclusion would seem to be that they are against God's will. (Kee 1990:160)

The espousal of violence is sin; its espousal under the banner of Christ is a heresy as is the rejection of the possibility of reconciliation. A reductive epitheton theology based on a human-devised secular-reductive base for society leads to a negation of a basic Christian concept of loving one's neighbour as oneself.

2.9.7 The Poor

The preferential option for the poor is foundational in black theology.

It was at Puebla in 1979 that the phrase 'preferential option for the poor' was coined (Bosch 1991:435). As regards the poor, Gutierréz (1983:137) says 'those found in this category are mainly the indigenous peoples, peasants, manual labourers, marginalized urban dwellers and in particular, the women of these social groups'. And, continues Gutierréz (1983:138) 'the poor merit preferential attention, whatever may be the moral or personal situation in which they find themselves ... the preference for the poor is based on the fact that God, as Christ shows us, loves them for their concrete, real condition of poverty, "whatever may be" their moral or spiritual disposition The conclusion is unmistakable. The preferential option is for the poor as such, the poor as poor.'

It is to be noted that in the above no mention is made of the ontological skin colour of persons.

Taken at face value these words mean that God is led by his love according to the socio-economic situation in which a person is located. God is made to be socio-economic pigmentation class-conscious. If this is so the question is then why ever try to change the socio-economic position of the poor for this would be doing them a grave disservice. The poor would then not *ipso facto* enjoy the preferential attention of the Lord God! Surely this is skewing the gospel!

But further, according to Gutierréz, whatever the moral and spiritual disposition of the poor God has a preference for them. Thus, as long as a person remains poor such a person inescapably has a preference in the eyes of God, even more than a rich person, such as King David or Job could have. Surely there is no direct text in the Bible supportive of this. It can only be rationalised in a humanistic philosophical way using human 'Enlightened-Romanticised' thoughts and ideas which are different to God's thoughts. And where theology is founded on a secular base.

If the point is that the poor are the first, though not the only ones, on which God's attention focuses and that therefore the church has no choice but to demonstrate solidarity with the poor then there is a danger in this, opines Bosch (1991:436), in that one may then easily fall into the trap of 'the church for others' (objective genitive) instead of 'the church with others' (of others also - subjective genitive).

Gutierréz (1988:170) correctly mentions that certain people argue that if the phrase 'blessed are the poor in spirit' (Luke 6:20) refers to material poverty then this leads inevitably to the canonisation of a social class.

Weber (1989:135) traces the trajectory of 'anawim' spirituality and concludes 'The decisive centre of the New Testament message is not a general solidarity and struggle with the poor but the presence of Christ, the poor one, who was anointed to die for others' and ' While the rich as a social class is thus warned, it would be wrong to conclude that according to Luke the poor as a social class are elected. Salvation comes also to the rich Zaccheus when Jesus meets and accepts him'. This exegesis of Weber is more acceptable than that of Gutierrez and also more theologically acceptable than the 'explanation' of Bosch.

Adamson (1979:29) echoes the viewpoint of Weber : 'By NT times the social problem had become a religious issue, poverty and piety, wealth and wickedness having become almost synonymous. Inevitably the Epistle of James was influenced by the OT (sic) "patriarchal-pietistic ethics of poverty". Most of his readers were apparently drawn from the "poor," whose affinities were with the *anawim*. (The apostle) James, however, does not teach that poverty in itself is a virtue. Nor does he regard wealth in itself as evil: what he does condemn is avarice and exploitation.' Adamson goes on to say that 'Christ and the disciples never held that all the rich were bound to be ungodly men, irreparably doomed to damnation'. Further, 'James does not spiritualise or idolise poverty. Poverty does not guarantee either faith or final salvation.' (Adamson 1979:109)

In view of the above and also in view of Leviticus 19:15 where

the imperative is used in the words '... do not show partiality to the poor or favouritism to the great, but judge your neighbour fairly...' it becomes extremely problematical to see just on what biblical grounds, if any, as a warrant, a preferential option for the poor could be postulated convincingly as a salvation prerequisite. Black theologians have come to identify the 'poor' with the 'proletariat' of Marx.

In terms of black theology there is no possibility of reconciliation between the rich class and the poor class - the only possibility is for the rich to make common cause with the poor and become poor. This impossibility of reconciliation is reminiscent of the charges levelled against apartheid theology as that it sees no possibility of reconciliation between cultures and/or between the ethnic group 'white' and the ethnic group 'black'. Such irreconcilability necessarily stems from a pre-determined epistemological break postulating a preferential option for the poor.

It is from this skewed argument advanced by black theology that a 'theology' is built up in which the poor class become the dominant hermeneutic category. This is again reminiscent of apartheid theology where, for instance, the tower of Babel (the formation of different peoples) and/or colour pigmentation of a class become the dominant hermeneutic principle.

2.10 Prolegomena

The abovementioned introductory aspects to a study of black theology lead logically to a study of the phenomenon of black

liberation theology itself. Black theology is as important and as it is wide ranging. Therefore it must be borne in mind that this study is concerned with black theology as it relates to aspects of the construction of an epitheton theology. An overview of black theology itself becomes necessary. This is the subject of the next Chapter.

BLACK THEOLOGY : AN OVERVIEW

To be black is to be beautiful

3.1 Background

Black theology first emerged in South Africa in the context of the black consciousness movement during the late 1960's and early 1970's (Mosala 1990:1). However it has failed to become the property of the masses (Mofokeng 1987 :27).

While the problem of poverty is the aspect accentuated in Latin American liberation theology in South Africa the accent is more on racism. (Smith 1988:46). However a postulated race paradigm is rather a hazy one. This haziness is not surprising as the dictionary definition thereof is equally indefinite and could mean ' a class or group defined otherwise than by descent.' Therefore it was to be expected that right from the start the concept 'black' would be problematical. At the beginning there was some unanimity that all oppressed non-white people in South Africa were 'black' people whether they were Africans, Coloureds or Asian. Maimela (1990:31) quotes Boesak as saying that ' To be black in South Africa means to be classified as a "non-white": a non-person , less than white and therefore less than human. Blackness spells shame.' Concerning the last remark one can but point out that such a far reaching conclusion is reached from a very narrow base.

There is no unanimity as regards the question whether black culture, black history and African tradition had to be included as being the formative factors for a black theology. Buthelezi, not surprisingly followed by Boesak (who could be classified in the above terminology as a Coloured by birth and not as being fully part and parcel of the black history and African traditions), was of the opinion that black culture had been totally destroyed. Biko on the other hand together with many other theologians held that black culture, though severely damaged, was not totally erased from the memory of the oppressed. Thus: 'At the end one was confronted by two parallel streams in our Black Theological thinking which still persist despite a slight narrowing lately.' (Mofokeng 1987:29). One is reminded of the two streams of thinking in the liberation theology in Latin America.

Black theology is committed to be passionately involved in the experience of the actual struggles, sufferings and joys of the black community. Black theology is to engage itself in the black experience namely that shared and articulated by the black community. (Boesak 1997:12). In this sense it is 'new'. Ratzinger (1985:60) sets out how this 'new' direction in theology came about:

- i) After the Council of Trent a new situation existed:
 - a) For some traditional theology had run its course.
 - b) A naïve faith in the humanities, in sociology, psychology and the Marxist interpretation of history arose.
- ii) The changed theological milieu coincided with a change in the spiritual climate after World War 11. Marxism, although anti-religious, nevertheless became accepted as an answer to the challenge of poverty and was considered to be able to actualise the biblical message.

iii) A solution was attempted and was sought in a kind of Christianity led along by a supposedly scientifically based model of Marxist philosophy.

It is in this world-milieu that black theology germinated and started flexing its muscles. While all expressions of black theology are not similar there is no total division between black theologies in South Africa, that in the United States of America and the liberation theology of Latin America. In principle all these different expressions are treated within the framework of the theology of liberation and are similar to Latin American liberation theology (Boesak 1977:7).

South Africa is part of the African continent and its theology is Afro-centric. Black liberation theology shares a common base with African theology (Boesak 1977:40). Afro-centrism is an attempt to reread Scripture from a premeditatedly Africa-centred perspective (Yorke 1995:153). Tutu is quoted as saying that 'Black theology is an aspect of African theology . That is to say not all African theology is black theology, but the converse: that all black theology ... is African theology.' (Boesak 1977 :40)

More explicitly Boesak (:144) states that 'black theology is a theology of liberation in the situation of blackness. For blacks it is the only legitimate way of theologising - but only within the framework of the theology of liberation. Black theology therefore finds itself in intention and theological methodology and also in its passion for liberation alongside African theology and the expressions of liberation theology in Latin America and Asia.'

For Boesak (1977 :142) black theology is black consciousness. However Nicolson is of the opinion that 'The features shared

in common with liberation theology are those of starting from the situation of the oppressed - in this case a black oppressed - as the basis of one's theology; an insistence that salvation has to do with this world as well as the next, and that political history and salvation history are not two different things. It therefore has an emphasis on orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy, and on the need to analyse the reasons for the situation of oppression and to address the full energy of the church in combating that situation ...' (1990: 200-201).

For Mosala (1990:141) Black Theology is an 'intellectually discursive practise rooted in the progressive dimensions of black history and culture and which should provide the basis for a critical appropriation of biblical texts. Such critical appropriation is to take place wherever there is an ideological necessity to theorise concerning the incompleteness of texts especially where they are silent about the struggles of the poor.'

Thus, for Mosala, the 'struggles of the poor' becomes the paradigm, the 'material centre', the 'canon within the canon' of the Bible. He also contends that black theology in South Africa has at most been a progressivist or protest theology but not a liberation theology. This is so because black theologians have failed to root black theology in a culture of resistance of the oppressed and exploited black people as they, the theologians, themselves are middle class people (Kritzinger 1988:338-349) for it is imperative for black theology to be a theology for a culture of resistance.

Mofokeng (1987:22) opines that black theology is the theological articulation of black consciousness in the

religious realm and has become one of the projects of conscientisation. It continues to play an important role in the ideological formation of black political agents. This is evidenced by the successful leadership of archbishop Desmond Tutu and dr Alan Boesak and other black pastors. West (1983:73) harshly suggests that without some version of Marxist social theory the conception of socio-economic and political liberation of black theologians 'roughly equates with American middle class status, leaving the unequal distribution of wealth relatively untouched ... If this is the social vision of black theologians they should drop the meretricious and flamboyant term "liberation" theology and adopt a more accurate and sober word "inclusion".'

Comparing African theology and black theology Frostin quotes Mbiti as writing '... But Black Theology cannot and will not become African theology. Black Theology and African Theology emerge from quite different historical and contemporary situations . African theology grows out of our joy and experience of Christian faith, whereas black theology from the pains of oppression ... black theology ... is full of sorrow, bitterness and anger and hatred.' (1988:176). 'Black Theology understands itself as a South African variety of Liberation Theology, focusing upon the question of political, economic, cultural and spiritual liberation among blacks. In this connection one aspect of cultural liberation is of particular importance, namely, liberation from the universal claims of Western Theology. These claims are understood as a racist attempt to dominate Christians from other cultures, a form of intellectual autocracy.' (Frostin 1985 : 128)

To use only theology in order to conscientise black people will be difficult, for, over and above the perceived dichotomy there also seems to be a plurality of Black Theologies which could be put forward: Enter black power, black consciousness and black political agents.

Reminiscent of romanticism, the poor is seen as being mystically the people of God and the struggle of the poor becomes for Mosala the canon within the canon. While on the one hand poverty (without defining the economic boundaries thereof) is overemphasised as a 'virtue', black theologians on the other hand are to assist in the ideological formation of black political agents. The black churches that are politically neutral are seen to espouse an intolerable neutrality and are deemed to be supporters of racism. While the political bias of black theology is clear, there is by contrast no clear vision of what black theology is or what its doctrine is.

3.2 Multifaceted theology

In black theology the term 'liberation' is certainly *en vogue*: any type of transition or change can, with a little ingenuity, be called 'liberation'. Liberation theologians virtually overcharge the concept of 'liberation' by making it applicable to any kind of liberation: for example, liberation for man from himself, from exploitation and oppression by others, from defilement by a sinful environment, from sinful structures, from self-pity and from the anger and bitterness which seeks nothing but revenge'. (Deutch 1981:192)

Recognising that a plurality of black theologies of liberation is a reality in contemporary society it is unlikely that there will emerge only one black theology of liberation (Mosala 1987:220). Some of these emerging theologies would

- i) be royalist in their theological perspective (seeking to fight for the restoration of former black ruling class positions) and be nationalist in character,
- ii) have a more middle class cultural, ideological and political perspective,
- iii) consciously adopt a working class perspective.

Of the three types mentioned the latter - the adoption of a working class perspective - is the most genuinely liberative (Mosala 1987:222). However, warns Mosala, in the absence of a proper theological grounding this approach could become a 'subversive non-systematic working class distortion of the Bible in favour of the struggles of its members.' Mosala requires black theology to appropriate black history and black culture as an ideological necessity for interpreting texts which are silent concerning the struggle of the poor. Here Mosala conceptualises the 'struggle' as a hermeneutic tool which could distort the biblical message (1987 :222). This emerging theology could become a theology for the working class in its struggle.

Frostin (1988:177-178) quotes Sundermeier (1978:149) as claiming that black theology is a contribution to social ethics and ipso facto not to dogmatics and suggests that it is a kind of hermeneutic belonging to preaching. Similarly Bosch (1974:21) claims that 'Black theology does not belong among the theological disciplines of systematic theology or exegesis but in that of hermeneutics. Black theology has an apologetic-pastoral and socio-ethical purpose.' Goba (1986:61)

in effect agrees with the above where he states that 'black theology in its method of interpretation is intentionally political, on the other hand, African Theology tends to be more ethno-graphical particularly in its emphasis on African cultural values.'

Gqubule (1974:18) writes: Black Theology is not an attempt to localise Christ in the black situation, but to make him so universal that the Red Indian, the Pigmy, the Maori, the Russian, the Hungarian, the Venda and the American, may each say: "This man Jesus is bone of my bone; he speaks in my own accent of things that are true to me!" Viewed in this way Christianity can never be a white man's religion although it was brought to us by a white missionary. It is natural that any white artist would portray Jesus as a white man.'

This much is apparent: Black theology is multifaceted. One can but agree with the summation given by Bosch (1991:432) namely:

'The theology of liberation is a multifaceted phenomenon manifesting itself as Black, Hispanic, and Amerindian theologies in the United States, as Latin American theology, as feminist theology, South African Black Theology and various analogous theological movements in other parts of Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific.'

While the above is a kaleidoscope of some of the stances taken in regard to black theology, a universally accepted point of view is still lacking. In this study then I shall follow the lead of Frostin where he says that black theology 'in spite of its complexity will, by and large be treated as one entity,

since there is no appropriate categorisation available so far.' (1988:92)

3.3 Characteristics

3.3.1 Objective genitive

Deutsch (1981:192) suggests a list of characteristics which would distinguish 'genuine' liberation theologies from other so-called liberation theologies.:

- i) The motivation: The belief that God is the one who liberates his people, who requires justice and who is partisan to the poor and who approaches human life holistically. (Comment: This concerns the 'poor' aspect. It is a reductive conscientisation.)
- ii) The vision: All persons in a given society or of a given class must be able, with justice, to participate in the social, economic and political life thereof. (Comment: Commitment aspect, that is a commitment to a secular content of its theology.)
- iii) The objectives: The objectives are to empower(?) the oppressed and to ensure the acknowledgement of the human identity of the alienated. (Comment: Political aspect comes to the fore. Conscientisation of a particular identity is advanced.)
- iv) The strategy employed: The status quo has to be changed and herein the oppressed and the alienated should take the initiative. (Comment: An epistemological break and/or a conscientisation aspect comes into play. Revolutionary action is motivated.)

In sum, Deutsch advocates being partisan to the poor; partaking secularly in socio-economic-political activity with a view to empower the poor politically thereby enabling them to change the status quo through a conscientised epistemological break. Liberation theology in this sense, then, does not identify liberation with salvation. But it 'focuses on social-political-economic liberation as an indispensable (my underlining) part of salvation - but it does not get the two confused.' (1981:192). It becomes liberation for the poor from socio-economic-political shackles. A liberation that is reductive and secularly based.

Brown (1987:60 - 74) suggests that the following six aspects characterises liberation theology as being the view from below:

- i) The starting point: Liberation theology does not start with 'the givenness of a set of claims made by an infallible book' Its starting point (of its epistemology) is the struggling poor. God sides with the poor and takes their part. (Comment: Here one finds the 'poor' aspect.)
- ii) The interlocutor, the person who is asking the question that need to be answered is the poor. In the past it was the non-believer who asked the questions. (Comment: Conscientising of the poor takes place.)
- iii) The tools used are the social sciences especially sociology and political science. This is so for ' if one wants to attack poverty it is indispensable to understand the structure of society that legitimates poverty.(Comment: Marxists social analysis provides the philosophical secular base hereto.)

- iv) The reality of an existing and ongoing class conflict must be accepted and resolved. (Comment: Marxism is the tool for conscientisation)
- v) Praxis is the mode of engagement in the existing conflict. 'For the Christian praxis is the means by which we attempt to work with God in building the "new heaven and the new earth". It is not simply any action in tension with theory but transforming action finally by the poor and humiliated' (Comment: The transformation aspect - a secular kingdom is envisaged.)
- vi) The theology is different for theology now becomes a critical reflection on praxis in which the first act is commitment. The reflections on the first act of commitment lead to a theology from below. A commitment for the liberation, in a socio-economic-political secular sense, of the poor (Comment: A methodological aspect). (Note: Parentheses are my additions).

Black theology desires to liberate man from religion and for it Marxist analysis is the unavoidable mediation towards Christian obedience. However, Marxist analysis, far from being only a tool becomes the measure by which Christian obedience is morally measured. It cannot become the theological measure because for this Marxism is unsuited as for it 'all religion is ideology and an inversion of reality.' (Kee 1990:190-191). Further 'Since Marx it is no longer permissible to theologise as before with regard to social problems.' (Boff 1987a:13)

3.3.2 Exclusivity

While some black theologians, like Boesak, describe African society before the coming of the white man as an egalitarian social system where property was communally owned and where a person was a person in relation to others (Kritzinger 1988: 144), Deutsch on the contrary declares that the

'... Sitz-im-Leben of traditional (African) religion was certainly not an egalitarian society. It was rather characterised by a hierarchical and feudal order largely determined by kinship, age and sex. For the sake of harmony, which was the social ideal, every member of the family was assigned a well-defined position in relation to other members.' (1981:194)

Indeed a certain exclusivity seems to be required for embracing Black Theology - an exclusive cultural or ethnic identity. As Bosch (1977:334) states :

'Theology must be contextual, that is true, but may it ever be exclusive? We have to ask in all seriousness whether the category "people" or "nation" may be the church's concern for liberation. "People" as cultural and ethnic entity is not a theological category and wherever it is made into such a category (as an "ordinance of creation" or "God-given distinctive entity") it cannot but lead to mutual exclusiveness which endangers the life of the church as the new community.'

Cone (1975:18) states that 'Black Theology is a theology of and for black people, an examination of their stories, tales and sayings... theology must uncover the structures and forms

of black experience because the categories of interpretation must arise out of the thought forms of the black experience itself.'

Cone draws a distinction between a theology of and a theology for. But he does not clearly distinguish between the relative meanings of the subjective and objective use of the genitive. Indeed it seems as if for black theologians the of aspect is simply mentioned while the for aspect is the one on which is concentrated. It is theology for the thought-forms arising out of the black experience. A reductive use of theology.

One of the major criticisms of black theology has been the charge that it is doing in reverse what 'white theology' has done in the past. 'This is a critical question that must continually be raised - to what extent is black theology deriving its theology from culture rather than the Christian tradition? Having said that, it must immediately be pointed out that black theology, like any other theology, cannot exist except in a dynamic relation to black culture, as has always been true of any theology that has been relevant But the problem remains for us all to ensure that theology does not become captive to culture but rather serves it on the basis of the gospel ... Indeed, part of the significance of his paper is to force us all to see whether our own version of Christianity has not become culture bound.' (de Gruchy in Maimela 1984:52-53)

Without specifically putting his finger on the problem of the use of black theology in the objective-genitive form, de Gruchy has an uncomfortable feeling about black theology in

the sense that the theology could be a theology for the retention of a culture as its base , a reductive use. He suggests that the base of theology should be the gospel as revealed. Not culture. In that sense theology cannot subsist on a secular base either.

3.3.3 Sources

Frostin (1988:17-18) mentions five sources for liberation theologies . These are briefly alluded to :

- a) The Bible and the Christian heritage. The Bible has to be reread in the social context of the struggle for humanity.
- b) African anthropology. A person is not seen as an autonomous individual. To be human is to be part of a community.
- c) African traditional religions. The sacred is experienced in the context of the secular.
- d) African independent churches. These have a distinctive type of worship.
- e) Realities such as the African arts and the struggle against economic, political, social and cultural oppressions.

The point is that the Bible is not taken unequivocally as the source and base of black theology. '... the starting point of liberation theologians is not the Bible ...' (Maimela 1987:79). Obviously this is necessary for black theology, on account of its epistemological break with 'western' theology and the acceptance of Marxist materialism, requires a philosophical secular base both for society and for its theology. In any event, says Mosala, the attempt to claim the whole Bible in support of black theology is misdirected because it ignores the results of biblical scholarship over the last century and

has its roots in ruling-class ideology (1990:17-18). Also, says Mosala , Buthelezi and other black theologians are unable to explode the myth of the universality of the Word of God. To be able to reopen the canon of Scripture in the interests of black liberation, black theologians will need to take the materialist-hermeneutic significance of the black experience much more seriously. (1990: 24)

Dwane is taken to task by Mosala as being in exegetical bondage to neo-orthodoxy when Dwane states that 'To say that liberation theology is not a Gospel of liberation is to state the obvious. The Gospel, it is true, is good news for all men. And no theology, Western or African, has the right to equate itself with the Gospel ... The entire theological enterprise is concerned with the interpretation of the one Gospel for all sorts and conditions.' (Quoted by Mosala 1990:17).

Mosala would have preferred a selective interpretation of the gospel concentrating on one aspect only, namely, for the liberation of blacks. Mosala is deliberately oblivious to the notion of Scriptural authority which is at the heart of traditional biblical scholarship. The reason for this is that, for Mosala, the Bible is not only the product and record of class, race, gender and cultural struggle but also that it is the site and weapon of such struggles. Therefore, he argues, the Bible should play only a secondary authoritative and supportive role in the black theology approach to theology. The Bible is not unequivocally taken as the source and base of black theology. It is not its starting point. The thrust and task of the black liberation theologian is to reveal God's Word to those who are oppressed and humiliated in this world.

There are two determinative poles of black hermeneutics: one is the Word and the other is the black experience. (Mosala 1990:15)

The ethic, says Boesak, of black theology is transformation and not merely survival. This is measured in terms of what it is doing for (my underlining) the oppressed. It presses for active engagement in socio-political affairs, to side with the poor and the downtrodden and to liberate the oppressed. (1977:148)

As regards liberation and black theology, Cone's main themes, states Neuhaus, are reflected in the statement of the National Committee of Black Churchmen, issued during the height of the debate about the 'Black Manifesto' which demanded reparations from white churches: ' Black Theology is a theology of black liberation. It seeks to plumb the black condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, so that the black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievement of black humanity ... ' (Neuhaus 1989:223)

Cone's approach is a blatant reduction of theology for the achievement of black 'humanity.'

The thrust of black theology is not evangelisation, not the proclamation of liberation from sin. The thrust is rather the consideration what the Word of God can do for the socio-economic-political liberation of the black 'oppressed'. Thus, using the socio-economic-political aspect of liberation as the base of production of theology, the superstructure in which the Word of God is now located, must be used congruently, commensurably, with the base structure and hence the question

becomes what can the superstructure do to advance the cause of the base structure.

3.4 Some Insights

3.4.1 Points of Departure

The situation of blackness is the only frame of reference in which black theology can legitimately theologise (Boesak 1977:144).

'...the starting point of liberation theologians is not the Bible or some once-and-for-all given, existent pure kerygmatic "truths" which can be distilled and reproduced so as to apply them at the right moment. Rather, the starting point in liberation theology is the concrete, historical praxis which claims to be Christian, that is, real life itself in which the "germinal events" of Christianity are believed to be incarnated (embodied).'

(Maimela 1987:79)

The epistemological 'germinal events' of Christianity referred to by Maimela include the totality of God's dealings with Israel and more specifically the Christ event embracing his life, death, resurrection and the coming Kingdom. As black theology is the only theology which makes sense to black persons (Maimela 1987:71,73) the starting point of liberation theology is to be the concrete historical praxis which claims to be Christian. In this Maimela has followed Bonino (see Maimela 1987:84). Bonino's point of view is that hermeneutics is not concerned with establishing through deduction the

consequence of conceptual truth, but with analysing a historical praxis which claims to be Christian. Unexpectedly the Exodus is not specifically referred to as a germinal event.

Mosala quotes West as stating that 'An interpretation of the black historical experience and the readings of the biblical texts that emerge out of this experience constitute the raw ingredients for the second step of black theological reflection. By trying to understand the plight of black people in the light of the Bible, black theologians claim to preserve the biblical truth that God sides with the oppressed and acts on their behalf.'
(1990:16)

A purely spiritual gospel is alien to an African idea of the wholeness of life. Since then the gospel has practical implications, and since the South African black theologians are much more concerned about practical issues than about metaphysical truth, they too can be said to start their theology with praxis (cf Nicolson 1990:203). Commencing with historical experience as the raw material for theological reflection, the question becomes : In what sense is the 'experience ' theological and Christian? What experience is referred to? What is the relationship between experience and praxis? Is the experience confined to a socio-economic-political sense of deprivation? Questions such as these are left hanging in the air. This is not surprising as there is no systematic theory built up by black theology. It has simply appropriated some Marxist philosophy as scientific and foundational.

A new approach to hermeneutics is now given with its function being to analyse the praxis which claims to be Christian. This reiterates that the Bible is no longer the base from which conceptual truth is to be deduced.

Gutiérrez (1983:61) is adamant that liberation theology is a reflection 'from a point of departure in the concrete historical praxis of human beings' and 'our theology will have no proper, distinct focus of its own until it takes its point of departure in the social practice of the Latin American peoples - the lowly, repressed, and, today as yet, silent peoples of Latin America.' (Gutiérrez 1983:66)

When Cone speaks of theology his point of departure is that it is a rational study. Boesak opines that for Gutiérrez theology comes down to man's critical reflection on himself, on his own basic principles. The reasons advanced by Gutiérrez for his formulation are, firstly, that such activity creates a new relationship between man and nature which makes him aware of his role in history. Secondly, a new focus is placed on service and thirdly, communion with the Lord is centred on concrete commitment to others. (Boesak 1977:11-12)

There can be no Black Theology which does not take the black experience for the starting point (Cone, s.l., as quoted by Goba 1988:1).

The point of departure of black theology is as multifarious as black theology is multifaceted.

3.4.2 Epistemological content

Kunnie (1990:70) states that essentially the point of departure of black theology according to Cone and according to its contents is the liberation of the oppressed.

Segundo (1984:322) is of the opinion that no amount of subtle argument can conceal that the only methodological feature of Latin American Theology is to start thinking, not from a systematic listing of theological problems so as to give credible answers for the sake of orthodoxy, but in the context of the common people, to start from both a commitment to think for the sake of the poor and from a consideration of their praxis. 'Every time we perceive that this praxis is linked, through theology, to the oppressive mechanisms of the whole culture' orthopraxis is aimed at. The starting point is now transferred by Segundo to a consideration of the praxis of the poor when linked theologically to oppressive mechanisms, or differently put, institutionalised violence.

Black theology represents a new way of believing. By beginning with the Exodus, by making theology a critical reflection on the praxis of liberation it places the gospel in its authentic perspective, says Boesak (1977:10). This means for some black theologians believing in the mystically claimed Christian praxis which the poor somehow intuitively follow .

In view of the different forms of liberation theology one would expect different departure points for doing liberation theology. The content of black theology up to this stage appears to be the liberation of the oppressed in the setting of their experienced historical concrete social praxis of

being oppressed. However a universally accepted point of departure is still being sought.

In view of the above divergently vague approaches regarding a point of departure one can understand that a better more acceptable hermeneutic starting point must be sought. This is what Mosala is seeking:

'Black theology needs a new exegetical starting point if it is to become a material force capable of gripping the black working-class and peasant masses. Such an exegetical point of departure must itself be grounded in a materialist epistemology that is characterised, among other things, by its location of truth not in a world beyond history but indeed within the crucible of historical struggles. The social, cultural, political, and economic world of the black working class and peasantry constitutes the only valid hermeneutical starting point for a black theology of liberation'.
(Mosala 1990:21)

Comparing Dwane, West and Mosala one finds that while Dwane (cf quoted in Mosala 1990:17) mentions that the entire black theological enterprise is concerned with the interpretation of the one gospel for all sorts of conditions and West (cf quoted in Mosala 1990:16) mentions that black theologians claim to preserve the biblical truth, that God sides with the oppressed, which emerges from the black historical experience, Mosala above (1990:21) advocates a utilitarian epistemology based on a secular classist structural base, as an hermeneutic starting point. This underlines the multifaceted non-agreed to hermeneutics of black theologians and makes the emergence of a systematic black theology problematical indeed.

Correctly Manas Buthelezi (1978:62) warns that 'there is a danger that the "African past" may be romanticised and conceived in isolation from the realities of the present'. De Gruchy also sounds a warning note when he asks '... to what extent is black theology deriving its theology from culture rather than the Christian tradition? ... The problem remains for us all to ensure that theology does not become captive to culture but rather serves as a basis of the gospel.' (de Gruchy in Maimela 1984:52)

As a cultural background in particular appears to be an unsuitable point of departure, a classist socio-economic-political approach is advanced as the only valid point of departure for the hermeneutic of black theology. But the poor are not asking the questions which the black theologians think that they should. (Nicolson 1990:181).

Contrary to the approach by black theology, the authority accorded to the Bible by the Christian tradition requires that the epistemological starting point of theology should not be a commitment to the liberation of the poor but should be a commitment to Scripture, or church teaching, or personal experience of God in which case praxis will be the fruit of that prior commitment. (Barth as interpreted by Nicolson 1979:181). Concerning worldly utilitarianism Barth, owing to his experience with theologians under the reign of the Führer, was all too aware that worldly utilitarianism may subvert Christian faith and make it the servant of what are in fact sinful, selfish and temporal demands. (Nicolson 1979:75-76)

Insightfully Ogden states that Richard, a liberation theologian, said '"Christians should not redefine social

praxis by starting with the gospel message. They should do just the opposite. They should seek out the historical import of the gospel by starting with social praxis." That the motives behind such a statement may be of the best, or that one may share the same social and political sympathies as the person making it, ought not to obscure the fact that the one-sided method it recommends could no more be accepted by an adequate Christian theology than the one-sided method it opposes'... 'Consequently, my own proposal for the emancipation of theology is quite different. Because the real root of theology's historic bondage is the underlying conception of its task as the rationalisation of positions already taken, the only way in which it can be emancipated is by re-conceiving its task, instead, as the critical reflection on such positions.' (1979:121)

Black theology states that God's relation to history is not that of a hidden God but that he is directly manifest in the struggles of the oppressed. Thus he is revealed in the Exodus event which serves as a paradigm only in so far as he, in epiphanies, espouses the cause of the oppressed and their struggle for liberation. As God's action in history is known only through his participation in this struggle, his action is understood dialectically. Hence the meaning of history is only hidden to those who refuse to act in solidarity with the oppressed. On the other hand 'For orthodox Christianity, if anything, in history has paradigmatic status, it is the Cross of Christ, the suffering Messiah. The Exodus experience and the prophets are subordinated hereto.' (McCann 1981:203)

However from the point of departure put forward , black theology is in conflict with reformed theology in regard to the authority granted to Scripture. In black theology's elevation of the result of 'recent scholarship' (Moltmann?) to the position of the primary authority and the Bible to that of a secondary authority, this awakens in the adherents of the Reformed tradition a 'suspicion' of heresy and a call of '*ad fontes.*'

3.4.3 Marxism: Base and superstructure

Cornel West says 'I believe that any social vision, political praxis or existential concern must take seriously the tragic aspects of our fallen finite conditions and circumstances ... as a Christian my choice is to side with the poor ... This choice is grounded theologically in the Christian principle of self-realisation (sic) of human individuality within community ... I view the circumstances of the working classes ... in light of the most sophisticated Marxist analysis available and work for the creation of a socialist civilisation ... ' (1983:81).

Hence, if Marxist analysis is not selected as the theory on which black theology is to be grounded, the base, the socio-economic-political foundation of black theology must collapse like a house built on shifting sand.

In 1973-1974 Tutu said (Frostin 1985:131) that 'Black theology is a refutation of the silent claims of the white man to *ipso facto* give his values and measures universal validity ... In attempting to obtain these objectives so highly prized in the West, we (ourselves) distorted our

own nature and found that something did not add up in the final result ... Our scientific strivings must make room for subjectivity, for the intuitive comprehension of matters which are hardly comprehensible for the alienated objectivity of the non-committed.'

In effect Tutu is constructing a new argument for accepting Marxist social analysis. An intuitive approach becomes necessary as black theology has not formulated a systematic theory of theology. So the new base becomes intuition. One must commend Tutu for spotting the weakness of a theology built up from below based on a selective theory of social analysis. His answer to the problem is an intuitive approach.

Building a theology - a theology intended to lead the way towards the spiritual salvation of the individual - on such a selective social analytic theory as its base, is sacralising such a theory. It is making an idol of such a theory which, as Ratzinger puts it, now becomes the norm for the Christian to live by. This is idolatry.

3.4.4 Praxis

'From the beginning the theology of liberation had two fundamental insights... referring to its theological method and its perspective of the poor... (Firstly) from the beginning, the theology of liberation posited that the first act is involvement in the liberation process, and that theology comes afterwards as a second act. The theological moment is one of critical reflection within and upon concrete historical praxis in confrontation with the word of the Lord as lived and accepted in faith ...

It is not a matter of setting an inductive method over against the deductive method of such and such a theology ... It is rather an attempt to situate the work of theology within the complex and proliferous context of the relationship between practice and theory.' (Secondly) 'the second insight of theology of liberation is its decision to work from the viewpoint of the poor - the exploited classes, marginalised ethnic groups and scorned cultures ... As a result the poor appear within this theology as the key to an understanding of the meaning of liberation and the meaning of the revelation of a liberating God.' (Gutiérrez 1984:200)

Here Gutiérrez plays down the importance of the scientific method. It is stated that the first act is neither induction nor deduction but that it is simply a critical reflection on a concrete historical praxis. Surely without deduction or induction such reflection leads to the acceptance of intuitive conclusions. Gutiérrez is vindicating the intuitive approach of Tutu.

3.4.5 Comment

For its methodology black theology in the above approach takes as its starting point the mode of theological production, supposed to be the practise of the poor, as practical data. What then occurs is an inversion of reality - the product produced from such analysed data becomes the measure for man to live by. Marx's proposition that all religion is a inversion of reality is affirmed when a secular mode of production is appropriated for producing a theology.

While black theology is adamant that only its own initiates can have an 'intuitive comprehension ... which is hardly comprehensible to the alienated objectivity of the non-committed', it does not equally adamantly accord the same privilege to 'white theology' namely that 'white' theology can hardly be comprehensible to non-committed black theologians. Thus, while forcefully critiquing others, black theology sees itself as a no-go area when it comes to a critique thereof by others.

Goba states the following: 'The precondition for constructing a black theology is the conviction that an unacknowledged (sic) white theology, a theology of racism and oppression, dominates the field. Black theology then by definition is committed to a theological development not only beyond this white theology but in conscious and fundamental opposition to it.' (Jones 1973:76). 'In all this there is a certain uniqueness to the black people as the people of God.' (Goba 1988:9)

Black theology is committed to an epistemological break with all western 'white' theology, all of which is not acknowledged. Unacknowledged on the unconvincing *ipse dixit* that all western theology is racist and oppressive.

According to Berryman liberation theology should be seen as a non-systematic exposition of principles as to how people should act (ethically); rather than as an (ongoing process) of exploration of the meaning of such activity (as the people enact it.) (1987:81). (Words in brackets are added by me). So what Berryman is saying is that

i) There exists a conglomerate of principles that have not been critically examined whether or not they could be

systematised in a logical organic fashion. They are simply principles stated *qua* principles not necessarily in accord with one another. As regards black theology this is factually the correct position.

ii) The significance and consequences of the action taken should not be explored critically to ascertain whether these principles can logically be deduced from such action. This is an admission of an uncertain base on which black theology is founded. It also smacks of theological ineptitude.

Surely to accept 'principles' without critically examining them must act as a censure on the whole approach by black theology to theology. A 'suspicion' that black theology is siding with the oppressed becomes, as Ogden (1979:121) puts it *supra*, simply a 'rationalisation of a theological position already taken up rather than a critical reflection on such positions'. If this is so then it is small wonder that black theology is non-systematic in its approach to theology. Then black theology becomes a pseudo-theological movement for legitimising socio-economic-political positions already taken up. An objective-genitive approach.

Black theology can be distinguished by its perception, starting point and method. The perspective is from the underside of society, the starting-point being commitment to the poor and the method being induction from data, empirically derived from the praxis of the community, and the reflection thereupon. Marx's social theory is used in the interpretation of the praxis and then the reflection thereupon is force-fitted into the interpretation previously so arrived at. (Kee 1990:89)

But Marx's theory has not been empirically or theoretically proven at all, it is simply an unconfirmed hypothesis. If one should take the political disintegration of the U.S.S.R as a practical example of the cogency of Marx's theory in action, it becomes patently clear that his theory is but a failed hypothesis.

What then are the insights that one finds black theology to have? Some of the insights are that it is non-systematic, uses a world view from the underside of society to generate an epistemological break and that it endeavours empirically to determine what the praxis of the poor is. It reflects upon this without inducing or deducing anything from it. Then, having in this way determined to its satisfaction what the praxis is, it uses Marx's social analysis to contend intuitively how black theology should be structured.

3.5 Epistemological break

3.5.1 Praxis base

"Praxis" is in the use of Latin American theologians a much more profound term than "practice". It does not simply refer to the active, practical dimension of human life as opposed to pure theory, but refers to a particular mode of practice: It is practice that "transforms history"; "it is the point where people re-create their world and forge their own reality, where they come to know reality and discover their own selves". "Praxis" is thus innovative, creative practice. Bongajalo Goba (see Deutsch 1977:195) does talk about "praxis"

... but he qualifies it rather vaguely as a new mode of hermeneutics and calls even theology itself "praxis". Hence 'praxis' refers to a narrow band of practice, namely, a practice which is aimed at bringing about the result that people should forge their own reality (it not clear whether the word 'people' in this context refers to individuals or to people as a community nor is it clear what 'reality' embraces).

Gutiérrez (1983:vii) states that theology is always the second act. The first act is commitment, that is 'commitment to the struggle of the "wretched of the earth". As people live out and reflect on that commitment, a theology (simply) emerges. The word used to describe this ongoing give-and-take between action and reflection is praxis...' Further, an approach to the transformation of history from the viewpoint of the oppressed , marginalised and dominated peoples, from the viewpoint of the poor of this world 'leads us to look on this transformation as a praxis of liberation'.(1983:50). Gutiérrez sees praxis as an ongoing transformation of history from the vantage point of the poor occasioned by the interplay between action and reflection in commitment to the cause of the poor.

As black theology is the only theology which makes sense to black persons (Maimela 1987:71,73) the starting point of liberation theology is to be the concrete historical praxis which claims to be Christian. It seems as if here there is some equivocation regarding the existence of an 'epistemological break'; a 'historical' praxis is mentioned - what 'historical' praxis is here referred to? How long is the

history referred to? Is it African traditional religion's historical praxis?

From the beginning, the theology of liberation posited that the first act is involvement in the liberation process, and that theology comes afterwards as a second act. The theological moment is one of critical reflection within and upon concrete historical praxis in confrontation with the word of the Lord as lived and accepted in faith...'. For Gutierrez praxis is not a 'claimed Christian praxis' but a praxis in confrontation with the word as accepted and lived.

Praxis can also be viewed as a social , secular based praxis. It is the arena of life itself in which Christians work out their destiny. And thus the participation in the process of liberation is an obligatory locus for Christian life. Without such reflection on social praxis and such participation there can be no authentic faithfulness to the Lord . (Gutiérrez 1988:32)

Brown states that praxis means something different from practise

' It describes a circular traffic that is always going on between action and theory: Action modifies theory and modified theory requires different actions. Action is the starting point. Thus it is not right-thinking (orthodoxy) but ortho-praxis (the combination of right thinking and doing) that is the task of the Christian'. (1978:71)

From the above one notes that the circular traffic is not between revelation, the revealed word of God, and practise/deed, but between theory and action. In the event

action can modify theory. In this hermeneutic approach religion becomes a theory. The problem for black theology remains to realise a bridging-movement from the secular to the revelational. To by-pass this problem, this gaping gap, revelation/religion is equated with theory. The argument seems to run as follows: Action, emanating from the secular base as its starting point, modifies theory. Theory is now located in the superstructure. Obviously then equally where theology, which is seen as a theory, is placed in the superstructure built on this secular base it could be modified by action/praxis. A new vocabulary for the theology residing in the superstructure becomes justified.

Brown further states that the ongoing task is '... involving our constant check of action at the hand of theory, theory at the hand of action. It confirms the ongoing truth of Marx's eleventh thesis against Feuerbach, in which he claims that the task is not to understand the world but to change it, not to have a passive intellectual acceptance of something, but an ongoing dialectical relationship with something, in interchange with which both it and we are transformed.' (1978:71)

One notices a thesis-> anti-thesis -> synthesis approach to religion as theory; this leaves out revelation completely. Praxis, continues Brown, is the means by which we attempt to work with God in building a new heaven and new earth. (1978 :71). It seems, to paraphrase Ciezkowski's position in which the deed is fundamental, that praxis no longer refers to the activity of critical theory but to the intervention of deeds which guide the changes to theory (In Kee 1990:48). The

sequence, if theology and theory are equated, is, theology -> deeds -> changed theology.

3.5.2 Truth and Knowledge

The praxis of black theology and liberation theology presupposes justification by faith but it turns the 'poor', or the 'people', which is a sociological category, into a theological term and treats it as synonymous with 'church'. The line between the church and the political movements gets blurred and faith becomes associated with faith in the struggle of the poor. (Bosch 1990:444)

It is presumed that praxis is a precondition for knowledge (Brown 1987:72) because experiential knowledge is the only way of knowing the truth. Frostin (1985:135-136) approvingly quotes Torres where Torres states that 'The traditional way of knowing ... only conforms to and legitimises the world as it now exists. But here is another way of knowing the truth ... Knowledge is not the conformity of the mind to the given but an immersion in the process of transformation and construction of a new world.' Also Migue Bonino is supported where he says that ' ... there is no truth outside or beyond the concrete historical events in which men are involved as agents. There is therefore no knowledge except in action itself in the process of transforming the world through participation in history.' (Frostin 1985:136)

Jesus Christ is not even considered when the concept of the truth is under consideration. A change in the production of truth has taken place. Once more this is understandable because the base of society has become secular.

Kelsey (1968:20) says that ' ... the fact (is) that the religious experiences themselves occur in response to an historically fairly constant tradition ... Hence while it may be that Scripture and not religious experience provides the data for a theologians argument a particular mode of religious experience will shape his decisions about the subject-matter of theology, the basis of unity in Scripture and the logical character of the Scripture he uses as data.'

Insightfully Lewis (1979:12) states that 'experience by itself proves nothing. If a man doubts whether he is dreaming or walking, no experiment can solve his doubt since every experiment itself may be part of the dream. Experience proves this or that or nothing according to the preconceptions we bring to it.'

In view of the above it is not surprising that Mgojo (Nicolson 1990:205) states that revelation is the first and most important source of knowledge in theology and that Boesak says that he fears that too much theological import is attached to the black experience and the black situation ' as if these realities within themselves have revelation value on a par with Scripture.' (1977 :16 note 87). Further, Barth's concern was to start radically from the side of revelation and a theological role for experience he strongly opposed . (Berkhoff 1990:55-56)

To declare that there is no knowledge but in the action of participating in the liberation of peoples is essentially reductionist.

3.5.3 Vague and opaque

Without indicating when an experience is an authentic experience of God Boesak, unhelpfully, agrees with the statement that 'Black theological reflection takes place in the context of the authentic experience of God in the black worshipping community.' (1977:2)

Berryman writes that ' A reader who casually picks up the writings of liberation theologians might be surprised at the seeming abstract tone. As much as the theologians insist on the primacy of praxis they do not devote much attention to specific experiences and events.' (1987:7). Maimela is rather vague when he refers to a 'claimed Christian practise'. How is it determined that such or any 'claimed Christian practise' is in accord with the demands of Scripture? This is not set out and remains opaque.

L & C Boff (1992:40-41) mention that a theologian can point only to broad lines of action for the process of action is extremely complex involving a number of steps. '... more knowledge is gained in practice than from theory ... it is easier to experience than to think out. Therefore ... wisdom and prudence are more useful than is analytical reasoning. And in this, ordinary persons are often way ahead of the learned.' Is this really so ? Such reasoning is not convincing at all - there is no reason to believe that the ordinary person is at times better equipped in wisdom and prudence than the learned person. This is simply, as Ogden puts it, a rationalisation of positions already taken up.

Goba (1989:158-159) opines that the Word of God is understood in terms of God's concrete involvement. He agrees with Sellers who puts it that human action, as the locus of divine action, is a medium for expressing a Christian stance. Unhelpfully and vaguely he does not clarify how the concrete involvement of God is determined but states that 'One of the basic presuppositions in this approach is that a biblical faith is expressed in concrete acts of Christian obedience' (which being axiomatic is unhelpful) and that '..there are many problems in these elements I have outlined for a biblical ethic from a Third World perspective...'. Save for this admission he does not clarify his statement further.

3.5.4 Comment

'Critical reflection on praxis' is generally the way in which the epistemological approach of liberation theologies is described. But this slogan in itself is opaque. It may mean for instance nothing more than the truism that you must practise what you preach. Or it may sound suspiciously provocative, for instance, stating that 'Praxis is just a ... word for revolution.' (McCann 1981:157)

The self-understanding of black theology as a product of a struggling community, 'sharing and experiencing history with God, presupposes a commitment to liberation and to God. 'In view of this emphasis on participation critics have asked: Is commitment acceptable in an academic theology? The answer of the theologians of modernity is negative. Liberation theology is in their view pre-critical as far as it insists on themes such as "God acting in history" and the option for the poor.' (Frostin 1988:185)

'Commitment to liberation and to God' juxtapositions God and liberation. A commitment to both equally. The commitment towards liberation places the accent on liberation. Commitment to God places the accent on God. Black theology places equal stress on liberation and on theology. It is liberation plus theology. Both are treated as nouns. Just what the two interconnected nouns signify is unsaid. It seems as if theology is taken to be that liberation from sin is not enough. Thus black theology is a theology for liberation from all possible limiting situations - the accent is now on socio-economic-political liberation. 'Liberation' as an epitheton is used not only as an objective genitive but also as a noun. The word 'liberation' becomes a word for all seasons susceptible to intuitive interpretations.

Berryman (1987:195) ' ... partly sympathises with Ratzinger in the latter's rejection of a notion of praxis which holds that partisan involvement is the unique source of truth in all matters for all time. Such expressions are found among certain enthusiasts but do not represent the considered views of liberation theologians. That is, involvement in the struggle of the poor cannot substitute for the properly intellectual work of theology.'

Apparently truth can be discerned via the intellectual work of, or theorising in, theology. Revelation is not mentioned. Jesus Christ as the truth is covertly rejected.

While theology is intended for a community surely it is not meant to remain the property of a particular class. It is not meant to be a theology for a class. At the same time not 'everything a community says or does can be called theology; otherwise theology itself becomes an empty concept.' Thus

'the community is a key source for theology's development and expressions, but to call it a theologian in the narrow sense of authorship is inaccurate.' (Schreiter 1986:17). The content of praxis as a praxis committed to the poor becomes a subversive action, an action to turn the world upside-down. (Brown 1987:72)

3.5.5 Revelation and contextuality

The goal at which black theology aims is equivocal and uncertain. It is but an illusion to assume that the goal of liberation is unambiguous. Nürnberger sets out his approach in this regard as follows:

'(The goals) can be interpreted in a variety of ways and not all of them are acceptable. More than that, they can be abused. The German Christians in Nazi-Germany provide a telling example. We need a criterion to judge the truth of the concept of liberation and the acceptability of the struggle itself. And that criterion must come from a point beyond the situation and the struggle ... It is not without reason that the ancient church declared certain traditions to be normative, that the Reformers spoke of a *Verbum externum*, that the "confessing church" in Nazi Germany insisted on the primacy of revelation over the situation. All this was necessary because Christians are always in danger of absolutising their actual experience at the expense of God's redemptive acts in history. Surely the situation can help us to detect dimensions of the Biblical witness which would remain concealed without a contextual interpretation of the text. But then the Biblical witness retains its primacy. In short, it is the Biblical witness to God's redemptive action in history

which must be used to assess and change the situation, not the situation which should be used to assess and adapt the biblical witness.' (1988:217)

This approach by Nürnberger commends itself as being logical, theologically acceptable and as being in accord with the tenets of the Christian faith.

In sum one could say that the concept of praxis is vague and opaque, it is used emotionally without it having a specific content and without its meaning or scope being demonstrated by examples. It is no substitute for theoretical theological study. Indeed as Nürnberger and others put it revelation is the primary theological consideration and not praxis. The vague and materialist approach, indeed the objective genitive approach, is the natural and reasonable consequence and outflow of an epistemological break based on the Marxist philosophical secular base.

3.6 Methodology

3.6.1 Epistemology

The following bears repetition as it is foundational for black theology and liberation theology:

'From the beginning the theology of liberation had two fundamental insights... referring to its theological method and its perspective of the poor... From the

beginning, the theology of liberation posited that the first act is involvement in the liberation process, and that theology comes afterwards as a second act. The theological moment is one of critical reflection within and upon concrete historical praxis in confrontation with the word of the Lord as lived and accepted in faith... It is not a matter of setting an inductive method over against the deductive method of such and such a theology... It is rather an attempt to situate the work of theology within the complex and proliferous context of the relationship between practice and theory.'

'The second insight of theology of liberation is its decision to work from the viewpoint of the poor - the exploited classes, marginalised ethnic groups and scorned cultures...As a result the poor appear within this theology as the key to an understanding of the meaning of liberation and the meaning of the revelation of a liberating God.' (Gutiérrez 1984:200)

Thus theology is always the second act. The first act is commitment, that is 'commitment to the struggle of the "wretched of the earth". As people live out and reflect on that commitment, a theology and a methodology simply emerges. (Gutiérrez 1983:50)

Black theology is different from reformed theology not the least because its epistemology centres on being a critical reflection on praxis, the first act is commitment. The reflections on this first act lead to a theology from below (Brown 1987:74). For EATWOT (Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians) the epistemological approach, followed by black theology, is that it is a theology from the underside of

history more particularly as seen from the perspective of the poor, from the underside of history. (Frostin 1985:134)

Mosala, a black theology theologian, opines that the canon of scripture with its ruling-class ideological basis is correctly defied and that the Bible is then to be appropriated in another way using black working-class cultural tools emerging out of their struggle for survival (1990:24). The attempt to claim the whole Bible in support of black theology is misdirected. 'The insistence on the Bible as the Word of God must be seen for what it is ; an ideological manoeuvre whereby ruling-class interests in the Bible are converted into faith ... ' (Mosala 1990:18).

Mosala argues that the Bible offers a non-equivocal message of God. 'The proposition that "God sides with the oppressed in their struggle" is one biblical truth but it is contradicted by important statements. Consequently the Bible cannot be a fundamental criterion ... he seems to suggest that experience is the fundamental criterion in theology' (Frostin 1988:164). On the other hand Boesak states that ' the self-critical reflection under the Word of God demands that one tests one's own programs by the criteria of the gospel of Jesus Christ defined as liberation, justice and the wholeness of life.' (Frostin 1988:164)

Liberation theologians ... have tended to read the whole Bible - even the most apolitical parts - with the aid of a political; key or to slight those parts which could not be read in this way .. because they were trying to glean ready-made answers from Scripture ..' (Bosch 1991:443). Indeed

'...the starting point of liberation theologians is not the Bible or some once-and-for-all given, existent pure kerygmatic "truths" which can be distilled and reproduced so as to apply them at the right moment. Rather, the starting point in liberation theology is the concrete, historical praxis which claims to be Christian that is, real life itself in which the "germinal events" of Christianity are believed to be incarnated.' (Maimela 1987:79)

3.6.2 Base: Social sciences

The tools used in the working out of the methodology of black theology are the social sciences, particularly sociology and political science. This is so for 'if one wants to attack poverty it is essential to understand the structure of society that legitimises poverty.' (Brown 1987:72). From the underside of history the major problem is seen to be that of poverty. The basis of the attack is poverty not sin.

As the Bible has not been written specifically to counter poverty but to counter the 'poverty' occasioned by sin, the poverty of being without God, another base, other than the Bible as the revealed Word of God, has to be found. This base is found in the social sciences. In particular in a social science with an attack directed towards alleviating poverty in some or other way. However, as there is no such specific social science Marxism, a pseudo-science being a hybrid of economic and political science has been co-opted to fill the lacuna as far as it can be subservient to the aims of black theology. Where Marxism cannot fit the bill innovation has to be reverted to. In order to create a pseudo-theological

movement, which is more easily accepted by the 'oppressed' masses who desire to be religious, sin becomes described as that which, through oppressions, occasions their secular oppression. The oppressor and the oppressed classes emerge.

The determinative aspect of the epistemological break generated by black theology is that theology is to be approached from below. The reasons advanced centre around a perceived humanist morality - compassion for the poor, as the poor, and siding with the poor, as the poor. The Marxist class of the proletariat is subsumed under the class 'people' which in turn is subsumed under the class 'the poor and the marginalised'.

Black liberation theology uses the idea of class to distinguish between bourgeois and the proletariat which is subsumed under the rich class and the poor class which in turn is subsumed under the oppressor and oppressed classes. These two classes are in secular socio-economic-political opposition to one another. The transformation intended to be occasioned by an epistemological break is a transformation from a religious class consciousness to a secular class consciousness. However the idea of class as advanced by orthodox Christianity differentiates between two classes, the Christian and the class of the non-Christian where the distinction is a theological one.

Clearly the Bible as religious text is not suitable for founding such a transformation; it provides no 'warrant' for such a transformation - from religious to secular class consciousness - which is not fully rebutted by other biblical texts. Mosala is fully aware of this and is logically correct

where he states that the insistence by black theologians on the use of the whole Bible as the word of God as a warrant is misleading. Maimela is also logically correct in the sense that a non-specified 'historical praxis which claim to be Christian' is rather to be the point of departure. If the above is correct then Boesak is not logically consistent as far as black theology is concerned when he states that black theology ought to test its criteria against the Word of God. However to the credit of Boesak, a theologian of the reformed tradition, it must be said that he is theologically consistent in proclaiming the traditional Reformed approach. This however means that he does not accept the inevitable consequences of an epistemological break and in this his logic is 'vague and opaque'.

Now, if the Bible is not the 'tool' to test a 'theological' methodology, what is ? As mentioned above, for black theology the social sciences become the tool. The spiritual concern of reformed theology and becomes a secular concern for black theology. The secular concern is subsumed under Marxist social analysis concerning which the assumption is made that it is undoubtedly correct and the only theory that is to be applied to theology. In fact it is an untested hypothesis. And with this argument that it is only an unproved hypothesis, the base of the epistemological break crumbles as does equally the secular base which has been parading as a base for the theology for black theology.

3.6.3 Contingent aspects

3.6.3.1 A relevant God

For black theology God is obliged to vindicate his divinity as the only true God in the light of what God does to and within a people's struggle to be fully human. 'In other words what happens to and with humans should make the difference as to whether they are under the lordship of the demon or the lordship of the true God who can and must demonstrate that this God is their Creator...' (Maimela 1987:2). It appears that the daily experience is the determinative factor as to whether God is functioning in a community: it is in the communal life that God must demonstrate that he is God. This leaves little to trust in - things manifestly to be seen, not faith, are made the requirement God has to comply with in order to validate himself. This is testing God contrary to the command of Jesus in Matthew 4:7. One notes that it is in the secular base of society that God must vindicate himself. Spiritual salvation is not mentioned as the hope based on God's saving actions in history.

Berryman states that for liberation theologians the question is not so much whether one can believe what Christianity affirms, but rather what relevance Christianity has in the struggle for a more just world '... liberation theology is not primarily an ethics(sic). It is not a systematic exposition of principles how people should act ; rather it is an exploration of the theological meaning of such activity.' (1987:26). It is a theology for the exploration of the theological meaning of activities, actions, leading to socio-economic-political liberation.

Mosala (1990:31-32) writes that black theologians evince a thinness in social structural analysis and a thinness in biblical analysis and not only do they suffer from an unstructured understanding of the Bible but also suffer from an unstructured understanding of the black experience and struggle. The struggle ought to be the key factor in the hermeneutics of liberation.

In view of the above one must agree with Moslala where, admittedly in a different context, he states that black theologians suffer from an unstructured understanding of the Bible. The demand is that God should demonstrate himself to be relevant. The Christian God is to show what relevance he has for the struggle. This is testing God and is sinful. It is also a continuing sinfulness. In the approach to heresy set out by the WARC (World Alliance of Reformed Churches) to persist in sin is heretical. (Hofmeyr et gal 1991:333)

3.6.4 Structure

For black theology the relevant base upon which society is to be structured lies in the historical, cultural and ideological struggles of the black people. This is a secular base. 'The

"category of struggle" at all levels and through various phases of black history should be taken as the key hermeneutical factor that includes the struggles behind and beneath the text; the struggles in the pages, the lines and the vocabulary of the text, the struggles that take place when readers engage the text by way of reading it, and the struggles that the completed text represents.' (Mosala 1990:6-7).

South African black theologians are not free from enslavement to the wider neo-orthodox theological problematic that regards the notion of the Word of God as a hermeneutic starting point. (Mosala 1990:17). Mosala is here apparently referring to Boesak.

As regards the mode of production of theology, the way in which for Marx the structure of society is to be changed, Mosala (1990:80) writes that 'the point of resuscitating black theology within the cultural struggles of the communal mode of production is to save it from the kind of historical amnesia that disables a liberation movement (sic) from recognising its own weapons of struggle when they resurface under different conditions.' But, says Mofokeng, maxims can become an Achilles heel. 'As far as religion is concerned, Marxism generally regards it as a negative factor in the life of oppressed people ... as we can attest from our own experience as well as that of many people in our black communities, this is not completely true'. (Mofokeng 1987: 24). Without overcoming the statement by Marx that all religion is an inversion of reality 'Some black theologians consistently apply class analysis .. in order to eliminate the negative elements in African culture, history and traditional religion and discover positive ones. This they do notwithstanding recognition of weakness of Marxism on issues of culture and black theology..' (Mofokeng 1987:30).

3.6.5 Hermeneutics

The category of the struggle in a socio-economic-political sense is the base on which hermeneutic interpretation is structured. Admittedly it originates in a class analysis even

although Marxism is weak on issues that are pertinent for black theology.

As regards the placing of the human sciences on an equal footing with Christian ethics, the consequence is that Christian ethics is undermined. In the personal sense Christian morality is determined by a believer's faith; it is theo-centrally conceived. For the Christian then it is his/her faith that is the central key to all morality. True Christian morality and ethics can learn from other disciplines however '... this can be open to certain dangers for in

particular the New Testament faith appears to be placed on an equal footing with other bases coming from other disciplines. In this way the Christian bases for Christian ethics will be undermined and it will lose its determining of the Christian character and become simply ethics' (Hartin 1987:41)

There is a deliberate contextually-generated non-objectivity in the method of theologising used by black theology. In this regard the problem is that analysis is often based on insufficient information hence on a 'postulate of ignorance'. The theologian who operates on the theory-praxis dialectic does not seek an objective analysis of scripture but rather a contextual interpretation and understanding of scripture. 'The question posed by the involved theologian is what the scripture means in a specific situation. He seeks a contemporary, contextual understanding of the scriptural message, spelled out in terms of specific, concrete political images and programmes. ... Black theology is the example par excellence of this method.' (Hulley 1984: 160-161).

The danger in this approach, and its possible weakness, is 'that it could allow ideological impositions onto the "givenness" of the Christian tradition to be so powerful that the unique liberating message of the gospel is lost in the clamour of ideological involvement.' (1984:161). Herein Hulley echoes the warnings of Bosch and Boesak previously adverted to.

Concerning the suggestion that liberation and black theology is a new way of doing theology, Ratzinger (1985:59) states that it is not a new phenomenon but an universal one in three aspects:

- i) It poses as a new hermeneutical way of understanding and concretising of the faith,
- ii) It has been influenced by European and North American theologians though its gravitational centre has been South America,
- iii) It seeks to be interdenominational by transgressing confessional boundaries.

Ratzinger continues and states that it is indeed new in some not commendable aspects in that a new interpretation is given to the concepts of faith , hope and charity. (1985:63-64).

- i) 'Faith' is replaced by 'faithfulness to history'. So Sobrino states that Jesus is God but then immediately adds that the true God is only that God who reveals himself in history and in a 'scandalous' way in Jesus and that only in the poor a continuance of his presence is found. Only those who affirm this, says Sobrino, are orthodox.
- ii) 'Hope' means confident reliance on the future in view of the 'laws' of historical materialism.

iii) 'Charity' now consists in a preferential option for the poor.

In sum we are left with a methodology the fruit of which is non-Christian. What is taking place is a perversion of conceptions. This occurs by black theology specially redefining and using in different senses the same words as determined over the ages by orthodoxy but now determined as bearing a different meaning, in the contexts of its use, than that which is assigned to them by orthodoxy.

Smith (1988:54) mentions that John Mbiti discerns that black theology defines race and colour in terms of concepts neither derived from scripture nor theologically justifiable on account of their biased infatuation with the theme of liberation. In this sense black theology becomes a political theology and hence an attenuated and reductive theology.

3.6.6 Conscientisation

In their rush to conscientise black Christians the protagonists of black power seem oblivious thereto that that which is sauce for the goose is source for the gander. Hence a certain self-righteous arrogance remains hidden from them. In the discussion below the remarks in square brackets are my interpolations given in the form of a running commentary.

The white power structure, says Boesak, represents full control over the major resources of the country. But this statement, says Maimela, could be an exaggeration (1984:41). Nevertheless, it is seen that the answer to this white power structure is black power (1984: 42). [Is the intention that

black power should represent full control over the major resources?]

The affirmation of black power is the slogan 'to be black is to be beautiful'. [Presumably white power would equally have the right to affirm its whiteness by saying 'white is wonderful'?]. For blacks this would be a legitimate way of existence. [Presumably also for whites.] (Maimela 1984:42)

Underlying the black struggle for freedom, black power was at work since the 19th century (Maimela 1984:43). [In the 'white' struggle in South Africa for liberation from Britain as a colony, white power, as designated by black theologians, was at work during the 19th century]. This led to the black leaders in the urban areas to opt for a policy of polarisation in about 1969 so as to enable them to negotiate from a position of strength (Maimela 1984:44). [It would then be quite acceptable should the whites opt for polarisation to enable them to negotiate from a position of strength].

Many black theologians are concerned that black theology is merely becoming the handmaid for and finding its framework in the black power political program as a 'black power religion' (Boesak 1977:78). [Many white theologians in South Africa, who have not been given credit therefor by black theologians, had the same fear, namely, that white theology is becoming the handmaid of politicians]. This is so because there is a close connection between black theology and black power as black theology addresses those people who seek black power as a means of liberation from white power. [And vice versa for the white community].

Bearing in mind the 'one-eyed' attenuated self-affirmation of itself by this conscientisation for the teachings of black theology, it is not strange that Manas Buthelezi has rejected outright an interpretation which links black theology to black power. However Baartman, quoted by Boesak (1977:78), states inexplicably to the contrary, that ' Black consciousness is the answer to the white gospel. For blacks (black consciousness) means that they now receive power to become children of God ' [!!!!].. Says Boesak, black consciousness is a search for power for blacks (1977:79). Quite some disparities in approach.

Further highlighting the disparity in approaches Roberts declares that one should differentiate between ' the religion of black power which seeks to be a theological justification for political, ideological, pseudo-religious elements of black nationalism and black theology which is the confession of faith in the God who is concerned about blacks.' (Boesak 1977:78). Roberts is the first black theologian who correctly drawn a distinction between the epitheton 'black' when used in the subjective-genitive and when used in the objective-genitive senses. The first aspect that he mentions would refer to the objective-genitive use and the second to the subjective-genitive use of the epitheton.

The black attitudes to mental slavery has been a problem, namely an attitude that this only is what they are destined for (cf Boesak 1977:54). To counter this particular attitude the tool of conscientisation is used for a commendable purpose in the black community. However using conscientisation politically to reject white value systems over as broad a spectrum as possible politicises its theology.

Black consciousness challenges blacks to create an own value system which is to be used politically and economically to transform their own position. [Conversely whites could use their system to retain their own value systems and structures]. Black consciousness thus becomes a force to galvanise blacks into a resistant power to transform existing structures. (Boesak 1977:45). It has challenged black theologians to take seriously the particularity of the black experience (Nicolson 1990:201) and have forced them to determine how they, as they are expected to do, can participate in the ongoing struggle for liberation (Nicolson 1990:203)

Black power, which prefers to be called black consciousness, created a new theological climate which rejected current white expressions of Christianity - creating an epistemological break - so turning the gospel into an instrument for resisting nearly exclusively the extreme demands of racial oppression. Thus black theology was born. Further, matters such as the virgin birth, a *status confessionis* matter, the nature of God etc., is stated to be irrelevant to the struggle. [Except as regards the nature of God, namely, that in his nature he favours the black and the poor people, on account of their materialistic existential problems. This is illogically selective in the extreme.]. The conscientisation emanating from the engineered epistemological break necessitates a new vocabulary.

Boesak (1977:142) states that 'For most black theologians black consciousness is black theology. Black consciousness implies the awareness by black people of the power they wield

as a group economically and politically. This is again the relation with black power. Black theology calls on black people to affirm this'. This is further borne out where Ogden (1979:24) quotes Cone (1970:209) as saying that black theology is the theological arm of black power and black power is the political arm of black theology . Mofokeng agrees with Cone that ' ... black theology as a theological articulation of black consciousness in the religious realm became one of many projects of conscientisation' and black theology ' continues to play an important role in the ideological formation of the black political agent.' (1987:22)

A synthesis has taken place between black power, black consciousness and black theology by way of conscientisation.

Conscientisation leads to a particular view of reconciliation. Reconciliation is used by black theology as a strategic tool. More recently black theology tends to stress that there can be no meeting of minds or reconciliation between oppressors and the oppressed until the former have repented and amended their way' (Nicolson 1990:205). This apparently is stated to the satisfaction of the 'oppressed' who thereby place themselves in the position of both judge and jury. In this 'reconciliation' 'pre-colonial communalism seems to be emphasised more' as a condition for reconciliation. (Frostin 1988:180)

Black theology, as has been stated, is born from antipathy, from a rejection of Christianity as it is expressed by the 'whites'. No logical or theological grounds are mentioned as being at the base of such rejection. Some disagreements with the 'whites' must now be rationalised to justify such a

rejection and this leads inevitably to dogmatic difference , for example, the relevance of the virgin birth , etc.

Conscientisation lets its pedagogical accent fall on the psychological aspects of the political, economic and social approach. Freire's concept of conscientisation is covertly put in place.

The above makes it clear that an emotional umbilical chord still binds black theology, black power and black consciousness together into a socio-economic-political movement using a vocabulary consisting of re-defined theological terms.

3.6.7 Limit situations

A fundamental message of black theology, according to Maimela (1987:96), is that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were aimed at the total liberation of humanity from all kinds of limitations, both spiritual and secular. This liberation is a dynamic historical process in which humans are given the promise, the possibility and power to overcome all the perverted human conditions this side of the grave. Thus humankind can work out its own salvation and has the power to overcome all perverted human conditions, apparently as Jesus Christ, using him as an example, had overcome the world. Limit-situations are denied any right to existence. In this Freire is followed. It is also a Pelagian approach.

This all-embracing conception of liberation imposes its own 'logic' and leads black theology 'logically' to accept a series of positions which are incompatible with the Christian

vision enunciated that the Bible which serves as the principal authority.

3.7 Some Weaknesses of black theology

3.7.1 Contextual exclusivity

A certain exclusivity is required for embracing black theology - an exclusive cultural or ethnic identity. As Bosch (1977:334) states :

'Theology must be contextual, that is true, but may it ever be exclusive? We have to ask in all seriousness whether the category ..people.. or ..nation.. may be the church's concern for liberation. ..People.. as cultural and ethnic entity is not a theological category and wherever it is made into such a category (as an ..ordinance of creation.. or ..God-given distinctive entity..) it cannot but lead to mutual exclusiveness which endangers the life of the church as the new community.'

Cone (1975:18) bears out the exclusivity postulated when he states that 'Black Theology is a theology of and for black people, an examination of their stories, tales and sayings... theology must uncover the structures and forms of black experience because the categories of interpretation must arise out of the thought forms of the black experience itself ...'

3.7.2 Rationalisation theology

The function of theology has been conceived as being restricted to criticising particular witnesses of faith with reference to whatever has been understood to constitute normative Christian witness (Ogden 1979:116). Theology has continued to be understood as a rationalisation of positions already taken rather than a critical reflection on such positions. This task of rationalisation has typically been expressed or implied by theologies of liberation. (:118).

Hence it is stated that there is a need ' for the liberation of theology, that is, the emancipation of theology itself from any such ideological function. This emancipation, urges liberation theology, can be effected only insofar as the prior option and commitment from which theology is done is not simply a believing acceptance of the Christian witness or even that together with a commitment to secularity but also a real and effective solidarity with the oppressed ... Only when theology is a reflection in and on the actual praxis of emancipation, in other words ... only when theology is a rationalisation of such praxis can itself be freed from being mere ideology of being misused as one ...' (Ogden 1979:119)

But, continues Ogden, this proposal of liberation theology is not a liberation of theology ' ... because (then) theology remains the rationalisation of certain positions instead of being critical reflection on their meaning and truth ... and this charge is hardly rendered groundless simply because the positions theology rationalises are those of the oppressed instead of the oppressors.' (Ogden 1979 :119).

One liberation theologian even proposed that 'Christians should not redefine social praxis by starting with the gospel message. They should do the opposite. They should seek out the historical import of the gospel by starting with social praxis.' (Ogden 1979:119). This is clearly one-sided attenuation of the gospel.

The real root of theology's historical bondage, says Ogden, is the underlying conception of its task as the rationalisation of positions already taken. ' and the only way in which it can be emancipated is by reconceiving its task instead as the critical reflection on such positions. Only insofar as theology is consistently conceived as such reflection ... can it be said that theology is really free.' (Ogden 1979:121)

This critical reflection is to be judged by the criteria of appropriateness and understandability using the apostolic norm.

'Theology can judge no position to be adequate that is not at once adequate as judged by its apostolic norm and understandable to human existence and reason. Because these criteria are not in serious question there is no reason to doubt that theology not only must but also can be freed from its historic bondage.' (Ogden 1979:122).

It is only by reflecting on these criteria of the apostolic norms, appropriateness and understandability that theology can be of service to any emancipating praxis.

Ogden goes on to say that ' while theological reflection is always free to result in positions reflecting the closest solidarity with the oppressed over against the oppressors it is not in this solidarity or in the praxis experience

of it that theology originates. On the contrary, the prior option and commitment from which theology springs are simply the prior option and commitment of any and all critical reflection, namely, human existence as such in its profound exigency for the truth that alone can make us free. It is because theology as such exists, above all, to respond to this deep human need for truth that its service to the praxis of emancipation can be only the indirect service of critically reflecting on the positions that such praxis implies ... this is the only service that a truly free theology is in a position to perform.' (1979:123)

Indeed, says Ogden in referring to liberation theology, 'there must be something strangely contradictory about a theology that explicitly talks about liberation only in such a way as to implicitly attest to its own bondage, politically or socially.' (:124).

3.7.3 Critique: Wagner

Brown (1987:104) refers to certain critiques by Wagner. Wagner, states Brown, believes that :

- i) the function of the church is to work individual reconciliation - class group-concerns is not part of its task,
- ii) priority must always be given to the salvation of souls,
- iii) Christ's activity is in the church; where two or three are gathered in his name,
- iv) the unity of the church is much more important than any socio-economic-political option. Such option will always be divisive,

v) liberation theology fails to take seriously the existence of evil supernatural forces and it attributes to human or natural causes such negative influences,

vi) liberation theology implies that salvation can be universally realised. It fails to explicitly warn non-believers of eternal damnation and so destroys the urgency and cogency of the gospel message.

If the above is accepted then the position of liberation theology and black theology is such that it must be totally rejected as a distortion or even betrayal of the gospel.

3.7.4 Critique: Ratzinger

Ratzinger (1984: 11 - 14) in a veritable *tour de force* points out the weaknesses and dangers of liberation theology. What follows below are in the main his critiques.

3.7.4.1 Theology for a class

The theology of liberation theology is one of class. As a result it must be critical on the basis of its classist viewpoint which it had adopted *a priori* and which has come to function as a determining principle. This makes dialogue with liberation theologians extremely difficult for these theologians start out with the idea, more or less consciously, that the viewpoint of the oppressed and the revolutionary class, which is their own, is the single true point of view. Theological criteria are thus relativised and subordinated to the imperatives of the class struggle. In this perspective orthodoxy, the right rule of faith, is substituted by the notion of orthopraxis as the criterion of the truth. This

praxis is the revolutionary praxis which thus becomes the supreme criterion of theological truth. The revolutionary praxis is part and parcel of the secular materialist base which intends changing the world.

3.7.4.2 Reductionist reading

This new hermeneutic inherent in liberation theology leads to an essentially political rereading of the Scriptures. Thus a major importance is given to the Exodus event in as much it is a liberation from political servitude. Likewise a political reading of the 'Magnificat' is proposed. The mistake is to make this one dimension the principal or exclusive component. This leads to a reductionist reading of the Bible. One thus places one in the perspective of a temporal messiahism which is one of the most radical expressions of secularisation to the Kingdom of God and its absorption into the immanence of human history.

3.7.4.3 Conscientised Salvation history

In giving such priority to the political dimension one is led above all to misunderstand the person of our Lord Jesus Christ and thus the specific character of salvation, that is, above all liberation from sin which is the source of all evils. Faith in the Incarnate Word, dead and risen for all men, is denied. In its place is substituted a figure of Jesus who is a kind of symbol who sums up in himself the requirements of the struggle of the oppressed. An exclusively political interpretation is thus given to the death of Christ. A conscientisation regarding the struggle as a struggle demanded by Jesus the Christ.

3.7.4.4 New Vocabulary

This brings about an inversion of symbols. For example, instead of seeing with St Paul a figure of baptism in the Exodus (1 Corinthians 10:1-2) some black theologians end up making it a symbol of the political liberation of the people. Likewise there is an inversion of symbols in the area of the Eucharist which is no longer to be understood as the real sacramental presence of the reconciling sacrifice and as the gift of the body and blood of Christ. For liberation theology it becomes a celebration of the people in their struggle. The Eucharist thus becomes the Eucharist for the class.

3.7.4.5 Inversion of morality: Violence

Mankind requires that this 'struggle' be fought in ways consistent with human dignity. That is why the systematic and deliberate recourse to blind violence - no matter from which side it comes - must be condemned. Violence begets violence and degrades man. It is only by making an appeal to the moral potential of the person and the constant need for interior conversion that social change will be brought about which will truly be in the service of man. The inversion of morality and structures is steeped in a materialistic anthropology which is incompatible with the dignity of mankind. The Christian cannot forget that it is only the Holy Spirit, who had been given to us, who is the source of every true renewal and that God is the Lord of history. Certainly the 'base groups' lack the necessary catechetical and theological preparation as well as the capacity for discernment.

3.7.4.6 Christianity: Essential elements

In its full representation of Christianity it is proper to emphasise those essential aspects which the theologies of liberation, in which black theology is included, tend to minimise or eliminate such as

- i) The transcendence and the gratuity of liberation in Jesus Christ.
- ii) The sovereignty of grace.
- iii) The true nature of the means of salvation.
- iv) The true meaning of ethics in which the distinction between good and evil is not relativised.
- v) The real meaning of sin.
- vi) The necessity of conversion.
- vii) The universality of the law of fraternal love.

3.7.4.7 Politics: sacralised idolatry

There must be guarded against the politicisation of existence, which, misunderstanding the entire meaning of the Kingdom of God and the transcendence of the person, begins to sacralise politics and betray the salvation-religion of the people in favour of the projects of the revolution.

Ratzinger (1984 :14) closes his critique by setting out the faith of the catholic church in the words of Pope Paul VI, some of which are quoted below:

' We profess our faith that the Kingdom of God ... is not of this world whose form is passing away, and that its growth cannot be confused with the progress of human

civilisation, of science, of human technology, but that it consists in knowing evermore deeply the unfathomable riches of Christ , to hope more strongly in things eternal, to respond evermore ardently to the love of God to spread evermore widely grace and holiness among men ...'

With this quotation I agree.

3.7.5 Heretical and Reductionist

'Liberation' has served as the metaphor for Christians anxious to promote their favourite liberation movement of which black theology is one. Even the WCC has committed its prestige and money to liberation movements against white governments in South Africa and its pervasive philosophy has become a solidarity-with-the-oppressed liberation theology. (Vree 1989:207)

A central motive of international Marxist-Christian dialogue is eschatology with particular attention to the Kingdom of God. Christians for Marxism have tried to expand the concept of the Kingdom into an earthly millennial society built in part upon human political action. The classical Pelagian heresy rears its head as salvation by works, not by grace only, is expounded. But a problem looms for black theology for

'The problem for any theology of liberation is to talk of salvation as a gift without inducing passivity and indifference to politics ... So Gutierréz's problem is twofold: How can man's political liberation be seen to be a part of a salvational process which finds fulfilment in God's kingdom without opening the door to Pelagianism? And how can one talk like a Christian out of one side of

one's mouth, and like a Pelagian out of the other, without choking on the law of non-contradiction'? (Vree 1989:211)

For Gutierrez salvation is contingent on man's prior action. Liberation is a precondition for salvation and liberation is another term for revolutionary socialism (Vree 1989:213) In the reductionist sense liberation becomes revolutionary socialism.

When Gutierrez says that ' The goal of theology and evangelisation is a socialist society, more just, free and human' (1973:274) liberation subserves a special interest not found in the biblical witness, to wit, socialism rather than God is presented as the liberator. The use of Scripture becomes notably tendentious and reductionist. To restrict theology to the historical socio-economic-political contexts, all elements of biblical revelation are by-passed and revealed theology becomes relativised while a conjectural theory, Marxism, is substituted as the absolute measure for man to live by. Henry (1989:200) mentions that 'Marxist exegesis of the Bible is selective and one-sided. Marxist exegesis of the Bible in no way deals with man's whole existence either in theory or practice; its hermeneutic is reductionistic and misleading. On the theoretical side, Marxism involves an uncritical denial of God, and thereby extends the alienation of man to the fundamental relationships of human existence by trying to suppress God-man relationships. On the practical level, Marxism ignores the fact that wherever its socialist program has triumphed, as in Eastern Europe, alienation does not in fact disappear. The highly prejudiced nature of the

Liberationist appeal for the socialist alternative is evident from its silence over Marxism's failure to achieve its promised liberation'.

Brown (1989:10-11) asks the question: From where do liberation theologians derive the right to call Marxist ideological analysis a theology at all? Using a number of presuppositions of varying reliability they

- a) Presuppose the existence of God. This is not derived from Marxism.
- b) Presuppose that he is God par excellence of the poor and oppressed and that he is on their side. 'The concept of oppression is not a biblical category - it is a Procrustean bed onto which to fit a mutilated gospel' (Brown 1989:10)

In fact these theologians have accepted another source of revelation. Neither *sola scriptura* nor reformation Protestantism nor the two sources of Tridentine Catholicism modified by the Second Vatican Council, namely scripture and sacred tradition. The primary source of 'revelation' for these theologies becomes the consciousness and experience of the oppressed classes and like many heresies it absolutises a non-biblical standard, that is, the feelings and experience of oppressed peoples alongside scripture and in lieu of tradition. To place such non-biblical standards on a par with Scripture is ultimately to deny the finality of Scripture and the efficacy of the faith claimed to be based on the Word. It denies the sovereignty and sufficiency of biblical revelation. (Brown 1989 :11)

Brown (1987:108) quotes that Novak unequivocally characterises liberation theology as being guilty of three heresies as follows: 'First, it places far too much hope in history.

Second, it places its hopes in a humanisation and sanctification of the world, the flesh and the devil, not through grace but through politics. Thirdly, it assumes that victims of oppression are innocent, good, the bearers of grace, rather than carriers of evils just as devastating as those of "oppressors".'

3.8 Overview.

In order not to be seen as a branch of theology merely derived from any existing orthodoxy or denomination, but rather as a substantive development, or movement, in theology, black theology, in tandem with liberation theologies, has used a generalised development.

In its unstructured non-systematic setting out of theological points of view black theology places the accent on socio-economic-political perspectives which is derived mainly from secondary sources that interpret Scripture with a hermeneutic predicated on secular points of departure. It does not use an *ad fontes* point of departure and thus a potential for heresy is widely opened up.

The generalised method used by black theology, which admittedly is based on a non-revelatory base, is discussed below.

a) The starting point is to construct a theology for the liberation of black persons who are seen to be poor and

oppressed. The poor and oppressed are seen as the elect of God.

- b) A philosophical base which could conceivably serve the purpose above, is sought. Marxist social analysis is appropriated for this function although it is anti-theology in essence.
- c) Some accommodation has to be arrived at between theology and Marxist anti-theology. The accommodation is found in adopting a secular base for society, namely historical Marxism with a socio-economic-political foundation.
- d) On this secular base a superstructure is erected in which theology is now located. In this superstructure theology necessity must be moulded to fit the secular materialist base adopted. The secular semi-Marxist base needs to be analysed. In particular the adoption and use of a philosophical base suggested by the religion-antagonistic Marxism. The inherent dichotomy in accepting such a base on which to found a theology from below certainly warrants suspicion.
- e) To be able to accept such a new constructed base in lieu of revelation, an epistemological break with revelational-based theologies becomes inevitable. Priority of place now is accorded the secular base in which, in turn, priority is accorded the poor and the oppressed. This is a reductionist approach.
- f) This reductionist base has to be legitimised by using the concept of contextuality. A theology for contextuality is postulated rather than a theology of contextuality. A new vocabulary is required. There is a danger that a contextual theology which is not primarily an outgrowth of a systematic study of the Bible simply becomes a coat hanger on which to hang a hypothesised theological approach. Such a

theology could become slanted in that it could either conflict with some parts of Scripture or completely neglect other parts thereof.

- g) To draw adherents from the targeted peoples to the acceptance of the attenuated theology a conscientisation of this theology for contextuality is necessary. An educational process which admits of no limit-situations is propagated.
- h) A new vocabulary becomes necessary to allay any fears that this theology might be an aberration. Is the conscientisation of necessity taught by such a theology a conscientisation leading towards Scripture-sensitivity or does it lead particularly towards a sensitivity for an hypothesised advanced teaching not effectively substantiated by Scripture? It is the latter.

With a development which ignores revelation in theology the road to heresy gapes dangerously wide. Indeed the further one moves along this road the nearer one gets to heresy until, like lemmings, one is rushed over the cliff into the dark and deadly waters of heresy.

An epitheton theology unless it is continually compared with Scripture as the norm and uses Scripture as a warrant for its teachings is on the slippery road to heresy . It needs to turn around and not let a genitive-objective approach with regard to its descriptive epitheton direct its theology.

Having considered aspects of black theology pertinent to this study it now becomes necessary in this study also to consider pertinent aspect of apartheid theology. This is the subject of the next chapter.

APARTHEID THEOLOGY

"After all, apartheid is but a microcosm of a world-wide situation."

(Boesak 1982:xii : Apartheid is a Heresy)

4.1 Hypothesis

'About 42% of the White population of the Republic of South Africa are members of the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk). As a result of its missionary endeavours, 14 younger Churches were established amongst the Black, Brown and Asian population groups within and beyond the borders of the Republic. At present these Churches have a total of 1640367 adherents - already about 400 000 more than the number of Whites belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church.

The Dutch Reformed Church is a direct continuation of the Reformed religion of the first White colonists who came to South Africa in 1652. As the Church representing the greater majority of Dutch-speaking (and later Afrikaans-speaking) citizens of South Africa, its very existence is inseverable from the whole of our country's chequered history'. (DRC Synod 19774:5)

In the Republic of South Africa the Dutch Reformed Church it is the major Afrikaans speaking church. The other two Afrikaans speaking Reformed Churches in South Africa, namely,

the Hervormde Kerk and the Gereformeerde Kerk, will, as the occasion arises, also be referred to.

In this study the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), also known as 'Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk' (NGK) is considered to be the main exponent of the apartheid theology and is taken as the prototype of a church expounding this theology.

The abbreviations 'DRC' and 'NGK' will be used interchangeably.

4.2 Introduction

In the approximately 350 years of its existence the community at the southern tip of Africa had varied forms of government each one of which had left different legacies to the Republic of South Africa. A brief overview of the constitutional and political policies over this period is indicated.

4.2.1 Pre-Apartheid period (1652 - 1948)

The DRC at the Cape fell within the church bounds of the classis of Amsterdam, in the Netherlands. However, factually it was under the control, and the secular responsibility, of the 'Here Sewentien' of the Dutch East Indian Company (The VOC).

The local ministers of religion in the Cape were servants of the state under the control of the Political Council ('Politieke Raad') created by Jan van Riebeeck, the first Dutch governor of the Cape Halfway station. The interest of the church and the interest of the state were closely

interwoven with the result that it was unthinkable that the church and the state would exist and grow as two separate communities of interest. (Hanekom 1957: 99)

In 1671, only about 20 years after the Dutch settlement at the Cape, a certain Commissioner van Rhee de prohibited marriage between the European on the one hand and the freed slaves who were full-blooded non-Europeans on the other. However, coloured persons, those of mixed blood, were allowed to intermarry with the Europeans. Racial differentiation in matters matrimonial became a norm prescribed by the state.

The evolutionary development of this van Rhee de legislation (which incorporated words to the effect that intermarriage, or mixing, with non-Christian women or female slaves was a disgrace for Christian people), was to be predicted. Bearing in mind the close relationship between church and state it was not surprising that the result of this legislation was that among persons of European extraction who took their religion seriously and who desired to remain true to both their religion and the state, it became accepted as sin and an abomination to mix their blood with the blood of the indigenous black race by way of connubial union (Scholtz 1967:164-165). The injunction in Deuteronomy 7:3 as regards inter-marriage with indigenous races was taken as the theological guide-line. Galatians 3: 28 was not considered and hence the hermeneutic was reduced to a racial basis with the key being a type of 'white-racial' theology.

One has further to bear in mind that the Church and the State at this stage in time, in the 17th century, had different agendas: The state discriminated against persons on a racial

basis prohibiting the intermarriage of 'races'. Ethnic origin as evidenced by skin pigment was legislated into a criterion for distinction between peoples. The church however made no distinction between its baptised members at all whether they be of different races or not. (Botha 1986:23 -24)

The legal position in the Colony in the late 18th century was that slaves who had been baptised had to be emancipated. Undoubtedly, the intention of this legislation was wholesome but the practice resulting from it was unfortunate from the perspective of church growth: slave owners were loath to permit their Christian slaves to be baptised. In this sense then the legislation became counterproductive. Unbaptised slaves were not integrated into the church community. (cf Vos 1911:137). This legislation was repealed in 1813.

While on the one hand one finds an increasing awareness of a growing nationhood among the white population one finds on the other hand an increasing disenchantment with the rule of the white congregations over the missionary churches. This created some tension among the missionaries. The missionaries felt that they would prefer to have their own congregations. The 19th century was a time when the slogan of H Venn (1724-1797) of 'self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches' was the accepted model and it became the foundation of their missionary cause (Bosch 1991:331). As the result of pressure by the missionaries the Cape synod agreed to a scheme for the establishment of a separate mission Church (Botha 1986:64). Smith is of the opinion that the separation which had developed between white and non-white in the socio-welfare context, also initially influenced their relationships in the Church context. In the Church the separation between the two

groupings became more purposeful and pronounced to such an extent that it became a constant factor in the daily organisation of Church life'. (my translation) (Smith 1973:165). Conscientisation towards a 'white nationhood' had led to organisational and liturgical division.

Correctly Botha (1986:65) mentions that the division of Church life into different congregations based on their skin pigment developed into a principle leading to a specific peoples theology. That is, a theology for the accommodation of the perspectives of specific peoples. This kind of approach would form the ground for the development of more than one such theology.

With the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899 - 1902) the British Colonial constitutional and political phase proper was inaugurated for South Africa. This war had as one of its consequences that it acted as a strong stimulus for a conscientisation towards an awareness of a greater nationalism among the Afrikaner.

The Union of South Africa was established in 1910.

The greater awareness of a growing common nationalism lead to an attempt in 1911 to unify the different Dutch Reformed Synods in the separate provinces of the Union of South Africa. However, the fact that the Cape Synod counted among its members coloured people led to the failure of this attempt. Scholtz quotes Dr W Nicol as stating that 'the resuscitated ghost of racial equality made Church councils balk at the idea of a Synodal Agreement in which many congregations would not be represented'. (my translation). (Scholtz 1979: 70). A

vaunted racial superiority based on skin pigmentation became a divisive element in the DRC. A theology for non-miscegenation is becoming a theology for racial separation.

The effect of this failure towards attaining unity in 1911 was that skin pigment was to become a constant divisive factor. This divisive skin-pigmentation-element is based on both tradition and prejudice. These two constant factors were slowly becoming more deeply imbedded in the ethos of the white Afrikaner community. This was undoubtedly assisted by an increasing awareness of Afrikaner nationalism, a nationalism that was fuelled by the fires lit by the subjugation of once free and independent nations by a foreign power, by Great Britain.

4.2.2 Epistemological break: Separateness

World War 1 which commenced scarcely 13 years after the subjugation of the two independent Republics in South Africa, released strong emotional feelings of anti-imperialism and anti-British colonialism. Afrikaner Nationalism started to flower.

Professor Brookes is quoted as saying in 1923 that: 'By adopting the formula of differential development, we oppose ourselves to repression. We wish not to hold back but to develop the black race ... we are spared the invidious task of pronouncing upon the quality or inferiority of the Bantu as compared with the Europeans. All that we are asked to believe is that they are different, and that each ethos is capable of an

independent development, however much influenced by the other.' (In Gerdener 1950:100)

The desire for political independence from Britain was given an impetus when the Union of South Africa obtained the status of a Dominion within the British Commonwealth in 1934. The road was opening up for more and greater degrees of freedom in both the political and religious spheres.

The inauguration of new political dispensations among nations and peoples of the world after World War 11 had spilled over into the Dominion. The rising tide of nationalism seemed to be a sign of the times, particularly in Europe's Germany.

In South Africa Afrikaner nationalism feared drowning in the sea of the different separate black nations. Racial mixing was still frowned upon but not to the extent that it was at that time in some European countries (notably Germany). To maintain the purity of one's race had become a sign of the times for the European . In this regard Gerdener (1951:91) referring to the Acts of the Council of Churches in 1935 stated that the traditional fear of the Afrikaner, of the white, being placed on an equal footing with the black, has its origin in the abhorrence of racial miscegenation; that the church is against such miscegenation; that nations had the right to be themselves and the right to endeavour to better themselves. While the church expresses itself against the social assimilation in the sense of disregarding the racial and colour differences between white and black in the daily social intercourse, it wants to encourage social differentiation and cultural segregation to the common advantage of both race groups. (my translation).

Black own institutions would have to be developed. General Smuts had some far-reaching views on the subject: 'We have felt more and more that if we are to solve our native question it is useless to try to govern black and white in the same system, to subject them to the same institutions of government and legislation. They are different not only in colour but in minds and in political capacity, and their political institutions should be different, while always proceeding on the basis of self-government ... we are now trying to lay down a policy of keeping them apart as much as possible in our institutions. In land ownership, settlement and forms of government we are trying to keep them apart, and in that way laying down in outline a general policy which it may take a hundred years to work out, but which in the end may be the solution of our native problem. Thus in South Africa you will have in the long run large areas cultivated by blacks and governed by blacks, where they will look after themselves in all their forms of living and development, while in the rest of the country you will have your white communities, which will govern themselves separately according to the accepted European principles'. (1940:18)

The seed for abrogating international law which states that a person is automatically a citizen of the country of ones birth, is being sown. An epistemological break with international law is in the offing.

Smuts speaking at the Rhodes Memorial Lectures at Oxford in 1929 talked about the Union of South Africa's native (black) policy :

'A race which could survive the immemorial practise of the witch doctor and the slave trader, and preserve its inherent simplicity and sweetness of disposition, must have some very fine moral qualities. The African easily forgets past troubles and does not anticipate future troubles. This happy-go-lucky disposition is a great asset, but it has also its drawbacks. There is no inward incentive to improvement, there is no persistent effort in construction, and there is complete absorption in the present, its joys and sorrows. Wine, women, and song in their African forms remain the great consolations of life. No indigenous religion has been evolved, no literature, no art since the magnificent promise of the cave-men and the South African petroglyphist, no architecture since Zimbabwe (if that is African). Enough for the Africans the simple joys of village life, the dance, the tom-tom, the communal excitement of forms of fighting which cause little bloodshed'. (1940:38)

Smuts was saying that wherever Europeans and natives live in the same country it will mean having separate parallel institutions for the two. In the new plan he envisages that there will be what is called in South Africa 'segregation' - separate institutions for the two elements of the population, living in their own separate areas. Separate institutions involve territorial segregation of the white and black. While they live mixed up together it is not practicable to segregate them into separate institutions of their own. (ibid:48).

Smuts goes on to say that in these great matters of race, colour, and culture, residential separation and parallel institutions alone can do justice to the ideals of both

sections of the population. The system is accepted and welcomed by the vast majority of natives ; but it is resented by a small educated minority who claim ' equal rights ' with the whites. It is, however, evident that the proper place of the educated minority of the natives is with the rest of their people, of whom they are the natural leaders, and from whom they should not in any way be dissociated.(Smuts 1940:49)

Smuts, a political figure of international standing during the World War II years, bases the separation between the black peoples and the Europeans on the diversity of their social and cultural practises, their different political capacities and on the subsistence economic world-view of the native population. For him there was an irreconcilability between these cultures and their respective political capacities at the time that he delivered his speech. Smuts who was Prime Minister lost the 1948 election to the National Party , the party that fathered the apartheid era.

It appears that E.G. Jansen , later Governor-general of the Union of South Africa, correctly echoed the sentiment of most whites when he states that there is unanimity among them on four points, namely (my translation):

- a) there must be no assimilation or social equality which would erase colour boundaries,
- b) miscegenation must be curbed,
- c) the government is not to follow a policy which would result in the black people taking over the reigns of government and
- d) the white will have to shoulder the burden for the welfare and development of the separate black nations. (Jansen 1944:15)

The policy as regards the black man in the past, had been dictated from overseas for more than 100 years, and had always been disapproved of by the white Afrikaners. Jansen stresses that simplistic comparisons between the land areas of the blacks with that of the whites are misleading. They are misleading because they do not take into account that the white land area are mostly arid desert-like and agriculturally inferior while the land areas of the black nations are in the main situated in the best and most fertile areas of the country as a whole. (Jansen 1944:19)

The Church gradually accepted segregation as a policy to be followed to the extent that in 1939 it requested the Government to introduce legislation to reserve separate residential areas for white and black. This request was unsuccessful (cf Die Burger: 20 March 1939). Nevertheless this request was acceded to step by step over the period 1940 to 1961 under a National Party government which had taken power in 1948.

4.2.3 In sum

Various governments at the Cape each left a legacy to the development of a political and church ethos.

The van Rhee de legislation passed in 1671 prohibited intermarriage between white and black (non-white). This was based on an interpretation of Deuteronomy 7:23. The church, though its interests were closely interwoven with that of the state, made no liturgical or pastoral distinction between its members from the various race groups.

Legislation passed in 1790 emancipated those slaves that had been baptised. However, for the church this proved to be counter-productive as many owners of slaves declined to have their slaves baptised. This legislation was repealed about 23 years later most probably due to pressure by the church.

Since 1880 a more marked conscientisation process commenced. An own free white nation became an ideal. In this liberating milieu missionary churches among the black people became more independent from white church rule. Yet in spite of this conscientisation and liberating milieu an attempt in 1911 to unify the Afrikaans churches into one Synod broke down. The reason being that the 'constant factor' of skin pigmentation, based on tradition and prejudice, made assimilation of other races difficult.

To maintain race purity became a major European world-view at the time and up to about the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. This ethnic-reductionist world-view in a reinforcing sense spilled over into the Afrikaans churches.

An epistemological break with accepted international legal principles occurred based on the proclaimed unique contextual situation pertaining in the land. In order to make this new situation acceptable to the rank and file who were mainly Christian believers a conscientisation policy could be expected to be inaugurated.

4.3 Some Post Republic developments

A year after the Cottesloe Consultation had taken place in 1960, the Afrikaner's political ideal of a political independent nation was realised when the Dominion of South Africa became the Republic of South Africa and the political umbilical cord with Britain severed.

It is against this background that further discussion of the apartheid theology will take place.

4.3.1 Introduction

Apartheid has been represented to people not conversant with the Afrikaans language as 'apart' and 'hate' with the implied meaning of 'set people apart in order to hate them more vehemently'! Although this meaning of the word has been used politically to good effect against the supporters of this policy, that is not the meaning of the word 'apartheid' at all. The meaning is 'separateness'. These two words, apartheid and separateness, can be used interchangeably. This will appear from what follows below.

Loubser(1987:29) mentions that in 1926 the National Party of General Hertzog introduced the 'Colour bar' law. The Cape Synod supported it, but warned that the foundations on which a society should be based had in the first instance to be ethical and moral and could not include matters such as physical descent, colour or race. The foundation of society could not as yet become based on the secular.

After a second church conference, a delegation was sent to the Prime Minister to inform him and to explain to him the import of decisions taken. Thus the custom originated of holding such church conferences and thereafter seeking to influence the government. Borchartd considers that the idea of cultural superiority rather than of racial superiority dominated. Until this stage the tendency to ideologise was also absent (Borchartd 1986:82). For the church there was grave doubt whether segregation was to be practised. The base of society had to remain theological. However in the years following on 1926 all this was to change drastically.

4.3.2 Epistemological break

In 1935 the Council of Churches for the first time adopted a missionary policy thereby by confirming a decision formulated previously by the Free State. This missionary policy was in line with the 'three-selves' policy of Venn and Anderson: missionary work among the Bantu (black native population) had to lead to self-supporting, self governing and self expanding Bantu churches (Bosch 1991:307). Bantu churches had to be sovereign in their own spheres.

In the light of the above and convinced that the above is acceptable to the NGK, Dr Verwoerd stated : 'Forget the word 'Apartheid'. Forget any term by which to describe a policy, and just ask yourselves what you would do under such circumstances. ... There are three possibilities. One is that the white people of South Africa should sacrifice themselves, their possessions and the generations to come ...

Another way is to bluff yourselves by making apparently smaller concession; hoping to stave off the evil day, so that your children or grandchildren may suffer, but not you ... In fact, this second method of solving the problem, solves nothing at all. It only means that the struggle for power goes on and on, while the white ruler of today lets things develop until he gives in as before, or finds himself at last fighting in the last, or nearly last, ditch for self preservation. There is another method (of living together as separate nations), however, and that is to take your example from the nations: live and let live - apart'. (Raath 1994:8-9)

Dr Verwoerd continued to stress the necessity for the development of a Commonwealth of Nations in South Africa as part of his vision of the future: 'We rather wish each of our population groups to be controlled and governed by themselves, as nations are. Then they can co-operate as in a commonwealth or in an economic association of nations where necessary. Where is the evil in this? Or in the fact that in the transitory stage the guardian must needs keep his ward in hand and teach him and guide him and check him? This is separate development.'

South Africa will proceed in all honesty and fairness. to seek albeit by necessity, through a process of gradualness, peace, prosperity and justice for all by following the model of the nations which in this modern world means political independence coupled with economic interdependence'. (Raath 1994:8) (cf Pelser 1963:477-478; Scholtz 1974:115-116)

Clearly 'Apartheid' was intended as a policy of 'separate development' which placed equal emphasis on both words, that is, equal but separate development. In a sense one discerns a continuation of the views of Smuts and Jansen in that such a policy was but the continuation of the historic development that had taken place in the sub-continent over the past three centuries.

4.3.3 Contextual conscientisation

Dr Verwoerd was convinced that the problem of inter-racial coexistence in South Africa is unique. He sketched the historical situation as follows concluding that this unique situation called for a unique solution, a solution in the context of the South African reality:

'More than 300 years ago two population groups, equally foreign to South Africa, converged in rather small numbers on what was practically empty country. Neither colonised another man's country or robbed him by invasion and oppression. Each settled and gradually extended his settlement and in the main each sought a different part to become his own. There were clashes and frontier wars and border areas were conquered, but since then the white man has added and is adding, more land to the bantu areas from what he himself settled and intended to be his own.'

'The white man therefore has not only an undoubted stake in and right to the land which he developed into a modern industrial state from denuded veld and empty valleys and isolated mountains, but according to all principles of morality it was his, is his and must remain his'. (Raath 1994:6)

The peoples of South Africa had become dependent on one another. The process of economic interdependence in South Africa had made the country the common home of races differing so radically from one another, even in their ethnic diversity, that

a) there can be no question of easy assimilation, and yet

b) so intertwined that

'the European and native communities should be accepted as being permanent and as being parts of the same big (economic) machine' In response to this dilemma a two-stream policy of racial and ethnic coexistence was proposed. (Moodie 1975: 262-263)

The ideological context for the 'separateness' aspect of apartheid theory is not racism. Rather it is the ethnic and cultural differences which are so crucial to Afrikaner Christian Nationalism, indeed to most nationalities, that are the ideological content of the theory. To describe the context in which Afrikaner Christian Nationalism breathes is a rather difficult exercise. It would be descriptive of the Christian Afrikaner nationalist as a group to refer to it as consisting of persons identifiably set apart by colour, language, political persuasion and citizenship, that is, those persons for whom apartheid had become a way of life. They can be referred to as apartheid Afrikaners, or separatist Afrikaners. This does not however mean that there were no apartheid English speaking South Africans.

Seen from the political perspective the broad grouping of black South Africans consist of many different 'nations' or 'peoples'. It is the racial superiority paradigm of previous

pre-apartheid white polity which has led to black anti-white nationalism, 'the monster which may still perhaps destroy all the best things in Africa' (Minister De Wet Nel: Hansard 1959, col. 6007). And, continues de Wet Nel, the best antidote to such racial nationalism is to foster positive cultural nationalism

' ... the spiritual treasures, the cultural treasures of a People. These are the fine things which have united other Peoples in the world. Thus we say that our basis of approach is that the Bantu too will be linked together by traditional and emotional bonds, by their own language, their own culture, their ethnic particularities'. [Hansard 1959, col. 6018]. 'The lesson we have learnt from history during the past three hundred years is that these ethnic groups, the whites as well as the Bantu, sought their greatest fulfilment, their greatest happiness and the best mutual relations on the basis of separate and individual development . . . the only basis on which peace, happiness and mutual confidence could be built up. [Hansard 1959, col. 6002)

Basic to the argument of the minister is the underlying conviction that a division of peoples should occur along the lines of ethnicity, language and culture. That which is determined for the white as the best way of life, should serve as a measure by which other cultures and peoples are to be united. This is so obviously correct in the eyes of Afrikaner culture , that other ethnic groups in South Africa are expected unhesitatingly also to accept this way of life for themselves.

4.3.4 Point of Departure: Liberative intent

When Dr. Verwoerd became Prime Minister of South Africa in 1958, he openly recognised the injustice of continued white domination especially since other states in Africa were rapidly moving toward independence. He explained that the division, or separation, of the peoples in South Africa mainly into ethnic groups had as its philosophical base two things;

a) that the white man should keep control of the daily life in his own settled areas and

b) that the black peoples, in that era seen as wards of the white, should have every opportunity to progress according to his/her own personal ability in their own settled areas

(Moodie 1975: 264)

In many states in post-independent Black Africa the upheavals can be traced to inadequacies in economic and personnel capabilities to cope with a meaningful economic and political independence. Dr Verwoerd said in 1960 that the South African policy of separate development is much-maligned; yet in its implementation it can ensure maximum localisation of economy and of the public sector to ensure meaningful political independence and stability. 'This is what we are trying to do

in our Bantu Homelands. We are trying to make the masses ripe for greater responsibility in every sphere of life, and when the time comes when they have reached full emancipation, the masses will then be democratically organised and experienced and not only a group of leaders. That is why the white man in Africa sees the development of the Black neighbour as something which he must guide from the bottom to the top instead of only giving privileges to the top while those at the bottom are still unripe for the new dispensation. That could

lead to oppression and dictatorship.' (In De Villiers 1976:138-139)

It is clear from the foregoing that the principle of physical separation (apartheid) was decidedly not simply an entrenchment of white domination by means of racial segregation, but was to insure that the black "nations" in South Africa develop along their own ethnic lines. This would then enable them to become "Peoples" in exactly the sense in which Afrikaners became a "People". Having been liberated from British political domination and now in a position to determine their own socio-economic-political future the point of departure for the Afrikaner was the liberation of the black peoples in an evolutionary fashion to eventually attain the same objectives of socio-economic-political self-determination.

4.3.5 Religious-political base

According to Dr Verwoerd his political philosophy, apartheid, has a commendable and necessary intent of liberation from any white domination as its prime purpose. He considered it to be a morally just and ethically defensible policy. The philosophical base of apartheid however was based mainly on pre-World War II world-views. As the peoples in South Africa were divided into mainly ethnic groups, separate development has as its philosophical base the control of their own daily lives by the different ethnic groups themselves.

There is a politico-religious content to apartheid. The custom which had originated of holding church conferences and thereafter seeking to influence the government probably had a

great impetus in giving political apartheid a religious content. It became a pseudo-religious political policy. This led to a concept of 'an ordained divine task': The apartheid Afrikaner is to ensure that every one living in South Africa has a right to live and to develop in an own national community.

The supporters of the government were mainly white confessing to be Christians. The government of the day found it expedient to add a religious dimension to its policy of separate development. The "*corpus christianum*" conviction comes boldly to the fore where minister de Wet Nel (Hansard 1959, cols. 6001-6008) says: 'The philosophy of life (world-view) of the settled white population in South Africa, both English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking in regard to the colour or racial problem ... rests on three main basic principles ... The first is that God has given a divine task and calling to every People in the world which dare not be destroyed or denied by anyone. The second is that every People in the world, of whatever race or colour just like every individual, has an inherent right to live and to develop. Every People is entitled to the right of self-preservation. In the third place, it is our deep conviction that the personal and national ideals of every individual and of every ethnic group can best be developed within its own national community. Only then will the other groups feel that they are not being endangered ... This is the philosophic basis of the policy of apartheid ... To our People this is not a mere abstraction which hangs in the air. It is a divine task which has to be implemented and fulfilled systematically.

(My underlining)

The development, seen as divinely determined, had to be holistic and morally acceptable to Christian Afrikaners. Hence in order to give the black peoples sufficient opportunities freely to realise their national aspirations, they must be provided with separate areas which would be administered and developed initially for them and eventually by them as self-ruling native areas in which the whites may have no rights of citizenship. The accepted motivation was that the white trustee knows what is best for the black ward. In the pre-World War II world milieu this approach was considered to be acceptable for any government to take on the basis of decisions taken by the League of Nations.

This view of a future ethnic and racial development set out above is the foundation of the policy of separate development which was designed to culminate in a commonwealth of nations wherein member states would be politically independent and economically interdependent. In a sense it was outdated as political developments had passed the 1919 concepts of the League of Nations by. In another sense it was premature in espousing the idea of a kind of European Economic Community: it was neither fish nor fowl. This policy can be summarised as having as its guiding principle 'bring together those which belong together through inner conviction'. ('bring bymekaar wat uit innerlike oortuiging by mekaar hoort')

These principles became divine tasks. The ideal of separateness for all nations based on that which the apartheid Afrikaner wishes to attain for himself was stressed. Here the separatist Afrikaner projects his own longing of

nationhood onto other nations with the presupposition that their convictions in this regard are similar.

De Wet Nel promised black South Africans what Afrikaner Nationalist intellectuals had fought so hard for after Union, namely, cultural, economic, and political independence. He believed that the policy of separate development created 'for the Bantu the possibility of bringing to fullest fruition his personal and national ideals within his own ethnic sphere' (binne eie volkskring). He believed this to be the case for such was the experience of the Afrikaner People, based upon its sacred history and the principles of Christian Nationalism. He added a pregnant phrase "We grant to the Bantu," he said "what we demand for ourselves" (Hansard 1959 Col. 6023).

An inversion of reality had taken place: The task of socio-economic-political emancipation had become divine and a base from which to project a theology for apartheid. The humanistic socio-economic-political ideal had become a theological measure for man to live by.

An inverted religious conviction is becoming absolutised.

Understandably in the post World War 11 milieu, with many newly independent states of the Third World being members of the United Nations Organisation, this policy met with resistance. The members of the British commonwealth were also opposed to it. In their opposition prejudice played a decisive role. It was said that if they had not known what they thought of apartheid already they would have been almost convinced of its fair practise in South Africa.

Internally as the developmental aspect of apartheid was more stressed and more applied five nations, after consulting their electorates, accepted the principle of a Commonwealth of South African Nations. For Ciskei, Transkei, Venda and Bophuthatswana the policy of political separateness and economic interdependence seemed to be the best political solution for the South African problematic.

Separateness, apartheid, became legally enforced in South Africa.

4.3.6 Conscientisation

In 1872 the Afrikaans speaking community made up about three-quarters of the population of the Cape. The British government began the process of Anglicising the Cape population, that is, the language, education and the legal system. In this atmosphere the 'Di Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners' (The Association of True Afrikaners) was established in Paarl in 1875 and commenced published an Afrikaans newspaper, 'Di Afrikaanse Patriot'. Under the guidance of S J du Toit, the 'Afrikanerbond' was established. This Association of Afrikaans speakers played an important role in the political development and groupings in the Cape (Scholtz 1970:162). The Afrikaans speaking people were being made conscious of their heritage and of the threat posed thereto by Anglicisation. In 1880 one thus finds an increasingly conscientised nationhood among the whites. This was further brought about by the successful opposition of the whites during the First Anglo-Boer War to a take over of their country by British sympathisers.

With Verwoerd the National party began to move slowly in the direction laid out in the policy statement of the 1944 Volkskongres. The main principles of the Bill for the Promotion of Bantu Self Government had been approved by the 'People' at the 1944 Volkskongres.: 'In order to give the natives sufficient opportunities freely to realise their national aspirations, they must be provided with separate areas which will be administered and developed initially for them and eventually by them as self-ruling native areas in which the whites may have no rights of citizenship.' (Inspan, 1944 quoted in Moodie 1975:273). The above is said in the conviction that 'the trustee knows what is best for the ward'.

In the world milieu of the 1950's this approach was still an acceptable one for any government to take. Today, however, after the passage of a further half century in which many black nations became autonomous governments in the world this approach can with facile ease be condemned as paternalistic.

In the era of the middle 20th century the task of the trustee went further. This separate development under trusteeship was intended at a later stage to develop into full nationhood and self-determination for the wards of their future.

'If the white man is entitled to separate national existence, what right have we to deny that these Peoples have a right to it also? Let us be honest and fair. Moreover nationalism is one of the forces which puts into motion the best things in the spirit of a human being. Nationalism is one of the forces which has led to the most beautiful deeds of idealism and sacrifice and inspiration. Should the Bantu not have it? It is the

nationalist who has learned to appreciate the cultural assets of other Peoples ... It will always be my task not only to respect these things of the Bantu, but to assist them to develop it as something beautiful and something which is in the interests of South Africa. It is our task to create channels along which these matters may develop, so that we may have co-operation. instead of racial clashes. (Verwoerd: Hansard 1959 col. 6007)

Minister de Wet Nel, referring to self-determination said underlined the importance of development: 'The form of

government of every nation is the locomotive which takes the whole community along the road of development ... By means of this Bill we want to ... give back to the Bantu this lifeblood of development ... because we believe the Bantu should develop ... Every People in the world finds its highest expression and fulfilment in managing its own affairs and in the creation of a material and spiritual heritage for its posterity. We want to give the Bantu that right also. The demand for self-determination on the part of the non-white nations is one of the outstanding features of the past decade ... These matters are the steam-power of a People's soul and no safety-valve in the world can smother them forever. The late Dr. Malan described it pithily ... once when he said that one might just as well stop the south east gale with a sieve as suppress the national sentiment of a People. That applies to the Bantu also. (Hansard 1959 col 6006)

4.3.7 Demise of political apartheid

The co-operation sought between independent 'Black' states and the 'White' state would be as between equals. The British Commonwealth concept would serve as a paradigm.

Dr Verwoerd addressed the conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in 1960. The following was remarked: 'It was a

brilliant performance. The conference listened fascinated. Apartheid is of course dr Verwoerd's favourite subject. Moreover he is a man of merciless logic and of celestial ordination. How could such a man budge "even a millimetre"?

In that flying hour apartheid became a beautiful, loving policy. Had not dr Verwoerd earlier interrupted Sir Abubaker's reference to South Africa's Blacks as "our people" with a protest "but they are my people!" "If we had not known what we thought of apartheid already 'said one astonished delegate afterwards, ' we would have been almost convinced.' (Sunday Times, London, 19 March 1961 quoted by Raath 1994:9)

The following could be apposite to the approach of certain foreign nations in this regard. Concerning the British occupation of the Cape in the 19th century the British historian James wrote in his 'Oceana' as quoted by Michel Davit, a former member of the British Parliament in 'The Boer Fight for Freedom' :

'We justified our conquest to ourselves by taking away the character of the conquered and we constituted ourselves the champions of the coloured races against them, as if they were oppressors and robbers. We had treated them unfairly as well as unwisely and we never

forgive those whom we have injured.' (Quoted in Raath 1994:46)

During negotiations in preparation for the acceptance of independence by the Ciskei in 1981, there was agreement between Chief Minister Lennox Sebe and his cabinet and the Republican Working Committee for Independence that the time was now ripe to work constructively towards a Confederation of States in South Africa. A Declaration of Intent was drawn up for signing and publication in the Government Gazette. This was a document produced jointly by the Government of the Republic of South Africa and that of the Ciskei. Several further interstate agreements were also published and agreed to. The last two sentences of the Declaration of Intent reads as follows: 'Both Governments are convinced that a prosperous stable and peaceful Southern African region will be obtained through formal co-operation in a confederation of sovereign independent states ... we are desirous of reaffirming our commitment to continue to work towards the establishment of such a confederation of states in Southern Africa and such institutions as may be appropriate to further this objective.' (Raath 1994:55)

The elected governments of Transkei, Bophutatswana and Venda, by taking the independence offered by the Republic, echoed similar sentiments. This sentiment was directly in conflict with world opinion at the time. The fact that this sentiment was held in spite of world opinion must indicate the depth of conviction held by the peoples flaunting such world opinion.

This Commonwealth perception of Dr Verwoerd met with resistance not the least among the members of the apartheid

Afrikaners who now found, as Dr Malan had predicted, that complete separateness was a pipe dream. Minister Koornhof, said in an address to the National Press Club in Washington in 1979 that 'apartheid is dead'. The accent was to be placed on co-operation and development. R J Raath , a former Director-general of the Department of Co-operation and Development mentions what Dr Koornhof said, namely, 'I am seeking with my Government to create a happy and meaningful life and therefore a new blueprint for all in South Africa. We are presently in a new era. Apartheid, as you have come to know it in the United States of America and other parts of the world is dying and is dead. We are in a period of reform.' (Raath 1994:38)

However one finds that while for political reasons apartheid was being rejected externally it was in the process of being accepted internally. The beginning of the end of the apartheid paradigm has been signalled.

4.4 Church polity

The prohibition of mixed marriages by Commissioner van Rhee in 1671 coupled to the biblical injunction of obedience to the secular authorities led thereto that to enter into a mixed marriage was seen as sinful. In any event the mixing of blood was seen as an abomination prohibited by the Bible and so a new addition was made to the list of sins, namely racially mixed marriages, without any specific biblically based warrant therefor. A secular legal requirement was made into a theological requirement, that is, into a pseudo-theological issue.

4.4.1 Exodus paradigm

The Great trek, which took place more or less between 1834 and 1838, was an organised physical emigration from the Cape Colony by thousands of Afrikaans speaking peoples living on the frontiers of the colony. (Mulder 1970:125). For them the situation on the eastern Cape frontier with its continuous Xhosa wars and lack of assistance from the British Colonial Government became unbearable (Mulder 1970:126,128). Three aspects of the British policy in particular swayed most to emigrate:

- i) the emancipation of the slaves and the putting of the black socially on an equal social par with the white. (Comment: A white social elitism was accepted as being ordained)
- ii) the lack of political self-government. An own state was the heart's desire and
- iii) the point of view taken by the Afrikaners that there is to be a differentiation, on a religious basis, between the Christian and the largely non-Christian black races (Mulder 1970:130)

Thus, for socio-economic-political reasons combined with a pseudo-religious base became the motivation for the Great Trek, the 'Exodus'.

The ministers of religion at the Cape were in the main not sympathetic towards the Voortrekkers, rather the contrary (van der Watt 1989: 106). Even in this climate the Voortrekkers sought their own politically liberative emancipation (van der Watt 1989:108). For the Afrikaans speaking community the Great Trek is seen as an heroic period out of which developed its national identity. (van der Watt 1989:127). Gerdener (1951:48) mentions that there was a certain group of fanatics who saw

the Trek as a type of Exodus out of Egypt to the promised land which they named Stream of the Nile, (Nylstroom) and called themselves Jerusalem pilgrims (Jerusalemgangers). (My translation). However Gerdener's point of view of a 'group of fanatics' is not totally shared by others. Pretorius (1977: 343-346) makes the following observations. (See the diverse authorities quoted there by him in support. My paraphrasing, underlining and translation)

i) As a pioneer community the hardships and struggles undergone by the Voortrekkers and their descendants led thereto that they saw themselves as a prototype of the ancient Israel. Parallels were easily constructed.

ii) The reading material of the Afrikaner in the interior of the country was mainly limited to the Bible. This they intensely studied and drew parallels between themselves and the Israelites. These parallels were built up into a supposed spiritual resemblance. This was no formal systematic theology but more of an experiential interpretational nature; the interpretation of their experience of the workings of God in their existence.

iii) The consciousness of being an elect people, surrounded on all sides by barbarian heathens, was immensely strengthened by the Great Trek. Just as the Israelites had left Egypt, so the Boers (Afrikaners) now emigrated from the Cape Colony, the land of oppression ... Were they not the new chosen people whom a Pharaoh ... had cast out of the land ? They were imbued with the belief that they were re-enacting the story of Exodus.

iv) In 1871 at Rustenburg at a meeting of Boers (Afrikaners) they were addressed by their State President as the fathers of Israel who had trekked (emigrated) from the land of

Egypt to escape the hated yoke of the Pharaoh, the British Government.

In essence the white Afrikaners believed that God was on their side against the oppressor, Britain typifying Pharaoh, and that he had led them out of the house of bondage. This world view made them conscious of being God's elect based on the analogy they drew between themselves and Israel.

4.4.2 Praxis: Epistemological break

The Cape Synod of 1857 took a watershed decision. Former heathen members of the Church would henceforth enjoy their Christian privileges in a building or place separate from those of the other members of the congregation. (Acta Sinodi 1857 quoted in Hofmeyr, Millard Froneman 1991:123). Botha (1986:60) deduced inter alia the following from the decision, that:

- a) The principle of integration remains acceptable as being Scriptural and in agreement with the Church's official tradition.
- b) A practical concession was made to accommodate certain prejudices of the some Europeans.
- c) As a practical arrangement and implementation of good order in the Church, the Lord's Supper was to be celebrated within the bounds of the same congregation to the separate ethnic groups without any intention of creating separate congregations.
- d) The decision was intended to be of a temporary duration only

e) The guiding purpose of the decision was in essence to advance the cause of Jesus Christ among the heathen. (My translation)

It is important to note that an epistemological break had in effect occurred:

- i) the sanctioning of a certain ethnic prejudice of one Christian group against another
- ii) the sanctioning, based on colour, of separate liturgical celebrations of a sacrament.

What had occurred with the decision of the Synod, was the sanctioning of ethnic prejudice in principle. This would have a major effect on the future ecclesiastic and theological development of the Church.

An era of intense missionary activity was taking place at the Cape. In particular, missionaries of the London Missionary Society were active in Christianising the heathen outside the boundaries of the Colony. These missionaries were imbued with religious fervour and for them the injunction of Galatians 3:28 was a sure guiding beacon. In harmony with the world-view of the time they expounded in a practical and positive manner 'equality, fraternity and liberty'. This they did to such good purpose that their liberal world-view of equality, fraternity and liberty and their practise of social integration, such as for example, their marriages to non-white women, created tension in the white community. This community still abhorred both the ideas of being equal to the non-whites and of mixed marriages, that is, marriages with non-white persons (Van der Watt 1976:51) (my translation). Galatians had been placed over against Deuteronomy. Nevertheless all factors and all developments that could lead to the existence of *de facto*

separate congregations for the non-whites free of white oversight were counteracted by both the State and the Church (Botha 1986:43). This ran counter to the missionary doctrine of Venn and Anderson being the missionary world-view at the time. The DRC was becoming the odd man out.

However with the missionary societies in the main concentrating on the non-whites in their efforts, separate congregations developed *de facto*. In this *de facto* development the 'colour bar' did not play a role to speak of in either the origination or the establishment of these congregations. The situation was simply that initially both the white (European) and the black (non-European) peoples were objects for christianising by the mission societies. Europeans often attended the joint church services held, while the non-Europeans continued to be members of the Dutch Reformed Church. (Van der Walt 1963:394-395)

After the Colony became a British possession at the beginning of the 19th century, the strong DRC church connection with Netherlands was severed. With many other denominations now entering the Colony , the Dutch Reformed Church, with its 14 congregations (Van der Watt 1989:26), in order to maintain its identity and leading position, convened its First General Assembly in 1824 (Van der Watt 1989:84). A Synodal system was put in place.

4.4.3 Contextuality

The post Second Anglo-Boer war socio-economic-political struggle of the vanquished Afrikaners to an extent dictated

the attitude of the DRC to assist its members, the Afrikaans speaking community. Why was this so?

McCord gives his description of the Anglo-Boer War: 'It was total war, nobody and nothing was excluded. Every possible form of force was used mercilessly. The land was systematically razed, denuded and ravaged of everything that could sustain human life. Non-combatants, old men, women and children, were rounded up and made prisoners of war. To the very last, as the letter of Milner to Chamberlain, dated November 7, 1901, shows ... Milner refused to release any women and children from the camps, though the death rate remained appalling. Hunger was used as a weapon on women and children in an endeavour to compel wives and mothers to urge their husbands and sons to surrender. Those in camps received only half rations if they had men still fighting. Others on the veld were stripped of what they had and left to their fate ... The diabolic cruelty of the semi-barbarian and barbarian was used against the South Africans ... International law was ignored.' (1952:313)

The following statistics indicate the extent of the catastrophe that hit the two 'Boer' Republics, the South African Republic and the Republic of the Orange Free State. 'The total number of citizens of the two Republics was about 250,000. The fate of these by the end of the war was about as follows: 72 % of the nation had perished or were prisoners in the hands of the enemy. 14% of the nation had perished. 25 % of the women and children and old men who had been interned in the concentration camps perished. (The death rate at one stage in the concentration camps was 34%). In total 26,251 women and

children had died, and also 1,700 males, in only 18 months. In addition to this the two Republics had been turned into a "waste" and "a desert" with "death and destruction everywhere" to quote the Encyclopaedia Britannica and Lord Milner. (By comparison: 27% was the mortality in camps where the Japanese held their prisoners of war in World War II. 4% was the mortality in German and Italian camps for the prisoners of war held by them in World War II.) (McCord 1952:315)

General Smuts in a speech at Leyden University, Holland, on receiving the honorary LL.D-degree in June, 1948, (The Star : June 18, 1948), said: ' In World War II no part of Europe was so devastated, root and branch, as the Transvaal and the Orange Free State in the South African War. From the battlefield our people returned to a country in ruins - devastated and burned until only nature remained.'

But for the Afrikaner even more suffering was to come. The depression which commenced in 1929 caused the maize price and the price of wool to fall dramatically. Insolvencies among the farmers also increased dramatically. Black workers lost their jobs. Economic collapse occurred in every sector of the economy. Over and above the harsh economic situation an uncustomary severe drought lasted over the years 1932-1933. The white farming community was hit the hardest. Understandably the economic situation overshadowed the political arena. (Liebenberg 1970:371)

The Afrikaner had suffered terribly and the DRC had to alleviate this misery.

4.4.4 Epistemology

A Special Meeting of the Council of Churches held in January 1915 at Bloemfontein stressed two particular aims of the Church. These were to advance both the interests of the Kingdom of God and the interests of the Afrikaner peoples or nation. The motive of national unity of the Afrikaner peoples and the motive of advancing the Kingdom of God are placed in streams running parallel to one another. They are to be complimentary to one another with the intention that there could be no possible conflict between the two motives (Botha 1986:93). Nevertheless the base of society which had formerly been theological-religious now included the secular, the socio-economic-political well-being and the particular interests of the Afrikaner. A change in the base of Afrikaner society is taking place; not as yet a change of the base. A new epistemology comes to the fore.

It became clear in the 1920's that an ecumenical rift was developing between the DRC and the English and black Churches. Increasing criticism from outside the Union of South Africa was also apparent. An attempt had therefore to be made to provide the policy of segregation (the word apartheid had not yet been coined) with an acceptable theological grounding. An acceptable philosophical theory had to be sought to justify the new change in the base structure of Christian society.

In June 1929 the DRC of the Orange Free State held a missionary congress at Kroonstad. A whole range of matters concerning the cultural welfare of the black inhabitants in South Africa, matters such as their education and language, social and religious requirements were reassessed. The congress declared that it believed that God's Word taught that

the 'the native was a human being of similar nature to us and that his soul was equal worth to any other human being in the eyes of God. He has e same right as we to claim all rights and privileges which are in principle related to Christian civilisation.' A national motif was , however, added: 'These equal rights and equal opportunities have to be exercised by the Bantu in his own community.' The report was accepted at the Free State Synod of 1931 and became the basis for the historical 'Missionary Policy' which was adopted by the Council of Churches in 1935. (Acts of the Free State Synod 1931 quoted by Loubser 1987:29)

4.4.5 Conscientisation

The suffering occasioned by the Second Anglo-Boer War with its concentration camps, and the British razed earth policy had hardly been forgotten when the Great Depression struck. In 1931 poor white people, driven from their farms, flocked to the greater towns and there created a social and economic problem with political undertones. The DRC as the major Afrikaans speaking denomination was faced with the problem of accommodating these people in the best way available. It was necessary to conscientise them by giving them a sense of belonging and the assurance that somebody cared. Thus for the DRC the question in 1934 now became: 'How can our white people maintain their identify without causing damage to the spreading of the Gospel to the other racial groups'. Geldenhuys (1982:34) underlines this when he says 'whoever misses this point, misunderstands the DRC at its heart.' The traditional missionary policy with its segregation at church level of necessity had now to be extended to the political and social level'.

In 1935 the Church openly declared its opposition to racial mixing and to anything which could bring this about. However, importantly, the Church did not begrudge in the slightest the black and coloured such honourable social status as they could obtain by their own endeavours. In the eyes of the Church, each and every nation has the undoubted freedom to be itself, to develop itself and better itself. While the Church declared its opposition to social egalitarianism, in the sense of such egalitarianism ignoring race and colour differences between black and white in their daily interaction, the Church earnestly desired to encourage and advance social differentiation and cultural segregation for the benefit of all the groups. (Botha 1986:123)

The Church stated that 'The policy of guardianship as is presently practised must gradually develop into a policy of independence and self-determination for the Coloured and native in his own society, school and church. All separate treatment is understood and meant by the DRC to promote life and independence. The fruits of Christian civilisation and the blessing of the Gospel are fully granted to the non-white section of the society.'

(Loubser 1987:31)

This sounds very much like the declamations of the later apartheid politicians.

The point of departure, the liberative intent thereof is stressed. It could serve as a theological palliative for conscientising those who would doubt whether the Word of God was being expounded by government and the church. In terms of the Missionary Policy that was adopted by the Council of Churches in 1935, social equality was rejected because it was

believed to lead to the moral decline of both white and black. All that was considered necessary was that blacks should be granted 'all opportunities to which they had a claim and needed or had the right to enjoy, becoming economically self-supporting.' (Botha 1984:232). One discerns an embryo of the later to be developed apartheid philosophy.

This 1935 document by the Council of Churches should be seen as an explanation of the policy of the DRC rather than a new directive for missionary work. It was to form the basis of the missionary policy to be accepted in 1935 by the Federal Council of Churches. As such it was to determine the relationship with the 'daughter churches' in future and also became the 'corner stone' of the apartheid policy. (Botha 1980:16). 'That which later was worked out with elaborate 'scriptural proofs' was initially simply called 'our missionary policy'. (Smith 1984:202)

4.4.6 Epistemology: Base and superstructure

Even before 1935 an attempt had been made to provide this policy of separateness with a theoretical basis (Botha 1984:254). As a result of ecumenical conferences in the 1920s, it became clear that a widening rift was developing between the English-speaking and Black churches on the one hand and the DRC on the other. Increasing criticism from the outside compelled the DRC to justify its view. This then culminated in the 'Missionary Policy' of 1935 which was approved by the Council of Churches and afterwards endorsed by all the participating synods of the DRC, In the missionary policy the diversity of 'colour, culture and language groups' was acknowledged as a fact, as well as the unity of humanity with

reference to Acts 17:26 : 'From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.' Here is found the scheme of unity in diversity which up to 1986 functioned as the premise of the DRC's theory of nations.

Loubser insightfully comments that 'What actually had happened was that the Reformed principle of the institutional unity of the church, established in the previous century, gave way to a view derived from the practice of segregation. The concession of 1857 (of separate liturgical practise) now became the guiding principle for determining the structure of the church and the structure of the society in which it operated ... The ecclesiastical sanctioning of the segregation policy had the effect of allaying the people's uncertainty about its legitimacy.' (1987:32). (My underlining).

Praxis , tradition as practised, now takes pride of place over theological doctrine. A base for Christian Afrikaner society has been determined albeit pseudo-theological, that is, a theology incorporating secular-traditional concepts. A theology of apartheid had become a theology for apartheid.

The publication of '*Koers in Krisis*' (A Route in Crisis - my translation - in 1935, 1940 and 1941 in three Volumes) led to the application of the Kuyperian brand of Calvinism to the crisis situation. L J du Plessis (1940:228) writes: 'Calvinism does not have its point of departure in ancient humanism and modern individualism, but the Creation of God Almighty and in the Revelation thereof in the Holy Scripture, and also in Christ and in human history and

experience. According to this a unity is acknowledged of reality and of humanity in the creational purpose of God and of the re-creation of the mystical body of Christ; but this is acknowledged by the God-given diversity of reality and humanity in its temporal appearance. In this appearance humanity is manifested as differentiated in groups, of races and nations and of societies of different kinds and also in unequal individuals.' (My underlining).

The matter is taken further in the editorial of *Koers in Krisis* (Volume 3 : 1941:ix-x). 'Whoever acknowledges God as sovereign also acknowledges principles such as the unity of the world and its diversity: the diversity of the people and the unity of humanity ... Now we should not think that these principles have already been worked out and only await human application. Man must discover them in Scripture and in nature and in the world and in his life. Take, for example, the principle of segregation which is through-and-through Calvinistic and had to be discovered in our situation.'

The principle of segregation becomes a divine ordinance of creation.

4.4.6.1 Reductive exegesis: Morality

Loubser (1987:38) after an overview of articles in *Koers in Krisis* and *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel*, concludes that two issues are clear:

a) Calvinism in many cases became a synonym for nationalism in the sense that both understood the collective experience of the Afrikaner as normative

b) Calvinism also acquired the connotation of "orthodoxy". It was represented as the "old Reformed doctrine" as revealed in Scripture and anyone who did not comply with this ran the risk of being accused of liberalism and errancy.

'These two phantoms were invoked to intimidate free-thinkers whenever the cause of the people was threatened ... ' (Loubser 1987:38).

Koers in Krisis became the Calvinistic blueprint for a new South Africa. It provided a moral basis for the idea of apartheid. Formerly there was a degree of healthy tension between neighbourly love and patriotism which kept extremists in check. This tension was now inhibited by the (perceived) biblical sanction to love one's own people. And an attenuated/reductive biblical exegesis arises.

The morality of patriotic apartheid, the love for one's own people, becomes the base on which theological apartheid is founded. This love was to spill over into the secular socio-economic-political arena. On this pseudo-theological base of society a superstructure, in which theology is further to be developed, is constructed. This theology of necessity has to be constructed in accord with the pseudo-theological apartheid forming the base of Christian Afrikaner society.

4.4.6.2 Comment

Loubser (1987:47) concludes that 'the popularity of Kuyper's theology was to reach its climax in South Africa:

a) The apartheid paradigm was placed within a framework of principles (Comment: theological principles).

- b) The people (on a selective basis) were seen as a sovereign sphere , normative in itself. (Comment: As the elect of God).
- c) The concept of creation ordinances gained popularity in exegetical arguments with the 'principle of diversity' being the most important of such creative ordinances.
- d) Semi-religious nationalistic concepts such as, for example, a national calling of a divine nature, were now incorporated into a Kuyperian system of principles. This served to stimulate the production of an idealised history. (Comment: Conscientising a pseudo-theology).
- e) The whole system acquired the label 'Christian-National' ... using the Kuyperian precedent of ... 'Christian-historical'.

Much debate had taken place concerning the concept 'Christian-National'. Are the words of equal import? Or does Christian modify national or does national modify Christian? In Nazi-Germany the latter was seen to be the case. It seems that this had become the situation with regard to apartheid theology also. This approach could arguably be seen as being heretical and, if so, Moodie would then be justified in calling a theology for apartheid a heresy.

An important addition to the above is the following contribution by Moodie (1975:i). 'The roots of the Afrikaner doctrine of election grew out of the Calvinism of Paul Kruger and the experience of the Boer War ... The divine agent of the Afrikaner civil faith is a Christian and Calvinist active sovereign God, who calls the elect, who promises and who brings forth life from death in the course of history. The object of his saving activity -

The Afrikaner People - is not a church, a community of the sacred, however; it is a whole nation with its distinct language and culture, its own history and special destiny.'

Moodie makes the bold statement: 'This Christian heresy managed to achieve a theological and practical *modus vivendi* with the avowedly orthodox Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa.' (1975: ix -x). For Moodie then Christian heresy would entail:

- a) the perception of a special divine election
- b) acting as a divine agent of the Lord
- c) that the object of the divine saving activity, a people, is not a Church. It is a whole group of people forming a nation which has a special destiny.

A theological epistemological break with the western world-view has taken place. A new epistemology becomes necessary which in turn requires a morally acceptable philosophical base which is to be attained via conscientisation. The contextual secular circumstances dictate that theological policy converges with the political policy. A more secular-oriented base for society is found in a socio-economic-political approach coupled to and in tandem with a pseudo-theological approach. The theology of apartheid has become the theology for apartheid. The objective genitive approach is espoused.

One has to note that the base of this society is not totally secular. It has become a slightly skewed theological base. The possibility is thus retained for changing the base of society into a proper theological one by excising possible

skewing. This makes this base different from a societal base structured on the anti-religious principles of Marxism.

4.5 Apartheid theology developments (1938 - 1948)

The difference between segregation and apartheid becomes more visible. Segregation (or pragmatic apartheid) had already been sanctioned by the DRC in 1935 by its adoption of its Missionary policy. Segregation as a pragmatic praxis of a racial policy had been advocated by all white political parties. This segregation in turn was a development from the qualified discrimination practised in the Cape and of the policy of no political equality espoused in the North. In this period apartheid developed and became a policy characterised by absolute and radical separation between the races.

When World War II broke out a wave of Afrikaner nationalism, aided and abetted by an animosity towards the British, infiltrated the DRC. The centenary celebrations of the Great Trek held in 1938 added a further impetus to this. During this war one found that in some DRC congregations ministers discriminated against their own DRC members who had volunteered as soldiers and wore the identifying red tabs ('rooi lissie') on their shoulders. This was an expression of a 'laager' mentality which not only excluded non-whites from communal church services but even whites who were perceived to be anti-Afrikaner, that is, those who did not ascribe to the now new pseudo-theologian base of society. These whites were seen as 'traitors' to the Afrikaner cause albeit that this cause was largely undefined. Afrikaner nationalism grew using British imperialism as its foil and became more theologically exclusive.

As regards conscientisation Botha (1980:18) insightfully mentions that ' To my mind the role of organisations ... fades into insignificance compared with the overwhelming role of the Church in preparing the community to accept and vote for a socio-political programme that would revolutionise South African life.' In this conscientisation role of the church one should include its role in the economic sphere directed towards the advancement of the white congregations.

4.5.1 Reductionist hermeneutic

In the turmoil occasioned by World War II the Afrikaner felt a need to be assured that Afrikaner actions were in accordance with biblical principles. J G Strydom said in *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel*, October 1938 at page 308 that : 'There are people who falsely maintain on biblical grounds that apartheid is wrong. We, however, believe on the basis of God's word that he willed nations to be apart ...' (In Loubser 1987:53).

Afrikaner academics and theologians turned to the task of assuring the Afrikaner of his undoubted right to be separate. Texts such as Colossians 3:11 and Galatians 3:28, advanced in support of equality or integration, were spiritualised. Texts to 'prove' that the Word of God endorses and requires 'separateness' were advanced . These included texts such as Genesis 9:1 ("Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth); Genesis 11:9 (That is why it was called Babel - That is, Babylon; Babel sounds like the Hebrew for confused - because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.); Joshua 23:12 ("But if you turn away and ally

yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, then you may be sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the LORD your God has given you.); Acts 17:26 (From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live); Revelation 7:9 (After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb) Revelation 21:24 (The nations will walk by its light ... The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it.); Genesis 1:22 (God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.')

4.5.2 Du Toit

In proposing an apartheid hermeneutic professor JD du Toit (1944:7 -17) played a major role. One of his contributions will be considered, namely that in 'Inspan' in 1944. What follows is my translation of selected portions of the article unless otherwise indicated.

The Bible as a whole is taken to demonstrate that separateness is in agreement with Holy Scripture. Here one finds right at the beginning of creation that God created divisions- he separated waters from waters. He is *Hammabdil* the 'Separator'. The whole first Chapter of Genesis is witness hereto.

Although God created all nations from one man, from one blood, Adam and Eve, nevertheless he created 'nations' and determined the times for them and the exact places where they should live (Acts 17:26). They should multiply and fill the earth. This injunction was again repeated literally after the flood: Multiply and fill the earth. Trek from here and become nations. Thus this is interpreted that they should become separate nations.

But human wisdom decided differently. The lineage of Set mixed with that of Cain. The giants came from a mixture of Sons of God and human womanhood. Violence erupted and the Flood came as punishment. After the flood the resistance to God's injunction became worse. At Sinear the builders of the tower of Babel gathered together and decided to trek no further. Let us become one and stay together, one nation, one language. So confusion of languages came about so that they could not understand one another. And they were scattered over the face of the earth. God was the great 'Separator' of nations.

Du Toit continues stating that the Great Trek was a power determined by God. It is in accordance with the plan of God evinced at Babel. Even the Trekkers were loath to trek and wanted to stay together - God decided otherwise. If they did not trek they would have opposed the order of God. This is also how Dr A Kuyper viewed the Trek.

In the increase of nations one should distinguish between a Divine factor and a Human factor. Firstly at Babel: God scattered the nations. Secondly after the flood: the nations divided after the flood and the table of Nations is found in

Genesis 10. Each nation has a calling which calling remains such until the end of time.

It becomes abundantly clear, says du Toit, that nations have to look after their own interest over against the spirit of making all one nation, this is a Babylonian spirit, a god-defying spirit.

Concerning the humanist attitude of equalisation between white and coloured having as its objective the assimilation of nations using the oft quoted Colossians 3:11 (Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all) the following. The fact is, says du Toit, that the Greek and the Jew and the uncircumcised and the Scythian, and even the slave in a sense, are still with us !! Galatians 3:28 (There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus) in spite we are still male and female!! The answer of course is that IN CHRIST that we are one. Those spiritually in Christ are spiritually one although the differences still exist among them on this earth.

Now du Toit turns to the world of black settlement. Here barbarism was common and had its highest triumphs. The fact is that black persons differ from all other nations. Now this is not some terrible thing at all! For narrow minded and stupid people this is a perplexing fact. But it is completely natural. It ought to be. Also among the black people one finds a diversity of human world views and a pluriform of cultures and ways of life. It can be said that they evince a curious type of human nature.

He returns to the aspect of the Great Trek and says that the Trekkers were armed with a conviction which had its origin in a higher power:

- i) They believed that God in his providence had called nations into being.
- ii) Nations were called into existence in a miraculous way and that this would not be repealed.
- iii) They were fully convinced that they as a nation that had to have a continuous existence in order to proclaim this miracle of God until the end of time.
- iv) They had a divine calling. The light dimmed in the North had to be rekindled in the south.
- v) They were convinced that the Great Trek was according to God's ordination.
- vi) They were convinced that the black person was of an own type and that out of or into their existential circumstances no Dutch or English culture is to be inculcated.
- vii) They grew to believe that the black man should not become moulded into a Dutch or English Christianity. In the Christian church they would represent their own type of Christianity.

Based on the above we, says du Toit, decide on no equalisation and no miscegenation.

Thus two conclusions (Loubser 1987:57 refers to them as principles) are made: Firstly, that which God has joined together no man should put asunder. This is the essence of our plea for the unity of the people. Secondly, we (the Afrikaners) may not join together that which God had separated. In pluriformity the counsel of God is realised. The

higher unity based in Christ is of a spiritual nature. Therefore no equality and no miscegenation is to be practised.

Regarding equalisation, du Toit opines that this is the Babylonian plan which 'God himself frustrated'. Uncreative uniformity does not exist among nations for example. Some nations have a Christian culture and others a heathen culture. We have also groupings of white, black yellow races, says de Toit. These are not simply cosmetic differences - there are different spiritual predispositions.

Regarding miscegenation he mentions that it is interesting to note that the policy of apartheid set out above is usually found where Protestantism is the major faith persuasion. 'Where the Roman Catholic persuasion is the major one among primitive coloured races, a policy of social equality and assimilation. Holy Scripture is against all unnatural mixing. (Deuteronomy 22:9-11). We have to note that God created Eva (Genesis 2:18) as a suitable helper. A union such as Van Der Kemp had with a slave woman is unsuitable (she is unsuitable as a helper) not to call it unnatural.

In any event the vaunted equality is but a fiction, opines du Toit. In a footnote Du Toit (1944:17 note 2) refers to what Booker Washington a Negro leader said (My translation) : 'In all things purely social we can be separated as the fingers of the hand which nevertheless form one hand, and yet in all matters essential for common and mutual progress we can be one.'

Du Toit continues as says that indeed we should take to heart the following indications. Under the influence of an original

undeveloped civilisation which weakens the quest for the natural order of things and also under the influence of their individual idiosyncrasies something unnatural develops which can easily manifest itself in the anti-natural, especially in the times we now live in. In our times the similarities are seen more than the dissimilarities. More stress is placed on egalitarianism than on the diversity; present humanity wants to place all things on an equal footing.

However, says du Toit, Afrikaners must act as proper trustees towards the black man. Fortunately our government had done more for the black man than was done in the rest of Africa. We ought to see our calling as a divine calling and pray that we be granted the wisdom by him to fulfil our calling.

So far du Toit.

Comment:

In the above overview some time was spent reviewing the points made by du Toit (Totius). In his treatment of the contribution of Totius to an apartheid hermeneutic, Loubser was too facile. By doing this he lost much of the nuance which is necessary for a fuller understanding of the NGK approach to and interpretation of apartheid in 1944.

What Totius in effect did was to reduce, for the consumption of the Afrikaner, the demands of Scripture to separation-by-divine-ordinance demands coupled to an Afrikaner eclectic exclusivity vis-a-vis the black people in South Africa.

4.5.2.1 Another contribution: Groenewald

Another important contribution was that of Prof E P Groenewald (1947: 41-67). Groenewald underlines seven principles from which he makes several inferences. His approach and the seven principles are summarised briefly below.

It is fortunate, says Groenewald, that scripture is rich in pronouncements supporting the decisions of the Church Volkskongres 1944 held in Johannesburg regarding apartheid. From these pronouncements we can distil directives from which to formulate principles.

Firstly, Scripture teaches the unity of the human species: Twice the human race originated from a single human pair - at creation and after the flood. The unity of the race is self evident.

Secondly, the division of the human species into races, peoples and tongues was a conscious act of God: The majesty of God is so exalted that no one can glorify him as his majesty demands. Therefore God specifically willed a diversity of peoples and nations.

Comment: This argument is not only a *non sequitur* but also presumes to know the mind of God.

Groenewald quotes Calvin in relation to Acts 17:26 (From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live) as stating that just as

an army unit where each company and section has its own position, so also human beings have been placed on earth in such a fashion that each and every nation is included within its determined boundaries. And, says Groenewald, on the day of Pentecost the separation between existing nations is not abolished but made firmer as the Holy Spirit in future would have the Gospel proclaimed to different nations.

Comment: This argument does not convince. The declaration of the Gospel in different languages (dialects) does not support an argument that different nations have of necessity to exist separately in perpetuity.

Thirdly, the Lord's will is that people living apart should maintain their apartheid: It is unthinkable that the Lord would have determined (*laat ontstaan*) the existence of separate nations for no other reason but so that they, as time goes by, would again be unified and be integrated (*saamsmelt*).

Comment: This is an argument from the unknown to the unknown!

Fourthly, the history of Israel indicates that a nation which radically segregates itself can be used by God for a sublime calling. Thus only nations who keep their identity can comply with God's ultimate plan (*bestemming*).

Comment: This does not convince. It is a non-sequitur. Heathen nations can also be used to fulfil God's plan at a particular time.

Fifthly, it appears that blood purity and nation-separateness (nasie-apartheid) was never deemed to be of secondary importance only.

Comment: This is a conclusion not borne out by his argument. This is apparently based on the Old Testament and covertly the Afrikaner nation is being equated to Israel. In any event in the New Testament these aspects were never of primary importance either, rather to the contrary.

Sixthly, where mixing, that is integration and inter-marriage did take place, says Groenewald, it was according to God's will but as exceptions to the rule only.

Comment: The consistency of his argumentation, if any, is difficult to follow. If such inter-marriage is sinful, the question is whether God makes exceptions to sin. This particular 'sin' becomes a special kind of sin acceptable to God?

Seventhly, Apartheid applies to all spheres of life. Total apartheid in all spheres of life, in particular, at national, social and religious levels is in line with Scripture. This we know because of the complete separation between good and evil.

Comment: The application by analogy of the difference between the concepts of good and evil and the separation of nations in all spheres of life is not convincing.

Further, says Groenewald, as regards separation on the national level, that is it is implied that nations will continue to exist as separate nations. Galatians 3:28 is not applicable as an argument for unity among nations. It refers

to the community of faith which all peoples, without distinction, share in Jesus Christ.

As regards social apartheid, says Groenewald, the separation of nations is accepted by Jesus. He makes no pronouncement for the social integration of Jews and Samaritans.

Comment: This is an conclusion derived from silence, from something that Jesus Christ did not say. It is not convincing.

As regards religious (*godsdiensstige*) apartheid: National, social and religious boundaries continue to exist even between Christians of different nations. As regards matthew 15:26 (He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.") Groenewald quotes Adolf Schlatter with approval where he, Schlater, states that Jesus sees between her as a Canaanite woman and Israel a divide (*grens*) which cannot be abrogated. There exist a difference determined by God which cannot be wiped out.

Comment: It seems that an irreconcilability even in Jesus Christ is proclaimed by this point of view. This is not only unconvincing it is unacceptable.

Eighthly, God rewards people who respect his ordained apartheid. To this rule there are exceptions. For instance Rahab and Ruth and Timothy. In these cases God allowed mixing and let it become a blessing. But these exceptions only prove the rule.

Comment: Why cannot matters in South Africa, taken as 'exceptions', not also prove the rule? Does God make law-

giving rules and then abrogate them as inapplicable in such-and-such a case? This argument of Groenwald is not convincing.

Ninthly, continues Groeneald, it is in Christ that spiritual unity is created. In spite of physical diversity all believers from all nations, peoples, rank and class and share community in Christ and are brothers and sisters in Christ. They are citizens of two worlds or realms: the heavenly and the earthly. The natural separations still exist. That is, a one-world-Christendom is established but not a one-world Christian peoples.

Tenthly, stronger nations have an obligation towards weaker nations to assist them. In the case of South Africa the white people have the black people as its wards, in line with Galatians 4:2. But this trusteeship is of limited duration. It ends when the ward reaches majority. The black peoples should be grateful for this caring trusteeship.

Loubser (1987: 69) remarks on the above that behind these lofty ideas there is a hidden bias. The 'inferior' nation surely cannot be denied the right to choose its guardian. A preliminary hermeneutic is discerned by Loubser:

- a) A people's (reductive) hermeneutic is used. As a result a meaning linking a national component to the text is read into the Bible where other readers might not so read it into the text.
- b) From that which the Bible treats as pure facts, moral norms are derived and appropriated to certain identifiable people.
- c) That which the Bible teaches about individuals is made applicable to nations. This hermeneutical principle fits

neatly into the idea of the nation as being the "collective" individual of romantic nationalism and that of Hegel.

- d) The communion of believers is identified relative to and in terms of the nation.
- e) The unity of ALL believers from different nations is seen as an 'invisible' unity. The biblical tension between being 'in the world' and being 'not of the world' is thus weakened by too much emphasis on the 'being in the world'. (Loubser 1987: 69)

Comment:

Concerning Groenewald, it seems that his hermeneutic culminates in the Afrikaners being a 'chosen nation' ordained by God to be irreconcilably separate from others, especially separate from the black South Africans. His argument is in essence a conscientisation in a contextual situation especially for inculcating the idea of a chosen nation. The injunction in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 23:7) that after the third generation even foreigners were allowed into the assembly of God is conveniently not taken into account or remarked upon.

4.6 Apartheid established (1948 - 1960)

The National party was swept to power by the 1948 elections held in the Dominion of South Africa.

In an Afrikaner political milieu in 1950 the Church Congress of the NG Gefedereerde en Sendingkerke on which also served representatives of the Hervormde and Gereformeerde Churches, *inter alia* declared at Bloemfontein (my translation) that

Congress firmly believes and wants to underline that the Word of God evinces the fundamental principles of apartheid, such as unity in diversity, divine calling and destiny. Therefore separate churches and schools for white and black nations must be promoted. The chief and main calling of the Church remains the proclamation of the Gospel and the application thereof in all spheres of life.

The Congress of the Federal Missionary Council held in Bloemfontein was followed in 1951 by the meeting of the Synod of the DRC (Hofmeyr et al. 1991:193)(my translation) where the following were accepted *inter alia*:

- a) That racial apartheid is the principle which accepts separate development of races in the political, economic, social and church domains. (Comment: A pseudo-theological approach is advanced)
- b) God determined the separate existence of peoples and nations. (Comment: A national hermeneutic is presented)
- c) Concerning mixed marriages it was considered that where in contracting a marriage the principle of separateness which was instituted by God is held in contempt and the Godly requirement of an inner conformity is ignored, a holy principle is mutilated.(Comment: Once more a pseudo-theological approach is advanced)
- d) The endeavours to assimilate the native, coloureds and whites so that the cultural norms of the white population is to serve as basis of such unity, is to be condemned .

These aspects now become the base of Christian Afrikaner society. The Church had now laid down its blueprint for a total approach to apartheid. But even Dr Malan, the Prime Minister at the time, thought this to be impractical especially as far as economic apartheid was concerned and

stressed that it was not the policy of his government. (Loubser 1978:78). The church had now decidedly opted for a secular pseudo-theological base for society and itself.

In 1954 the Transvaal Synod decided to appoint an ad hoc committee to draft a Missionary Policy for the church. The report of the ad hoc committee was completed in 1956. While it is acknowledged that practical circumstances played a large part in the missionary policy of the DRC this does not suggest that the policy does not depend on the principles accepted. The accent now falls more upon racial relations within the church rather than on the church itself. The objective genitival use of the epitheton, apartheid, is now apparent. Theology no longer plays the decisive role as the base of society. A reversal of roles had taken place. The epitheton has usurped the decisive role in the couplet apartheid theology. Theology as such becomes subservient to the concretised conceptualised epitheton.

The scriptural acknowledgement of pluralism in creation and in the world of nations and the pluriform approach to the concept church by Calvinism which leaves room for the existence of separate national churches from the ideological foundation of these principles. In this kairos time for the DRC Abraham Kuyper still had a great influence on the theological thought of the NGK and, it seems, played a major role in the ad hoc committee's report. According to its policy statement the NGK missionary policy is in essence that separate churches can be scripturally justified on account of cultural and language differences; however, membership of a church or the right to attend a particular church is determined by practical considerations. Each local church council has the right to

decide separately thereupon. (Lombaard 1981:146-147). The Report of the Council of the DRC on racial Segregation (1956) in its doctrinal aspects stating its principles in regard to the above had as its main features that (See Hofmeyr et al 1991: 206 -208):

- a) It is with serious reservations that the church can identify itself with the struggle for equality and unity in this world. True unity can be found only in Jesus Christ.
- b) The communion of saints is exemplified in the mystical body of Christ. The reformed churches have steadfastly refused to identify the mystical body of Christ with the institutional manifestation thereof. This does not mean that the one true Church cannot be manifested in terms of the diverse individual autonomous churches.
- c) Creation forms a unity which at the same time contains a rich diversity.
- d) God created all people and is the Father of all people. All people are equal in that sense but, in the sense of the New Testament's childhood and brotherhood, he is the Father of the believers alone.
- e) After the Fall God sustains, for the sake of the honour of his name and by his common grace, the unity and diversity in creation. He ordains even greater diversity in order to prevent degenerate man from becoming too powerful and rebelling against God. In this way by this diversity the infiltration and effect of sin is curtailed. By his grace he willed a multitude of nations and languages and dispersed humanity to dwell over the face of the globe.
- f) As the fundamental norm the command that 'I must love God with all hearts soul and mind and my neighbour as myself' is to be applied. This naturally results therein that we should do nothing for the sake of our own selfishness or

vain honour; that we should humbly deem others higher than ourselves; that we should give to others their proper due with unprejudiced and unswerving justice.

g) In spite of the diversity a constant guard has to be maintained to preserve the unity of the Church and prevent it from degenerating into becoming a negative debilitating diversity.

Although Botha (1986:217-218) states that a clear shift in emphasis becomes visible in that where previously the principle of diversity had been accentuated strongly and where the concept of the unity of the human race was almost a concession, the emphasis is now placed much more pertinently on the unity motive, nevertheless this 'shift' appears to be qualified by being a unity in diversity - each equally accentuated - in the approach that the DRC employs. This leaves its options open.

4.6.1 Cottesloe

During 1960, a time of political flux when political manoeuvring was taking place to change the constitutional status of the Union of South Africa into that of a Republic, the Cottesloe consultation took searching decisions at Rosettenville, a suburb of Johannesburg.

That politics was most important for the black man in this constitutional situation is understandable. The situation at the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1909 -1910 when, under the auspices of Great Britain, the black man was excluded from participation in political decision making should not be repeated. The result of this exclusion in 1910

was the formation of the African national Congress in 1912. The repetition of such a situation the black man wanted to avoid. The Consultation is to be read with this in mind.

The consultation was destined to have a lasting influence on the Church polity in South Africa. The following decisions taken are high-lighted (Hofmeyr, et al. 1991:230 - 235) (my underlining)

a) 'The church of Jesus Christ by its nature and calling is deeply concerned with the welfare of all people both as individuals and as members of social groups. It is called to minister to human need in whatever circumstances and forms it appears.... In its social witness the church must take cognisance of all attitudes, forces, policies and laws which affect the life of a people; but the church must proclaim that the final criterion of all social and political action is the principles of Scripture regarding the realisation of all men of a life worthy of their God-given vocation.'

Comment: In Part 1 of the Consultation's Declaration much emphasis is placed on ALL people as regards their human need, social and political action affecting peoples and on a rather undefined God-given vocation of ALL men. A universalist and non-specific address to ALL, not only to Christians faith-interests as such. A gauntlet had been thrown down to the political establishment and also to the DRC leadership.

b) The Church as the Body of Christ is a unity and within this unity the natural diversity among men is not annulled but sanctified.

Comment : Natural diversity of men is sanctified within the Body of Christ, the church. A stronger theological approach to underline the diversity among men would be hard to find.

c) No-one who believes in Jesus Christ may be excluded from any church on the grounds of his colour or race. The spiritual unity among all men who are in Christ must find visible expression in acts of common worship and witness, and in fellowship and consultation on matters of common concern.

Comment: Another gauntlet had been thrown down aimed at the praxis of the DRC.

Spiritual unity is to be expressed in fellowship with one another concerning matters of common concern, matters presumably found in the socio-economic-political arena and not necessarily matters relating to worship and witness and faith only. Consultation is to take place in connection with 'matters' of common concern such as perhaps the preferential treatment of the so-called previously disadvantaged?

In a time when political uncertainty reigns and the authority of the church is largely disavowed, church representatives should state their positions clearly and with unequivocal and transparent clarity. No doubt the representatives at Cottesloe were of the cream of the church intelligentsia and admirably able to have done so. The question is why did they not do so? It seems as if the theology of liberation is covertly presented and is covertly being counteracted.

d) There are no scriptural grounds for the prohibition of mixed marriages.

Comment: With this decision a further gauntlet had been thrown down to the political establishment and the DRC.

The Declaration goes on to single out the inhabitants of Bantu areas who specifically must be provided with opportunities to live in conformity with human dignity. This of course is flexible concept; human dignity in terms of Zulu or Africa or Arabian or German concept? It is concept which can always be criticised by comparison to other standards no matter what! Such a formulation leaves the field open to social engineering depending on the political-theological based persuasion which is hypothesised.

Regarding the political domain as it was seen to exist at the time it was declared that an adult man (woman being excepted in line with African culture) has the right to own land (the word right is again a remnant of African culture where the chief is obliged to give land to an adult male of the tribe - no mention is made that a person should be able to purchase land) wherever he is domiciled. And has a right to participate in the government of the country where he is domiciled (note that such a person need not necessarily be a citizen.)

It seems as if the era of demanding 'rights' (the stressing of the concomitant duty of having obligations is lacking) in the social and political arenas has dawned in South Africa with the active assistance of some clergy.

The gauntlet having been thrown down, political action by the government and the church could be expected. The political approach propagated at Cottesloe was not in accord with policy at the time, namely, in regard to

- i) mixed marriages
- ii) owning of land (whites could not own land in declared black areas)
- iii) voting arrangements.

Political action was forthcoming as was doubtless foreseen by certain members of the Consultation. Prime Minister Verwoerd expressed his personal grave displeasure with the actions of the DRC delegation.

There was also strong reaction from conservative groups within the Church, notably Dr Koot Vorster, brother of a future Prime Minister, and Dr Andries Treurnicht later to become a minister in the Nationalist Party government. In due course the Cape and Transvaal synods belatedly fell into line with the declared political views of the Afrikaner establishment thereby rejecting the role played by their own elected and distinguished representatives at Cottesloe (de Gruchy 1990:67-68). In the DRC the apartheid-conscientised theological perspective had won the day.

In 1961, as a reply to the Cottesloe Consultation's decisions, the Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk set out, *inter alia*, the following (Hofmeyr et al. 1991:235-242)

- a) The policy of the Church in limiting the visibly organised membership of the Church has its origin and source in both the practise of race differentiation in South Africa and in the interpretation of the Bible by the previous generations ...
- b) Article 11 (stating that the church is a Church for whites only) is thus taken up in our Church law also on the basis of the historical-developed situation and is as such a legacy of the past.

- c) The Church Law formulations in connections with the good order within the church are not a necessity for salvation and have therefore only relative value and efficacy.
- d) Article 3 is an article incorporated into the Church polity to address the situation on which the church finds itself in these times.

Traditional South African church history is advanced as the norm for decisions regarding theological doctrine. An attenuated approach.

As regards the relationship between the English-speaking churches and the DRC, De Gruchy (1990:68-69) correctly points out that Cottesloe itself represented an high point and the subsequent action of the DRC synods, a low point. A DRC subservience to the political establishment is apparent. The church's prophetic role has been ignored.

A new theological era dawned with the inauguration of the Republic of South Africa, a Republic outside the British Commonwealth of Nations.

4.7 Republican Period

The political aim of the Afrikaner, to obtain a free Republic, having materialised in 1961, the close association between church and state no longer was considered to be as necessary as in the past. Matters theological could become more accentuated. Thus, the first General Synod of the DRC constituted in 1962 appointed a commission to determine the scriptural justification of racial-apartheid or otherwise (Geldenhuys 1982:68). Eventually after two further Synods in 1966 and 1970 , the General Synod of 1974 approved the report

in document form namely as *Ras, Volk en Nasie* (Hofmeyr et al. 1991: 265-273). This document was published after the establishment of the South African Council of Churches in 1968 whose Constitution was adopted in 1969 (Hofmeyr et al 1991: 251).

The question is : Is the pseudo-theological base of society going to be purified of its secularly induced skewing so as to form a theological base proper?

4.7.1 Human Relations

The publication 'Human relations and the South African Scene in the Light of Scripture' (Abbreviated to HR) (DRC Synod 1974) (The official translation of "*Ras, volk en Nasie*"-abbreviated RVN) is used herein. This publication consists of 100 pages. It is in the main a succinct recapitulation of previous policies. Only certain aspects will be mentioned below.

The DRC laid down as policy its hermeneutic interpretation namely, that the Old Testament is indicative thereof that the modern propensity towards unqualifiedly blotting out all differences between nations is to be avoided. Furthermore that the New Testament gives room, under particular circumstances, for allowing the co-existence of separate nations in one country along the lines of separate development.

Some of the hermeneutic principles discussed in this document (DRC Synod 1974:9) are mentioned below: 'We proceed from the following hermeneutic principles:

- a) The Bible must be interpreted in accordance with recognised, reformed, scientific, hermeneutic principles in keeping with its actual intention - it is not a scientific text-book for empirical sociology or anthropology.
- b) In dealing with Scriptural data the Church will constantly have to be aware of the central theme of its preaching - the way of salvation in Christ and the coming of the kingdom of God - and it will have to indicate and extol the norms that coincide with this theme in all spheres of life.
- c) On the other hand the Church has a prophetic function in respect of the state and society when the Scriptural norms that should apply in all spheres of life are not respected.
- d) In the implementation of this function the Church must guard against two extremes: on the one hand it must guard against a lack of daring, and on the other hand against a lack of discretion. The Church must not adapt itself to such an extent as to forfeit confidence, but neither may it act without pastoral compassion and understanding.' (My division into paragraphs)

From the above the following is of importance for this study:

- a) Reformed, scientific, hermeneutic principles in keeping with its actual intention is to applied.
- b) The Bible is not a scientific text-book for empirical sociology or anthropology.
- c) The Bible does nevertheless present fundamental data and principles of normative significance in all spheres of life.
- d) Texts must be interpreted in their own context and in the context of the entire history of salvation.

- e) The central theme of the Bible's preaching - the way of salvation in Christ and the coming of the kingdom of God.
- f) a prophetic function is now being accentuated
- Thus, the church accepts the Bible as the fundamental authority on which to base its praxis and doctrine.

The HR document (DRC Synod 1974:100) mentions in conclusion that :

'The Dutch Reformed Church is only too well aware of the serious problems in respect of inter-people, inter-racial and inter-human relationships in South Africa. It seeks to achieve the same ideals of social justice, human rights and self-determination for peoples and individuals, based on God's Word, as do other Christian churches. It is also convinced that it is imperative for the church to fulfil its prophetic calling, to be sympathetic, to give guidance according to Scripture and to intercede on behalf of man. If the Dutch Reformed Church does differ from other churches, the difference is not due to a different view of norms concepts and values or of Christian ethics, but to a different view of the situation in South Africa and the teachings of God's Word in this regard. There is no difference in ideals and objectives, but merely disagreement on the best methods of achieving these ideals.'

It is stated that a constitutional model of autogenous development of diverse peoples can be founded on Holy Scripture. HR still deems mixed marriages as being contrary to the word of God (See DRC Synod 1997:24). This is remarkable. While it is not heretical in the sense that one's salvation will be jeopardised by such a belief it certainly is placing a

reductive and incorrect interpretation on Scripture under the pressure of politics. And then, strangely, it is said that the church as institution may under no circumstances take part in politics (See DRC Synod 1997:45).

As regards common worship the following (See DRC Synod 1997:47). 'In our dispensation the church of Christ displays a pluriformity which is directly related to the diversity of peoples, but it is not a closed community in the sense that it is meant for members of one people only. (Therefore) ... Just as members of a certain people or nation may in principle not be prevented from becoming members of another people or nation, so members of one "national" church may not be forbidden to become members of another "national" church.'

In other words, according to the above, in principle there is no exclusive national church in the sense that no believer from the ranks of any other people may not join it if such a believer should choose to do so. A separate church is certainly not a closed church. The above is immediately qualified as follows, namely, that if however, such a transfer of membership should disturb the order and peace of both church and peoples (or sections of the people) to such an extent that the kingdom of God is no longer served, that the fellowship of believers and their ability to serve should suffer and the nation or nations concerned should find it difficult or impossible to give full expression to their national identity - in these circumstances a temporary arrangement against the transfer of membership cannot be condemned since it would enhance the well-being of the churches concerned.

Comment :

One notes that the 'disturbance' is with regard to the order and peace of the 'peoples'. The latent assumption is that the *status quo* is correct. Surely order and peace derived from a sinful tradition ought to be disturbed. And why is the difficulty in giving expression to 'national identity' to become a touchstone? Surely expression should be given to Christian identity. The placing of national identity on a par with Christian identity can easily slip into heresy. National identity can easily become a idol. The matter of salvation is not mentioned in this secular approach. Here the DRC espouses a theology for apartheid. The basic approach to pluriformity, states Kinghorn (1986:131) correctly, is still attenuatedly based on the Babel-phenomenon and the curse of Noah found in Genesis.

It seems that the existential approach of the DRC, its praxis, is still theoretical theological. Little attention is given to the practical results of the separate development approach. No thorough analysis is made of the suffering brought about in political practice by the separate development approach. In 1990 (DRC Synod 1998:51), the above is reiterated where the NGK admits that it for too long judged the policy of apartheid in a sense too abstract and too theoretical, and thus too uncritically. The NGK in its struggle against integration did not sufficiently notice that apartheid had engineered for itself an ideological and ethnocentric pseudo-theological base. The right and freedom to remain true to an own cultural legacy was built up into a political ideology of apartheid as a system to guard the own interest of a white minority at the expense of others. The DRC is criticising itself for not

discerning the eventual result of the policy of apartheid. In effect it is criticising its praxis.

The question whether the pseudo-theological base of Christian Afrikaner society has been purified from having been skewed must still be answered in the negative.

5.4.2 Changes and critiques

A few years later in 1979 the Synod of the Western Cape took certain decisions which set a course for future approaches to apartheid. It was now decided that all race discrimination which is in conflict with the ethical norm of neighbourly love (which by definition includes justice) and which are in conflict with the principle that all people are equal before God, is contrary to the Bible message. (Handleiding van die Sinode :352 - see DRC Synod 1997:27-28)

In 1980 followed a cry in the 'Ligdraer' (16 August 1980; Official organ of the NG Sendingkerk) to the effect that although the NGK believed that apartheid served the best interests of both the whites and non-whites and that it would avoid race conflict and would result in a permanent solution of the social and political problems in the country , nevertheless, the fruits of the political policy is a vivid example of ambiguity, of good and evil, of opportunities of self-actualisation entwined with situations of atrocious dehumanisation, of large scale financial and technical development co-joined with unbelievable loss of human values. For this reason the policy of apartheid has been experienced as extremely oppressive.

All however did not share the same points of view. Where I refer below to publications, in Afrikaans, by Vorster, Treurnicht and Potgieter the translations are mine.

As mentioned, not all DRC theologians were critical of the policy of separate development: Autogenous development of peoples is necessary in the light of scripture. Vorster (1978: 80) declares that in the Reformed family not only are the identity and the right to existence of peoples recognised but also that the God-given right to worship God in an own way according to own nature and disposition is upheld. Potgieter (1978: 80) writes that it certainly is unscriptural to deny any person from participating in the community of faith on the basis of race or ethnicity. However, due to the declared diversity of peoples we have a duty to persuade in love those belonging to another people to join in forming their own churches. Treurnicht (1978:104) opines that when the question is raised as to whom governs whom then the answer is that the each nation should have maximum self-determination and full independence if at all possible.

On Reformation day (1980) eight DRC Ministers issued their witness in which they pleaded *inter alia* that the church should strive

- a) for the elimination of loveless and racist attitudes and actions which cause hurtful incidents and which is not the message of God's reconciling grace of its power,
- b) to form a church unity in which the oneness of believers adhering to the same confession can take visible form (Hofmeyr et al 1991:303) (cf DRC Synod 1997:30)

Storm Kompas (Smith 1981 : 139-140) contained 44 statements. The translation found in Hofmeyr et al (1991:311 -315) is followed below. Among the 44 statements are the following :

'5. A Christian may never unreservedly identify with his volk, group, class of culture. There must always be a certain distance. The highest loyalty of believers is exclusively to Jesus Christ as Lord.'

Comment:

This is seen as a correct admonition to both black theology and apartheid theology.

'16. The existence of separate NG Churches for different population groups, has developed into an artificial and ideological separation of people. This enforced separation of people on the grounds of race and colour is in essence based on the conviction of fundamental irreconciliability between people and is as such in conflict with the Gospel.'

Comment:

Here a most important statement is made, namely the statement '...in essence based on the conviction of fundamental irreconciliability between people' and as such is in conflict with the Bible. This conclusion was later accepted as a base on which to declare apartheid to be a heresy. The question is : How fundamentally correct is this conclusion? What evidence is advanced to substantiate it?

The basis for such a conclusion could be Groenewald's approach that the Afrikaner is to be 'irrevocably' a separate nation. However, no mention of an 'irreconcilability' of Christian peoples IN Christ had been postulated by him. This statement in *Storm Kompas*, if it related to Groenewald, is not what Groenewald had said.

Of course there is a fundamental irreconciliability between good and evil. There is a irreconciliability between peoples unless the love of Christ works in them a neighbourly love which is not a natural manifestation among peoples. It is the Spirit of God that brings this about otherwise there would be no difference in the quality of love between the believer and the unbeliever. But let one not confuse the eschatological with the temporal.

Consider, in comparison to *Storm Kompas'* pronouncements, the following statements from 'Human relations and the South African scene in the Light of Scripture' (DRC Synod 1974):

a) The Church can never allow itself the luxury of regarding its consideration of relations between races and peoples as completed ... (1974:7)

b) Nowhere does the Bible use the word 'race' or any word to express this concept in terms of our scientific definition (1974:12). However ethnic diversity in its very origin is in accordance with the will of God for this dispensation (1974:14). The New Testament, as the Old Testament, does not deal with the concept of "race" specifically either. (1974:28)

c) According to the New Testament, the danger of a sinful separation of peoples is ever present in the diversity of peoples. The church of Jesus Christ should at all times ... talk over problems and build bridges which will prevent the

diversity from becoming a sinful spiritual estrangement. (1974:33)

In respect of inter-people relationships, church and people are confronted with the demand in the New Testament of love for one's neighbour, and in particular to act in absolute justice. The church realises that this justice will be an absolute reality only in the eschaton (the fullness of time) when justice will reign on the new earth (2 Peter 3 : 13). In the light of Scripture the church also knows in how imperfect a manner this demand is being fulfilled on this side of eternity. Thus the church is faced with a double temptation. It may eliminate the tension between the present and the eschaton by throwing in the towel or by suppressing the ethical imperative out of fear and by consoling itself in the prospect that everything will be different in the eschaton. But this would amount to neglect of duty. It is the function of the church to preach to the state, the citizens of the state and to its members the great Scriptural principles which have to be adhered to in human relationships, so that signs of the eschaton may be established even in the present era. (DRC Synod 1974:36)

The second temptation with which the church is confronted is a desire to eliminate the conflict between the present and the eschaton by trying to enforce the latter without due regard for the complexity of the concrete situation. While it guards, on the one hand, against a false and sinful acquiescence in the status quo and, on the other hand, against an unrealistic enforcement of the eschaton, the church must nevertheless continue to bring its prophetic message so that the supremacy of God may become apparent in all spheres of life. (1974:36)

d) The unity of the church is a unity in Christ. It is a community of faith which transcends all divisions. They are one owing to the fact that there is but one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all (Eph. 4 : 4-6). This unity is in the first place a confessional reality of faith in Christ, but at the same time it should be experienced and applied according to circumstances and the concrete realities of the church's existence (cf. John, 17 : 21; 1 Cor. 1:12, 4 : 6; Eph. 2 :14). The norm for this unity was given in Christ and is determined by the truth of the gospel (cf. John 17 : 6-17). (DRC Synod 1974:37)

e) The natural diversity of people and nations continues to exist in the church of Christ, but is sanctified in Christ by the gospel and they may not degenerate into a glorification of the self at the expense of others.

Thus, diversity in the church may never lead to spiritual estrangement. Thus the most serious attention must at all times be given to the New Testament concepts of the brotherhood in Christ and of the koinonia.... How these requirements should manifest themselves in the practice of the institutionalised church, cannot be argued in the abstract but are to be determined by the practical realities of the human situations in which, in the imperfect now, the church finds itself. (1974:38)

From the above the conclusion is that the statement used in 'Storm Kompas' that the theology of the NGK is based on a theological irreconcilability is not well founded. It would be described more correctly as a 'sinful estrangement' or an 'irreconcilable-separate-nation' view. It is submitted that

Storm Kompas confusingly and facilely equates the political with the theological.

The importance of the word 'irreconciliability', unfounded as it is in an evaluation of the HR-document, nevertheless has an emotional value which creates a repugnance for NGK theology. This word has served the antagonists of the NGK well.

Storm Kompas (cf Hofmeyr et al 1991:314) continues :

'35. It is time that the NGK said clearly that the policy of apartheid in South Africa has many harmful consequences, in spite the good intentions of the authorities about allowing population groups to develop separately. The church needs to state clearly that Christian cannot support this policy without question.'

Where the thesis is irreconcilability then the anti-thesis must be reconciliation. Thus the theme of reconciliation becomes more accentuated. This is particularly noticeable in the Statement - The Open Letter - dated the 8th June 1982 in which 123 white ministers and theologians of the DRC family state that (cf Hofmeyr et al 1991:319-323) 'We, ministers and ordinands of the NGK state as our conviction that genuine reconciliation in Christ between individuals and groups is the greatest single need in the Church and so also in our country and society...'. The following are some excerpts from their Statement:

'1.1 We are convinced that the primary task of the Church in our country is the ministry of reconciliation in Christ.'

'1.1.4 there is space within the unity of the church for a diversity of languages and cultures. Specifically because of the reconciliation this diversity provides mutual

enrichment and not division.

1.1.5 This unity, however belongs to a different category than diversity. Unity is primary, diversity secondary. The unity is normative and is confessed (the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed) the diversity not so.'

'1.2.2 ... that the church may lay down no condition for membership other than the confession of true faith in Jesus Christ.'

Comment:

The above are truisms. And are begging the question. The problem is rather: What is 'true' faith. And how is this 'true' faith to be lived in the South African context, that is the question. The NGK claims that it has true faith and so does each and every one of the different denominations and churches in the world including the apologists for black theology.

In this Open Letter (Hofmeyr et al 1991:321) the concrete situation, the existential situation, in South Africa now receives closer attention:

' 2.1.1 The church will always bear witness that an arrangement of society based on the fundamental irreconcilability of individuals and groups cannot be accepted as a basic point of departure for the ordering of society.'

The Open Letter stresses the need for unity in paragraph 3 (Hofmeyr et al 1991:322) as follows:

'.... we also want to

3.1 confess to our deepest guilt before God that we ourselves have also failed to manifest adequately the unity of the Church of Christ in our lives and that we too have

contributed to many of the societal evils which we have identified.'

Comment:

We are all guilty of not adequately manifesting a unity as a holy Catholic Church. Sinful human beings will never be able to do so adequately while inhabiting this vale of tears. This is a truism.

4.7.2 Pressure increases

From the above it is clear that in a turbulent NGK atmosphere pressure is mounting both from without and from within the DRC for a new approach towards race differentiation/discrimination and a new evaluation of the church polity as regards the same. Reconciliation as theme is now being emphasised.

Following on the Open Letter of the 8th June 1982 The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) met in Ottawa, Canada, during August 1982. In its statement issued on the 25 August of that year (cf Hofmeyr et al 1991:333-337) the following were stated *inter alia*.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ 'confronts racism , which in its very essence is a form of idolatry. Racism fosters a false sense of supremacy ... As such the struggle against racism, wherever it is found, in overt or covert forms, is a responsibility laid upon the church by the Gospel of Jesus Christ in every country and society.' (1991:333)

'At the present time without denying the universality of racist sin, we must call special attention to South Africa ...

The white Afrikaans Reformed churches of South Africa through the years have worked out in considerable detail both the policy itself and the theological and moral justification for the system. Apartheid (separate development) is therefore a pseudo-religious ideology as well as a political policy.' (Hofmeyr et al 1991:334)

'... the exclusion of any person on grounds of race, colour of nationality from any congregation and part of the life of the Church contradicts the very nature of the church.' (1991:334)

'We feel duty bound by the Gospel to raise our voice and stand by the oppressed. "None of the brethren can be injured, despised, rejected, abused, or in any way offended by us, without at the same time injuring, despising, and abusing Christ by the wrongs we do ... We cannot love Christ without loving him in the brethren".' (Hofmeyr et al 1991:335)

'Therefore the General Council declares that this situation constitutes a *status confessionis* for our Churches, which means that we regard this as an issue on which it is not possible to differ without seriously jeopardising the integrity of our common confession as Reformed Churches.' (1991:335)

'We declare 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.' (1991:335)

'The General Council of the WARC affirms earlier statements on the issue of racism and apartheid (separate development) made

in 1964 and 1970 and reiterates its firm conviction that apartheid (separate development) is sinful and incompatible with the Gospel on the grounds that:

- a) it is based on a fundamental irreconcilability of human beings, thus rendering ineffective the reconciling and uniting power of our Lord Jesus Christ
- b) in its application through racist structures it has led to exclusive privileges for the white section of the population at the expense of blacks
- c) it has created a situation of injustice and oppression, large scale deportation causing havoc to family life, and suffering to millions.' (Hofmeyr et al 1991: 335-336)

'Therefore the General Council , reluctantly and painfully, is compelled to suspend the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (in the Republic of South Africa) ... from the privileges of membership of the WARC....' (1991:336).

'... the delegates of the General Council, confess that we are not without guilt in regard to racism. Racism is a reality everywhere and its existence calls for repentance and concerted action.' (See Hofmyer, et al. 1991: 337)

Comment:

The word 'irreconciliability' is now used in a theological context. It is a repetition of the 'fundamental irreconciliability ' found in *Storm Kompas*.

New approaches to heresy are being advanced by the WARC. Heresy becomes:

- i) A persistent disobedience to the word of God and/or

ii) The moral and theological justification of sin.

Disobedience to the Commandments of God is sin. Persistent sinning is a heresy? If this is so then of course just about all people are heretics for no one can keep the Law of God perfectly. The whole church is thus made up of heretics. This obviously cannot be so. It therefore appears as if racism is made into a special kind of sin. A sin which is worse than any other sin. If the above is correct then degrees of sin are postulated - this is not a Reformed point of view.

Racism is declared an idolatry. Idolatry is a sin. That racism is universal is not denied. The NGK especially is to be censured on account of its part in the universally acknowledged practise of racism.

The Synod of the N G Sendingkerk met at Belhar over the period 22 September to 6 October 1982 and set out its 'Confession'. The events that took place at Ottawa a few months earlier and at which Boesak played a leading role would still be fresh in the minds of people.

From a political-constitutional point of view it was a time when a Three Chamber parliament, which excluded only black people from parliament, was in the process of being established.

The following are excerpts from the Statement on Apartheid and the Confession of Faith announced at Belhar. (Hofmyer, et al. 1991:342 -349; cf Botha 1986:285 - 292)

'The political and ecclesiastical order of South Africa is an order within which irreconcilability has been elevated to a

fundamental social principle within which, in spite of supposed good intentions, the greed and prejudice of the powerful and privileged are entrenched at the cost of those who are powerless and without privileges.' (Hofmeyr et al 1991:342-343)

'The Church will always bear witness to the fact that no order of communal living which fundamentally affirms the irreconcilability of people and groups can be regarded as acceptable.' (Hofmeyr et al 1991:344)

'Because the secular Gospel of apartheid threatens in the deepest possible way the witness of reconciliation in Jesus Christ and the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ in its very essence, the N G Mission Church in South Africa declares that this constitutes a *status confessionis* for the Church of Jesus Christ. (A *status confessionis* means that we regard this matter as a concern about which it is impossible to differ without it affecting the integrity of our communal confessions as Reformed Churches).' (Hofmeyr et al 1991:345)

'We declare that apartheid (separate development) is a sin, that the moral and theological justification of it makes a mockery of the Gospel and that its consistent disobedience to the Word of God is a theological heresy.' (Hofmeyr et al 1991:346)

As regards the relationship between the N G Mission Church and the N G K in terms of the *status confessionis*. ' The N G mission Church regrets that its relationship with the N G K is seriously threatened. The Synod is of the opinion that the road of reconciliation can be walked only if the

NGK confesses its guilt regarding the mortal and theological grounding of apartheid, and concretely demonstrates her repentance by working out what the consequences of this confession of guilt mean in both Church and state. In so doing the Mission church does not deny its own guilt in the situation and declares itself ready to walk in love and forgiveness with the N G K in seeking to develop and not to break the relationship with that Church.' (Hofmeyr et al 1991:348)

Comment:

One finds basically a repetition of the statements of Storm *Kompas* and the WARC.

Fundamental affirmation of irreconciliability of people is unacceptable, it invalidates the Gospel it is said. Nowhere is it said that irreconciliability IN CHRIST is unacceptable.

Concerning the 'secular' gospel of apartheid: The words 'pseudo-religious ideology' now become translated as secular Gospel. In a sense both descriptions are correct for in terms of DRC theology the base of society had now become pseudo-theologically secular. Theology had been placed in the superstructure built on this foundation and DRC theology had become, as previously mentioned, a theology for apartheid.

The NG Mission Church does not deny its own guilt: However this guilt of the NG Sendingkerk is glossed over and is neither explained nor confessed. Wherein lies its own guilt? Does it lie therein that it accepted for a long time the 'theological grounding of apartheid' and the situation of a separate church

which breaks the 'visible and active unity of the Church'? If this is so then it too had supported a pseudo-theological gospel. While the NG Mission Church accepts its guilt it does not confess it humbly before God ! Thus, in fact, the situation of the Mission Church is that it has not been forgiven and is still unrepentant of a sinful situation. However and nevertheless, in this sinful situation, the NG Sendingkerk is ready to walk in forgiveness with the NGK - it will forgive the NGK without confessing its own sin.

No one denies the NG Sendingkerk its right to castigate the NGK if it is so led. But in the statement of the NG Sendingkerk there is some evidence of spiritual presumption. Some evidence of an attempt to rationalise a predetermined theological stance. A new approach relating to sinfulness in establishing separate churches is discerned.

Die Kerkbode (27th October 1982) sets out the statement of the Synod of the N G Kerk in reply to the WARC statement suspending its membership of the DRC. The Synod notes with regret 'that these decisions of the WARC are undoubtedly taken from a standpoint of liberation theology, which according to the N G K is undoubtedly in certain essential respects in conflict with the Bible and reformed theology.'

The Synod further states; "Because the New Testament affirms the principle of equality and the actual differentiation of all people and nations, each with its own right of existence, as well as the unity of the entire human family, and because of the commandment to love one's neighbour, which also manifests itself in justice, is the ethical norm for ordering human relations, the general

Synod rejects all racism as unscriptural and as sin. Because it regards and treats some nations as superior and others as inferior. The Synod gives further expression to its conviction that race-consciousness and the love of one's own nation is not sinful, but when race and/or nation becomes absolutised, we are dealing with racism and that is sinful'. (De Gruchy et al 1983: 183-184)

Comment:

The NGK acknowledges racism to be sin when it is absolutised. When anything is absolutised to the extent that of being placed over and against the commands of God it is made an idol and the absolutisation thereof idolatry.

The question whether the skewed pseudo-theological base of society is to be purified is now receiving the attention of the DRC.

The WCC Assembly met at Vancouver, Canada, on 24 July - 10 August 1983. After discussion a statement was issued. It commended the stance of the South African Council of Churches, especially its rejection of the Tri-cameral Parliament, a political development granting representation in Parliament to Coloureds and Asians while the representation of black people was to be exercised in their Independent Homelands. What follows are excerpts from this statement (See Hofmeyr et al 1991:350-353).

'We recall that in Nairobi the Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) declared that 'racism is a sin against God and against fellow human beings... ' (Hofmeyr et al 1991:350).

The statement now continues and equates apartheid with racism and thus opines that it is a sinful system of injustice on the following basis : 'Apartheid raises barriers and denies the fullness of life in Christ. Christians and the churches are called in obedience to Jesus Christ, the Life of the World, and to maintain the integrity of the church, to oppose apartheid in all its forms, to support those who struggle against this sinful system of injustice and to denounce any theological justification of apartheid as a heretical perversion of the Gospel.' (1991:350)

The WCC does not state in what respects the fullness of life in Jesus Christ is being denied. Indeed it is not explained how a human being can deny any other fullness in Christ - it is a gift of the Spirit! These statements can certainly only be a particular perception of a world view at the time. A theological foundation for averring that apartheid can ever deny others the fullness in Christ is lacking.

The fact that some black leaders accepted this form of independence is seen as threatening "black solidarity" as if it is the function of the World Council of Churches to advance the cause of black solidarity in South Africa. It is assumed that the black people in South Africa consist of one nation. The wording of this approach is as follows:

'Bantustan rule is in many, instances as oppressive and arbitrary as that of white rule in the area, and has resulted in the proscription of churches and the

systematic persecution of people. The willingness of some black leaders to accept this form of "independence" furthermore threatens to become the single most divisive and potent force militating against black solidarity and liberation in South.' (Hofmeyr et al. 1991:351)

This of course fails to state that the Independent States came about as the result of Referendums held among the people concerned and that an overwhelming majority voted in favour thereof.

4.8 Rehabilitation of the DRC

4.8.1 Reply to the NG Mission Church

The General Executive of the NG Kerk replied to the NG Mission Church (Sendingkerk) via '*Die Kerkbode*' (4 April 1984) in which several observations and points of view are set out. Some are referred to below.

The General Executive Council states that neighbourly love and social justice is to be the norm for human relations and that no injustice in the implementing of the laws of the land may be practised. Seen in this light separate development, applied in accordance with the above principles, is not in conflict with the demands of Scripture. (DRC Synod 1997:35)

Further, it is stated, that the averment that the 'secular gospel of apartheid' has structured the Church practise and the religious denomination of the NG Kerk, is categorically rejected. As the genesis, the coming into being of the diverse churches happened under the influence of Missionary

considerations long before autogenous development took its present form, the NG Kerk believes that this also had took place under the guidance of the Lord God. (DRC Synod 1997:35)

The unilateral declaration of a *status confessionis* by die NG Mission church in reality, in the view of the General Executive Council, causes a *status accusationis et divisionis*. (DRCD Synod 1997:36)

The General Council is of the opinion that the statement to the effect that the church, as the property of God, has to side with the 'destitute, the poor and the wronged' is one-sided as the Word of God teaches that God is in the first place on the side of the justified-elect and thus also is he present with those who do not qualify as the "destitute, poor and wronged." (DRC Synod 1997:36)

It is opined that the point of departure of the NG Mission church is the result of an unacceptable horizontalism in exegesis which is the hall-mark of liberation theology. (DRC Synod 1997:36-37)

About 13 years later in *Reis met Apartheid* (DRC Synod 1997: 37) it is remarked, as a criticism of the DRC, that while the General Executive stated that neighbourly love and social justice is to be the norm for human relations and that no injustice in the implementing of the laws of the land may be practised, and that seen in this light separate development, applied in accordance with the above principles is not in conflict with the demands of Scripture, nevertheless, it is a pity that the General Executive did not

- i) move from the theory of separate development to the effects of the practice thereof
- ii) exude sympathy with those who had personally experienced the application of the policy in which neighbourly love and social justice seldom was the norm applied.

The application of the policy of separate development not only caused hardship among blacks but it caused hardship among whites also, some of whose farms, which had been theirs and had been improved for generations, were expropriated and given to black peoples. These white people had to leave their inherited or bought farms and try to make a new beginning in a property market where farms were becoming more expensive. It is also true that in certain instances the Asian community were advantaged by the application of the policy of apartheid.

4.8.2 Synod of 1986

The synod of 1986 with its acceptance of 'Church and Society' ('Kerk en Samelewing') re-evaluated previous decisions and moved away from certain decision taken in the HR-document of 1974. For instance it was decided that (my translation and synopsis)

- i) As a result of studies and articles , conferences , commissions and synods the conviction slowly grew that the forced separation of peoples cannot be founded on Scripture. The attempt by the NGK to found apartheid on Scripture and to attempt to justify it in terms of the Bible was a mistake and is to be deprecated. (para. 305) (cf DR&C Synod 1997:42)
- ii) The use of apartheid as a socio-political system by which people were treated not in accord with justice and one group

advantaged unjustly, cannot be accepted on a Christian-ethical basis. It is in conflict with the principles of neighbourly love and justice and inescapably results in the diminution of the human dignity of all concerned therewith. (para. 306) (cf DRC Synod 1997:42)

iii) The suffering of people with which the church has compassion is not to be attribute to apartheid only but to a plethora of socio-politico-economic realities where peoples of different communities do not fully accept one another. To the extent that the church and its members had part in this, the church confessed this with humbleness and sorrow. (para. 307) (cf DRC Synod 1997:42-43)

iv) As regards mixed marriages it is clear that scripture does not forbid such marriages. However, serious social, cultural and he such like problems could created tensions which could detrimentally affect such marriages. Especial pastoral care is her called for. (para.368) (cf DRC Synod 1997:43)

The approach of the DRC, which had determined anew that membership of the church is to be open to all visitors who wish to share in hearing the Word in the communion with other Christians, led directly to a schism in the church. It was not unexpected. The APK (Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk) was birthed. Much has to be said in favour of the DRC for putting their considered interpretation of Scripture above the maintenance of a large membership. As political rallying force and as a church for the Afrikaans speaking peoples, the DRC, by taking this bold stand, lost much of its influence. For the NGK the cost was, and is still, high. (DRC Synod 1997:44-45).

The question whether the pseudo-theological base advanced would be purified is still not finalised. However a reformation of the base of society is under consideration.

4.8.3 Vereeniging Consultation 1989

At the Vereeniging consultation held in March 1989 the DRC delegation led by Professor Johan Heyns 'confessed with humility the participation of our church (the DRC) in the introduction and legitimation of the ideology of apartheid and the subsequent suffering of the people' and ' declared the ideology of apartheid to be a sin and any teaching of the church that would defend this ideology to be heretical' (Bax 1989:64-65).

Heyns (1989:6) mentions that the delegation had stated, as regards apartheid, that 'It is a political and social system

by which the human dignity of people are negatively influenced and whereby one ethnic group deliberately suppressed/oppressed another ethnic group. This cannot be justified on Christian-ethical grounds as this is in conflict with the deepest meaning of reconciliation, neighbourly love and justice. It brings the unity of the church, and the human dignity of all those connected therewith, into question and therefore it is sinful. Any dogmatic teaching of the church that attempts to defend this ideology must be seen as heresy, that is it is in conflict with Scripture. (My translation).

It seems that the delegation were in accord with points of view of the WARC.

This setting out of the church's position was not accepted by the ASK (General Synodal Commission) (Bax 1989:66). These two statements were still qualified by the ASK by stating that they must be understood in the light of the NGK's official position as set out in Church and Society.

4.8.4 The decade of the 1990's

4.8.4.1 Church and Society reviewed

In 1990 the DRC reviewed some of its statements made in the 1986 document published four years earlier. The review was published one month prior to the Rustenburg Consultation and probably with this consultation in view. What follows below is extracted from 'Reis met Apartheid' (DRC Synod 1997:50-52) (my paraphrasing and translation).

- i) World wide apartheid is seen as a form of racism and a crime against humanity.
- ii) The DRC is aware thereof that the ideal and policy of apartheid had taken shape over a long period of time in our history. There were honest and sincere intentions for the optimum development of population groups within our cultural traditions.
- iii) The DRC acknowledges that for too long it had adjudged the policy of apartheid , on account of the reasons mentioned above, too abstractly and theoretically and therefore too uncritical also. It did not discern that in its struggle against integration that apartheid had developed an ideological and ethnocentric base. It had become a political ideology.

- iv) Although the DRC had over the years sought the will of God in our situation in South Africa the church had erred in allowing forced separation of peoples in its own ecclesiastic sphere to be seen as a Biblical requirement.
- v) Apartheid had started to function in such a way that the greater part of the population experienced it as an oppressive system which, by virtue of forced separation, had preferred one group unjustly at the expense of the other. In such a way the human dignity of fellow human beings was impaired and it conflicted with the principles of love and justice.
- vi) Any attempt by a church to justify such a system on Biblical-ethically grounds must be seen as a serious mistake.
- vii) The DRC states clearly and unambiguously that it condemns all forms of discrimination and oppression of human beings. It earnestly desire it that all shall be free and share in the privileges of their fatherland and receive fair and equal opportunities to enjoy prosperity and to acquire riches.

The question whether a theology for apartheid is sinful has been settled in the affirmative. A public confession of this sinfulness is still to be made.

4.8.4.2 Rustenburg consultation

The Rustenburg consultation, held in 1990, was arranged on the initiative of the State President F W de Klerk acting on a suggestion by the Moderator of the General Synod of the NGK.

At this meeting certain points of view emerged. (My translation and paraphrasing) (cf DRC Synod 1997:54-55)

i) The N G K, following the lead of professor Jonker, associated itself with his confession of its responsibility for contributing to the political, social, economic and structural injustices which still pertain in this land. Further, it was declared, the NGK is in the process of making restitution with regard to its own position in the family of Reformed Churches and also in regard to the South African community as a whole .

ii) Archbishop Tutu accepted this confession and made confession of sins of omission within his own denomination and other denominations.

iii) The NG Sending Kerk, by statements made by its Moderator of its General Assembly, was the odd man out. In a less than gracious way it brutally insulted the N G K as being past masters of the art of playing with words. (DRC Synod 1997:54-55)

Comment :

The attitude displayed by the NG Sendingkerk bears out the presumptuous attitude referred to in a comment on the Belhar confession made earlier.

The effect of the Rustenburg declaration, as accepted by the NGK, was that the NGK had now in 1990 decidedly rejected apartheid as being a sinful policy both in its intent and application. Undoubtedly this unequivocal rejection of apartheid played a decisive role in ensuring the overwhelming political majority obtained among the white voters when a referendum was held to incorporate all citizens of South

Africa into a proposed democratic system - the creation of a New South Africa which so many had hoped and longed for.

This approach of the DRC led to the General Synod of the NGK stating (Die Kerkbode 28 October 1994) that the 1994 Synod has been marked by a spirit of reconciliation . The visit of President Mandela to the synod, the hand of reconciliation extended to prof Ben Marais, Dr Beyers Naude and others further underline the unique importance on this Synod. (DRC Synod 1997:61-62)

The question whether the pseudo-theological base put in place by a theology for apartheid would be purified and delivered from its skewedness, is now not only positively affirmed but such a purification had in fact now taken place.

4.9 Reconciliation: DRC with WARC

It was at the WARC Conference in Ottawa in 1982 that the membership of the Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa was suspended. Significant steps have been taken to provide the means for those churches to reinstate its membership of the WARC.

At the WARC General Council meeting at Debrecen, Hungary, in 1997, a proposed joint resolution between the WARC and the DRC was drawn up. This proposed joint resolution reads in part as follows:

'Both the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Dutch Reformed Church express their desire to lift the suspension imposed by the 21st General Council in Ottawa, and to see the Dutch Reformed Church welcomed back into

active membership with full privileges in the family of the World Alliance.

(1) As part of this action the Alliance, meeting in Debrecen in 1997, re-affirms its repudiation of any theological justification of apartheid as a matter of *status confessionis* for the churches inasmuch as such a theological justification is a travesty of the gospel and in its persistent disobedience to the Word of God, a theological heresy.

(2) As part of this action, the Dutch Reformed Church through its General Synod, meeting in 1998, within the framework of the decision of the WARC (paragraph 1 above), assures the churches of the Alliance that it rejects apartheid as wrong and sinful not simply in its effects and operations but also in its fundamental nature.

(3) WARC pledges to continue to work pastorally with the Dutch Reformed Church and other churches in South Africa in the process of unity and reconciliation.

(4) Upon approval of this joint resolution by both the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1997 and the general Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1998, the suspension of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Alliance will be lifted.

Both the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Dutch Reformed Church give thanks to God for this act of reconciliation and pray that it will strengthen the joint witness of all Reformed churches both in South Africa and throughout the world'. (Van Zyl 1997:19)

Comment:

The erstwhile DRC pseudo-theology for apartheid has been confessed and repented of and the theology of the DRC saved from the disaster of heresy.

After having confessed its sin reconciliation had taken place in true Christian spirit. The DRC has been accepted back in the fold of the Reformed Churches.

4.10 Overview

Newman (1888:199) mentions with keen insight that a true theological development conserves the course of antecedent developments. It extrapolates along the same trajectory. It is an addition that illustrates, not obscures, corroborates, not corrects, the body of thought from which it proceeds. Thus a true development does not generate an epistemological break by grafting on a new teaching which skews the original teachings.

One could discern the following course of events.

a) The Afrikaner people in view of their minority situation *vis-a-vis* the black ethnic groups, and the tradition of separation between white and black in the socio-economic-political sphere coupled with their suffering at the hands of both 'Pharaoh' and nature sought guidance from the Word of God. They studied the Bible and determined a theology for retaining their contextual-situational way of life. The theology they determined was arrived at in a non-systematic

fashion. They needed some philosophical base to support their contextual theology.

b) A philosophical political-cum-theological base for their theology was found in separate development, that is, in apartheid. For the Christian Afrikaner the base of society had to be morally defensible, theological and conservational of their traditions. This resulted in an attenuated hermeneutic and world-view. Hence for them apartheid had to be presented as moral, ethical and in line with the Word of God by government that needed their political support and the DRC as their faith-shelter.

c) To justify an attenuated political-cum-theological base an epistemological break with western theology was generated. The point of departure was the concept that apartheid theology was also liberative of the black peoples and conservational of their heritage. A theology for apartheid was constructed.

d) In the context of the Afrikaner's Christian roots it became necessary to adapt the Christian Afrikaner societal base so as to be congruent to the Afrikaner political base and vice versa. It was inconceivable that this base could be Marxist-secular. It had to satisfy the contextualised and conscientised theological conscience. A theological base incorporating their secular aspirations was necessary. While the base adopted was in fact pseudo-theological they were nevertheless convinced that it was fully in accord with the Will of God.

e) The epistemological break had to be conscientised so that the Afrikaner would accept it. This was done with the active

assistance of the DRC. The Afrikaners became fervent adherents of this policy, for it was argued, the church had interpreted the Word of God and in matters theological the church is to be trusted.

This attenuated theology was accepted as legitimised being a biblical based theology. In view of the context of South African tradition this came easily. Church pronouncements conscientised the members of the DRC and the pseudo-theology which incorporated their secular requirements was accepted as the base of society.

f) However, in the context of the Christian Afrikaner, theology plays a major role. Hence, theological admonitions from the outside and a declared *status confessionis* could not be taken lightly. In the event the DRC was led to confess that it had propagated a sinful separation of peoples based solely on the basis of skin pigmentation. It undertook to excise this skewing influence from the pseudo-theological base of DRC society. At present, having done so, it has been accepted back into the fold of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

The skewed pseudo-theological base of society which had been put in place by a theology for apartheid had been purified of its skewedness.

The DRC had been pulled back from the abyss of heresy.

The road travelled by the DRC is an example of the use of an epitheton in such a theologically unsystematic way that the use resulted in an unacceptable theological praxis. It was a case of the tail, the epitheton, wagging the dog, the

theology. This is a warning of the danger that can be expected to arise when an epitheton, theologically applied, results in a theology for a contextualised conscientised interpretation of the import of such an epitheton.

CONCLUSION

... what is in a name

5.1 General

In this study two different epitheton or couplet theologies were considered. Their approaches to theology, their motivation for their respective theologies and, broadly, the way in which they arrive at their theologies were overviewed.

To consider the use to which the epitheton is put in their respective theological approaches is insightful, that is, whether it serves as a subjective genitive or whether it is used as an objective genitive. That is whether it is descriptive of a certain aspects of theology or whether it is used for advancing a particular attenuated theology. In both apartheid theology and black theology the epitheton served as an objective genitive. However in their genesis, development and present status the two theologies differ.

It is axiomatic that theology plays an important role in a Christian society. Indeed once one uses theology then , as Marx puts it, 'he who wants to ally himself with religion

owing to religious feelings must concede it the decisive voice in all questions.' (Kee 1990: 27)

For the orthodox Christian in order for the base of society to be acceptable, it has to be religious and the Bible is to be the final court of appeal in all matters theological. And herein lies the importance of being in consultation with other churches, in order to take into consideration the views and opinions of others. To be in communion with other churches and to be willing to stand under the judgement of one another is necessary in order to discern 'what the Spirit is saying to the churches'. A church should not close itself off from others because of it being so assured of its own 'truth discernment' that it considers that it has no need of intercourse and interaction with other churches. (Schreiter 1986:120). To consider one's theology to be a no-go-area for other theologies is to court the disaster of heresy.

Black theology, as a movement, has no acknowledged theological hierarchy that can speak authoritatively on its behalf or any body that can guide it, correct it, or deal pastorally with it. On the other hand in this regard apartheid theology has available to it bodies such as the WARC and the WCC. Although the pastoral care and admonishments of the WARC and WCC at times could have been clouded by non-theological considerations, nevertheless, their pastoral care played a decisive role in curbing heresy in the DRC's apartheid theology and in accepting the DRC back into the fold of the Reformed Fraternity. At present black theology has no such advantage.

It appears that once the epitheton is used for the construction of a theology for some 'theological' project, for example, some project for black persons or for white persons, the incorporation of some degree of non-orthodoxy becomes a reality. Then, the epitheton theology for a project must be legitimised, the project must be justified. The epitheton must be placed in the forefront, it must become the base, or part of the base, of the particular 'theological' society. It must distinguish itself from others, it must discriminate against conservative orthodoxy. An epistemological break is inevitable and indispensable.

The context in which a community or a people finds itself is postulated as birthing the necessity for this epistemological break. This unique context can supposedly not be understood by outsiders because they are not part and parcel of it nor do they participate in the experiential pre-requirement, that is, they are not living in the context of the existential world in which the protagonists of this break proclaim themselves to be.

In the experienced context some suitably acceptable socio-economic-political base has to be found and legitimated. For this purpose a philosophical base becomes a requirement. On the basis of this philosophical base the members of this contextually determined community are to be convinced of the correctness of this 'theological' approach. For the protagonists convincingly and with own conviction to advance this approach so that others would accept it, a conscientisation process is essential. And, as Ratzinger (1984:11-14) says, regarding such conscientised views ' This

makes dialogue with them extremely difficult for these theologians start out with the idea, more or less consciously, that the viewpoint ... which is their own ... is the single true point of view.'

Once this stage has been reached some skewing of orthodox theology must of necessity take place. The degree of skewing is the only aspect which then remains open for discussion. The couplet with its attenuated epitheton now takes on a life of its own , it develops, not conservatively of the past. The following which Newman (1888:199) mentions is apposite, namely, that a true theological development conserves the course of antecedent developments. It extrapolates along the same trajectory. It is an addition that illustrates, not obscures, corroborates, not corrects, the body of thought from which it proceeds. Thus a true development does not generate and epistemological break by grafting on a new teaching which skews the original teachings. As the couplet takes on a life and development of its own it is no longer a 'true theological development'.

The above is the general approach of the theologies considered. A typical development of couplet theologies, where the epitheton is used as a foundation for constructing a project theology, becomes discernible.

At a stage it is necessary to refer to aspects concerning heresy. This stage has now been reached.

In the early church 'heresy ' was seen as some teaching which undercuts the very basis of Christian existence. For this very reason this kind of teaching was taken very seriously. As Paul (Galatians 1:8) says of such a person who brings/teaches another gospel 'let him be accursed'. Those who persecuted Christians could only but murder them in the most abhorrent fashion but they could not deprive them of everlasting life. The deprivation of everlasting life is effected by heretics. Those succumbing to their blandishments will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The early church correctly considered heresy to be extremely serious. It ought be so for the churches today also. 'For just as there are doctrines which are true, and that can bring salvation, there are those that are false, so false that they can spell eternal damnation for those who have the misfortune to become entrapped by them.'

(Brown 1984:4)

Some particular aspects of epitheton theologies are now discussed below.

5.2 Aspects of an epitheton theology

a) Secular problematic.

The interactions of problems in secular society, the hardships suffered in the secular sense, give birth to a project in the hearts and minds of those with certain feelings of empathy toward those suffering. This leads to a decision to find a basis on which to solve or alleviate these problems that occur in a particular secular context. For black theology the project is to side with the poor and oppressed. For apartheid

theology it was to advance the cause of the nationhood of the Afrikaner who had suffered terribly .

b) Base of society

In the theological context a base has to be found on which to built both a structure and a superstructure for society. In this Marx's concept of base and superstructure is insightful.

A philosophy has to be found for the acceptance of the base by the targeted society. For black theology Marxism with its secular socio-economic-political base supplies this philosophy; Marxism being anti-religious, black theology as a 'theology' has to make room for theology somehow. It placed it the superstructure of society. The role of theology thus of necessity becomes subservient to the secular. This subservience can act as a generator for diverse kinds of heresy.

The question to be considered is what degree of heresy, if any, had been reached by black theology. Some would argue that it is not heretical at all, others would overtly say that it is dangerously close to heresy, others would covertly imply that it is a heresy while others, like Novak (see Brown 1987:108), unambiguously declare it to be a heresy.

Other than in the case of black theology, for apartheid theology the base of society is not simply only secular. It becomes a mixture of the secular and the theological. Here the apartheid hermeneutic plays a major role. A contextual conscientised hermeneutic which co-joins the secular with a sinful apartheid paradigm arises. This admixture results in a

pseudo-theology. The question concerning the degree of heresy in apartheid theology, if any, now becomes pertinent.

As the base of society becomes pseudo-theological, theology is housed in both the base and in the superstructure with the base prescribing an attenuated theology for the superstructure. For some people this pseudo-theology is clearly heretical, for others it is not. The DRC has confessed that this pseudo-theology is a sin and has repented thereof.

c) Contextualisation

The context of 'suffering' is used in both black theology and apartheid theology. The motivation in each case is of secular content and origin.

d) Conscientisation.

In both theologies conscientisation aimed at an acceptance of its particular theology is indispensable. For black theology this conscientisation concerns a secular base while for apartheid theology it concerns a pseudo-theological base. Obviously, it is much easier to revert from a pseudo-theological base to an orthodox based theology than is the case for a purely secular-based theology. In the one theology revelation plays a decisive role while in the other experience/praxis assumes this role.

f) Sacralisation

Once the theology for the project becomes more established, it begins to take on a life of its own. Other theologies are in a sense vilified and declared heretical (Echols 1984:31) and one's own intuitively and emotionally accepted. (cf Tutu see

Frostin 1988:22). The particular theology becomes universalised and sacralised.

5.3 Conclusion

The development that has been discerned is

- a) the objective genitive epitheton theology has an unsystematic beginning. It starts off as a project for alleviating some secular problematic, for example, injustice, poverty or suffering.
- b) A theological-philosophical base is sought. Some epistemological break is inevitable as the secular concerns begin to play an increasingly important role.
- c) The base of society is changed, rather than understood. An attenuated theology is found in the superstructure. This attenuated theology must be congruent to the accepted base of society.
- d) The context is advanced as a rationalisation for the particular attenuated secular or pseudo-theological base while conscientisation is used for the legitimisation of this couplet theology. A rationalisation of positions previously taken up is advanced.
- e) An own life for the 'theology' begins and heresy is in the offing.

Apartheid theology has been plucked from heresy as a 'burning stick snatched from the fire' (Zechariah 3:2) by the admonitions and pastoral care of an Alliance to which it had ascribed as a member. The value of such Church Alliances (WARC) and Councils (WCC) is underlined as being indispensable in curbing sinful theological developments.

Black theology has no such Alliance or Council to which it subscribes and which could snatch it 'as a brand from the fire'. There is no advisory or pastoral body available to it as a movement. Internal dissensions, as is to be expected, still reign. This is the disadvantage inherent in any epitheton theology which owes allegiance only to its own unsystematised concepts.

Where black theology does not have the advantage of an Alliance or Council as mentioned above it ought to cultivate a self-correcting theological approach as a priority. This would require the construction of a base for society based on the Bible as the norm rather than on a secular base prescribed by socio-economic-political-cultural considerations. Where this is done then

- a) biblical revelation will be taken as the norm and not an experiential awareness;
- b) conscientisation towards a 'theology' with socio-economic-political-cultural overtones becomes unnecessary;
- c) such a theology will become more inclusive, the unity of the Church more pronounced and the reconciliation between people will be more visible;
- d) the theology will no longer be a reduction-theology as an objective genitive approach to the epitheton 'black' will have been eliminated.

However, theological self-correction can only be done effectively and constructively where there is a systematic approach towards the construction of a theology. This would counteract any rationalisation of 'theological' positions previously taken up. A systematised theology would sever any vaunted 'theological' emotional-intuitive umbilical chord with

racial-cultural-gender overtones. Black theology would no longer need to rely on an epistemological break to postulate or justify its theology as a no-go area for other theologies. This in turn would open up dialogue which could lead to reciprocal constructive criticism that would assist black theology in the self-correction of its theology.

This study suggests that it is now necessary and that it is now the kairos time for black theology seriously to consider the above aspects.

It has become clear that an epitheton or couplet theology used for a contextual conscientised project ought to be studied critically to ascertain, for instance, whether or not it is following in the footsteps of apartheid theology, using a pseudo-theological base, or, as in the case of black theology, a secular 'theological' base.

The conclusion is inescapable that any couplet epitheton theology has to be approached critically and is to be scrutinised carefully lest it becomes a theology for a project thereby skewing orthodoxy and setting a course towards heresy. The use to which the epitheton is put, whether it is used in the subjective genitive sense or the objective genitive sense becomes critical as an indication that a closer scrutiny of the theology is required.

The object must be to guard against theological teachings, so-called, from being heretical.

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