

THE IMPACT OF BLACK
CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE BLACK
CATHOLIC CLERGY AND THEIR
TRAINING FROM 1965-1981.

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Preface and Acknowledgement

Black Consciousness which gained root in South Africa in the late 1960s had a lot of impact on the society as a whole and more especially on the churches. This thesis aims to examine the impact Black Consciousness had on Black Roman Catholic priests and their training.

Whilst conducting this investigation, oral sources were an invaluable source of information. Conducting the interviews was intellectually stimulating and academically challenging. The practical aspect of interviews was fascinating and the relationship I developed with my interviewees will be cherished forever.

This thesis owes its greatest intellectual debt to my supervisor, Dr. Philippe Denis O.P.. For without his knowledge of the history of the black clergy and the invaluable printed primary sources he gave me, this would not have taken the direction it has. Also, without his painstakingly thorough comments on earlier drafts, this would not have achieved the shape and conciseness that it has; and without whose general encouragement this would have been infinitely more laborious than it had been.

I am also deeply indebted to Fr. Oswin Magrath (former rector of St. Peter's), for having provided the background information and regarding certain seminary events, and also for his untiring effort in reading my earlier drafts.

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Abbreviations

BAWU	- Black Allied Workers' Union
BC	- Black Consciousness
BCP	- Black Community Programme
BMC	- Black Methodist Consultation
BPC	- Black Peoples' Convention
BPM	- Black Priests' Manifesto
BT	- Black Theology
CMM	- Congregation of Mariannahill Mission
CPSA	- Church of the Province of South Africa.
MUCCOR	- Ministers' United for Christian Co-Responsibility
NUSAS	- National University of South African Students
PBPSG	- Permanent Black Solidarity Group
RCC	- Roman Catholic Church
SACBC	- South African Catholic Bishops' Conference
SACC	- South African Council of Churches
SACR	- South African Clergy Review
SASM	- South African Student Movement
SASO	- South African Student Organisation
SCPF	- Sacra Congregatio de Propanganda Fidei
SPOBA	- St. Peter's Old Boys Association
SRC	- Student Representative Council
SVD	- Society of the Divine Word
TEEC	- Theological Education by Extension College
UCM	- University Christian Movement
UNB	- University of Natal (Black Section)

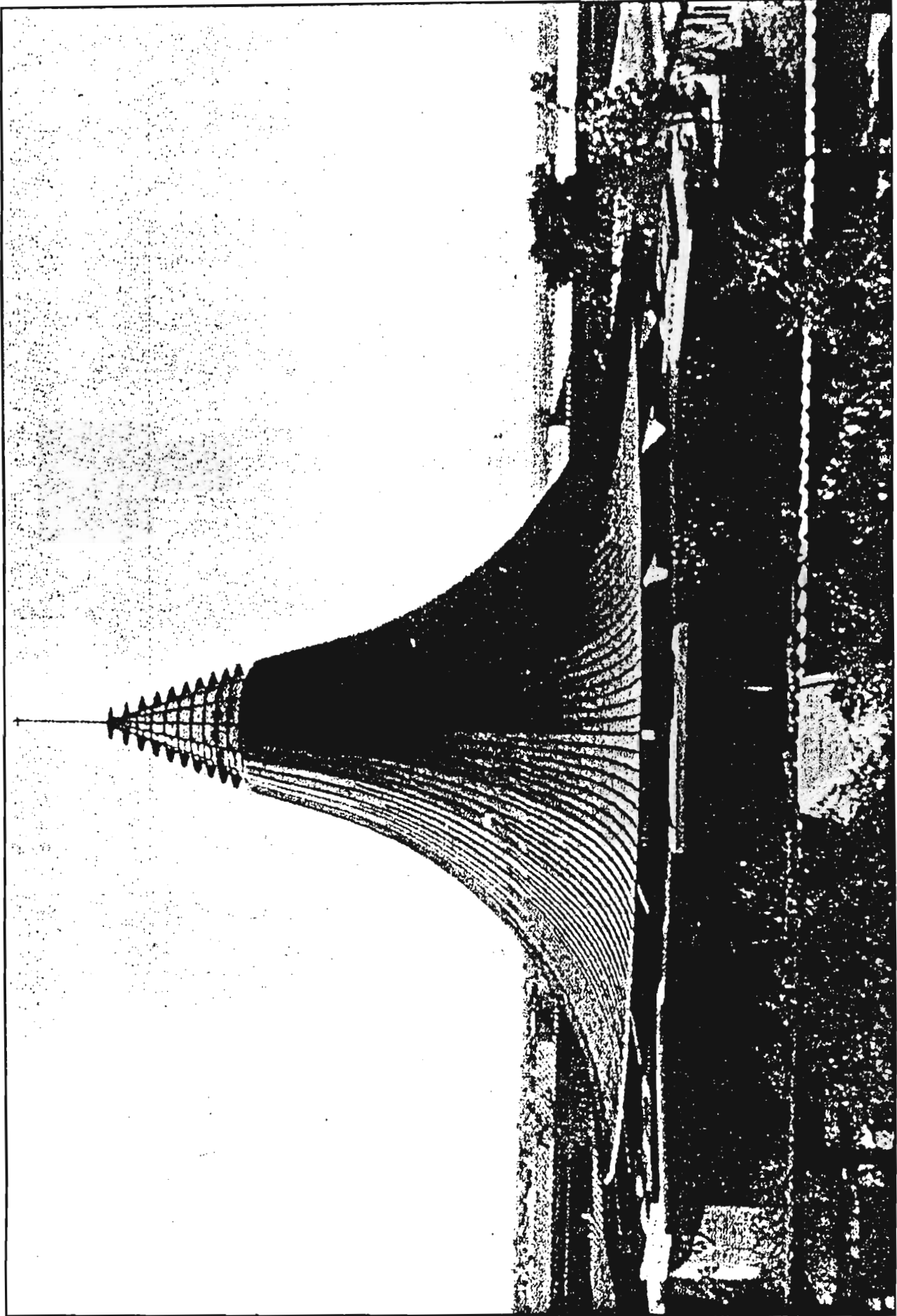
Abbreviations of Religious orders

CMM	Congregation of Missionaries of Mariannahill
CR	Community of the Resurrection (Anglican)
OMI	Oblate of Mary Immaculate
OP	Order of Preachers (Dominicans)

OSB Order of St. Benedict
SAC Society of Catholic Apostolate (Pallotines)
SMB Missionary Society of Bethlehem
SVD Society of the Divine Word

Abbreviations of Archival Material

SADA Southern African Dominican Archives (Springs)
BTPA Buti Tlhagale Private Archives (Pretoria)



St Peter's landmark chapel

0.0 Introduction.

Black Consciousness had a great impact on South African society and has become manifest in a wide range of ways. This thesis seeks to investigate its impact on the Churches specifically the Roman Catholic Church, especially the Black Catholic clergy and their training at St. Peter's Seminary in Hammanskraal from 1965 to 1981.

Its history will be traced from 1965 because the Association for Black priests (SPOBA - St. Peter's Old Boys Association) was formed the following year. This is vital that year marks the starting point. Fr. Mkhathshwa¹ was ordained in 1965 as a Catholic priest and he was destined to be very vocal on discriminatory issues. Also in 1966 the Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA) under the incumbent Archbishop Robert Selby Taylor convened a meeting which later on led on to the founding of the University Christian Movement (UCM). This was to become the vehicle for Black Consciousness. Finally, in 1966, Reverend Ernest Baartman of the Methodist Church was ordained. He was later going to be very vociferous in his church and spearheaded the formation the Black

¹. Fr. Mkhathshwa grew up in Barberton and received his secondary education at Maria Trost, Lydenburg, and Pax College near Pietersburg.

He studied for priesthood at St. Peter's Seminary, first in Pevensey Natal and then at Hammanskraal near Pretoria and was ordained for the diocese of Lydenburg - Witbank in 1965. After six years of pastoral work Mkhathshwa went to the University of Louvain in Belgium gaining a Master's degree in Dogmatic Theology in 1973. Since then he has held several posts simultaneously in the bishops secretariat.

In August 1976, he was arrested and detained until the end of the year. In June 1977 he was served with a five year banning order. He headed the ICT and now he is the Deputy Minister of Education

Methodist Consultation (BMC).

The investigation will conclude in 1981 for several reasons: one of them being that the two seminaries, St Peter's and St. John Vianney were amalgamated in that year. At this stage Black Consciousness and Black Theology were becoming marginalised and the charterist politics of the United Democratic Front (UDF) were becoming dominant. Also, the Permanent Black Priest Solidarity Group (PBPSG) was undergoing a metamorphosis into an ecumenical body.

Some of the Black Catholic clergy started questioning the hierarchy of their own church long before Black Consciousness was formally launched in South Africa in the late 1960s. With the launching of the Black Consciousness Movement (where there were organisations like SASO, BPC, SASM, and BAWU), from 1969 onwards the Black Catholic priests adhered to it *mutatis mutandis*.

St. Peter's Seminary played a vital role in the Catholic church and Black Consciousness, especially with the formation of SPOBA in 1966, when we see Black priests questioning the church hierarchy (SACBC - South African Catholic Bishops' Conference). This is the highest policy making body in the Catholic Church in South Africa². The priests were addressing issues which were affecting the Black community, through petitions or resolutions passed in 1966, 1968, 1969. These priests were not initially directly influenced by Black Consciousness and its affiliated bodies as these were

² The constitution of the SACBC says that "The particular aim of the conference is to provide the ordinaries of the territories mentioned above with facilities for consultations and united actions in such matters of common interest to the church..." Cf "Appendix K" in *SACBC Minutes of the Ordinary Plenary Session held at St. John Vianney Seminary Waterkloof, Pretoria. (2nd - 9th February 1977)*.

yet to be formally launched, but were already involved in the struggle. When Black Consciousness came on the scene in 1968 and 1969 they readily embraced its philosophy as they had been trying to criticise the system of oppression and the mentality which existed. As Mkhathshwa says

...whether BCM as a movement existed at that time or not there would still be a need for the Black Priests' Manifesto....because it was addressing the issues of the [people].... But one must also point out that the BCM had really influenced people especially the students - SASO was very active at that time and some of us were very actively involved with the students. You know when they went out to some of our parishes, ran projects on education, literacy, working classes, women. So many activities were involved to raise the level of social consciousness amongst the people."³

Priests who were involved during this time included people like Simangaliso Mkhathshwa, John Louwfant, Anthony Mabona, Clement Mokoka and David Moetapele. We also see that CPSA was also actively involved at this time through Archbishop Selby Taylor who was very keen to form a multiracial student movement as early as 1966. The UCM membership came from university, teachers training and seminary students and also pastors from different churches. Black caucuses were established in different churches.

From the mid to late 1970s, other priests joined the struggle with great vigour. This group mainly consisted of the lecturers at St. Peter's. Through the impact of Black Consciousness, they were able to question authority and try to enforce change. During this period people like Lebamang Sebidi, Buti Tlhagale, Elias Monyai and Ernest Baartman were prominent. The Dutch Reformed daughter churches were also influenced by Black Consciousness and they decided to affiliate with the South African Council of Churches (SACC). At the same time black delegates to the CPSA Synod staged

³ Simangaliso Mkhathshwa, Interview conducted in Edenvale on 12th December 1995.

a walked out in October 1974⁴. The SACC which mainly represented the English speaking churches

changed during the seventies from being white - dominated institution, to becoming much more widely representative of the black Christian community. This is reflected...in the appointment of black Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu as Secretary General in March 1978⁵.

The Methodist Church spearheaded by the Rev. Ernest Baartman formed the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC). This group reflected on the ministry of the church with special emphasis on the role played by black people in the leadership structures of the church.⁶

We see that, generally, in the churches a change was beginning to occur through the philosophy of Black Consciousness and Black Theology. The former is defined by Allan Boesak as

"... the awareness of black people that their humanity is constituted by their blackness. It means that black people are no longer ashamed that they are black, that they have a black history and a black culture distinct from the history and culture of white people. It means that blacks are determined to be judged no longer by and adhere no longer to white values. It is an attitude, a way of life"⁷

Along the same line, Black theology is defined by Basil Moore as

"Black People interpreting the Gospel in the light of black experience and interpreting black experience in the

⁴ Thoko Mbanjwa, (ed)., *Black Review 1974/75*, (Lovedale: Black Community Programmes, 1975) p.135.

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ Balia, D, *Black Methodists and white supremacy in South Africa* (Durban: Madiba Publication, 1991), p.88.

⁷ Boesak, A, *Farewell to Innocence* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1976), p.9

light of the gospel"⁸

Black Consciousness and Black Theology closely connected. This was expressed through the meetings and the seminars they attended as Sebidi notes

"... Black theology (was regarded) as the theological manifestation of the concerns of Black consciousness. It was a theological expression of the basic concerns of BC. So that for us BC concerns were concerns of God, of the church, of the basic ethics of Christianity. They were taken by all and we supported the movement with this kind of theological vehicle. So BT was BC at prayer. BC was BT politically. So there was really no difference they were two sides of the same coin. And there was a very close relationship between the exponents of BC and those of BT. They were almost the same. We went to the same meeting and supported each other"⁹

Black Consciousness and Black Theology were asserting the position of blacks in society, where blacks were supposed to take pride in themselves and consciously manifest that pride. Black theology challenges established Christianity to engage in a dialogue with the Black people who feel that somehow theology has not taken them into consideration¹⁰. There are many other aspects associated with Black Consciousness, for instance, cultural activities, welfare work, politics, economics, education etc.. Its approach is holistic.

⁸ Moore, B, "Black Theology Revisited", in *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in South Africa and Africa*, Vol.1 (1994), p.7

⁹ Lebamang Sebibi, interview conducted in Braamfontein, Johannesburg on 7th December 1995.

¹⁰ Bucher H., "Black theology in South Africa" in *AFER*, Vol.14, (1973).

0.1 Methodology.

Various methods have been employed in this research. Because of the theoretical nature of chapter one, most of the information has been obtained from secondary sources, i.e. works of writers on Black Consciousness and Black Theology. General information about the various approaches and research methods were summarised from existing literature, i.e. from books, and journals. However, for the other chapters, most of the information has been obtained from oral interviews with people who were directly and indirectly involved and from printed primary sources.

The Primary Sources consisted of Oral interviews, recording and transcribing them. Some of the information was collected through personal communication with Catholic priests in Natal. Other primary sources included archival material from newspapers; minutes of meetings; personal letters and official contracts between different parties. This information was very enriching because some of the events have never been recorded, but exist in a scattered unorganised form.

Secondary sources used consisted of published books and journals. They also contributed a great deal to the thesis especially for chapter one. But for the rest of the chapters heavy reliance was placed on primary sources. This is because the secondary sources had very little information on some the specific events which were happening amongst the clergy. The primary sources filled in the *terra incognita* of the secondary sources.

During my field work among the black priests in South Africa, I had an opportunity to conduct interviews and associate with the people who were involved during this period. This method enabled me to have first hand information about the incidents which were happening in the country. I chose priests who ranged from the

rector who was at St. Peter's in 1957 to a priest who was ordained in the 1980s. This gave me a wide cross section to refer to and sift information from. One of the problem I experienced was funding. I had to travel long distances to do the interviews, look for my own lodging and food. This can be very straining for a student with small financial resources. Most of the people I interviewed are high ranking members of the Church and Society. This at the beginning of the interviews intimidated me, but as we went along I discovered that they were very keen to help me and let me know what really happened. In some of the interviews personal opinions and story telling tended to overshadow the focus. Though, I discovered later, these served actually to illuminate particular events.

This thesis is a an historical and chronological narrative of the impact of Black Consciousness Movement on the Black Catholic clergy and also on other clergymen from different churches and their training.

After having set the scene I will briefly state how the investigation will proceed.

The first section will also look at the rise of Black Consciousness, Steve Biko, and UCM. Then briefly at its Philosophy. Alongside the development of Black Consciousness, Black Theology will also be examined. This section will help us understand the key issues, events, concepts which we will be dealing with later on.

The second section will briefly look at the history of the Black clergy training in the Catholic Church. It will trace the history from St. Mary's at Mariathal in Ixopo, to Pevensey, then to St. Peter's at Hammanskraal. Attitudes of the missionaries towards local vocations will be examined. Finally, we will look at some liberal trends which were becoming evident at the seminary.

The third section will look at the rise of SPOBA and the early petitions. This will be an introductory chapter to the Manifesto. It will help us understand why the clergy later on questioned the hierarchy on certain critical issues. It will be seen that it was mainly the training they received from the seminary and their lecturers that led to this state of affairs.

The fourth section will deal specifically with the Black Priests' Manifesto which was published in the *Rand Daily Mail* in 1970. It will examine how it came about, its reception and what it achieved. A critical analysis will follow to see whether it was really relevant.

The fifth section will look at the black clergy questioning the hierarchy; the Memorandum; Black Demonstrations and the situation at St. Peter's Seminary concerning amalgamation and the need for a black rector.

The last section will examine the impact of Black Consciousness on the Black lecturers and their students. Priests who were articulating the concerns of the people will also be looked at. In addition, this sections will look at the first black rector, the Permanent Black Priest Solidarity Group (PBPSG), and the Ecumenical role played by PBPSG later known as MUCCOR (Ministers' United for Christian Co-responsibility).

Finally we will look at the amalgamation of the two seminaries. It will become clear that not everybody was happy with this new venture.

CHAPTER ONE

Black Consciousness

1.0 Introduction

Black resistance subsided after Sharpville. The ANC and the PAC were banned. Their leaders were either banned or imprisoned or fled into exile.¹¹ By the mid 1960s some Black community leaders had reluctantly agreed to work through separate development. People like Dr. Gatsha Buthelezi, thought that they might use this option as a way of overthrowing the oppressive regime.

1.1 Black Consciousness.

However, a younger generation of blacks who were largely products of separate development, rejected such roles played by these community leaders. This generation had gone to non-white Universities like the University of Zululand, the University of the North, the University of Durban Westville, the University of Fort Hare and the University of Transkei.

These young people had little contact with white people and were very suspicious of them. For instance, the Nationalists, because of Apartheid; the Liberals, because they were just talking about the struggle and doing nothing in practice. They embarked on politics of polarisation as a starting point - "Black man you are

¹¹ De Gruchy, J, *The church Struggle in South Africa*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979), p.149.

on your own"¹²

"BCM which, rising like a phoenix out of the tumultuous events of the 1960s, saw its role as continuing the black struggle while at the same time making its own unique contribution"¹³ It filled the gap which was created by the banning in the 1960s.

Although the advocates of BC were greatly influenced by people like Stokey Carmicheal and books and writings like Charles Hamilton's *Black Power*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Elridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, Rap Brown, George Jackson, James Cone's, *Black Theology and Black Power* and Albert Cleage¹⁴ they largely drew from their own experience as De Gruchy puts it forcefully

"Black South Africans did not have to be told by outsiders that their own rights and dignity had been crushed by racism, nor that their culture was thought to be second-class to that of whites. But they had to be made more aware of what their identity meant, and of their potential for changing the situation in which they lived, BC aimed at doing precisely that"¹⁵

The young generation were directly influenced by some writings of African leaders against colonialism. People like Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Leopold Senghor, the then president of Senegal, Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral and Frantz Fanon. They were also influenced by the liberation struggles of Mozambique and Angola.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.150; See also; Archbishop Peter Butelezi, interview conducted in Bloemfontein on 8th July 1996.

¹³ Leatt J., (ed)., *Contending Ideologies in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1986), p.105-119.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; see also; Hopkins D., *Black Theology USA and South Africa* (New York: Orbis Books, 1989).

¹⁵ De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, p.151.

Indirectly they were influenced by student revolts in Europe, Britain and the USA. They were also influenced by non-African third world leaders like Fidel Castro, Mao Tse-tung and Latin America liberation theology.¹⁶

All these factors had an impact on the young blacks who fashioned Black Consciousness in South Africa.

1.1.1 The University Christian Movement.

The Student Christian Association (SCA) split up in line with the apartheid policy. Hence, separate groups of white, coloured, indian associations were formed. The "English speaking churches" reacted against this with the help of Archbishop Selby Taylor of the Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA) as we noted earlier. In 1966 he called a meeting of church leaders. The discourse at this meeting led to the formation of the University Christian Movement (UCM) in 1967. It was going to be multi-racial and ecumenical in character and the vehicle for Black Consciousness.

This enabled the black students from various campuses to come together and discuss areas of common interest. The membership comprised "university, teachers training and seminary students and also black and white pastors."¹⁷

The National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) had survived

¹⁶ Leatt, *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, p.106.

¹⁷ Mofokeng, T.A, *The Crucified Among the Cross bearers: Towards a Black Christology* (Uitgeversmaatschappij: Kok-Kampen, 1983), p.7.

as a multi-racial organisation which acted as a platform for political issues for English speaking and Black campuses¹⁸. Following the banning of the ANC and the PAC, African students began to look towards NUSAS as a platform from which to air their views¹⁹. However, though NUSAS was radical, it was run by liberal whites who dealt only with symbolic multi-racial activities. At its conferences it was mainly dominated by the articulate white delegates.

The structure of South African society made it very difficult for a multi-racial organisation. Firstly, because the whites lacked the background to understand the issues which were being addressed by blacks. Secondly, the fact that they (whites within NUSAS) were part of the oppressor group, created difficulty.

A small number of frustrated black students were co-opted in NUSAS. But in 1967 a small number of black students spearheaded by Steve Biko, a young medical student at University of Natal (Black Section) began to see a lot of discrepancies in NUSAS. The mounting tension reached its peak the same year. When there was an incident of "blatant racism" at a NUSAS conference. This occurred in the form of appalling segregated sleeping at the conference of 1967 held at Rhodes University in Grahamstown²⁰

Biko's main contention was that the white liberals stance to

¹⁸ See Beinart W., *Twentieth - Century South Africa*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 218; where he says, the Afrikaans campuses had their own National Union.

¹⁹ Johnson B ., (et. al) *Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa: The Real story*, (Cape Town: Cape Town Readers Digest Association, 1994), p.443.

²⁰ Hopkins, *Black Theology USA and South Africa*, p.21.

racial segregation was not effective and hence, was not going to lead to any change. This is because it lacked a "coherent critique of racism" and the socio-political-economic repercussions it had on the people.²¹ For Biko, the whites were claiming a monopoly on knowledge and moral judgement and hence setting the standards to be achieved by the Africans²². As Mofokeng puts into perspective the meetings of

NUSAS degenerated into polarisations and contradiction of aspiration along the colour lines that are represented in it. This polarization also reflects the political, economic and social polarization in the entire country"²³

Biko "felt that paternalism in part stemmed from their deep-seated feelings of *superiority* towards black people. He criticised their definition of multi-racialism, which assumed the superiority of Western Culture and the automatic assimilation of blacks into its fold. He was critical of the reliance blacks placed on white leadership. He charged blacks with lack of faith in themselves and of having internalised an inferiority complex. Such self-inflicted psychological oppression ensured their continued physical and political oppression. *He urged blacks to see themselves as blacks first and foremost, and to commit themselves to the total liberation of all black people in South Africa.*"²⁴ (Italics mine)

The solution for Biko was for black people to take initiatives and lead their own liberation. He drew a great deal of inspiration from the Black Power Movements, the Black Panthers in the USA and

²¹ Ramphele, *A life*, p.56.

²² Biko, *I Write What I like*.

²³ Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Cross Bearers: Towards a Black Christology*, p.7.

²⁴ Biko, *I Write What I like*, p.56.

from writers on Negritude as we saw earlier on.

This literature was banned, but it managed to slip into the country. Biko and his friends wanted to go back to their communities and "counter the ethnicization of black politics through the rapidly evolving Bantustan system"²⁵. Black consciousness asserted the black person's skin colour, amidst banning, racism and the subhuman living conditions. It was also an intellectual orientation rather than a political organisation. It was "difficult to capture analytically because it was represented by a scattering of proponents and small organisations rather than a single party"²⁶. The use of the term "black" was a threat to apartheid, instead of the then conventional "non-white". Biko started using the term black as early as 1970.²⁷

The UCM initiated by the Anglican Archbishop Selby Taylor, helped the young black to create their own platform. In 1968 in Stutterheim at a UCM meeting, Biko started canvassing for an all-black University Movement at a conference where blacks were in the majority. A situation arose where the black delegates met alone to discuss "the problem relating to a clause in the Group Areas Act which rule(d) that blacks may not be in an urban area for more than 72 hours without a permit"²⁸. The 40 black participants used this opportunity to discuss an all black student movement which was affirmed by all. Consequently, a black caucus was formed. The

²⁵ Beinart, *Twentieth - Century South Africa*, p.219; See also Pampallis, *Foundation of the New South Africa* (Cape Town: Miller Longman, 1991), p.233.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.217.

²⁷ Davenport, T.R.H, *South Africa: A Modern History*, (Bergvlei: Southern, 1991), p.378-779.

²⁸ Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Cross Bearers: Towards A Black Christology*, p.8

membership consisted of University, teacher training and seminary students with black pastors.

In December 1968, SASO (South African Students Organisation) was launched at Mariannhill High School of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). This conference was convened by the University of Natal (Black section - the Medical School). SASO broke away from NUSAS. The inauguration took place in July 1969 at a conference at Turfloop, whilst en route to Petersburg, they stopped off at St. Peter's Seminary in Hammanskraal. This was to have some repercussions as we shall see later on. The UCM provided the background for the organisation of Black Consciousness. Mofokeng emphasises the Christian influence when he says tersely that "It is important to note that the SASO and thereby the Black Consciousness philosophical approach was born inside Christian circles"²⁹ This was later summed up by the Rev. E. Baartman who said that;

"The church through its preaching and work has helped the black man realise that he is a man. Not all streams of the church have done that in this country. Yet it is no lie to say that the church had made her contribution."³⁰

Thus, the churches played a major role in getting the UCM, Black Consciousness and SASO on its feet. For instance, Sabelo Ntwasa a theological student, a member of SASO and an exponent of BC became the first secretary for Black Theology.³¹

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.9.

³⁰ Baartman E, "Black Consciousness" in *Pro Veritate* (March 1974), p.4.

³¹ Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Cross Bearers: Towards a Black Christology*, p.19.

1.1.2 SASO and Black Theology.

SASO policy manifesto defined Black Consciousness as

- i) ... an attitude of mind, a way of life.³²
- ii) The basic tenet of Black Consciousness is that the Black man must reject all value systems that seek to make him a foreigner in the country of his birth and reduce his basic human dignity
- iii) The black man must build up his own value systems, see himself as self-defined and not defined by others.
- iv) The concept of Black consciousness implies the awareness by the black people of power they wield as a group, both economically and politically and hence group cohesion and solidarity are important facets of Black consciousness.
- v) BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS will always be enhanced by the totality of involvement of the oppressed people, hence the message of Black Consciousness has to be spread to reach all sections of the black community.

The theological aspect is seen in term of

... a re-examination of the Black man's religious make up and an attempt to unite the Black man to God. SASO sees Black Theology as an existential theology that grapples with the Black man's day to day life experience.³³

Consequently, the term "black" became the basis for reference in liberation, politico-economic, theological and ecumenical discussion. Also Black Consciousness was expanding and encroaching on all spheres of black life. For instance, by 1972 the Black Peoples' Convention (BPC) was formed. This was to reach beyond

³² See also Pityana, B.(ed)., *Bounds of Possibility: the legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness* (Claremont: David Philip, 1992), p.118.

³³ Wolfson , J.G.E, *Turmoil at Turfloop: A Summary of the reports of the Synman and Jackson Commission of Inquiry into the University of the North*, (Johannesburg: South African Race Relations, 1976)

university campuses, and other constituencies. It grew quite rapidly by 1973 it had 41 branches. In 1973 the Black Allied Worker's Union (BAWU) was formed, with an emphasis on worker organisations. Black Consciousness literature and journalism flourished. Some members were banned and imprisoned similar to the earlier cases of the ANC and the PAC in the 1960s.

1.1.3 Analysis

The Black Consciousness era can be divided into two phases:

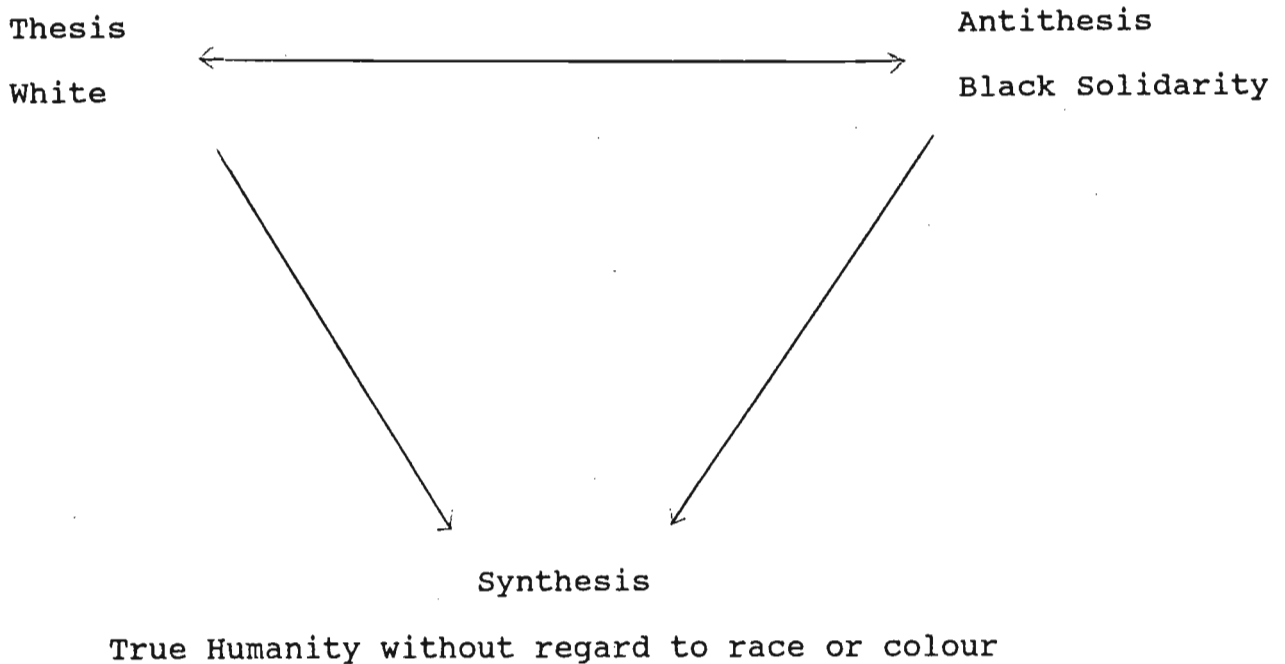
- a) As a liberation movement; when it began in 1967 until the big organisations were banned in October 1977.
- b) After 1977 - Internal (inside the country) and external (outside the country) developments. This led to the creation of new institutions to express Black Consciousness in South Africa. Also there were some shifts in the ideologies especially in analysis and strategies.

1.1.3.1 The Philosophy

According to Black Consciousness, the history of South Africa can be explained as a dialectical process³⁴, like Marxism. There are two opposing poles; the whites and the blacks. These are in direct conflict with each other. But if their interests are combined a new synthesis can be achieved. This can be explained in the following manner;

³⁴ See Leatt (ed), *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, p.105

We have the thesis, i.e. white, then the anti-thesis i.e black solidarity. If the two come together we have a synthesis of humanity without emphasis on race or colour, which was an obsession of South African Society. This can be illustrated as follows;



The white thesis was to be combined with the black solidarity antithesis to produce true humanity without regard to race or colour as a synthesis.

They believed that the early strategies of the ANC and the PAC were premature and therefore doomed to fail. They believed that;

.... in order to play a positive role in the liberation struggle, blacks had to develop a sense of solidarity through the concept of group power, and in this way build

a broad base from which to counter the divide and rule strategies of whites"³⁵

This was going to be done by having a working definition of Black Consciousness and Black renaissance, blacks had to be aware of their dignity. For them liberation was holistic. Thus, they had to be conscientized and they began to explore their situation in order to raise the level of awareness. They adopted the policy of Communalism, which had its model of 'African Family-ism'. This entailed that political change should also mean the redistribution of wealth. They even thought that it would be better if the state owned most of the land. This was going to reflect elements of traditional African culture based on communalism, where the community shared all that they owned. It also favoured the "non-racialism" rather than "multiracialism"; this is mainly because non-racialism stressed the rights of individuals rather than those of groups emphasised by multi-racialism.³⁶

1.1.4 Conclusion

This goes to illustrate how Biko and his colleagues tried to show the world that African people were as capable as white people. In this manner, the philosophy was articulated by the leaders to show the capability of the blacks. The people who listened to it found it very relevant. Some said this is what they had been waiting for. Black Consciousness became the vehicle for oppressed South Africans to voice out their grievances.

In this investigation we are particularly interested on the impact it had on the churches especially the training of the Catholic

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.108.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.111.

priests and in the situation of the Catholic priests in general. Our other aim is also to see the how Black consciousness brought about a new theology called Black Theology. We will look at how this emerged. It is very closely related to Black Consciousness.

1.2 Black Theology.

Black theology was developing rapidly within Black Consciousness. Its initial stages were mainly influenced by James Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power*.

Black Theology was mainly discussed at seminars at Seminaries, Universities and Conference centres. Mkhathshwa was also involved in some of these seminars. He says that even

"though Cones' writing influenced Black theology, it was more the articulation rather than the actual experience. The actual experience was rooted in our spirits experienced in South Africa. So whether James Cone, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King existed or not, I would say, because of our experience we would have come up with Black theology or another name that would have been very necessary"³⁷.

The UCM Director for theological concerns, Dr. Basil Moore, was spearheading Black theology in South Africa. In 1971 the UCM conducted a series of seminars on Black theology. The first one was held at Roodepoort in March, it was arranged by Sabelo Ntwasa from the Black Theology Movement(BTM). As Archbishop Butelezi says:

"...later on at another meeting there was one strong Anglican seminarian Sabelo Ntwasa who was very active in

³⁷ Mkhathshwa, interview conducted in Edenvale in Johannesburg on the 12th of December 1995.

organising the 'black church' in 1971."³⁸ This project started existing around 1970³⁹.

For Moghethi Motlhabi, BTM was the spearhead of Black theology thrust⁴⁰. Various seminars and caucuses for ministers were held in the country to promote BT in South Africa⁴¹. This led to the first South African publication on this subject, *Essays in Black theology*⁴². Ironically, seminars became very popular and well known to the public and the churches mainly because the book was banned. During one of the seminar Bishop Alphaeus Zulu, now in Johannesburg, was arrested on a technical pass law offence.⁴³ Another reason for the popularity was because the leaders within the UCM were banned this included Moore, and Ntwasa.

But regardless of the suppression Black Theology material managed to slip through. The churches could not manage to hide it, they had to come to terms with the situation. Black theology began as rebellion and found some form of expression in the African Independent Churches. "Black theology is rooted in the ongoing search by Black Christian for authentic expression in

³⁸ *Ibid.*; see also Pityana (ed), *Bounds of Possibility, the Legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness*, p.103.

³⁹ Hopkins, *Black Theology USA and South Africa*, p.31.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Mosala I. and Tlhagale B., *The Unquestionable Right to be Free: Essays in Black Theology* (Johannesburg: Skataville, 1986), p.xvii.

⁴² *Ibid.*; and also see De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, p.155. The book - *Essays in Black theology* - was banned in South Africa. It was published in the USA with a different title, *The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa*.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.155.

Africa. For this reason, it is wrong to suggest that there is a fundamental difference between what is now called African Theology and Black Theology"⁴⁴ Siphon Mtetwa recently observed that,

It is not just black theology, it is also African Theology and that is my point of departure.... I think I am an African theologian and I do not see contradictions between the African Theology and Black Theology. Only that, Black Theology was more emphatic in its attack on the socio-economic and political discrepancies in the country. African Theology was more geared towards the cultural identity of the African or black people. Now what we are trying to do is to search for the interface between African Theology and Black Theology, both within our church as well as outside.⁴⁵

One particular seminar was based on Dr. Manas Buthelezi of the Evangelical Lutheran Church who addressed the issue of blackness and God. At the end of the Seminar, Mr Ntwasa said that, "Black theology, it was agreed, cannot be seen outside of the concept of Black awareness and identity - an identity which can be discovered in part in traditional African religion. What was good in our African religion will be investigated and ways and means will be found of incorporating this into Black man's understanding of Christianity".⁴⁶

An important aspect of Black Consciousness is 'communalism' which was mentioned earlier. Where the kinship system in African culture is related to the biblical concept of the community as Bongajalo Goba expands

What we discover in the concept as it manifests itself in Israel is the unique idea of solidarity, a social consciousness that rejects and transcends individualism. Apart from this, one discovers a unique sense of a dynamic community, a caring concern that seeks to embrace

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.156.

⁴⁵ Reverend Siphon Mtetwa (from the Presbyterian Church of South Africa), interview conducted in Pietermaritzburg on 23rd July 1996.

⁴⁶ *The Southern Cross*, (22nd September 1971).

all, a love that suffers selflessly for others.⁴⁷

This concept has been destroyed by the coming of Europeans. Black theology it was hoped was going to restore this. There have been many definitions of Black theology, I have given some already, but basically, as Elliot Mgojo puts it succinctly, it is "an attempt by Black Christians to grasp and think through the central claims of the Christian faith in the light of black experience"⁴⁸

Black is used here as a sense of empowerment. It is also a negation of the view that the other "mainline theologies" are the true theologies. The term 'black' is used in a sense to empower the people who by nature of their pigmentation have suffered unimaginable oppression. This is evoked from a particular context, it is not an armchair theology. As De Gruchy tersely puts it

It is reflection on 'doing the truth', that is on 'praxis', in obedience to the gospel amid the realities of contemporary suffering, racism, oppression, and everything else that denies the lordship of Christ.⁴⁹

1.2.1 Summary

Black Theology can be divided into the following phases used by Moore (1994);

I) 1972-1977 - Heyday and banning.

⁴⁷ Quoted in De Gruchy, *The church Struggle in South Africa*, p.157. For an expansion see Pityana, (ed). *The Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness*, p.194.

⁴⁸ Elliot Mgojo, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Black theology", *Journal of Theology for South Africa*, no.21 (December 1973), p.27.

⁴⁹. De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, p.194.

This is the period when it was launched. It flourished and became established in the mainline churches with the formation of black caucuses. It was closely linked with June 16 as Moore says:

Black theologians like Mkhathshwa ... who were closely associated with the student uprising and their aftermath as members of parents' and crisis committee and who suffered banning and imprisonment for their effort"⁵⁰

With the banning BCM and its leaders in 1977, the situation changed drastically. Other organisations, like the UDF, started gaining popularity.

II) 1977-1983: the Rise of charterist politics of the UDF and its alliance with black consciousness.

The government was becoming very oppressive. As a result there emerged an informal alliance of charterist politics with BC politics. The people who fled the country after 1976 saw that ANC was the in charge outside the country. Hence there was a change in ideology i.e. change from emphasising 'race' to 'non-racialism'.

III) 1983-1990: the Triumph of charterist politics and the marginalisation of Black Consciousness.

This saw the decline in importance of Black Theology.

IV) 1990-1992: Reconstruction begins;

Here we have the un-banning of political parties and the release of prisoners. However, the great weakness of Black Theology and Black Consciousness is that its main emphasis has been an oppositional mode. The present era demands reconstruction. Hence one needs to ask oneself a question, does Black Theology have a future?

This question can be answered in a number of ways; Black Theology can have a future if:

it is made accessible at the grassroots level. If people are able to use its tools for their betterment. Other people feel that it

⁵⁰ Moore, "Black Theology Revisited", in *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in South Africa*, p.13.

has to change its term from black and use some other relevant term to denote it like "anti-oppression theology"⁵¹. Others like Tlhagale, sees no future for Black Theology because its function i.e. oppositional mode, is defunct in the new era. It has to deal with real issues rather than be left in the past or become an armchair theology.

But others like Mtetwa have seen that Black Theology and Black Consciousness are still relevant as long as "economic emancipation is looming at large...[and] as long as racism is looming at large"⁵².

Black Theology arose out of the liberation struggle and most of its subjects were products from the liberation camps. But though that era has passed, Black Theology is still relevant to the people it is a "theology embedded in the struggle of black people as against racism in general and apartheid in particular in South Africa"⁵³. Mtetwa encompasses the relevance of Black Theology when he says

BT is going to be with us for a long time still as long as racism is looming at large. We have to defuse the myth now from within the BT and AT enterprise, that, for instance, if you suddenly talk about racism now post 1994 you are working within a politically incorrect framework..., we are going to expose racists for who racist are.⁵⁴

However, this is how Black Theology is perceived as mentioned above. But there are some distinctive features which have developed over the years since its inception in the late 1960s.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁵² Mtetwa interview conducted in Pietermaritzburg on the 22nd July 1996.

⁵³ Moore, "Black theology Revisited", in *Bulletin For Contextual Theology in Southern Africa*, p.7.

⁵⁴ Mtetwa, same interview.

That it is

- a) a theology of and for black resistance activists
- b) black people reflecting critically on black experience
- c) a theology which gives voice to the most marginalised members of society
- d) a theology which systematises the struggle and the reflection which is already taking place 'out there' among the people
- e) a theology which advances the struggle by empowering people
- f) a theology of hope and
- g) a theology of suspicion⁵⁵

Presently, people perceive Black Theology in a number of ways; Some see it as having opened up a huge gap between the intellectuals and the people on the ground. They feel that academics do not actually relate to what is happening on the ground. Secondly, that it was not associated with the resisting groups which came up in the 1980s, in which prominent Black Theology proponents like Tutu and Boesak played a vital role. Thirdly, Black Theology is seen to be in alliance with AZAPO and ideologically in conflict with the ANC. Finally, Black Theology is still trapped in the opposition role rather than in reconstruction, which means that it is still trapped in the early time framework, whilst things are changing now⁵⁶.

1.3 Conclusions

But I think if we take Black theology as addressing the Black people and by this, we mean, people who are economically underdogs, who are considered to be lesser human beings, free but yet oppressed by their circumstances. One sees that there is still a need for Black Theology. Let us take an example of some African countries, for instance, Zambia. It will take many generation

⁵⁵ These definitions are summaries of interviews conducted by Professor Basil Moore (the Former Director of Theological concerns in the UCM). For further discussion see, *Bulletin for Contextual theology in Southern Africa and Africa*, Vol.1 1994. p.7ff.

⁵⁶ Based on Basil Moore's conclusions; see *Ibid.*

before the people of Zambia are economically viable. This means that they are still oppressed by several factors, one of them being the western countries. This has been done through the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. A theology which could help them appreciate their faith could be Black Theology. It could act as a backbone to the whole suffering which is taking place. At the end, regardless of the inequality in wealth the Black people of Africa would be able to assert themselves as full human beings who have been denied a chance through circumstances. This in itself is empowering, because it creates room for hope and for the future advancement.

Black theology is dynamic, and I believe that, it will develop to accommodate new horizons. Perhaps the example I have given above could be one of the areas it could deal with. There is a need for black theology. The situation of blacks all over the world is deteriorating rapidly. It is quite plausible that hope could be seen through Black Theology.

Having looked at Black Consciousness and Black theology, we see that they were expressing the same basic concern for the black - awareness and self actualization. Now, we will look at the history of the Catholic seminary at Hammanskraal and then proceed to see how Black Consciousness came in.

CHAPTER TWO

St. Peter's Seminary and the Negative Attitudes towards local Priests.

This chapter aims at giving an exposition of the establishment of a seminary for Black Catholic priests. The prevailing discouraging attitudes towards Black vocations which existed during the time will be analyzed. Then, finally it will look at some trends of "liberalism" which were prevalent at the seminary. This was later going to have positive effects on some priests.

2.1 St. Peter's Seminary.

The seminary's history starts with the coming of the Trappists Monks to South Africa, whose aim was to evangelise and educate the Black people. This group of Trappists later wanted to be more independent from the original group in order to carry out their work easily amongst the local people. Among other things, they took the vow of silence. If they were going to evangelise the local people this was not going to be very helpful. So they became the Congregation of Mariannahill Missionaries (CMM).

Their first settlement was at Dunbrody in 1880, but was later moved to the present Monastery in Natal at Mariannahill, in 1882. By 1884 their work had advanced considerably. They started teaching Catechism, and managed to train the first black catechist by the name of Benjamin Makheba. They also had a School with 100

boys where catechism, education and manual work were taught.⁵⁷

The CMM managed to send five African aspirants to Rome, who were later ordained. Edward Mnganga was the first Black priest to be ordained in Rome from the CMMs. Four priests later on followed⁵⁸.

2.2 St. Peter's at Ixopo⁵⁹

In 1923, St. Mary's Seminary in Ixopo was opened for the training the Black clergymen. In 1929 it was divided into a Minor Seminary and a Major Seminary. In 1946, the Major Seminary was separated from the Minor Seminary⁶⁰.

⁵⁷ *St. Peter's Seminary*, (undated Pamphlet published on St. Peter's) Southern African Dominican Archives, Springs).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; Abbot Pfanner and his successor encouraged these early vocations. The following were sent to Rome for studies; Aloys Mncadi, Charles Mbengane, Julius Mbhele and Andreas Ngidi.

⁵⁹ For the History of St. Peter's on the beginning of the seminary in Mariathal, Ixopo and Reichenau see the following
 a) Thomas Respondeck, "Die Erziehung sum Preistertum in der Marainhiller Mission", *Zeitschrift fur Missionwissenschaft*, (1950), p.34
 b) Damian Magrath, "The English Vicariate in South Africa", *Dominican Topics* (VII, IV, May 1967), p.4
 c) Sr. M. Adelgisa, *History of the congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannahill in the Province of the Mariannahill, South Africa.* (Mariannahill, 1983) p.94-97.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

2.3 Pevensey.

The seminary moved to a new location at Pevensey and acquired a new name of St. Peter's Seminary.⁶¹ It first started using the buildings of the defunct Reichenau Agricultural School founded in 1928. Seventeen students and three priests moved to this new place.⁶² In 1947 Bishop Fleischer of the CMM handed over the seminary to the jurisdiction of the bishops.

2.3.1 Two Seminaries

The decision to establish two seminaries (one for whites and one for Blacks) was taken at the Plenary session of the SACBC in 1947⁶³. With the initiative of the apostolic delegate, the most Reverend Martin Lucas, SVD, a new seminary was to be established at St. John Vianney in Pretoria for whites⁶⁴. The other, St. Peter's,

⁶¹ *Ibid.*; The new place was located at "Pevensey which was at the foot of the Sani Pass in Natal", Cf. the *Sermon at the Jubilee of Fr. Joseph Sonaba* (on the 10th July 1989), by Oswin Magrath [SADA, Springs].

⁶² Sr. M. Adelgisa, *Reichenau Mission*, (Mariannhill: Mission Press, 1990), p.19-21.

⁶³ *Background to the Closing of St. Peter's Seminary, Hammanskraal 1977* (7.05.79, Tlhagale private archive).

⁶⁴ The training of white priests in South Africa started in Queenstown before it moved to Pretoria. According to Archbishop Peter Buthelezi, it was stated by German Pallotines; A number of German congregations were brought to South Africa after the first world war. The German colonies were taken over by the Apostolic delegate Archbishop Bernard J. Gilswijk. The bishop in Queenstown was very interested in missions in promoting missions. He even started Lumko and promoted these vocation. (Archbishop Peter Buthelezi,

was to be taken from the Vicariate Apostolic of Mariannhill as we saw earlier on. "At the time of the decision no-one queried the establishment of two seminaries for that time the practice of racial segregation was accepted as normal, even within the church"⁶⁵. As Archbishop Peter Butelezi put it succinctly, "...the question of black and white happened to be *de facto* situation..."⁶⁶

Bishop Fleischer also gave them a building site for a new St. Peter's which was near the old St. Joseph's Home. When the bishops took over the Seminary, a Board for Seminaries was established with Archbishop Hurley of Durban as the first chairperson. The opening took place on June 17th 1951.

In 1957 the Apostolic delegate Monsignor Celestine Damiano negotiated with the English Dominicans to take over staffing at the Seminary as the CMM had problems in finding people to teach at the seminary. "Until then forty priests had been through St. Peter's by the Mariannhillers for the church in South Africa"⁶⁷. The contract between the hierarchy of Southern Africa and the English Province of the Order of Preachers concerning the administration of St. Peter's was signed on the 27th June 1957 by Archbishop Hurley on behalf of the Bishops and by Hilary Carpenter (the English Provincial), on behalf of the Dominicans. The latter accepted for an indefinite period the direction and ordinary administration of the regional Seminary of St. Peter. The Dominicans were to be treated as an exempt community of the regulars. The contract was accepted by the Propaganda (SCPF) on

interview conducted in Bloemfontein on 8th July 1996).

⁶⁵ *Background to the Closing of St. Peter's Seminary, Hammanskraal 1977*, (Tlhagale private archive), p.1.

⁶⁶ Archbishop Peter Butelezi, same interview.

⁶⁷ *St. Peter's Pamphlet* (SADA, Springs), p.21.

the 22 August 1958. The retiring Rector Fr. Laurence Schleissinger CMM handed over to Fr. Oswin Magrath O.P on December 10 1957.

2.3.1.1 Nationalism

The aim of this thesis is to establish the impact of Black Consciousness and Black Theology on the Catholic Church and churches in general. It is interesting to see that in December 1956, Fr. Schleissinger, the then Rector noted in the *Annual Report on St. Peter's Regional Seminary* for the year 1956, under the title "Discipline" that, "the discipline was generally good. But there were instances of undue criticism and sign of unhealthy and exaggerated *nationalism* with a tendency to take even the best advice in the wrong sense. There were however, no excesses"⁶⁸ (italics mine).

It would be interesting to look at the advice given to these students. Nationalism at this time does not come as a surprise because this is when the internal resistance was intensified. This can be clearly in the epoch making events which characterised that era. The year 1952 saw the beginning of the defiance campaign, where people were defying, *inter alia*, laws related to passes, Group Areas and suppression of communism.⁶⁹ In 1955 the Congress of the People in Kliptown, members of the different liberation parties came together and the Freedom Charter was passed, it demanded a non-racial South Africa. Finally, between 1956-64 there was a great rural resistance to the apartheid

⁶⁸ *Annual Report on St. Peter's Regional Seminary, 1956* (written by the Rector, Schleissinger).

⁶⁹ Davenport, *South Africa A Modern History*, p.335.

regime.⁷⁰ For instance, the climax of this resistance came between 1957 and 1960 in Pondoland. With the introduction of Bantu authorities there was some opposition in Sekhukhuneland. Plausibly, the above events could have led to what the Rector called *exaggerated nationalism*. It is very interesting to see that the black clergy were already "questioning" the existing structures at the time. This could be defined as Black Consciousness at an early stage (an unarticulated stage) by the seminarians. Interestingly, what Fr. Schleissinger said in 1956 was going to be repeated by Fr. Dominic Scholten who was to be rector in 1971. However this point will be dealt with at a deeper level from 1965 onwards.

2.4 Prevailing attitudes towards local Priests.

These evolved around the idea that Africans were not ready to be priests. They can be categorised in the following ways;

2.4.1 Doubt about Black Priests.

The missionaries really doubted whether the people they had evangelised could be priests. They had great doubt as to whether the people actually comprehended and believed in the new faith. This was seen with the "doubt about opportuneness of having African priests at all, all often expressed in the opinion that it would be another fifty years before it would be wise to ordain any"⁷¹. It was even well known that white South Africans could not be priests in one diocese. But they are priests and bishops now."...wide doubts about the policy (local vocations) still

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.332-6; 346; 348-50; 531.

⁷¹ Magrath, *Sermon at the Jubilee of Fr. Joseph Sonaba*. 10th July 1989 (SADA, Springs)

persisted, world wide, even into the late 1960's and the attitudes of the Papal representatives in the missions, the Apostolic Delegates, was not always consistent"⁷².

But the Holy See in the missionary encyclicals from Benedict XV until today always stressed the recruiting of local priests as a first priority once the church came to a new area, and pressure was exerted on missionary bishops to establish seminaries. In this century the Holy See aimed to build a big seminary in every African country, and did so. But it took time to convince the foreign missionaries of this policy. That is why you find that local seminaries were greatly subsidized by the Holy See.

2.4.2 Black to be Religious first before they can be priests

The first black priests in South Africa were diocesan and trained in Rome. However, some bishops wanted priests to be religious first and not diocesan. They thought that they would find it easier to have the support of a community by joining a religious group. "A second reservation concerned secular or diocesan priests. A few would not accept a student unless he became a religious"⁷³. Magrath goes on to give the example of Bishop Zwane of Manzini. He was advised to become a religious by both the Servite Bishop and the Salesian superiors. Zwane reacted by rejecting the easier way and choosing the harder. This reason was a hierarchical barrier, the people in authority wanted Africans to do things the way they thought fit.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

But at the same time we see that the people in authority might have had a point. When priests were ordained the problems of loneliness, celibacy and support of others were real issues especially for diocesan clergy. This problem still occurs today because most of the clergy are religious. But as in the case of Black Consciousness, they naturally tended to reject the implications of being unready. Here, we see a typical case of Zwane who was greatly influenced by the philosophy of Black Consciousness.

2.4.3 Responsibility.

The third reservation concerns power, i.e. having African priests and bishops "in positions of some responsibility such as pastors of parishes and missions."⁷⁴ About 1950 a lecturer in Canon Law at St. Peter's Seminary when it came to the section of Parish Priests⁷⁵ "simply said: 'This does not concern you, we go on to Assistant Priests'⁷⁶. However, this had later repercussions because according to Magrath

He (the lecturer of Canon Law) was a student during the CMM times. Suddenly he was made Parish Priest in the Umzimkulu valley and he came to me and said, I do not know what to do. I have been a priest for ten years, I never dealt with the baptism register and accounts. The things I did, I was asked to do by the Parish Priest. Now the bishop has put me in charge⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ This in the modern Canon Law is Canon 515-552, see *The Code of Canon Law*, (Collin: Sidney and London, 1983).

⁷⁶ Magrath, *Sermon on the Jubilee of Fr. Joseph Sonaba*, 10th July 1989 (SADA, Springs)

⁷⁷ Fr. Oswin Magrath O.P., (Former Rector of St. Peters 1957 - 1971), interview conducted in Cedara, Pietermaritzburg on the 19th July 1996.

Hence it was taken for granted that black priest would never be in charge: this is what the black priests who protested in the seventies were up against. On similar sentiments we have a case of Bishop Bonaventure Dlamini. Damiano the apostolic delegate was sent with orders from Rome to get a black bishop. Since the biggest diocese was Mariannhill they decided that a bishop should come from there. But on the other hand Mariannhill thought that this was too soon.

Prior to this, the then Apostolic Delegate

who was very autocratic had some trouble with black priests, he had told all bishops to put black priests under white priests. *This was supposed to be confidential but it came out.* His name was Martin Lucas SVD he was a powerful character he used to tell bishops what to do⁷⁸.

He met with some problems during his era and hence directed the bishops to put those few Black priests who were in charge under white priests.

Fr. Bonaventure Dlamini was one of the first to be demoted. However, he later became Bishop of Umzinkulu. A similar incident in the late 1960s occurred with the Oblates. According to Archbishop Peter Butelezi of Bloemfontein

It was in Soweto then. Amongst them it would be Mofolo and St. Pius the X parish. The priests [were] Fr. Mbata and Fr. Phetla, they were Oblates. I do not know where they quarrelled with Bishop Boyle of Johannesburg, but he demoted them from being Parish Priests to being Assistant priests. Amongst other things, it seems that Fr. Phetla had said something about people complaining about black priest walking on foot when the white priests are driving around with cars.... These events happened in the 1960s or around 1971 before I came [to Johannesburg]. When I came, there were a number of demonstration in Johannesburg by the justice and peace group.

Similar events happened in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa

(PCSA). Here according to Mtetwa

the PCSA is predominantly a white church in all senses. When it landed in South Africa in 1897, it was excluding black people consciously. It was a deliberate move to keep black people out of the church until about the mid twentieth century when black people were absorbed into the clerical ministry only as evangelists.⁷⁹

Another example is that of Nehemiah Tile, from the Wesleyan Methodist church. As early as 1884 he left the main church and found the Thembu National church. This was, among other things, mainly due to discriminatory practises, that blacks could not be trusted with authority.

"So the future for African priests looked as if it meant a permanently subordinate position in the church"⁸⁰. It was as if they were doomed to extinction.

But being the Rector, Magrath challenged the prevailing attitudes. He was very vocal especially on the third reservation. When he became rector of St. Peter's in his opening address to the returning students he said that many of them "would have to be bishops. The Delegate Archbishop Damiano who came a month later indicated similar intentions. He had been sent with special mandate to promote the local clergy and had only recently appointed bishop Dlamini to Umzimkulu in 1954. His methods were rather rough and provocative. There was what can only be described as fury at the idea of black bishop among some missionaries."⁸¹

Magrath was considered by his fellow colleagues as a sell out

⁷⁹ Reverend Siphon Mtetwa (lecturer at the University of Natal), Interview conducted in Pietermaritzburg on the 23rd July 1996.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Magrath, *Sermon on the Jubilee of Fr. Joseph Sonaba*, 10th July 1989 (SADA, Springs).

because he supported black clergy, "I propagated (Pere Charles⁸²) theology, accepted by popes, both at Stellenbosch and in the seminary and in writings. When transferred to forming native clergy, it proved even more shocking to the missionaries. I gained the same reputation (as Fr Charles): enemy of the missionaries defender of the Black clergy.... It was the delegate Celestine Damiano, an italo- American, who backed us strongly. An impossible man in some ways, but ruthless in challenging the prevailing outlook..."⁸³.

It is evident that the missionaries thought the Africans were incapable of being responsible. It is interesting to see that the negative attitudes still prevailed in the 1950s. If you comprehend this, then it will illuminate what we will be looking at later and what kind of task lay ahead for the priests in the 1950s and 1970s.

However, tensions were growing between the black and white clergy. The negative attitudes "and the stories or legends of earlier African priest among the students and black clergy and their relations with the missionaries caused quite a ferment of uncertainty... There was a great lack of communication between the black and the white clergy. Apartheid was growing...some got out; some were embittered; those who were determined to persevere insulated themselves against these problems in various ways"⁸⁴.

⁸² Fr. Charles was a Jesuit at Louvain University in Belgium who criticised the motivation of missions "to save souls from hell" and substituted "planting the church where not present". The local Church would save souls. (Magrath Private Archive, 27.05.96).

⁸³ Oswin Magrath, interview conducted by P. Denis in King Williamstown on the 12th March 1990.

⁸⁴ Magrath, *Sermon on the Jubilee of Fr. Joseph Sonaba*, 10th July 1989 (SADA, Springs).

This thesis seeks to see how the priests insulated themselves from such attitudes mentioned above and finally got rid of the insulation to a certain extent.

However, so far we have seen the establishment of St. Peter's at Pevensey. It is very challenging to see the prevailing negative attitudes towards black clergy formation at this time - late 1950s. The 1960s were going to unveil a new era.

St. Peter's was to be moved again as Pevensey was not at an ideal place for the Dominicans or the bishops. With Magrath as the Rector, new challenges were going to be faced by the Seminary.⁸⁵

2.5 St. Peter's Seminary at Hammanskraal.

The Dominican Fathers found Pevensey no longer suitable as a location for the Seminary⁸⁶. As Magrath the then rector said in the sermon,

"Pevensey was ... in a very isolated place, by policy, and was as well a very Zulu environment. Started by Bishop A. Fleischer CMM in 1925, other bishops for a number of years did not send students, and (the Bishop)... only accepted students for his own diocese if they joined a religious congregation he had founded at the same time. The students were treated very much like religious. However, with the Seminary becoming a general one for the whole of the region, and being taken over by the Holy See, administered by the Bishops Conference, and staffed by Dominicans, changes were on

⁸⁵ Magrath "Fostering Vocations in Southern Africa", in *The South Africa Clergy Review*, (No. 12, 1960), p.9-10: where he states that a basic principle, "The aims of missions is to establish a new local church, dioceses, ruled by local bishops and clergy".

⁸⁶ *St. Peter's Seminary Pamphlet* (SADA, Springs), p.3.

the way. More non-Zulus and urban candidates and ones not from minor seminaries came in, and an awareness began to be born of the wider context of the African priests and students."⁸⁷

Pevensey was far from the cities it was rural and inaccessible so it was inevitable that it should be moved. Through the help of Archbishop of Pretoria they got land in Hammanskraal North of Pretoria. Earlier on the Dominican Provincial had reported in *Dominican Topics* that, the greatest difficulties experienced in connection with Native Vocations are the civil laws imposing separation between whites and non-whites. The department had no objection to the building of a seminary provided that;

"In order to avoid possible racial friction points,.... buildings of this nature must be erected not less than 500 yards from the nearest European residence, 500 yards from any national road, 300 from a provincial road and 200 yards from other road or adjoining private property except where the adjoining property is a native reserve."⁸⁸

By July 1961 buildings had started at Hammanskraal. At Pevensey 70 students could be accommodated. In December 1962 they left Pevensey, to open Hammanskraal in 1963. The official opening took place on June 29th 1964. It was attended by the Master General of the Dominicans, Fr. A Fernandez, the English Provincial, Fr Gerard Meath and most of the Southern African Bishops.

In 1965, following a decision that the seminary would be staffed

⁸⁷ Magrath, *Sermon on Jubilee of Fr. Joseph Sonaba*, 10th July 1989 (SADA, Springs).

⁸⁸ Xolile Keteyi, "The end of an era. St. Peter's leaves Hammanskraal", *Challenge* (Aug/Sept. 1993), p.22.

jointly by the English and Dutch Vicariates,⁸⁹ a number of staff changes took place. The staff now consisted of 6 English Dominicans 3 Dutch and 1 South African.⁹⁰ Figures for 1966: 64 students, "a slight decrease on (the previous) year"⁹¹. As the rector said, "at St. Peter's there has been no increase in numbers between 1963 and 1964: 17 entered in 1964, but 17 had left during the preceding year: four as priests, the rest giving up their aims, or being advised to leave or dismissed"⁹². The house could accommodate up to 200 students. By 1964, St. Peter's seminary at Hammanskraal was fully established.

2.5.1. Liberalism

The Oxford Dictionary defines "liberal" in several ways. The working definition of the trends of liberalism which existed at the seminary is that of being "open minded". By this we mean that the Rector and some lecturers at St. Peter's Seminary were open minded, i.e. open to new ideas of change and practice in the church

⁸⁹ Hilary Carpenter O.P. (Socius), *Observation and proposal of the most reverend father General on St. Peter's Regional Seminary, Hammanskraal, South Africa for the consideration of the very reverend Provincial of England and Holland*, 9th March 1964 (SADA, Springs).
See also Magrath Note on Cooperation between the Netherlands and English provinces at Hammanskraal (undated), [SADA, Springs).

⁹⁰ *Dominican Topics*, VI.3., (February 1965), p.13.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, VII,4, (May 1966), p.16.

⁹² Magrath O. "St Peter's Seminary Hammanskraal" in AEP (28th April 1964).

(especially at the seminary). Magrath and Synnott were looking forward to seeing a change in the way the power structures of the church were composed. Magrath had indicated at the opening of the Seminary as early as 1962, that the Black clergy were supposed to lead the church, and he had touched on several aspects on Africanisation. We are not talking of liberalism in the political sense. But rather being open to new ideas which were being enforced especially with the coming of Vatican II.

The delegate Joseph McGeough (1960-67) started accusing the staff members at Hammanskraal, especially the rector of liberalism. As is seen in letter from Gerard Meath (the English Provincial) to Damian Magrath, "...I am sorry about the alarm over Hammanskraal liberalism I suppose it was inevitable that some sort of alarm (false) should be raised. If I read delegate McGeough right I guess he is a diplomat and was telling the truth when he said he wanted to prevent worse developing. I don't think there is any danger of worse developing myself.... I shan't give in easily on the question of Hammanskraal because I believe the brethren there are right"⁹³.

Magrath could not recall this incident as he says, "I don't remember this particular incident. But there was widespread concern about our liberalism and mine in particular for years"⁹⁴. Some of the priests who were going to be very vocal on discriminatory issues in the church were trained during this era. For instance, Fr. Mkhathshwa was ordained on 26th June 1965, Clement Mokoka was ordained in the following year in 1966. Fr. Mkhathshwa later on commented saying that, "we had benefitted a

⁹³ Meath, Gerard to Magrath, Damian (London: AVSA:EP,Corr, Prov.6th Feb 1965), [SADA, Springs].

⁹⁴ Fr. Oswin Magrath, Interview conducted by P.Denis in Cedara, Pietermaritzburg on the 15th October 1992.

lot (from St. Peter's) first of all from the Dominican priests, most of whom had studied at Blackfriars Dominican Study House at Oxford. They were actually very progressive and far ahead of their own time"⁹⁵. This liberalism orchestrated by the rector was to have far reaching consequences on the seminary, church and society as a whole.

2.6 Conclusion.

This section has looked at the early period of the seminary. It is interesting to note that the attitudes against the ordination of local priests still persisted through the 1960s, 1970s and even the 1980s. One of our main objective is to see how some of these attitudes were changed. The important thing to note is that trends of liberalism existed at the seminary. This was going to help alleviate future problems at the seminary especially with the help of Black consciousness which at this time was coming and busy knocking at the doors of the seminary.

⁹⁵ Mkhathshwa, same interview.

CHAPTER THREE

SPOBA and The Inception of Black Consciousness in the Catholic Church 1966 - 1975

This period begin with the establishment of St. Peter's Old Boys Association (SPOBA). Black Consciousness comes later, then flowing into SPOBA. It was going to make the SPOBA members especially the executive to be very articulate.

3.1 St. Peter's Old Boys Association

SPOBA was formally established in July 1966. But elements of the desire to form one platform were already in existence as early as 1965. For instance, from the 30th June - July 5th, seminarians from all over South Africa met at St. Peter's. The theme of their meeting was "The priest, shepherd of the flock". The aim of the seminar was that; "The people of this country are divided - politically, culturally, linguistically and religiously. Yet the motto of the country is *ex unitate vires* - unity is strength. This is a paradox, and a paradox calls for an answer"⁹⁶. Attending this meeting were delegates of St. Peter's, St. John Vianney, *À Mater Jesu* Oblate Scholasticate (Roma), St. Joseph,s Scholasticate

⁹⁶ *Southern Cross* (23 June 1965), p.1.

(Oblate Cedara); Salesian Studentate (Daleside) and St. Nicholas Dominican Priory (Stellenbosch).

The delegates at this meeting believed in having a united vision so that the church could speak with a single voice. If the Seminarians are united now, it will be the clergy tomorrow, this in turn will involve the Christians.⁹⁷ The Chairman of this seminar was Fr. Mkhathshwa.

The Seminarians saw the need for a new order by transforming themselves; this they hoped would affect the community as a whole. These kinds of meetings contributed greatly to the establishment of SPOBA.

As Magrath says, "this was before Black Consciousness came up, but there were some considerable gaps between the different seminaries.... About the same time we were having meetings with the staff from different seminaries."⁹⁸

One such meetings was held from the 4th -7th of July 1966, at Hammanskraal, thirty one priests attended and a past students association was established, later, to be known as SPOBA.⁹⁹ Several papers were presented. Magrath the Rector of St. Peter's, as early as 1962 was thinking in terms of unity of clergy and local clergy taking up leadership positions. For instance, in his inaugural lecture of the Scholastic year in February 1962 he had said, "...the unity of the church, and its future, also demands that such a orientation (segregation) should not go so far as to produce a clergy segregated. From the rest of the clergy, nationalistic

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Magrath, interview conducted in Cedara on the 19th of July 1996.

⁹⁹ Mokoka, *Black Experience in Black theology*, p.53.

and even anti-white in spirit, and even perhaps tribally divided among themselves. This would be a mostly unhappy result". What was needed was a truly Catholic clergy ready to serve the people. Magrath's main concern was that the training of black clergy in a separate institution should not be put the unity of the church at risk.

Four years later, Magrath was still emphasising that the clergy should unite.¹⁰⁰ He referred to Vatican II and pleaded for an integrated clergy. He also appealed to the black clergy to help the white clergy evolve as the control was supposed to be in the black clergy's hands. Again, we see trends of "liberalism" coming up. The Rector was trying to tell SPOBA at its inception to be more acceptive but at the same time not to yield to the oppressive structures of apartheid. In his paper he charged that Africans are supposed to be leaders in their churches and encouraged them to be prepared to take up such roles.

Other priests also presented papers: Fr. Anthony Mabona on liturgy, Fr. Finbar Synnott on Vatican II. Officers for the association were elected; the Chairman was Patrick Mkhathshwa*, Assistant David Moetapele*, Secretary, John Louwfant*, Assistant R. Mosiea, Treasurer Thlamelo Kolisang. One should take cognisance of the names with a star as they are going to appear later on.

It is interesting to note that two white priests were actively involved in the launching of SPOBA, i.e. Magrath and Synnott. According to my own conception, these priests were open to new ideas - "liberal" . By 1966 they had written widely on the discrepancies of Apartheid¹⁰¹. When the Blacks came up with the

¹⁰⁰ From the paper entitled, *Unity of Clergy in Southern Africa*, presented by Magrath (SADA, Springs).

¹⁰¹ *The Southern Cross*, 1957 onwards.

idea of forming a platform to air their views (i.e. through SPOBA), the then rector, who had already indicated in the in his inaugural address in 1962 said that Africans were supposed to take charge of their church in Africa. As it was meant to be theirs! It is therefore, not amazing, to see them in the forefront when the association was formed.

There were many reasons for forming the association. The chairman of the association, for instance, Mkhathshwa was working with the coal miners from the neighbouring countries. He thought he had to reflect on his theology, ministry and spirituality. Also, as a black priest at that time, particularly from St. Peter's, he had benefitted a lot, especially from the teaching of the Dominican priests, most of whom came from the house of Studies at Oxford and other universities. They were very progressive, broadminded and far ahead of their time as I indicated earlier. Fitting into this period was a new era which had dawned on the church, "...it was at the end of Vatican II Council. Therefore, we thought that in order to make sure that the spirit of Vatican II continues we thought of forming SPOBA."¹⁰²

Other reasons were simply to meet regularly as priests who studied together at the Seminary. This became helpful when young priests were sent into ministry for the first time, they would be on their own and have difficulties in coping. The association served as a supportive platform for the priests. For Mkhathshwa the most important reason for formation was "the kind of training we had received probably prepared us to face the new challenges in the socio-political situation of South Africa"¹⁰³. This was the liberalism which was being blamed on the staff, especially the Rector of St. Peter's, by the delegate McGeough when he visited

¹⁰² Mkhathshwa, same Interview.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

them. It looked harmful at that time for the hierarchy, but to the students this was considered as an eye-opener to the realities of South Africa.

Finally, Mkhathshwa felt that SPOBA was formed because it could help them come to grips theologically with pastoral demands and theological challenges.

3.2.The Petitions

The Black Consciousness Movement rose in the early 1970s: "it did not penetrate the churches in a denominational fashion but eventually all black churches had what we call black caucuses"¹⁰⁴. SPOBA was the black caucus group of the Roman Catholic Church.

The BCM started flowing into SPOBA from about 1969 onwards. For instance, in April 1971, SPOBA met with BCM in Bloemfontein¹⁰⁵. For Dr. Mokoka, SPOBA was "an organised platform to challenge and oppose the hierarchy's predilection to support the settler regime actively at the expense of the indigenous clergy, laity and the oppressed and exploited community at large" and " a two-stream church, namely, the quest for an autochthonous church represented by the black clergy and laity on the one hand, and the struggle to establish the legitimacy as well as the superiority of Euro-Christian represented by the hierarchy on the other hand"¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁴ Reverend Peter Lenkoe (Anglican priest from in Orlando West in Soweto), interview conducted in Pietermaritzburg on the 19th June 1996.

¹⁰⁵ Pityana, *Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness*, p.125.

¹⁰⁶ Mokoka, *Black Experience in Black Theology*, p.53-54.

SPOBA stated sending petitions to the hierarchy immediately after its inception in 1966. Several other petitions followed in 1968 and 1969. Their main contention was "the theme of the right to self-determination on the plea of mature manhood"¹⁰⁷. This theme was already put to Fr.J Gerard by the Zulu people when they explicitly said "Let the white man leaves us alone, to live according to our way on our own"¹⁰⁸. This concept is reinforced by Archbishop Peter Butelezi's summary of SPOBA;

"SPOBA comes in an era of strong Black Consciousness at the end of the 1960s, when there was a danger of forming a black church of all christian groups"¹⁰⁹

The blacks in many churches were trying to assert themselves, this sometimes had separatist tendencies i.e. people trying to form their own churches, hence, the growth of African Initiated Churches. This move was already spearheaded by Nehemiah Tile in the Methodist church. He formed the Thembu National Church in 1883.¹¹⁰

Most of the petitions which were sent to the bishops were easily dismissed, either because the hierarchy felt that it was not a true representation of the Black membership, or, it was probable according to Mkhathshwa that they were not in a position to do anything about it. Lastly it is very plausible that they did not take them sufficiently seriously and could not see the urgency of responding.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.54.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Archbishop Peter Butelezi, same interview.

¹¹⁰ Balia, D., *Black Methodists and White Supremacy in South Africa*, (Durban: Madiba Publication 1991). See chapter on Tile.

3.3 Black Consciousness at the Seminary

By the end of the 1960s Black Consciousness had entered the seminary. Its inception was going to make the seminarians very vocal politically and theologically. According to Magrath

NUSAS president John Daniel (afterwards teaching with me at UNISWA - political science) pressed for the SRC at St. Peter's to affiliate with NUSAS. Not many students were eager. I was open to a branch of NUSAS but had reservation about affiliation, as Black Consciousness was knocking at our door (and I was personally in favour of that). But probably most of the staff favoured the "liberal NUSAS", as this was an element in my leaving St. Peter's.

SASO was the movement which presented the Black Consciousness Movement to the seminary. As Magrath recalls

I forget the exact sequence, but there was some preliminary meeting of BCM people at Mariannhill in 1968. At the end of the year two meetings to propagate it were held in December - January 1969-70, at Ongoye and Turfloop (now UNIZUL and the University of the North). Students stayed the night at St. Peter's. They were going from Natal to Northern Transvaal and back. That is how it (BC) entered the Seminary.. ¹¹¹

It did not only enter the Seminary but also Springs, a town in Gauteng at that time, as Magrath continues

I remember a girl student from UNIZUL was in the party,

¹¹¹ Magrath, O, *Some notes on Bernard Connor's reminiscences on St Peter's Seminary*, October 1993, (SADA, Springs).

Actually SASO was formed in December 1968 at Mariannhill, its inauguration was at Turfloop in July of 1969. That is when it entered the seminary when the students were moving from Natal to the Transvaal.

For references see Mofokeng, T *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, and Wolfson, J.G.E, *Turmoil at Turfloop*.

her home was in Springs (Kwa-thema). I forget the name. Benedict Mulder told me how after this BC came to Kwa-thema and was an instant success - what everyone felt they had been waiting for. I would remember her surname if I heard it: Nyakabinde or something like that¹¹².

Later, as we shall establish, it spread like wild fire throughout South Africa. However, at the seminary the leaders of Black Consciousness and NUSAS wanted them to affiliate. The Rector, Fr. Magrath took a side line in the procedures. A few students became activists, the majority were passive. This did not mean that they were not in favour of Black Consciousness, as the Rector says, "but the black students could ultimately back the black movements. Some of them, very few were inclined to NUSAS, the white liberal movement Neither of them got established. They both had some following. But I do not think the NUSAS group was very strong, it was just friendly liberals. **The black group had this backing with concerned priests**"¹¹³. NUSAS leaders were very articulate but not very practical in dealing with the grievances of the blacks. BC, therefore, proved to be more popular because it was asserting the position of the oppressed. The point to be stressed is this, Black Consciousness was not formally established at this time, but it had a following at the seminary and from the black priests.

The Catholic bishops at this time were not informed as to what BC was, they

... were lost! They talked to me [Magrath] about it. I remember, I told them but this was a bit later, when Black Consciousness was becoming more visible but it was the same thing. I told them, some of the bishops said that I was listening to extremists. But South African bishops like McCann and Butelezi were always on the side lines and they were ready to listen."¹¹⁴

¹¹² Magrath, interview conducted in Cedara, 19th July 1996.

¹¹³ Same Interview.

¹¹⁴ Same interview.

But things were changing fast in as far as awareness amongst the blacks was concerned. But the church did not realise this new spirit. That, there was a need for black people to be in positions of power and also be involved in other apostolate like lecturing. For instance, in 1969 among the nine lecturers at St. Peter's, there was only one black staff member, Anthony Mabona, who was from the Diocese of Queenstown. He was teaching Canon Law, History of Philosophy and Psychology.¹¹⁵ He was appointed in 1967. The rest were white Dominicans. There was a growing gap between the staff members and the students. This was leading up to some tensions. As the report says

"That no African staff are being prepared, and that no African priest from this seminary, except one who has now left the priesthood, has been sent for further academic studies which might prepare him for the staff, since 1958. And that the existing and probably increasing lack of communication between Africans and Whites demands the presence of African staff members, of the highest quality both intellectually and as to character and personality"¹¹⁶.

In the same year there were 59 students at the seminary. During this time "a more satisfactory constitution was introduced, and a students representatives had been admitted to the Seminary council. This had resulted in an improved working system during 1969"¹¹⁷. As there was a crisis with regards to discipline with certain individuals due to immaturity, unwillingness to cooperate with other students.

Black consciousness had entered the seminary. There was a need to

¹¹⁵ *Annual Report and Account of St. Peter's Seminary Hammanskraal in South Africa: (1969):* Prepared by the Rector, O. Magrath O.P. with the Dean of Studies, Ronald Torbet O.P. and the Bursar, Anselm Holbery O.P..

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

have more black lecturers to ease the gap and tension between black students and white staff members. Hence Black Consciousness came at an opportune time because the existing system as we have seen above, needed some affirmation of the local people.

3.3.1 The SACBC formally takes over St. Peter's

Some of these problems of discipline, immaturity and racial tensions, led to the invitation of Monsignor Peter Butelezi (the Administrator of Umzimkulu Diocese) by the Rector and the Bishops' Conference Board. He spent a week at the seminary in October 1969. As he recalls,

At the same time these seminaries did not belong to the bishops. They were regional and there was no bishops conference before 1947.... The Dominicans had a direct contract with Rome and the same applied to the Franciscans at St. John Vianney. But after Vatican II, a new arrangement came in force. The regional and national seminaries were put under the SACBC. I was asked to make a visitation (not canonical) of Hammanskraal, before the bishops took it over. The bishops wanted to get an idea of how things were going It was about 1968 I was an administrator of Umzimkulu and not a bishop, yet. But I was participating fully in the bishops conference because I was running the diocese.¹¹⁸

After the visitation he reported that it was "hoped that progress will be made during 1970 without destroying the advances towards students responsibility and maturity already made"¹¹⁹, in the establishment of the constitution and a more viable SRC.

He also made various points some of which dealt with "the question of discipline at the seminary, and more specifically the

¹¹⁸ Archbishop Peter Butelezi, same interview.

¹¹⁹ See *Report and Account of St. Peter's Seminary Hammanskraal 1969*.

interrelationships between rules and responsibility", that the majority of the members of staff were white so they could not monitor the situation of the students in the township. The most interesting point was on "... the question of groups. This is a very delicate matter. I would strongly recommend to the Seminary Authorities to be very careful here. It was mentioned to me that the Zulu group gave trouble. In my talks it appeared that this group sometimes felt it was not treated fairly, it seemed that the Sotho group was favoured"¹²⁰. The last point seems to be of great significance in our investigation.

The above illustrates that the African students were not acting as a collective body but rather were divided - ethnically. This was due, *inter alia*, to the fact that the Rector was seen as discriminating and had his favourites¹²¹, however this is beside the point. The point we should consider is that, before Black Consciousness entered the Seminary (incidentally it entered at the end of the year in December of 1969), the African groups saw each other as different ethnic groups. This was to change with the impact of Black Consciousness as we shall see later on. It was not a total change a few elements of dynamism and greater association amongst the students was later elucidated. But other reasons also played a role in this situation, especially with the Zulu group. For instance, Mariannahill, as Magrath expands

...there was a great tension between black priests and priests from Mariannahill, a very strong tension. ... they started the seminary in 1925. Most of the bishops said that it was too soon and they would not send any students. But Bishop Fleischer went ahead and started the seminary, then one or two bishops did send their students but hardly any others. Then eventually they said that they could not manage and they asked the

¹²⁰ From the letter by the Rt. Rev. Monsignor P. Butelezi O.M.I to Very Rev. Vicar general O.P. (dated 6th April 1970).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

bishops to find a place somewhere. They found the Dominicans. When we took it over a lot of Mariannahillers were very angry they were against handing over the seminary¹²²

Interestingly, the CMM, mainly from Natal were opposing what the progressive priests were saying about equality in the church. This is mainly seen in the negative attitude which they had towards the seminary, because it was ran by these broad-minded priests. A typical case of such tension is the case in Bishop Dlamini of Umzimkulu, who ended up resigning because the CMM did not like the idea of having their diocese divided into two i.e. Mariannahill and Umzimkulu. They thought that it was too soon to have an African bishop.¹²³

Monsignor Butelezi's report also looked at the position of the Rector, he was ready to leave the seminary and retire as he says, "in his speech, Fr. Magrath often affirms that he was ready to leave the Rectorship, I doubt this. So too do some of the members of the staff. The Seminary is too much a thing of his own"¹²⁴.

This is consequently highlighted by the following polarisations. St.Peter's by 1969 had the following antagonistic factors. Inherently, there were big problems as to discipline among the Seminarians. Also they were divided into two groups; Zulus and Sothos. The staff on the other hand complained that too much power was placed in the Rector, and some wanted him removed. Synchronically, the Rector affirmed the assertion that he could leave any time. Black Consciousness had just been introduced to

¹²² Magrath interview conducted in Cedara on the 19th July, 1996.

¹²³ Magrath, same interview.

¹²⁴ Butelezi P, *A Letter to the Reverend Fr. Vicar General* (SADA, Springs).

the Seminary at the end of 1969 and beginning of the 1970s, it acted as pinnacle to this epoch. With its influence the seminarians and some members of staff, even the Monsignor were going to be very vociferous on discriminatory issues.

The reports made by Monsignor Peter Butelezi were studied by staff and students jointly. From these discussions, guidelines were to be formulated which would help progress at the Seminary.

All these factors would determine the course of events in the following years. For instance, In 1971, the priests published a memorandum which called for the removal of Cardinal Owen McCann. Demonstrations were held which led to considerable tensions and confrontations in the Catholic Church. In the preceding year, the Manifesto was published in the *Rand Daily Mail*, which we shall deal with in the following section.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Black Clergy Questions the Hierarchy

The aim of this section is to show the instances when the Black priests questioned the hierarchy of the church, specifically through the Manifesto. The Black clergy broke down the pigeonhole view of many white clergy, that the Black priests are supposed to be subordinates and incapable of ruling themselves. To see how this standardised view was changed, we will look at the Manifesto of 1970. Then we shall look at the reaction of the church and many bishops, after the situation shifted. It is my contention that all these incidents are intricately intertwined with the same theme running across of "...the right to self determination on the plea of manhood"¹²⁵

4.1. The Manifesto

"Our Church has let us down".

On the morning of the 23rd January 1970, *The Rand Daily Mail* published a document entitled - "Our church has let us down". The article was just the tip of the ice-berg. The Black Clergy had started sending petitions as early as 1966 (especially with the formation of SPOBA). In 1969 a memorandum was sent to the Bishops' Conference, but was easily dismissed as not representing the Black membership of the church.

SPOBA executive tried to send other petitions to the Bishops, but they waited in vain for their desired answer. By the end of 1969

¹²⁵ Mokoka, *Black Experience in Black Theology*, p.54.

the priests had no alternative but to invite the general public into the contentious arena by publishing the manifesto in the *Rand Daily Mail* - with the title "Our Church has let us Down".

The progression of events can be narrated as follows; when the five priests presented the Manifesto to the SACBC secretariat, the bishops said that it was not truly representative of the black membership of the church. Then the executive said that "... if you refuse to accept this document we will come back on Saturday with thousands of people"¹²⁶. This was done and many parishes were contacted to come to Pretoria and march on the Bishops. As Mkhathshwa says

"...we said Saturday we were going back (To Pretoria) we are marching on the bishops and we asked people to be organised. Even to our surprise thousands of people came by bus and on foot. We converged in Pretoria and the five of us (the executive of SPOBA) lead the march to the bishops. They had no choice but to quickly open when they saw the people".¹²⁷

The executive with four lay people confronted the hierarchy. The latter questioned the method of approach, but this was immaterial as the Bishop's conference had refused to listen to them. This, therefore, showed the bishops that the grievances were not only for the five priests but for everybody in the church - Christians and clergy all over the country. These parishioners registered their support when they associated themselves with the grievances of the priests. As Clement Mokoka says it cogently

...the contrary to the bishops' lame excuse was proved to be right when in February 1970, Black parishioners from all over the country arrived unannounced and uninvited to the Bishops' Conference in session, to register their

¹²⁶ Mkhathshwa, same Interview; The day they went to the SACBC was on Thursday according to the interviewee.

¹²⁷ Mkhathshwa, same Interview.

support of the memorandum.¹²⁸

4.1.1 The Manifesto

The Manifesto can be divided into seven parts;

- 4.1.1.1. Introduction
- 4.1.1.2. Africanisation
- 4.1.1.3. Apartheid
- 4.1.1.4 Beliefs of the priests
- 4.1.1.5 Grievances
- 4.1.1.6 Suggestions
- 4.1.1.7 Conclusions

4.1.1.1 Introduction

The article begins by introducing the grievances, and says that all avenues which they had tried before had been closed to them. They had sent petitions in 1966, 1968 and 1969, but received no response. They had confronted the Secretary General and even the Bishops but nothing fruitful came out of these confrontations as we saw earlier on.

There were five signatories

The Reverend Fathers Patrick Mkhathshwa, David Moetapele, John Louwfant, Clement Mokoka, and Rev. Dr. Anthony Mabona.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Mokoka, *Black Experience in Black theology*, p.54.

¹²⁹ It is important to note the three of the signatories, were involved in the formation of Seminary's past students' union in 1966, these are Mkhathshwa, Moetapele and Louwfant. They held offices of Chairman, Assistant Chairman, and secretary respectively. The other two Mosiea and Kolisang were not involved. For

Of these, Louwfant passed away, Mkhathshwa is currently the Deputy Minister of Education, Dr. Mabona is no longer an active priest, he is lives in Switzerland, Moetapele is running a parish in Pretoria, Mokoka went into exile in 1976 to Holland He came back and is working in the Diocese of Rustenburg (near Brits)¹³⁰.

The introduction puts us into the *Sitz im Leben*. The African, it was believed, was very patient and could take anything without complaining. It was a whole paradigm or attitude which stated that all Africans are lazy and they need to be taught the value of labour. A proponent of this was Dr. John Philip who was the Superintendent of the London Missionary Society from 1819 - 1951¹³¹. As Selope Thema is quoted despite their differences (Boers and British) they had one belief in common, "that the African way of life was condemned by both the missionaries and the colonists as a life of laziness and indolence. Both agreed that Africans should be taught the dignity of labour"¹³². But things had to change, this paradigm which was taken for granted had to be broken down.

"Be as it may we want to state that the African is capable of an agonizing '**ENOUGH! ENOUGH!**' In spite of our ordination, we have been treated like glorified altar boys"¹³³. Their ordination was just a formality, not the actual process to produce "Self

more information see the *Southern Cross* (20 July, 1966).

¹³⁰ See *The Southern Cross*, (11th August 1996).

¹³¹ He wrote a book entitled *Researches in Africa* (New York: New Universities Press, 1969).

¹³² James Cochrane *The Church and Labour in South Africa*, (For ICT, Johannesburg: Skotaville) p.5.

¹³³ *Rand Daily Mail* (23 January 1970). The Manifesto was re-edited in the *African Ecclesiastical Review* (AFER), vol.12 (1970), pp. 175-77.

determined priest". This is not how the formation of priesthood was supposed to be. It was supposed to treat the different priests on the same level regardless of race.

"For one thing, Church politics are hidden from the rank and file"¹³⁴. This is where the church takes advantage because people are not consulted on basic issues. This point of view was further re-enforced by a person who reacted in the *Southern Cross* to the Manifesto calling himself "Pro-African", from Cape Town. He maintained that they should not have published it in the *public* press. He preferred only Catholics who were involved to discuss the issue because, *inter alia*, it made Catholics laughable and for him, some bishops were against apartheid such statements embarrassed them.¹³⁵ But the church should not "go into a hole-and-corner huddle to discuss its affairs"¹³⁶, it must do it in public so that everybody is given a fair deal. This must be done because there are three parties involved - those who are for the process of Africanisation, those who are against it, and the public.

4.1.1.2 Africanisation

Pope Paul VI, when he addressed the African Bishops in Uganda said, "You can give the church the precious and original contribution of negritude which she needs particularly"¹³⁷. Pressing on similar sentiments Cardinal Zoungrana "reminded his colleagues that before they could realise the pope's ambition it was imperative to rediscover what he called the African Soul"¹³⁸.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Southern Cross* (29th July 1970).

¹³⁶ *Ibid* (1st July, 1970).

¹³⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, (23 January 1970).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

In spite of the Pontifical backing and a Cardinal encouraging the Africa bishops with the process of Africanisation nothing much had been done in terms of its implementation.

People (i.e Bishops) had to look for an answer for Africa in Africa not in Europe. The whole concept was not taken sufficiently seriously. This actually frustrated many local priests as they were supposed to lead their parishioners in ways appropriate to the gospel truth.

4.1.1.3 Apartheid

The Catholic church pretends to condemn apartheid. But "yet in practise, they cherish it. The church practised segregation in her seminaries, convents, hospitals, schools, monasteries, associations and churches long before the present government legislated against social integration"¹³⁹. The clergy showed itself to be divided on the question of apartheid, for instance, an interview in the *Sunday Tribune*¹⁴⁰. Others were non-conformists like Hurley, other white priests were sympathetic to some of the governments policy on restrictions.

Whites would like to support the philosophy of separate development, discourage any existence of a black or multi-racial government, and opt out of the concept of integration. This meant that the whites who were benefitting a lot from the government's policy of apartheid. They would even go all the way and defend it as a tradition which has lasted for a very long time i.e three

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

centuries!

4.1.1.4 Belief

The Black Priest Manifesto and Christianity as whole "believe in a multi-society". They feel that "... this is the only way in which real Christianity can be practised"¹⁴¹. However, since the Black priests were in a situation where Apartheid was imposed, therefore they could not practise what they believed in freely.

In the priest's belief, we see an both implicit and explicit manifestation of Black Consciousness ideology, especially when they state that

"The African wants to rediscover his personality and identity. He wishes to develop all his faculties - mental, physical aesthetic. We wonder whether he can achieve this in the midst of white people. Competition will always be in their favour"¹⁴². The African needed to assert his existence in the light of all these challenges i.e apartheid and segregation.

The Black Priests were preaching realism and common sense, "Don't get us wrong. We are not preaching racialism because we despise and loathe racists"¹⁴³. They wanted the situation to be normal - multi-racial society rather than a divided society.

4.1.1.5 The Grievances

Having set the scene they then enumerate a few grievances

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

- a) They deplored and condemned the *baasskap* and *miesiesskap* of the white clergy over Africans.
- b) Blacks are not "glorified altar boys" who happen to share in the white priesthood.
- c) The marooning and exiling of some African priests need to be addressed.
- d) Bishops must know their African parishes better.
- e) The hierarchy should open new avenues for our priests, for instance, specialised apostolate, serving on commissions.
- f) Africanisation to be encouraged, why not have a Black Bishop for Soweto?
- g) White priests should stop spying on the black priests
- h) They also deplore the "tripe that some missionaries write about Africans."¹⁴⁴

4.1.1.6 Suggestions

Four suggestions are then given

- a) Bishops should widen their approach to the apostolate of the church and priests should be allowed to work outside their diocese.
- b) An African Affairs Department to be created to "look after the interests of Black Catholics".
- c) The Black Priests preferred "to manage or mismanage [them]selves, other wise [they] shall forever remain Black boys under the Rectorship of white boys". A question is posed to the church whether they have failed to produce leaders whilst the government to a certain extent in its civil service has done so.
- d) The last suggestion is directed at the white priests

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

when they say, "Let our white colleagues cease to pretend to be impeccable angels at our expense."

4.1.1.7 Conclusion

At the end of the BPM they try to assert their commitment to the Catholic church. Their plea is to put things right as they say, "We would like to reassure readers that we are sincere men who wish to put things right in the church. Please do not misunderstand us. We have in the past presented to the hierarchy resolutions that were passed in July 1966, but to no effect"¹⁴⁵. These were passed immediately after SPOBA was formed. Other resolutions were also passed in 1968 and 1969, as we saw earlier on. The concluding part is very interesting and worth quoting,

"If anybody suspects us of mud slinging or defeatism for that matter, then our message has been misunderstood. We would be hypocrites if we pretended to be contented with the status quo. Our colleagues can rest assured that in any eventuality we shall be their best allies".

From above we see that the priests were not happy with the existing structures, after realising that they could do the same things the white priests were doing and be in the same positions as whites. The status quo had to be questioned

"Should a fruitful dialogue emerge from this meditation so much the better for the church. We invite you to join us in reciting an act of loyalty;

We the undersigned, profess and embrace the Catholic teaching in all its entirety. We firmly believe that Christ's church is one holy, Catholic and Apostolic. We hope to live work and die as true sons of our beloved brother and Saviour Christ"¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

4.2 Summary

Steve Biko said that white liberals "are claiming a monopoly on intelligence and moral judgement and setting the pattern and pace for the realisation of black man's aspiration."¹⁴⁷ It was the time for blacks to liberate themselves. Blacks experienced their own particular problems in their institutions.¹⁴⁸ He was critical of the reliance blacks placed on white leadership. He charged blacks with lack of faith in themselves and of having internalised an inferiority complex: such self-inflicted psychological oppression ensured their continued physical and political oppression."¹⁴⁹ Biko emphasised that the Black students must "see themselves as black first and foremost" and commit themselves to the total liberation of blacks¹⁵⁰.

The Black priests who wrote the manifesto *initially* were not directly influenced by the Black Consciousness Movement as some of these were established in the early 1970s. SASO, by 1969 was very active amongst the students. The other projects which encompassed the community were introduced in the 1970s, for instance, "the Black People's Convention was formed in 1972 to operate on the political front, while Black Community Programmes were set up to promote black initiatives in the provision of health and welfare services"¹⁵¹. The direct influence of Black Consciousness

¹⁴⁷ Biko, *I Write What I like*.

¹⁴⁸ Beinart, *Twentieth - Century South Africa*, p.219.

¹⁴⁹ Ramphele, *A Life*, p.56.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁵¹ Davenport, T.R.H., *South Africa a Modern History*, p.379.

commenced after 1970 as Magrath documents,

'The struggle of the indigenous clergy and laity in the Roman Catholic Church'. SPOBA was started in 1966, and passed (except in Natal) into the Permanent Black Priests' Solidarity Group (PBPSG), in 1976 with Black Consciousness flowing into it from about 1970 onwards¹⁵².

Interestingly, the Manifesto exhibit many aspects of the Black Consciousness. Even though the link developed later, we see a lot of similarities in what BC was advocating and what they were advocating as illustrated below;

The priests changed the tradition which said "that Africans had infinite patience..." This was attributed to the African's laziness, generally identifying him to be inferior to the white man. The priests questioned this paradigm, they said "enough enough!" We are now laying our grievances on the table and breaking the false tradition which has existed for three centuries.

Self-realisation concepts which were being encouraged by Rome like Africanisation are emphasised. Blacks should see themselves as blacks first and foremost as Biko said.¹⁵³ This was done by the priests trying to speed up the process of Africanisation. This in essence was going to upset the tradition that whites would lead the blacks. Africa had its own solutions which you could not find in Europe hence, whatever came comes from Europe was not the answer.

On apartheid, it was clear that the Catholic hierarchy supported the system in various aspects like education and health, separate development. They were hiding under the veil that it was

¹⁵² See Review by Magrath, O., in *Grace and Truth*, (1985/2, p.94-103) of the Clement Gobi Mokoka, *Black Experience in Black Theology. A Study on the Roman Catholic Missionary Endeavour in South Africa*. (Catholic University in Nijmegen: Doctoral thesis, 1984).

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

instituted by the government whilst in actual fact they cherished its existence. This was very evident from the structures which existed within the Church. Some individual bishops and priest openly supported the system of apartheid.¹⁵⁴ The black priests stated the position as the BCM saw it that "Whites do not want to mix socially with Black people. They believe in preserving their identity as a white nation¹⁵⁵". They advocate the philosophy of separate development because if Blacks were to stay with them "their position will always be precarious and uncertain"¹⁵⁶. The superiority complex, is seen when the priests say, "socially, culturally and intellectually the whites consider themselves quite different from Blacks"¹⁵⁷. In this case, they would not want to integrate because they feel far superior to the blacks.

The priests also upset the falsely perceived world-view when they said that they believed in a multi-racial society. If such a society existed then Christianity could be preached. Apartheid is not a normal situation but an artificial one. Here, we have to note the slight difference from the Black Consciousness main stream philosophy. Especially on communalism, which favours non-racialism, where the rights of the individuals are stressed, rather than multiracialism which underscores group rights.¹⁵⁸

The Black Consciousness advocates were very concerned with the rights of individuals. The Black man had been oppressed for a long

¹⁵⁴ Rand daily Mail, (23rd January 1970).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Leatt, *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, p.111; And also see De Gruchy *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, p.157.

time, it was time to affirm his position in society. The self esteem had to be done individually before group rights were given great gravity.

Biko said that whites were monopolising world-views, blacks were leaving the whites in command. Blacks, really, believed that they were inferior, and had no faith in themselves. The priests saw this and were suggesting solutions when they said,

"the African wants to rediscover his personality and identity. He wishes to develop all his faculties - mental, physical, aesthetic. We wonder whether he can achieve this in the midst of white people. Competition will always be in their favour"¹⁵⁹.

This in essence was the philosophy of Black Consciousness. As Ramphele says, the blacks were supposed to see themselves as black first and foremost and commit themselves to the struggle. By discovering their mental faculties they would be themselves - Black!

They also wanted to develop on their own not being under the "Rectorship" of the white priests. This, later on became the great emphasis in BCM. This is projected through the projects which were run to empower and uplift the black people.

Through the Manifesto, the black priests challenged the falsely apprehended world-view of the white priests and came up with their grievances. They also came up with suggestion as to the way forward.

4.3 Bishop's Reaction

The Bishops released a press statement. They said that "we will do what is possible to meet the proposals put forward by you. We

¹⁵⁹ *Rand Daily Mail* (23rd January 1970).

sympathise with your good feelings in furthering the cause of the church, but we expect the same from you". With these words Cardinal McCann summarised the discussions on the 7th of February between the Administrative Board of the Bishops Conference and the five priests who recently had presented the manifesto.¹⁶⁰

The five priests did not speak to the bishops except for factual information during this meeting. The discussions were led by nine laymen associated with the request. They emphasised the "subservient role", which the African priests led. However, it was stressed that the incidents given in the manifesto were not directed at the individual bishops or Dioceses. "They served only as descriptive points of what it was felt had now become a general trend in the church's pastoral action"¹⁶¹

In replying to these allegations the bishops gave facts and figures on the responsibilities given to various priests in their dioceses and "the scope for African layman and priest offered in the course of the years. There was a great need for trust on both sides. It was also necessary to take cognisance of positive results achieved over the course of the years. While understanding the urgency of pleas, some bishops stressed the need for a correct approach in future representations. It had not been proved that requests made in the past had been ignored. If they had been overlooked, this could be ascribed to lack of sufficient channels of communication within the church. It is only since Vatican II that better links for communicating within the church had been forged."¹⁶²

According to the spokesman of the conference taking everything into

¹⁶⁰ *AFER*, Vol. XII, (1970), pp.175-77.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

consideration the meeting was a moderate achievement.

The editorial note in *Africa Ecclesiastical Review* (AFER) said that the manifesto stood out as loyal and frank document. The editor hoped that it was going to further the dialogue between the parties concerned. "A divided house cannot stand"¹⁶³

Bishop Butelezi reflecting on it recently said that "it was a challenge, a challenge which was saying we have no black leaders. Even the church is not serious about this, they are only making us low class, altar boys not really worth it. No black bishop, no black leaders in high positions. So that was a challenge...."

4.4 Reaction to the Manifesto

The reaction to the manifesto can be classified into three categories

- a) Those who associated with it
- b) Those who associated with BUT with some modification
- c) Those who rejected it altogether.

a) Sympathizers

a) Fr. Oswin Magrath who was Rector of St. Peter's Seminary in 1970 said "the Manifesto....was unexpected to me, but reflects a situation of which I have long been aware"¹⁶⁴. He says that the situation as seen by the Africans "is not perceived very much by the majority of Europeans"¹⁶⁵. The latter would think that these are exaggerations. He also dealt with the question of Africanisation.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Southern Cross* (28th January 1970).

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

REACTION TO PRIESTS' MANIFESTO

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Courage
admired
Some
questions

From H. AERTZ
WITH reference to the five priests ask in the Southern Cross, allow me to give to our dear African

I like the courage of our African priests, especially if someone of the great task of Africanization of the Church in Africa please allow me to add some questions for a friendly discussion.

1. Should family be discussed inside the statement given in the Press and not in Church?
2. Do our African really see the main point of Africanization of the Church means the Africanization of life in all its different aspects in South Africa? We are looking for priests who are willing to put their energy into this work.

There are many European missionaries who want to learn from our African priests who are prepared to do their parish work in a better way.

Surely a department of African affairs could be a good step forward. But it cannot work without the backing of African priests who are prepared to Africanize parish life with great energy.

The seminary with European and African staff should take those questions very seriously (more than political questions), it could help to find the right ways for Africanization of parish life among African Catholics.

One point we should not forget: progress of Church in Europe was initiated by priests who devoted themselves to create a better parish life by working for 10 or 20 years as assistant-priests.

Let us open a friendly discussion on new ways, on experiences in the different places to make parish life into an African way of Church life.

LETTERS to The EDITOR

Africans have had top jobs

From P. J. KUNUTU, St. Paul's Minor Seminary, Hammanskraal:

THE argument of the five priests who aired their grievances against what they believe to be wrong practices in the Church here in South Africa, seems to lay heavy emphasis on the need for "Africanization", and if I understand them rightly, Africanization should mean the appointment and elevation to lofty positions of African clerics and the removal of the colour-bar which is seen as the root cause of their grievances.

The Church has striven to foster the indigenization of its religious culture so that her teachings should not estrange members from their native cultural structure.

In the early '50s, in keeping with the trend, African staff was appointed in various aspects of Catholic life. The first non-White bishop was consecrated, to be followed within the next decade by two more.

Outside of the hierarchy, a fair number of African clerics were offered opportunities in positions of increased responsibility.

Rectors, principals of schools and heads of various organizations were given the chance to put themselves to the test of time and circumstance, and further appointments will doubtless be made on the results of these. The availability of suitably qualified candidates for the job will be all-important.

The Church envisages the eventual arrival of an Africanized pattern among the Africans, but she warily guards against a process speeded up at all costs and by all means.

Nothing progresses by leaps and bounds. To pose management or mismanagement as a legitimate support for redress might prove disastrous.

Regrettable publicity

From "Where O where is your Priestly Humility?":

It was with regret that I read the recent Press report (complete with photograph by an alert — or perhaps duly briefed — photographer) of several dissident priests and various members of the laity arriving at the St. John Vianney Seminary in Pretoria.

I am sure that many Catholics share my dismay, as the whole incident smacks so much of the sensation-seeking publicity-hungry element so prevalent in certain sections of our present day society—demos et al.

Surely these people realize that if they did indeed have legitimate grievances, they could have sent them, in confidence, to the Bishops' Conference, and exactly the same courteous, careful consideration would have been accorded them under those circumstances as has now been

FIRST THINGS FIRST

From Fr. A. M. ZIWANE, Swaziland:

I SHOULD like to give my full support to the manifesto of the five African Catholic priests.

If there is any doubt as to how many African priests hold the views expressed in the manifesto, let it suffice to say that these priests are the executive of St. Peter's Seminary Old Boys' Association.

I admire our executive for the courage to dare. A true Christian is such a man who challenges even the Sanhedrin and breaks the mores, if necessary.

As regards the alleged difficulty of African priests who are given the responsibility to run missions or parishes: "Well, a Bantu priest will always run to his bishop to ask for money," some might say. True! But is the sole criterion of the successful priest to be his ability to raise money? Might not this be better left to the parish council?

"There are varieties of gifts but the same spirit . . . of service but the same Lord . . . but earnestly desire the higher gifts." (1 Cor. 12:11 et seq.)

If a statistical survey were to have been made among the parish of Ars and any ordinary parish in France or elsewhere, very little difference might be revealed. But what a real difference! The Kingdom of Heaven cannot be measured by statistics.

I think the shift of emphasis on how the Kingdom of God grows among men would be the beginning of the solution of our problem.

Why not more signatures?

From Fr. MAX LESETIA, Port Shepstone:

Nothing progresses by leaps and bounds. To pose management or mismanagement as a legitimate support for redress might prove disastrous.

As much as I would like to sympathise with the Fathers, yet I cannot see why they preferred not to obtain more signatures from us. This omission in itself goes to prove that the manifesto is not truly representative of our African priests' opinion as some people would perhaps be led to believe.

It would be unfair to blame the fact that there are no pastors and rectors on faulty training and apprenticeship. To my mind a promotion to such positions or to any other, for that matter, depends on ability, personal qualities, experience, etc.

Reception of the sacrament of Holy Orders does not automatically give a man the right to claim more.

Apartheid, separate development, segregation, self-determination, Africanization, the right to "manage or mismanage ourselves" (I quote), all these terms are to me synonymous with the trial-and-error method. Both the civil and Church authorities are watching these developments carefully.

Finally, with regard to the grievances enumerated in the manifesto, I consider them to be severely personal, and that the Reverend "glorified altar boys" deserve a hearing from their respective superiors.

So then — over to you, the

'I HAVE NO HOME'



"Will you help me to get one?"

Donations towards the building would be gratefully received by Fr. D. Longland, OFM, P.O. Box 141, Dundee, Natal.

The clergy on the Rand met regularly to discuss issues which affected them. After the manifesto was published, fifty Rand clergy in Johannesburg attended a meeting, organised by the "Priest Discussion Group", to discuss the manifesto. They supported the manifesto and called a meeting to review "the alleged lack of Africanisation in the church"¹⁶⁶. To them it became clear that these problems were not only limited to the black clergy but even went beyond, because among them there were some white clergy also. Even though the Rand clergy agreed they questioned the method of using the secular press.

Fr. A.M Zwane from Swaziland supported the BPM. He also stressed that usually black priests are judged by the amount of money they have. He was later to become the Bishop of Manzini in 1976 and gave a talk on "Human relations - with special reference to Black Consciousness", in 1977, when the SACBC started taking Black Consciousness seriously.

b) Those who associated with it but with some modifications

A person calling himself "Pro-African", seemed to associated with the BPM as he says. "the manifesto of African priests served one useful purpose: to reveal that a feeling of frustration does exist among this group which is probably shared by many others, at least to some extent I would agree with them that there is no point in hiding such feelings or pretending that they do not exist"¹⁶⁷. But he continues to say that they should not have published the manifesto in the public press as it undermines the condemnation of Apartheid by the bishops. He sees Africanisation taking place with the ordination of Bishops Khoarai and Morapeli in Lesotho. By the end of the article one feels that the author of the 'Pro-African' article, actually supported the status quo. His

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, (4th March 1970).

¹⁶⁷ *The Southern Cross* (29th July 1970).

conclusion is that the black priest should draw a list of positive concrete proposals to see whether they are realist or visionaries.

c) Those who rejected it altogether

Fr. Max Lesetia from Port Shepstone, wrote a letter in the *Southern Cross* and said that the Black priests should have obtained more signatures. "This omission in itself goes to prove, that the BPM is not truly representative of our African priests opinion as some people would perhaps be led to believe" (italics mine)¹⁶⁸. He continues to say that the grievances which are enumerated are their own personal agenda. One should also note the paternalistic tone which is used in this letter, for instance, he uses the word "our", which in actual fact meant that these priests were still all under the tutelage of the white priests.

A letter from "Where O where is your Priestly Humility?" in the *Southern Cross*; rejects the Manifesto altogether. The writer calls the priests and laity who disrupted the Bishops' meeting at St. John Vianney "Dissidents". He further claims that the priests involved only wanted publicity. He also questioned their method and suggests that they should submitted the manifesto confidentially.

P.J Kunutu, from St. Paul's Minor Seminary, Hammanskraal, wrote to the *Southern Cross* and said that if the argument of the five priests rests on Africanisation then they are wrong because to him many Africans have had top positions.

These are some of the reactions which the manifesto provoked. As we can see some people agreed with it, some agreed but wanted it to be modified and others totally disagreed with it. The main problem

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

which runs through was that they to used the secular paper - *The Rand Daily Mail*. It was chosen because it was one of the liberal newspapers and widely read¹⁶⁹. It was critical of apartheid, racism and discrimination. It was inevitable that the editors were going to listen them as this was one form of oppression.¹⁷⁰

For Mkhathswa, "in terms of the issues we were addressing the people ...supported us."¹⁷¹ The five priests initiated the whole process as they were near each other and very conscious of what was going on. The manifesto was a way of mobilising the people as many were scattered all over the country. After this incident. "SPOBA grew from strength to strength when people began to realise that what we had done had the support of, certainly, the majority of the black priests but even some white priests to some extent. I still have correspondence of some priests who wrote in support of what we had done."¹⁷²

In the final analysis one sees an

"ambiguity in many black priests. And many do not align themselves with BC (or activists). The situation is that, usually in principle they agree with what BC says but they decide to say it is better for a priest to remain out of politics. But you can rely on the fact that all black bishops and priests have the same background. This puzzles white bishops and priests to find out that black priests are not black activists but they realise their mentality is black activist¹⁷³.

¹⁶⁹ Mokoka, *Black Experience in Black Theology*, p.54.

¹⁷⁰ Mkhathswa, same interview.

¹⁷¹ Mkhathswa, same interview.

¹⁷² Mkhathswa, same interview.

¹⁷³ Magrath, interview conducted in Cedara on the 19th of July 1996.

However, something was achieved through the manifesto. It had an impact which was later going to bear fruit for the church as well as the laity.

4.5 What did the Manifesto achieve

Before the year ended, Fr. Mkhathshwa from Witbank diocese joined the General secretariat of the Bishops Conference in Pretoria. He was to share with Fr. Dominic Scholten the work of the Ecumenical, Press, Justice and Peace Commissions.¹⁷⁴ Was this appointment in any way influenced by the Manifesto? Mkhathshwa recently observed that "it is very difficult say what prompted my appointment. I would not be surprised that some people like Fr. Scholten might have thought that maybe it was a better strategy to get some of these guys into higher positions in the church. Then, they would have a stake in the whole thing. Or, it was a genuine desire on the part of the hierarchy to respond positively to what we had challenged them with - namely the context of the manifesto."¹⁷⁵

Also around the same time an organising committee for the priests' council was formed. The secretary of the committee was Mkhathshwa.¹⁷⁶ By December 1970, a Draft Constitution was already drawn up. The purpose of the council was "to promote a more effective sharing of responsibility in hierarchical communion with the bishops in the mission of the church"¹⁷⁷ It was also to;

- a) coordinate views of priests on mission and brotherly unity
- b) be an instrument for greater co-operation with the SACBC
- c) provide an arena for problems affecting personal lives of

¹⁷⁴ *Southern Cross* (6th January 1971).

¹⁷⁵ Mkhathshwa, same interview.

¹⁷⁶ *Southern Cross* (7th October 1970).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, (30th December 1970).

priests.

These were some of the grievances which had been raised and a forum was already being formed.

Reacting to this today, Fr. Mkhathshwa, the then Secretary, felt that this move watered down the militancy of the black clergy. He says that even though we had this development "many black people felt that there was still a need for a black voice to organise itself. In the USA, you have the Black Catholic caucus which is recognised by the bishops"¹⁷⁸. The role of such a movement is to build and help people.

In 1972 the Umzimkulu administrator Monsignor Peter Butelezi was appointed as an auxiliary bishop of Johannesburg, the Bishop there was Boyle. His appointment had a great impact as he says, "you see if I had been appointed to Durban or Cape town, I would not have made the same impact. But being appointed to Johannesburg, then it meant the other places were open"¹⁷⁹.

This meant that other new black bishops could now be appointed in other areas, because a black bishop was appointed in South Africa's biggest and richest diocese - Johannesburg!

By 1974 the South African Council of Priests (SACOP) had set up a Black Affairs Department as the manifesto had suggested. It was due to the pressure SPOBA was putting on the council that the blacks were not adequately represented that led to the formation of the Black Affairs Department.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Mkhathshwa, same interview.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Southern Cross* (10th February 1974).

4.6 Conclusion

Consequently, through the help of SPOBA and certain elements of Black Consciousness, the association pushed the hierarchy to make changes which were not being considered at that time. To a certain extent, tangible results were achieved by this move because the process of Africanisation was slowly beginning to take root.

We are now going to proceed and look at the need for a black rector, and also at other manifestations of Black Consciousness.

CHAPTER FIVE

Need for a Black Rector at St. Peter's 1970- 1974

They year, 1970 started with a big bang, when the black priests were demanding their rights. The brighter side of the situation was that, by the end of the year the Rector at St. Peter's either wanted to resign or to be removed. He wanted to be replaced by a Black Rector. He was already trying to implement the BPM. This lead to some considerable tension. It is necessary to elucidate some of the phenomena which happened as to limelight the watershed on our theme of "...the plea of mature manhood"¹⁸¹. The 'crisis of the rector' at the seminary stands out a convenient example to highlight the effects of BC and the need to bring it practically to the seminary.

Earlier on I mentioned that the Rector held an ambivalent position as far as resigning was concerned. The report¹⁸² said

A disturbance among the students at the end of the year led to a delay in the examination, this was caused partly by the rather sudden implementation of the take-over of administration by the hierarchy and acceptance of the Rector's resignation, though these had been under discussion for a long time. Partly also by the threatened resignation of one staff member, a rising from disagreements about the policy being followed in the seminary in matter's of discipline and organisation on the part of some staff members¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Magrath, *Grace and Truth*, p.99.

¹⁸² *St. Peter's Seminary Annual Report, 1971*. (See also *Southern Cross* [25th November 1970].

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

In November 1970 there was a meeting of the seminary board, here Magrath was asked whether his resignations stood he said yes! As he put it

In fact I had previously offered to resign if and when a new (*preferably Black Rector, as recommended by the Dominican order*) was found. It seemed clear that it had been decided that the simplest way to solve the problems was for me to go, and I acquiesced in that sense.¹⁸⁴

It is evident from above that already the Rector wanted to enforce what was demanded in the Manifesto and what BC was advocating; he was very concerned about the affairs of the black people as a whole. On a similar note, the Dominican Council had recommended that a black rector be found for the seminary.

The Dominican Provincial, Fr. Brenninkmeijer, wanted Magrath to leave the seminary. The latter realised that,

"my weak saying 'yes' to avoid trouble was a let-down of the students, and I should have said 'yes' when you have a newblack rector. And also of the Bishops who had asked me to remain... I suppose that the canonical background to all this must have been that Fr. Brenninkmeijer told the bishops that he wished to withdraw me as my religious superior. Consequently, they could only acquiesce, since the seminary was now under them and not SCPF"¹⁸⁵.

¹⁸⁴ Magrath, interview conducted in Cedara on the 19th July 1996.

¹⁸⁵ Magrath, *Minutes of Commission for Seminary*, manuscript note, 4.7.93. (St. Peter's Seminary; Comments by Magrath, July 1993, with reference to the events of the last week of 1970 [SADA, Springs]). The seminary seems to have been handed over to the bishops in 1969 from Sacra Congregation of the Propaganda Fidei, the SCPF was involved in running seminaries in mission countries. Cf. Letter of the Vicar General, J. L. Brenninkmeijer, to the brethren to inform them of the decisions taken at the first council meeting of the Vicariate General held at Springs, 26th-27th March 1968.

There was a meeting in November at which Fr. Dominic Scholten was appointed. Magrath was subsequently notified that he was required to be away from the Seminary before Scholten moved in on the 1st of December. But Cardinal McCann pressed him to come for the opening in February 1971.

On the day of this meeting in November Archbishop Hurley contacted Magrath and said, "we have a made a big mistake today by appointing Fr. Dominic Scholten, I know it will not work. But they said they could find no one else"¹⁸⁶. Hurley's comments were later going to manifest some truth. Other bishops indicated that they did not really want to change the Rector at that point but were forced by the way things had developed. "The above make intelligible much of the reactions that followed among the Black clergy and students"¹⁸⁷. They went and demonstrated at the ceremony. Before this culmination, Finnbar Synnott, a lecturer at the seminary, was deeply distressed by his own intervention when he rang Fr. Brenninkmeijer to say that there was a crisis at the seminary. Synnott had come to the conclusion that it was the Dominican Order and not the bishops who had got Magrath out.

On February 13th 1971 Scholten was welcomed and Magrath was thanked.¹⁸⁸ The Black Priest Manifesto group staged a protest with banners. They were demanding that the rector who was "expelled" be restored. Magrath was not actually dismissed, he resigned freely. There was a communication breakdown between the rector and the students. But he did not foresee such kind of spin-off, he thought he was going to resign and be replaced, probably by a black successor.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Southern Cross* (25th November 1970).

To a certain extent we see some impact of Black Consciousness on the rector. When he wanted to resign he wanted a black rector to replace him. He was probably acting in accordance to what the Priests's Manifesto was trying to tell the bishops to implement. Again, we see our theme coming through here - "the plea of mature manhood." By having a black rector the desire could have been fulfilled to a greater degree.

However, the new rector, Fr. Scholten was congratulated by the chairman of the commission for Doctrine, Seminary and priestly formation¹⁸⁹. His main focus during his initial years was to train lecturers for the seminary. He implemented new strategies to try and alleviate staff shortage, "[....] Father Scholten also proposed that special training overseas be given to four African priests whom he had in mind to prepare for future lectureship posts at the Seminary. Archbishop Fitzgerald agreed to write to Louvain in Belgium to investigate the possibility of procuring bursaries for these priests..."¹⁹⁰ As Butelezi says, "the idea was to get students who were going to teach at Hammanskraal, Scholten tried to get prospective students and got... bursaries for Louvain...and... the ecumenical institute in Dublin"¹⁹¹. Father Dominic Scholten reported "that Bishop Schmidt of Marainnhill had agreed to release Father A. Zuma F.F.J (crossed out and replaced by C. Chiliza) on the 18th April, 1971, to take up this post at the seminary. The chairman agreed to approach Bishop Rosenthal concerning the withdrawal of Reverend Father Mabona from the Seminary staff in order to enable him to proceed overseas to

¹⁸⁹ See *Minutes from the meeting held at St. John Vianney Seminary, Pretoria, (on 10th February 1971)*.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Archbishop Peter Butelezi, same interview.

continue his studies."¹⁹²

The new Rector was going to compensate for the lack of black staff at the seminary, by advocating further studies to the priests. We have to note that Black Consciousness and "the theme of the right to self-determination on the plea of mature manhood"¹⁹³ was taking some effect. The previous rector wanted a black rector, this was not possible. The new rector, probably, with some influence of Black Consciousness and the impact of the Manifesto saw the need to train black lecturers to teach at the seminary. The Black priests had specifically suggested that their apostolate be widened. This was going to be achieved through this programme Scholten was embarking on.

The previous rector had believed in parish work first and then studies later. This probably explains why only one black lecturer was at St. Peter's in 1969. Even though the rector was for black advancement the bishops emphasised that the new priests get pastoral experience before doing anything else. But the new rector, however, tried to implement a watershed policy on future lecturers at the seminary.

The rector did succeed in getting some priests to train overseas. At the following meeting of the commission held on the 24th May 1971. It was reported that two priests M. Zuma and F. Makoro had been accepted at Louvain University to do Scripture so that they could translate the Bible when they came back. The former, managed

¹⁹² [Minutes of the] meeting of the Commission for Doctrine, Seminaries and Priestly formation held at St. John Vianney Seminary, Pretoria (on 10 February 1971).

¹⁹³ Magrath, *Grace and Truth*, p.99.

to teach for a while but was impeded by ill health¹⁹⁴. Makoro also wrote a letter saying that could not come back to St. Peter's.

The impact of Black Consciousness can be seen running through the years 1970-1971. In the first instance, Magrath was looking for a black rector to replace him. Secondly, Scholten sent local priests to train as lecturers. To my own conception, these two incidents indicate that the white clergy and the bishops to a certain extent, took serious the grievances of the manifesto.

Plausibly, Black Consciousness had an impact on the two rectors. However, the coming section might convince us otherwise. But certain elements of black empowerment are clearly portrayed during these first two years of BC on the scene.

5.1 The first closure of St. Peter's - October 1971

Unfortunately, the period of the new Rector was characterised by turmoil. This is seen in what the Provincial had indicated to the bishops when he said that Scholten "is a strong man,... efficient... and can straighten out some mess...but he should not stay too long".¹⁹⁵ Fr. Dominic Scholten was a very good administrator, good fund raiser and good organiser but essentially not very good in as far as relationships with people were concerned. This to a certain extent sheds light as to what happened at the seminary.

The first calamity was the announcement by Fr. Augustine Shutte O.P. a popular lecturer, that he was going to marry, on the 17th August 1971. Scholten had been informed earlier. Shutte wanted to

¹⁹⁴ *[Minutes of the] Meeting of the commission for Doctrine, Seminary and Priestly formation held at St. John Vianney Seminary, Pretoria (on the 24th May 1971)*

¹⁹⁵ Archbishop Peter Butelezi, same interview.

continue teaching. Three staff members wrote a petition for him to stay. The response of the rector was that Shutte should leave the Seminary. He also continued to say that among the factors which contributed to the present state of affairs¹⁹⁶ was a

"non-relenting campaign to defile (defy) Afrikanerdom in teaching and preaching a one sided (black?) Theology of Liberation and redemption from the Afrikaner oppressor. This has created a spirit of self-righteousness in many a student who sees himself more in the role of the underdog than as the instrument of reconciliation in a divided society."¹⁹⁷

However, this was not the end, but the beginning when "more fuel was added to the fire on the 25th of August 1971 when SPOBA, former Students of St. Peter's, decided to have their meeting at the seminary. Some members saw themselves called to 'solve' the situation by direct interference in the seminary routine and policy which was greatly welcomed by both some staff members and students who were beyond the rector's control;

To crown it all the former rector who was present at that meeting and in correspondence, in private discussion and even in public was described as the victim unceremoniously discharged from his office in 1970 (.....). (He) declared in the closing function held in his honour 'willingness to join the "ecclesiastical guerilla" if no suitable job would become available to him'¹⁹⁸.

¹⁹⁶ *St. Peter's Annual Report* (1971), p.4

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *St. Peter's Seminary Annual Report*, (1971, p.4) compiled by the Rector Fr. Scholten [stamped confidential].

"The former rector was present at the meeting", Magrath states that "I did not go to Hammanskraal from November 30th 1970 until 1983.. except for 1971 when I attended the opening ceremony and farewell, I never returned to the Seminary for twelve years". He was in Cape Town, Europe and in Rome for the 1971 Synod of Bishops and then 16 years in Swaziland. (Interview 25.06.1996, PMB).

This is when he said that "...at some point I said publicly that I would continue the struggle for the black clergy as a kind of ecclesiastical guerilla, and this I was able to do for many years as Chairman of the Theological Advisory Commission present at most Plenary session and through Bishop Zwane (of Swaziland). But I kept well out of any direct contact with the Seminary."¹⁹⁹

The above events might led one to think that Scholten was not very favourable with the students and some staff members. This point is closely related to the personality of the rector. It did not however, interfere with his policies of producing local lecturers. These personality clashes were later going to have serious repercussion on the seminary.

5.1.1 Bishop Khoarai's Visit

Amidst these events Bishop Khoarai of Leribe, Lesotho was called in to facilitate discussions in 1971. A petition was discussed by the students in the presence of the bishop. It set out ²⁰⁰; Augustine Shutte's case; Centralisation of power in one man; that current training did not allow for mature responsible people and the policy on students discipline was more authoritative than consultative.

Under "General Suggestions and comments", the students were asking for a change of Rector, "a Rector in a African Seminary in these days should be more than aware of the current Black thinking and feeling which is now sweeping throughout the country. Failure in

¹⁹⁹ See Magrath, *Minutes of Commission for Seminaries*, (manuscript note, 4.7.93).

²⁰⁰ See *Account of the Petition discussed by the students in the presence of his Lordship Bishop Khoarai* (undated).

this will result in these forces being misdirected. (...) the students from St. Peter's should not always be dismissed as revolutionary and corrupt. They should rather be seen from the background of a fast changing world and an age in which everything is being questioned especially by young people. They are different from those of ten or five years before".²⁰¹

In his report back, the Bishop Khoarai said that the "kernel of the trouble seemed to be the removal of the previous Rector and installation of the new Rector". Another issue was Fr. Shutte's departure. For the student he was 'kicked out', Shutte had suggested that he was willing to stay at St. Peter's but not under the present structure of administration. The students were also not satisfied with what they called 'Concentration of power in one man', - the Rector! They also expressed displeasure at the alleged overbearing attitude' of the rector in matters of discipline and seminary life.²⁰²

But immediately after the departure of Bishop Khoarai "the situation turned worse, on the 15th October, not entirely unexpectedly as 'due' a notice was given in an anonymous letter from Pretoria: "WE WILL USE SPIES TO GET RID OF YOU FROM OUR PLACE - THE SEMINARY IS FOR BLACKS ONLY." This was five days after the rowdy SPOBA meeting. Other incidents happened within the seminary. For instance, the prefect of students, Fr. Chiliza, was publicly insulted by a deacon in the absence of the Rector but other staff members were present. The following day the students were treated to an imprudent sermon denouncing certain church practices in an abusive way.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² See *Minutes of the meeting of the commission for Doctrine, Seminaries and Priestly Formation and Administrative board, (October 14th and 15th).*

The same week another staff member was insulted when investigating some serious offence. On the 9th of October it was discovered that at least eleven students had been out regularly for over a period of a couple of months during the night to the neighbouring township. On the 11th October students were given permission to attend a 'dubious' show in the township".²⁰³ According to the Rector these were some of the highlights of St. Peter's which never provided a dull moment.

From the minutes of the Commission²⁰⁴, there was discussion of the Rector's report of August 17th. The situation had not improved, "he detailed several incidents which indicated that there was an undercurrent of opposition to him as rector, and there was also a lack of respect in the attitude of some of the students towards the Prefect of discipline and the Spiritual Director", Some of the incidents are mentioned above. Scholten was supported by Fr. Chiliza, a staff member who had said that "among other things, SPOBA had generated the impression that there is no consultation of Africans in matters regarding African Priests. He asked that the Bishops do something to dispel this contention which had been communicated to the students as well.

Both Bishop Khoarai and Monsignor Butelezi advocated a procedure by which SPOBA could be advised of the decision of the administrative Board, and asked for suggestions. Bishop Khoarai went further and suggested that the South African Council of Priest be asked to propose a committee of African priests to be of assistance in regard to the seminary."²⁰⁵ At the end of the meeting it was

²⁰³ Dominic Scholten, *St. Peter's Major Seminary Closed or Abortive coup* (25th October 1971), [SADA, Springs].

²⁰⁴ *Commission for Doctrine, Seminaries and Priestly formation and Administrative Board (of SACBC) on the 14 and 15 October.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

announced that Edmund Hill, one of the lecturers, offered to resign because he did not agree with the Rector's ways of operating. He was exchanged with the Reverend Harrison of the Community of the Resurrection from CPSA.

On the 16th of October a letter from the Chairman and members of the Seminary Commission addressed to the Rector, staff, students of St. Peter's Seminary said "unexpected developments have made it imperative that the seminary should be closed as from October 18th of this year. Since the end of term examination cannot now be taken, credit will be accorded to all students". After this had been communicated a lecturer and two students went to Pretoria. Their main intention was to ask the bishops to dismiss the Rector. They were refused audience with his Eminence. Eventually the Seminary was closed. This decision must have pleased the Rector who had earlier on recommended on the same lines on the 14th of October, in report to the board. These are some of the highlights of Scholten's period.

During this meeting Bishop van Velsen also emphasised that Magrath had not been dismissed but resigned (this was seen in the report by Bishop Khoarai from the students).

5.1.2 Analysis of the Rector's crisis 1971

There are two opposing players during this time; Oswin Magrath and Dominic Scholten. The former was likeable, favourite amongst the students with an attitude of "sink or swim" whilst the latter was to a certain extent the opposite of the former. He emphasised authority and obedience.

When Scholten took over he was aware of what was happening especially with reference to Black Consciousness and the manifesto.

This was a time when the blacks were demanding their rights. My analysis is that he did not actually comprehend the situation fully. In the 1971 annual report he says that "[t]he rector was regularly confronted by a students' representative council which, in order to enforce its will, had shrewdly developed over the years the trade Union approach in the sense that it tried to squeeze out of the authorities as many permissions as possible²⁰⁶. This for him was not counter-balanced with responsibility. Probably the Rector did not grasp the situation fully. Incidents developed on this point bearing the following in mind

The background is very complex: shift from remote rural area to Hammanskraal; change of methods of training and discipline in favour of maturity and responsibility; African *uhuru*; influx of students with urban background; majority not from minor seminaries; distance from home environment and families; mixture of ethnic groups; apartheid; Politics was unavoidable; NUSAS (Liberal) and Black Consciousness vied for influence. While sympathetic to the latter, the former rector said, 'I sat on the fence when organisations wanted to affiliate the SRC in the Seminary to one or the other'.²⁰⁷

Giving the Rector the benefit of doubt, probably he did understand these trends but did not sympathise with them. This might have led the students not liking him and also having a lot of problems. It was not only the Rector, Dominic Scholten, who had problems with the black clergy, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Southern Africa, Cardinal Owen McCann, had problems as well.

²⁰⁶ *St. Peter's Annual Report: 1971, p.3*

²⁰⁷ Magrath, *Minutes of Commission for Seminaries*, (manuscript note, 4.7.93). [SADA, Springs] p.3.

5.2 The Memorandum on Cardinal Owen McCann

In 1971, Cardinal McCann visited Australia and gave a speech which had serious repercussions in South African especially from the SPOBA members. His speech appeared in the *Star* on October 27th. He said, *inter alia*, that colour should not be the criterion for one to have a franchise but the ability to vote in a truly responsible manner²⁰⁸. "If Black Africans were given immediate and complete control of the country, then chaos would result"²⁰⁹ and that "the Black man is not ready to assume control of his destiny"²¹⁰. He basically expressed no confidence in Africans. This was insulting! He was still caught up and limited by the apartheid world-view as Mkhathshwa says, "but also in fairness to the old man I don't think he realised the implications of what he was saying. Politically he was a bit naive".²¹¹

A group of African Catholic priests, all executive members of SPOBA,²¹² expressed a lack of confidence in the leadership of the Catholic Church by McCann.²¹³ A memorandum was issued "as a matter of fact we even required his removal, his resignation as Cardinal"²¹⁴. They were annoyed with the Cardinal who was

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, (17th February 1971).

²⁰⁹ *Southern Cross* (24th February, 1971).

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² It is important to note that the Manifesto signatories were still active the executive of SPOBA comprised of Moetapele, Louwfant, Mokoka, and Mabona.

²¹³ *Southern Cross* (17th February 1971).

²¹⁴ Mkhathshwa, same interview.

telling the whole world that Africans were unprepared for universal franchise, and were positively immature. His words could be interpreted as a return to colonial tutelage²¹⁵.

The aim of the memorandum was to highlight the disrepute into which African people had been pushed. They also wanted some clarification on the distorted reports. Mkhathshwa concurred with this view, the memorandum was to such attitude towards black people, such things are not said to people who have been oppressed and are still fighting for their freedom. A deduction one can come with is that the training they were giving blacks was incomplete. How could they fail to produce a leader after all this time they had of training the black people? There must be something wrong with their training methods and not the black people.²¹⁶ As Archbishop Buthelezi analyzed it

There were a whole lot of problems Black Consciousness was fighting for, especially when they say "Black man you are on your own". This was true because even the most liberal whites ultimately could not be trusted. You would not be surprised that white person was a spy on you.... I gave a talk at the Anglican seminary in Umtata.... It was about formation, when you come to formation you can look at three stages:

- a) A priest will be forming a priest who would assist him. The missionaries sent black priests to outstations and he extends his influence where he does not want to go he sends the black priests,..;
- b) where a priest is preparing future leaders. when I am gone these people will take over..;
- c) but the real challenge is when he is preparing his own superiors. Basically preparing people he will be working under. That is different. (*italics mine*)²¹⁷.

It is quite plausible that the Cardinal was caught in the first type of formation. This in turn might have influenced his world

²¹⁵ *Southern Cross*, (7th April 1971).

²¹⁶ Mkhathshwa, same interview.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

view. The Cardinal McCann made a trip to Pretoria to attend a SPOBA's meetings which was held at St. Peter's. It was attended by the Rector, Fr. Scholten and SPOBA members, during this meeting a member of SPOBA attempted to read the memorandum aloud but was stopped by the Rector.

It is interesting to see the prevailing world-view which existed at this time. The whites thought they were in a superior position in comparison with blacks. What the Cardinal said in Australia was normal, it was part of his daily experience. Even though the priests had tried to dismantle the false world-view it still persisted in the mind of many a white South African. Black Consciousness was at this time also trying to educate the blacks so that they could see themselves as equals to whites. The reactions to the memorandum by other white clergymen do not, therefore, come as a surprise. A Fr. F. Morscher M.F.S.C., of Malelane in the Eastern Transvaal wrote in the *Southern Cross* to say that he was disgusted by the way the African were handling the situation. He said the Cardinal was speaking the truth. He says that those priests are only interested in getting higher positions in the church, not to work for their elevations to these posts.

5.3 Black Demonstrations

The statement of the Cardinal led to some considerable confrontation and tension in the Catholic Church²¹⁸. This was evident through what the *Southern Cross* called the "Black Demos". These pressure groups had existed as early as 1969, before the Manifesto was handed to the bishops. In July 1970 another "Demo" was staged, which produced general disapproval and widespread

²¹⁸

John De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1982), p.99.

disgust. This "Demo" demanded that Cardinal McCann of Cape Town and Bishop Hugh Boyle of Johannesburg make way for African Bishops. The observers thought this was a display of despicable racism.²¹⁹ They said these demands for black church leaders came from a type of Black Power movement which had its centre in the Transvaal. But other groups supported the "Black Demos" because they saw them as the only way of pushing the church into action²²⁰. This meant that the church should try to involve all the people concerned, especially the blacks.

Later on we will see that the "Demos" played a very vital role in pushing both the church and state on the policy of apartheid. It is quite evident that the blacks were becoming aware of the situation, they wanted to exercise their rights. They knew that the only way of doing this was by demonstrating and making demands for what they wanted. At this time, Black consciousness was also becoming very strong among the people. It was firmly established at many Black Universities, Maphumulo (Lutheran seminary) and The Federal Seminary (FEDSEM) where different seminarians from churches like the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian were trained.

The year - 1971 was not a very good for St. Peter's. This is reflected in the Annual Report written by the Rector Scholten, "it was our sad duty in 1971 to speak of the 'disintegration' of Seminary life"²²¹. Outside, Black Consciousness was getting organised. Seminars and workshops were given at different campuses and schools. SASO and other groups helped a lot to make the people be aware of the situation. Students Work Camps were organised, for instance, in December 1971, Dr. Ramphela whilst studying at the Medical School in Durban led students to a work camp at

²¹⁹ *Southern Cross*, (11th August 1971).

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, (15th September 1971).

²²¹ *St. Peter's Annual Report: 1973*, p.3.

Winterveld, a huge squatter camp near Pretoria. Whilst there, they were co-hosted by Sr. Doris and two Catholic priests, one of them was Fr. Clement Mokoka (a signatory to the Manifesto). The aim of the student's was to assess the needs of the community and identify a project which they could carry out effectively. The project was supposed to help people in the community. Although this project was not successful, it showed one how engaged SASO became in trying to uplift the communities. With the BC getting stronger, the awareness of the people was also getting stronger²²².

Black Consciousness helped to assert the position of Blacks amidst all kinds of oppression. Being Black was an important element. They did not actually need the white person to exist. However at the Seminary, the awareness was seen from another perspective.

In 1972 the Rector of St Peter's described the situation as having some, "'persistent unsettled atmosphere which may indicate a crisis situation'"²²³. However, for the rest, 'Black Consciousness' was in full swing. It was shown in uncouth behaviour towards white guests, refusal to write examinations, undue criticism of lecturers, unwillingness to co-operate, or simply passive resistance, also in the celebration of the liturgy"²²⁴. This is the similar problem which was raised by the retiring Rector in 1956, Fr. Schleissinger, when I dealt with the concept of Nationalism before the Dominican took over the seminary. Our deduction can be that in time of awareness the Rectors thought that the students were acting abnormally, whilst most probable, the students should have acted like this all along. A challenge for

²²² Pityana (ed), *Bounds of Possibility: The legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness*, p.159.

²²³ *St. Peter's News Annual Report 1973*, p.1.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

these Rectors was very unsettling.

However, in 1972, the staff took a stance of tolerance and bending backwards to cope with the situation. The former students (priests and lecturers) were also contributing to this. One then poses this question, raised earlier on concerning Magrath - "Could or should be it allowed that Seminary work is being hampered by an 'ecclesiastical guerilla' under the guise of Black consciousness? What could be done for the larger section of well disposed men?"²²⁵. For Scholten the developments i.e. Black Consciousness and awareness were rather emotive and could lead a person astray. But this was not the case in actuality. The rector was saying all these things because he was very insecure as we can see from the general mood of the report which attacked Black Consciousness and with regard to Magrath the previous rector. But however, he becomes positive in the end of the report when he says, that a dialogue with the Black intelligentsia (the educated priests - especially SPOBA executive) should be established as was suggested by Bishop Khoarai. This also applied to the establishment of a Seminary Investigation Committee. Encouraging news was that three more black lecturers were expected to come in the later part of 1973.

Probably, this was going to ease the tension which was developing. Nevertheless, the process of amalgamation of St. Peter's and St. John Vianney was about to be launched, though for South Africa's seminaries this was a *terra incognita*.

5.4 Amalgamation of the two Seminaries

The SACBC in February 1972, launched a major project to deal with the problems regarding the training of priests that had cropped up over the years. It appointed a commission of Enquiry into Priestly Training to look at the training, consult other bodies for information, to receive representation from different people and groups and to report to the Commission for Doctrine, Seminaries and Priestly Training by the end of December 1972. Afterwards it was also agreed that the committee should study ecumenical co-operation in priestly training. "This plenary session approved twenty-four resolutions on training for the priesthood. Two of them dealt with amalgamation. They read as follows

Resolution 11

That major seminaries, keeping in mind as a broad guideline recommendation V B 1 of the report, work as quickly as possible toward the situation in which the seminaries, wherever resident, shall be taught by a single staff belonging to one Academic Institute, with as little duplication of lectures as possible.

Resolution 12

That

- i) the SACBC make a firm offer to seminarians, seminary staffs, and priests of each racial group to set up a racially integrated residence, asking whether they wish to accept or reject this offer;
- ii) if the response is favourable, the SACBC approach the minister(s) concerned for the requisite permission to bring such residence into existence;
- iii) if a negative response is received from the minister(s) this fact be publicised."²²⁶

When the work of the Committee of enquiry was completed the SACBC

formed a Continuation Committee which looked specifically at Resolution 12 on the opinion poll. We will look at this later as we proceed. In the meantime the Annual Report of St. Peter's for 1973 stated that things were "normal"²²⁷. The points which came through are, firstly, on the unity of clergy especially the Black intelligentsia. This, if implemented very well was going to help the situation at the seminary. Secondly, on amalgamation of the two seminaries with the discussions which had started in 1972, with the SACBC appointing a continuation committee. This was seen to have good potential for both institutions.

The process of amalgamation was going to take more or less a decade as I said it was a *terra incognita* for the seminaries in South Africa. This was primarily because the Black priests were against this process. For them, it was a signal of going back to the old system of being appendages to the white priests. What they wanted was for the black priests to stand alone and on their own as the Black Consciousness philosophy was advocating, "Black man you are on you own". The black priest's stance become explicit after 1977. Incidentally, Black Consciousness was getting deeply ingrained at the seminary.

5.5 Effects of Black Consciousness within the Seminary

1973

"For 1973 the general climate may be described as one of tranquillity, peace and normality throughout the year"²²⁸. The

²²⁷ But he later cautions and says that, "Even if at the beginning we reported that an air of 'normality', has returned to our seminary world, we remain vividly aware of living in an abnormal world 'social situations which seems sometimes beyond repair'". *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *St. Peter's Annual Report: 1973, p.1.*

main concept which came out explicitly in the report was "Black Consciousness", which the rector says was used so many times in the year. According to him not much literature was available. In the report he says that, the fight of Negroes in America had given a new impetus to the situation in South Africa. The situation in America is much more advanced than in South African which has resulted the "deep frustration of the politically aware black men"²²⁹. This is seen acutely in the way black men react to "whatever the church and her white representatives undertake. A perfectly normal and justified administrative measure to correct an abuse or rectify an error is met with slogans 'We are not here on Robben island'"²³⁰.

Evidently, from this report we can see that Black Consciousness was gaining a great deal of ground at the seminary.

Outside the Seminary, one of the University's ceremonies was disrupted at Turfloop.²³¹ Inside St. Peter's, during the holidays they hosted one exponent of black militancy and intelligentsia (SASO). The Rector says that he witnessed the painful experience of a white journalist being rejected as an irrelevant white man. He goes on to say that "these instances are mentioned here because they are indicative of the attitude amongst certain students at the Seminary in the course of the year. It is true that there has been no direct outside interference. In the only case, when the President and Secretary of a militant black organisation had 'decided' to come and address the students, the staff 'decided' to the contrary.

²²⁹ *St. Peter's Annual Report, 1973, p.1.*

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ "The most prominent reported was the 'impressive "walkout at the University of the North (Turfloop where Mr. A Tiro delivered his momentous speech, criticising the status quo in African Education". At a graduation ceremony.

At this point one has to admit that Black Consciousness was flourishing fully at the seminary. The Rector describes the consequences of Black consciousness in extreme negative terms. But what one has to assert is the fact that the blacks were now acting in their full capacity as blacks and on the same level as the white colleagues. This might have been very challenging to the Rector. This then might shed some light to his reaction to Black Consciousness. But at the same time, one should leave room for extreme cases of people who have a tendency to exaggerate things. The Rector might have picked up such reactions and generalised them so that Black Consciousness was seen in all extreme ways he mentions above. The question we should ask ourselves is, 'How can a solution which the black people have been waiting for so long be considered to inadequate by other people, for instance, the Rector? The government took a more or less similar reaction to the rector, though more drastically!

After 1974/75 the big event in Black Consciousness was the harassment of its leadership, organisations and the participants by the Government. The various leaders were banned and continually detained, arrested or charged.²³² Pertinently, the Schlebusch Commission linked Black Consciousness to the Chinese version of Communism. The chairman of the commission was A.L. Schlebusch, it investigated the University Christian Movement, the Christian Institute and the South African Relations of Race Institute.²³³ At this time, Steve Biko and Barney Pitso Moseneke were banned in terms of the Suppression Act²³⁴. Consequently, we see that Black Consciousness was becoming a very big threat to the government.

²³² Thoko Mbanjwa (ed) *Black Review 1974/75* (BPC: Lovedale Press, 1975), p.131.

²³³ Davenport, *South Africa A modern History*, p.386.

²³⁴ *Ibid*, p.132.

Later on, many of the leaders and people involved were to be banned²³⁵. This is when the church became very active. Some churches became arenas where grievances against the government were voiced.

However, we will now turn back to the theme of amalgamation of the two seminaries.

5.6 Suggestion on One Seminary

The Committee which was appointed in December 1972 on amalgamation reported to the SACBC in July 1974 and said that a questionnaire had been sent out and the replies were summarised. It was then decided that a professional sociologist be consulted. Professor Maritz of Unisa was chosen as he was going to be impartial.²³⁶

In his report he considered that residential integration should not proceed at that moment, but recommended a joint academic training with separate residences. This was going to provide a testing ground for future policies.

The rectors of St. Peter's in Hammanskraal and St. John Vianney in Pretoria, had a joint meeting with the Administrative Board and Seminary Commission and considered these documents on the 28th February 1974. This joint meeting observed that the opinion poll did not show a clear acceptance of the offer made by the SACBC. Pertinently, it also showed that it was not possible to proceed with the joint academic institution. It recommended to the plenary as follows

²³⁵ Davenport, *South Africa A modern History*, p.379.

²³⁶ *Background to the Closing of St. Peter's Seminary in 1977* (1979, Tlhagale Private Archives).

a) that the response of the seminaries and the seminary staffs to the offer made by the SACBC in terms of Resolution 12 of the 1973 Plenary Session is not such as to justify the action conditionally envisaged in the resolution.

b) that as present circumstances and attitudes indicate that it is not realistic to press for immediate academic integration or centralisation, this meeting recommends that the rectors and staff of St. Peter's and St. John Vianney's seminaries and of St. Joseph's Scholasticate be requested by the hierarchy to explore all possible avenues of communication and co-operation with occasional progress reports to the Hierarchy through the commission for Seminaries²³⁷

In July 1974 the SACBC adopted this report on the meeting held on the 28th February 1974. In August, following on this, the Department of Seminaries recommended that,

1. that a committee be appointed to plan the setting up of a Catholic Academic Institute, thus fulfilling Resolution 11/1973

2. That the findings of the two committees of Enquiry into Priestly training be used as a basis, to be supplemented by further investigation consultation, including seminary staffs and students, priests and laity.

The Department also requested the approval of the board for the appointment of Fr. John Sebidi as rector of St. Peter's Seminary. We will deal with this more fully in the next chapter.

Whilst the Catholics were trying to get one seminary around 1974, the government had expropriated the Federal Seminary (FEDSEM), which was a unity of the English speaking seminaries. The Black Renaissance Convention met in the middle of December 1974, it "expressed shock and dismay over the expropriation of the Federal Seminary in Alice and called for the entire Black community to fight for the continued survival of this institution."²³⁸ Here we

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.3.

²³⁸ Mbanjwa, *Black Review* 1974/75, p.134.

see Black Consciousness trying to exert pressure in order to protect black institutions. Black Consciousness was also brought to the grassroots by the Black Renaissance Convention as Mkhathshwa observed

Most of our people will agree that, thanks to SASO efforts, Black Consciousness has come to stay in South Africa. [At first it] only reached the educated and sophisticated... Through its projects it is now gradually moving towards the grassroots..."²³⁹

In the Catholic Church, other contested areas included the South African council of Priests (SACOP). In 1974 SPOBA questioned the composition of the Priests' Council, the Black priests wanted more representation in the white dominated council. The executive of the council consisted of 4 whites and one black from Lesotho. SPOBA demanded an 80% increase in representation as this would reflect the proportion of blacks amongst the Catholics in South Africa. But the council countered this argument and said that the council was composed of priests and not the laity.

SPOBA had planned a walkout which was going to be followed by a black caucus. This situation was averted when they agreed to increase the number on the executive to four.²⁴⁰

This goes to show the extent to which the black clergy were becoming aware and conscious of the situation.

Around the same time Bishop Peter Butelezi also came out strongly in support of Black Consciousness. He saw it as movement which was quite compatible with Christianity as he says,

²³⁹ *Ibid.*; See also Thoalhane Thoahlane (ed.), *Black Renaissance: Papers from the Black Renaissance Convention, December 1974*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1975).

²⁴⁰ Mbanjwa, *Black Review*, 1974/5, p.135.

Jesus died for opposing an exclusive law in which his people did not want others to have the same advantages that they had. If Black Consciousness was to be exclusive and deny the humanity of the white man, or if it taught hatred, then it would be wrong. But if it defends all humanity in defending the most misused of humanity, intends to allow everyone his rights, and only works in separation to re-establish those who have been most disinherited, then it may be doing a service to God and all men²⁴¹.

This statement by Bishop Butelezi was published by *Drum Magazine*²⁴² and was also published in a pamphlet with the following title; *Statement on Black Consciousness and Human Rights*, with other articles entitled, *A call to workers and employers*, *The Y.C.W.*, and *Questions we are asking*, with four signatories.

We are interested in the latter document - *Questions we are asking*. There were four signatories: J. Nkosi, L. Mokoena, P. Lephaka and S. Mkhathshwa. In this article they were addressing issues which were affecting the consciousness of people as they say, "In South Africa Black people can be roughly classed into three categories: a significant number of simple and resigned people; a large number of socially conscious men and women; and a growing figure of highly educated, articulate and socially aware who are now thinking independently. It is especially the latter section that realises the disturbing gap between the church's doctrine about social justice on one hand, and much in its internal structure on the other"²⁴³. The article goes on to state some irregularities that are practised in the church. But finally, concludes by saying that

²⁴¹ Butelezi, P , *Black Consciousness and Human Rights* (Pretoria: SACBC, 1974), p.2.; See also Mbanjwa, *Black Review* 1974/75, p.136.

²⁴² see *Drum* 22.4.74.

²⁴³ Butelezi, P.J, *Statement on Black consciousness and Human Rights; Y.C.W., A call to workers and employers and Four Signatories., Questions we are asking* (Pretoria: SACBC, 1974). p.7.

if the church wants to retain the loyalty of blacks "she must welcome and inspire the phenomenon of Black Consciousness."²⁴⁴ One of the signatories is one of the authors of the Black Priest Manifesto, this goes to show the great impact of Black Consciousness, and it also shows that Mkhathshwa was greatly influenced by Black Consciousness and deeply engrossed in it. He also organised the last Black theology seminar in 1975²⁴⁵.

Archbishop Butelezi summarises this period, "it was the atmosphere...you had to face the challenges"²⁴⁶.

The other churches were also feeling the force of this new movement.

5.7 Black Consciousness in other Churches

The expression of Black Consciousness in the Catholic Church were followed by similar outbursts " by Black Anglicans in the Provincial Synod.... About the same time, 100 black ministers of the Nederduiste Gereformeerde Kerk in Africa also 'revolted' openly against apartheid."²⁴⁷

We also see that from 1973 onwards the SACC was saying that "these events show a definite trend in thinking of black churchmen in South Africa. That Black Catholic priests, generally regarded as 'conformists' and black ministers of the NGKA who have been called 'stooges' took a lead in the 'revolts' suggests a growing degree of discontent amongst black Christians"²⁴⁸. Consequently, the black

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ Mosala (ed), *The Unquestionable Right to be Free: Essays in Black theology*, p.12.

²⁴⁶ Archbishop Peter Butelezi, same interview.

²⁴⁷ Mbanjwa, *1974/75 Black Review*, p.135.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

clergy are set against the common course of white domination. At another conference of the Black minister's of NGKA decided that they would "no longer go on with their sister church but affiliate to the SACC. This was seen by observers as a logical development of their earlier rejection of apartheid."²⁴⁹

The Black Methodists were also trying to get rid of the ecclesiastical injustice which was occurring in the church. The church was controlled by whites. The Reverend Ernest Baartman, was ordained in 1966, was greatly influenced by Black Consciousness. In May 1975 he called a convention of Black Methodist ministers in Bloemfontein. The aim of the convention was to examine the contribution of role of black people in the leadership positions in the church. This lead to the formation of the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC). The chairman of the organisation was Baartman and Reverend Mgojo was secretary.²⁵⁰ At this time, some churches were reacting strongly against apartheid but others did not voice out their opinion against the system. They were still caught in and following the status quo.

5.8 Conclusions

Clearly, in this period 1966 - 1975 Black Consciousness had taken root in society, within the churches and especially amongst the Black clergy and the seminarians. This was seen through things like the Manifesto, the Memorandum, black demonstrations, Black Theology and many other incidents which have been indicated above.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ Balia, *Black Methodist and White Supremacy in South Africa*, p.88.

The Black Consciousness Movement had a huge following, this helped the clergy to have an immense impact in their churches. Some of the black clergy were not very militant, they backed the black activists and their movements. Only a few would go all the way in believing in the status quo as essentially proclaiming the truth.

CHAPTER SIX

The First Black Rector and the Effects of Black Consciousness 1975 - 1978

Black consciousness achieved its peak at the seminary with the appointment of Fr. Lebemang John Sebidi, the first black rector. He was born in Potchefstroom in 1939²⁵¹ and was a member of the Secular Institute of Christ the Priest. He was ordained in June 1968. He did his Philosophy at St. Peter's in Hammanskraal and Theology at St. Augustine's in Roma. He taught at St. Pius X Minor Seminary, at Franklin in the Transkei. In early 1972 he went to Rome to study Moral Theology at the Alphonsianum, an Institute run by the Redemptorists and attached to the Lateran University in Rome. He got an Masters degree and was proceeding to do his Doctorate, when he was recalled in 1975 by Bishop Naidoo the chairman of the Seminary Commission, to be the first black Rector of St. Peter's on December 1st.²⁵² Fr. Dominic Scholten was Rector until April the 30th 1975, when Fr. Donald Johnson was appointed as rector of St. Peter's. Scholten was appointed as Secretary General of the SACBC. Johnson's term did not last long because in December Sebidi was appointed. When he went to St. Peter's he found that the students were aware of the political situation, "I think the students in general were affected by the BCM. But whether the BC manifested itself in practical programmes or

²⁵¹ See Hope, M & Young, J, *The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1981), p.164.

²⁵² Sebidi, interview conducted in Braamfontein, Johannesburg on the 7th December 1995.

activities I would not be sure. I think it is thanks to people like myself, Tlhagale, Monyai²⁵³ who somehow, almost unconsciously because of our anger found ourselves pulling the seminary into this kind of involvement with Black Consciousness and Black Theology."²⁵⁴

He served his term from 1975 to 1977 when the seminary was suddenly closed²⁵⁵. From 1978 he was a course writer at TEEC then after that decided to leave priesthood and got married in 1979. The interesting puzzle was, why did they choose him when they could have chosen other local priests?

There were probably other people who could have taken up this post as Rector of St. Peter's. For instance, one of the BPM signatories could have been appointed. But the bishops did not do it. Why? This might be explained in the way Sebidi puts it

To be honest I think I always give an impression of somebody who is very soft, curbs easily, can be manipulated by liberals and soft and very careful. I think that was the main reason why they picked on me. Because that is the impression I give to people as somebody who is not going to cause problems, a very reasonable man and he listens, that is why liberals sought my aid.²⁵⁶

²⁵³ Buti Tlhagale was one of the new lecturers appointed at the seminary. He started teaching black theology. He is now the Secretary General of the Catholics bishops. Monyai was also recruited by the new rector he lectures at Fort Hare in Black theology. He went to the ecumenical Institute in Dublin, Cf interview with Buthelezi.

²⁵⁴ Sebidi, same interview.

²⁵⁵ Hope M. and Young J., *The South African Churches in a Revolutionary situation.*

²⁵⁶ Sebidi, same interview.

The liberals thought that they could manipulate him. On the other hand, Tlhagale says that, the appointment "was a very sensitive issue... you had a sensitivity within the church itself, that had been shown through protest.... The bishops became very sensitive about that. But at the same time there was this protest in society generally, so both fed on each other."²⁵⁷

One aspect of the protest was that SPOBA at this time had been pushing for a black rector²⁵⁸. But Sebidi had great doubt at whether SPOBA had anything to do with his appointment because he studied at St. Augustines' and was not well known in the SPOBA circles. They did not know him and what he stood for.²⁵⁹ As Archbishop Butelezi says "...Sebidi had not worked in the context of peers in a seminary. When he left St. Pius Minor Seminary he was working with lay teachers. Now he comes to the seminary where he comes as a new man with a staff of qualified professors. So the context is different."²⁶⁰

Sebidi's reception at the seminary from both the lecturers and students was not terribly enthusiastic as he says,

"the students did not quite know me.... I should be

²⁵⁷ Fr. Buti Tlhagale currently Secretary General of the Bishops' Conference, interview conducted at Khanya house in Pretoria on the 8th of December 1995.

²⁵⁸ See *The Southern Cross*, (2nd November 1975), "Black Rector For St. Peter's": It mentions that, "the Rectorship of St. Peter has been contentious issue since 1971, when priests of SPOBA openly criticised the bishops for not appointing a black Rector for the Seminary." their argument said that although the Catholic Church is predominately black all key position were filled by whites.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ Archbishop Peter Butelezi, same interview.

fair it was not anti- as well. They were still going to study who I was. The white liberals were very suspicious about the whole affair but pretending to be really happy"²⁶¹.

Sebidi was later to be drawn into the process of amalgamation, with commissions which had started as early as 1972. Thus, bearing in mind that a Catholic Institute was about to be implemented the Plenary session of 1976 agreed to

- * setting up of the institute racially integrated both in the academic and residential spheres.
- * resolved that first steps be taken in testing the venture by
 - a) having students from the two seminaries to share some classes
 - b) that the two seminary committees live together in 1976 in one seminary community
 - c) that in 1977 both staff and students live together in one seminary in preparation for the realisation of the proposed institute
- * A director to be appointed as soon as possible
- * Archbishop George Daniel of Pretoria was elected as director²⁶².

"Everything was set for the amalgamation and it was left to the administrative Board to see to the implementation of the plan"²⁶³

A special meeting on April the 8th 1976 was called of Rectors of the Seminaries with the Director of the Catholic Institute and the chairman of the Commission in Pretoria at Archbishop Daniel's house, to initiate the implementation of the resolutions of the

²⁶¹ Sebidi, same interview.

²⁶² *Background to the closing of St Peter's Seminary in December 1977, (BTPA, Pretoria), p.4.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

Plenary Session on amalgamation. From the 3rd to the 5th May at the Board meeting, these recommendations were discussed. The two Rectors were invited and were in complete agreement with the resolutions finally passed by the board; that the seminary be at St. Peter's; the Bishops to be responsible for staffing; contracts with staff members to be re-negotiated; that both staffs resign by the end of 1976 and that both students bodies re-apply with the exception of deacons.

Bishop Naidoo was appointed as Chancellor, Sebidi as Rector with Doyle (who was the Rector at St. John Vianney) as Vice Rector and Administrator. A committee was to be set up to draw a constitution to indicate, *inter alia*, functions of various office bearers to be submitted to the August Board meeting and then to the Plenary Session of the Conference, this committee consisted of Bishops Naidoo, Murphy, Archbishops Daniel and Hurley and then two rectors; they were going to have power to co-opt. The two seminaries were going to function as they were until the end of the year.

At the meeting it was then decided to notice all the parties involved by telegram.

"On May 6th, the day after the board meeting, Bishop Naidoo informed the staffs and students of both seminaries of the Board's decision which was apparently welcomed with great joy and enthusiasm, especially by the staff and students of St. Peter's, Hammanskraal. The Bishop were, therefore, quite unprepared for the bombshell which exploded at the end of May, shattering all their plan for amalgamation"²⁶⁴

This came in a form of a boycott over food at St. Peter's and led to the closure of the seminary.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.6.

6.1 The Second Closure of St. Peter's

On the 28th May 1976, there was a students boycott over food in the absence of the Rector. In the *Southern Cross* an article read "Lectures at St. Peter's Suspended" following unrest, the 34 students went on strike because of food complaints and boycotted lectures. This came at a time when arrangements for amalgamation with St. John Vianney were advanced. The report went on to say that Black opinion on the move to amalgamate the two seminaries had been mostly been negative.

Some members of SPOBA which is a Fraternal organisation of Black priests have pointed out that the scanty representation of Black staff members (there were only two at St. Peter's) would give the new seminary a white look.²⁶⁵ Hence they were against the whole process because for them it was not time yet. The problems which were manifested on the 28th May had wider causes, for instance, an internal one could be seen at St. Peter's with the appointment of a Black Rector - Fr. John Sebidi! The political arena at the same time also had an influence on the seminary.

6.2 Soweto and its Sequel²⁶⁶

The South African government led by B.J. Vorster continued to pursue the grand plan of apartheid. People were still being taken back to the homelands. Every black South African was supposed to be a member of a homeland. Insofar as Bantu education was concerned

²⁶⁵ *Southern Cross* (27th June 1976).

²⁶⁶ Section based on Davenport, *South African: A Modern History*, p.389-394, and Pampallis, *Foundations of a new South Africa*, p.246-263.

in 1974 a decision was taken to have two languages as mediums of instruction Afrikaans and English, instead of English. This was unacceptable to a great number of pupils and parents. Any applications for exception were rejected.

Soon the situation in Soweto became tense. The South African Student Movement (SASM) was based in Soweto. SASM was a branch of SASO which dealt with issues at a high school level. SASO was mainly concerned with tertiary institution of learning. SASM was already addressing issues of overcrowding in schools. Direct confrontations with principals of certain schools led to SASM's call for a boycott. Demonstrations for June 16 were planned and an action committee was formed by the Soweto SRC.

On June 16th about 6,000 students marched from Naledi School. When they reached Vilakazi street they confronted the police. Hector Petersen was the first to be killed after the police panicked. Petersen, and two others killed were seen as martyrs of the new era. Unrest and destruction spread to the other Townships. Amidst other reasons like oppression, language issue and homeland system, Black Consciousness was the backbone of this uprising. On the 19th of October 1977 the Minister of Justice, J.T. Kruger, "banned all movements associated with Black Consciousness, to whom blame for the events was ascribed".²⁶⁷ This included organisations like SASO, BPC, SASM, the Soweto SRC and BCP. Black Consciousness was heavily blamed by the government as Davenport puts it tersely

The range of banning was itself an indication of the extent to which black self-awareness had proliferated since the banning of the ANC and the PAC in 1960²⁶⁸.

²⁶⁷ Davenport, *South Africa A Modern History*, p.392.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Reiterating on the same point the Cillie commission after investigating the incident, said that language was the major factor but also other grievances. The Commission headed by Judge Cille covered the violence of June 1976 upto February 1977.

With the Soweto uprising the churches had to re-define their role in society. One of way of doing this was through the Permanent Black Priest Solidarity Group (PBPSG), which started as a Roman Catholic Church (RCC) caucus but rapidly spread in Soweto to include other churches.²⁶⁹

6.3 The Permanent Black Priest Solidarity Group

When Sebidi became rector in November 1975, he did not encounter many problems. But in 1976 he got involved in Black Consciousness and Black Theology. This meant that he was constantly out of the seminary,

"1976 becomes a major upheaval and I immediately got embroiled in the meetings and I think because of that I gave the white lecturers a stick to hit me with, that (I) was hardly around, ... busy organising political meetings and neglecting my duties at the Seminary. I think that was the main thing, ... they were communicating with my employers - the SACBC".²⁷⁰

The staff took a serious view of this. The Rector on this particular occasion had been away for about a week. Interestingly, Sebidi did not have major problems with the students but the staff were perturbed by the fact that students whom they felt should be

²⁶⁹ See Lenkoe, same interview.

²⁷⁰ Sebidi, same Interview.

suspended were not²⁷¹. The incident according to him transpired as follows:

...One or two students were caught jumping the fence to go outside which was illegal.... So [they] were caught ...the white lecturers decided that these students must go, if they don't go we don't lecture that was the main thing. I refused to chase the students away. The lecturers went on strike. I think this is when the bishops came in. They sent a delegation to come and break the deadlock. They met me and Monyai. *This is when I wrote a memorandum as a response to what the lecturers were saying, doing and wanted me to do. That is where I wrote that I would rather lose the lecturers and keep the students.* At that point the bishops began to see my point and I finally lost the lecturers and I got new people to come in; Albert Nolan, Buti Tlhagale, Finbar Synnot²⁷² .

A committee of six bishops wanted to placate the strained situation between the Rector and the white Staff on the 15th and 16th of June. This did not achieve anything as the Rector was already pointing out potential black lecturers. When the "meeting broke up on the afternoon of June 16 we heard of the shootings in Soweto. All the issues and disagreements about St. Peter's were drawn into the rage and antagonism that then swept the country, so that the Seminary's happenings could not be dealt with on their own merits or demerits. Some of the anger people wanted to direct at the government was let out against the bishops and staff. A similar conflict occurred at St. Paul's a month or so later, with the minor Seminararians driving the staff, the De La Salle brothers,

²⁷¹ "I was told by Black priests that Remy Hoekman led the staff boycott. He had some mixed feelings about Africans after bad experiences in Congo (Zaire) during Liberation there as I found when he visited Swaziland (1976)" (SADA, Springs).

²⁷² Nolan and Synnott were a very progressive Dominicans. So was Tlhagale who was an Oblate.

into their rooms and beating on the doors."²⁷³

When the lectures at the seminary were suspended, food was used as an excuse. There were other problems between the white lecturers and the rector. Also, some SPOBA members realised that the rector was fighting a great battle so they decided to come in and help. As Sebidi recalls

The "food issue" was used to suspend lectures and close the Seminary and an inquiry was made and this

"...was the spark which started the PBPSG (Permanent Black Priest Solidarity Group), because the black priests realised that I was alone and I had huge pressure on me"²⁷⁴.

And SPOBA which was started on the 6th of July 1966 was changed (except in Natal) into the PBPSG in 1976 with a strong BC flow from 1970 onwards.²⁷⁵

The PBPSG became a pressure group within the churches in South Africa, but it did not have great support from the priests just like SPOBA. Other people who were involved in the PBPSG were Anglicans like Fr. Geoff Moselane, Fr. Drake Tsankeng. As Lenkoe an Anglican Priest in Soweto says

you had RCC and PCSA who were prominent in the PBPSG. This was a way in which the churches were saying we are not immune from what is happening in society. There was a lot of pain in 1976.... The church had to say we are part of that. We cannot just be content with burying people without sharing their pain, and stories and their lives. The whole thing was that the churches were saying

²⁷³ Bernard Connor on St. Peter's Seminary, 24th September 1993 (SADA, Springs).

²⁷⁴ Sebidi, same interview.

²⁷⁵ Mokoka, *Black Experience in Black Theology*, p.54.

- we are pledging our solidarity to the people"²⁷⁶

The PBPSG first started as a RCC Black caucus group in Soweto, but this did not last long because other churches felt that PBPSG was expressing what they felt they should be doing i.e. to be in solidarity with the people. In the end many churches were involved.

But "we were a small group very powerful, pressurising the church that most of the improvements you see today were brought about by the PBPSG. I think we were really feared for two reasons;

Firstly, the Black Consciousness people supported us, so although we did not have the majority of the black priests behind us we had the BC behind us, which was a big movement, we were theologically leaders of BC.

Secondly, we occupied the high moral ground because the concerns we expressed were in agreement with the gospels"²⁷⁷. It was a small group basically because some priests were afraid to join them, indoctrinated into obedience by the training received.

The PBPSG was also formed in response to the external factors on politics generally explain what was happening at this time. Many people were banned and there was a feeling of anger towards the white people, this is seen in the incidents which happened on and after June 16th.

Returning to the crisis at the seminary, the rector did not want to dismiss the student. On the 23rd of June a smaller meeting held at the seminary the Rector was supported by two members of

²⁷⁶ Peter Lenkoe, same interview.

²⁷⁷. Sebidi, same interview.

PBPSG. The Rector after the meeting did not want to dismiss the black students. Here, Monyai²⁷⁸ was present and according to Bernard Connor he was the *agent provocateur*, this was affirmed by the Rector when he says that during this meeting Bishop Naidoo called him aside and said,

"Why don't you let this guy (Monyai) go, and not to come to the meeting because this guy seems to have so much influence on you" So I (Sebidi) said, "I can't let him go he is witnessing the meeting"

I think that confirms what Connor said about an *agent provocateur*. The bishops and some staff members thought that Monyai was pushing the rector to be revolutionary. They thought that without Monyai, the situation could have been peaceful.

On the 9th July 1976, the Administrative Board of SACBC and the Seminary Commission met in Bloemfontein and afterwards released a press statement which said that; because of staff problems which included some resignations it was not going to be possible to re-open the seminary in August; the amalgamation process of 1977 was to be halted; suggestions were to be made on what was to be done with seminarians in the meantime; and that a consultation be made with relevant bodies including seminary commission, priest's council, black priests and laity and that after these consultations that the seminary was to explore ways of finding staff as soon as possible.

²⁷⁸

According to Magrath, Sebidi and Monyai were both sons of Catechists of Fr. Nicholas Humphreys O.P. from Potchefstroom, and members of Fr. Blais' institute of Christ the Priest. After ordination they were both living in exemplary poverty at Makapanstad, a Tswana chiefdom north of the Seminary.... Sebidi is still an "activist" and referred to as a Catholic priest though married. Both Archbishop Hurley and Bishop Verstraete of Klerksdorp tried to get him settled. Monyai is teaching at Gaborone University. (Magrath private archive).

But the PBPSG responded aggressively to this press release;

On July 20th, 1976, the permanent Black Priests' Solidarity Group addressed a letter to the Bishops and the Seminary Commission expressing their shock and their rejection of the decision of the meeting of July 9th, and informing them that the PBPSG was calling a meeting in Regina Mundi on August 8th to discuss all the problems of the church and particularly the problems of the only black Seminary for training Catholic priests in South Africa²⁷⁹

The meeting did take place as planned and a memorandum called "Black People's Memorandum" (dated 8th August 1976) was drawn up. Twelve members were elected as a delegation to represent the Black people at the consultation which was to be held on the 23rd and 24th August at Hammanskraal. Before this, on the 18th August the PBPSG met again and insisted that at the meeting on the 23rd, a Black Parents' Delegation had to meet the bishops and they also threatened to publish everything in the press if the issues were not going to be solved. The Commission for Seminaries, Priests, and Religious prepared themselves for this consultation. Nine elected members were requested by the bishops to meet them.

On the 23rd August, "a large group of Black priests assembled at Hammanskraal and decided that all should attend the consultation, not just the 9 elected members requested by the Bishops. The delegation of Black lay people should also be allowed to attend the whole consultation."²⁸⁰ But only four lay people managed to attend as the other members did not manage to leave Soweto, because there was a bus boycott.²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ *Background to the Closing of St. Peter's Seminary in Hammanskraal 1977* (BTPA, Pretoria), p.7.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ Archbishop Peter Butelezi, same interview.

The laity also formed part of the pressure as Sebidi says they were "part of us when we went to talk to bishops, they would be involved in some demonstrations; pressure groups were formed as support groups of PBPSG.... The whites were angry, some people were called me a communist, even my grandmother...because this is what the parish priest said."²⁸²

Those who managed to attend presented the Black People's Memorandum at Hammanskraal and "insisted on 4 points:

1. That St. Peter's seminary re-open in August
2. That Father Sebidi be maintained as rector
3. That Black priests be released at once to staff the seminary
4. That only the rector had the right to dismiss students"²⁸³

Initially, the black priests began this process aggressively, but later "developed into a friendly dialogue when it was realised that communications had broken down, somewhere, and that the bishops had never received the memorandum of the Black priests which they were accused of having consistently ignored."²⁸⁴ Prior to this meeting, the PBPSG had been sending unsigned letters to Archbishop Naidoo the chairman of the seminary Commission. Since these letter were not signed the archbishop did not show or discuss them with anybody²⁸⁵.

After all these efforts the Press release of August 27th issued after the board meeting said that St. Peter's was to remain temporarily closed. We should note that at this meeting the following groups were consulted

²⁸² Sebidi, same interview.

²⁸³ *Background to the closing of St. Peter's Seminary in 1977.* (BTPA, Pretoria).

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ Archbishop Peter Butelezi, same interview.

- * Additional Bishops,
- * Members of the South African Council of Priests (SACOP),
- * Council of Catholic Laity,
- * A delegation from a group of priests calling themselves PBPSG,
- * And delegates from a meeting of black Christians held at Regina Mundi, on 8th August 1976.

The last two groups' memorandums were considered in "the present tragic situation of racial tension and forceful expression of legitimate Black grievances and aspirations"²⁸⁶. This goes to illustrate that the bishops were beginning to take seriously the black priests and the laity. With all this clutter going on the process of amalgamation was further thwarted.

The bishop's board came up with the following decisions

- 1) Amalgamation to be postponed
- 2) Problem with getting suitable staff ruled out the re-opening
- 3) that Bishop M. Biyase of Eshowe be the Chancellor
- 4) That the chancellor and staff were to look for staff
- 5) To get a good spiritual director
- 6) steps to be taken so that Blacks are trained as staff²⁸⁷.

Sebidi was asked to read these statements. It was also suggested that he spend time at St. Augustine's Seminary in Roma to gain some experience. Since he did not have much experience it could be plausible that the turmoil could have resulted from his inexperience and possibly incompetency. Or, that Black Consciousness and really taken root at the seminary. I would be inclined to side with the latter reasons, mainly because the

²⁸⁶ *Background to the closing of St. Peter's Seminary in Hammanskraal in 1977, (BTPA, Pretoria).*

²⁸⁷ *Southern Cross (5th September 1976).*

bishops could not face the new challenges which they encountered. They were trying by all means to find other unrelated reasons to shift the focus which was - Black Consciousness.

6.4 Summary

The closing of the Seminary in 1976 can be looked at on several levels. On a general level three issues come to be inextricably tied together. Firstly, we have the problems of post-Vatican II, where people were not certain about priesthood, celibacy, prayer, mass attendance. A new era had dawned and people were not sure as to how to react. The period was bringing a crisis which could be seen in the turmoil which was occurred at St. Peter's.

Secondly, the normal issues of young people growing up, discipline and authority. This had been a recurring problem as we saw earlier on, when the Monsignor Peter Butelezi in 1971 came from Umzimkulu to help sort out some problems.

Thirdly, the apartheid era, as the seminarians were all black and the staff were nearly all white. This was the time of Black Consciousness.²⁸⁸ The students had become aware of the situation, they saw that there was need for improvements, for instance, more black lecturers. Black Consciousness said that the African should develop by himself and not with the white colleagues because they were surely enforcing the paradigm of being superior to the Blacks. If the Seminaries were to be combined in 1977, how were the African seminarians going to fare with the whites? This was going to be a predicament, taking into consideration the BC background. Hence, due to the influence of Black Consciousness, the

²⁸⁸

See Bernard Connor on St. Peter's, 24th September 1993 (SADA, Springs).

Black seminarians wanted to develop on their own before they could be brought together with whites. If one looked at the Staff membership it was going to reflect a white staff with a few sprinkling of black staff members.

However, St. Peter's was to reopen still, as a black seminary. this was not going to last a long time.

6.5 St. Peter's Closes indefinitely

An extraordinary Plenary session from 28th -30th September 1976 approved the recommendation of the August meeting. The constitution and statutes of St. Peter's were amended.

New members of staff were appointed. The full time lecturers were, Fr.J. Sebidi SCP; Fr.E. Mailula OMI; Fr. A. Nxumalo OMI; Fr. B. Tlahgale OMI; part time staff members included; Fr. P. Kolisang; Fr.A. Nolan OP; Fr. F. Synnott OP; Fr. S Whyte; OFM and Fr. N. Carroll, OFM.

On the 6th of February 1977, St. Peter's had opened with full staff and approximately twenty students. Fr. Nxumalo was Vice Rector and Fr. Mailula Bursar and administrator of St Peter's. Seven black priests were proposed to study overseas.

Sebidi reorganised the teaching system by bringing in more black lecturers. For instance, he asked Fr. Tlhagale to give a course on BT.²⁸⁹. According to Tlhagale the students were already "aware" but the course was introduced because at that time "there was quite a stir in the air. Either BT or African Philosophy or African Theology was welcomed because there was a desire to learn about our own situation and about our own condition. It did not inform the students about anything new experientially but it formalised

their knowledge and began to present things in new conceptual form which they had not had before. They began to reflect on their experience, something they had not done before. In other words as opposed to classical theology they began to look at a different theological concepts to articulate their own theological experience"²⁹⁰.

In the same month the bishops issued a statement in favour of BC. At their plenary in February 1977, the Bishops came out in favour of collaboration with the Black consciousness movement ; inspired by Steve Biko, the young black leader who died later that year in police detention.

As the year progressed, however, the situation at the seminary was perceived in various forms. For instance, the bishops thought that the seminary was being highly politicised as portrayed in the following incident.

On the 19th October of 1977, Sebidi and Buti organised a march to John Vorster square, with other priests. They were protesting against the detention and banning of Black Consciousness leaders and Organisations. The Bishops did not like this state of affairs. The priests got arrested and were bailed out. They went for trial and were consequently fined R60 for marching illegally. This hit the last nail in the coffin for the bishops as Sebidi says

.... I think this was the last straw for the Bishops, there I was leading a march against the government..... they felt that this was not good for their students. This was the only way, you see the SACBC would turn away from closing the seminary directly because they would be afraid of the BC backlash....So what they did was for each individual bishop to withdraw his students. For instance, the bishop of Pieterburg, he was very angry with me . He withdrew his students and sent them to St.

²⁹⁰ Tlhagale, same interview.

John Vianney or to Lesotho.²⁹¹

He also alleged that the bishops were saying that St. Peter's had become a "revolutionary centre". For the Bishops, the students were not taught proper theology, but radical black theology! Evidently, the bishops reacted in various ways, the explicit one was when they started sending students away and St. Peter's ended up having no students. In the end the bishops told the Rector that we have no students, we do not really want to close the Seminary but we will be running at a financial loss. "it was a calculated move to close the Seminary. That is why I had to leave by default, because I had no students I could not continue to be Rector of St. Peter's"²⁹². For Tlhagale, the closing of the seminary was just an excuse. "It is one of those situation where there are complaints that are being made and then you have an excuse which appears to be legitimate for closing down the Seminary saying there are very few students so we close down the Seminary".²⁹³

"At a meeting of the Administrative Board held from the 1st - 3rd November 1977 the chairman of the commission for seminaries, priests and religious reported that very recently he learned from two reliable sources that things were not going well at St. Peter's. The bishops decided to have an investigation made and asked that a report be made to a special Board Meeting on December 13th and 14th"²⁹⁴. There were many things which were happening before the Seminary was closed. I will examine some of the causes which lead to the closing of St. Peter's.

²⁹¹ Sebidi, same interview.

²⁹² Sebidi, Same interview.

²⁹³ Tlhagale, same interview.

²⁹⁴ *Background to the closing of St. Peter's Seminary in Hammanskraal in 1977*, (BTPA, Pretoria).

For instance, as I said earlier Fr. Buti Thlagale was brought in to be part of the full time staff. He was teaching Black Theology; this became part of the curriculum at St. Peter's. Here, BT And BC were dealt with, the bishop considered this to be part of politicising the students. As Thlagale says there were complaints that "students were being politicised.... not being taught proper theology,...complaints in terms of absenteeism, or lack of responsibility in teaching including more time spent in protest and political issues outside the seminary. There were complaints outside the Seminary"²⁹⁵

For Albert Nolan, who was a part-time lecturer, the closing of the seminary was not simply a black and white issue, "many Bishops (including Black Bishops) and especially the Major superior of a Secular Institute for priests had refused to send their candidates to the Seminary on the grounds that we (the staff) were teaching politics instead of Theology and making the seminarians into politicians instead of pious apolitical priests. Most members of the staff maintained that they were simply teaching a Theology which was relevant to our situation"²⁹⁶

And then there was the eventual "deadlock" since some members of staff were politically involved as we saw in the march to John Vorster Square. This worried the Bishops. On the 21st December 1977, Scholten, the Secretary General of the SACBC, released²⁹⁷ a

²⁹⁵ Thlagale, same Interview.

²⁹⁶ Letter from Albert Nolan O.P. Vicar General to Martin Vijieurberg O.P Dutch Provincial, (3rd February, 1978) [SADA, Springs).

²⁹⁷ Dominic Scholten was Sebidi predecessor according to Sebidi he was very anti- whatever he was doing. But he was a good administrator and he controlled the bishops because he knew how to make money. "So that is why they relied on him and listened to him. He was very strong and powerful. He was not our friend.

press statement saying that the seminary was to be closed indefinitely."²⁹⁸ It read as follows

The Administrative Board of the Southern African Catholic bishops conference expresses gratitude and appreciation to the rector of St. Peter's Seminary for his devoted services during 1977. At the same time, the Board is compelled to take note, with regret, of the fact that seminarians enrolment is likely to be so low in the immediate future that it no longer appears justifiable to keep the Seminary in operation.²⁹⁹

The tension was between the bishops (most of whom were white) and the Black African priests who supported the philosophy of Black Consciousness. Despite the fact that the Bishops Conference had taken a lead on racial issues, they were calling for majority rule in a country in which the blacks are the majority. This is seen by statements passed by them in 1948 (Bishop Hennemann of Cape Town), 1952 Bishop Hurley, 1957 the SACBC, and some later pastoral letters in 1972 and 1977.³⁰⁰

The African catholic clergy, gathered within the Black Priest Solidarity Group, accused the bishops of having gone back on these declarations. They said that the closing of St. Peter's seminary was a political decision because of its pro-Black Consciousness tendencies"³⁰¹

We see a typical contradiction of words and actions to a certain extent. The bishops were writing against apartheid but at the same time going against their proclamation when it came to practice.

Somehow he contributed to the closing of the seminary." (*Ibid*)

²⁹⁸ *Background to the closing of the St. Peter's Seminary at Hamanskraal in 1977.* (BTPA, Pretoria).

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

³⁰⁰ See De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, pp.97-100.

³⁰¹ *The Oblate World* (April 1978).

This has been a great problem with churches. This dilemma has surfaced even in other churches, for instance the Anglican Church. At St. Joseph's theological Institute, Black Consciousness was beginning to take effect. This is seen in the formation of a group called Black Dimension. Being "Black" was the main emphasis of this group. This goes to show that it was not only the seminary at Hammanskraal which was affected but other Catholic seminary were influenced by the philosophy of Black Consciousness.

St. Peter's seminary was not to reopen the following year, events on the political arena were developing rapidly. For the better and also for the worse. With the Soweto uprising, unrest and the passing away of Steve Biko in detention, the Government acted in two ways, firstly it banned and suppressed the BCM and the newspapers which supported them, for instance, Donald Woods of the East London Daily Despatch This was done by Law and Order Minister James Kruger. Hence, it was difficult for the organisations to develop nationally. . Secondly, since the incident had received widespread publicity on TV, some NP politicians were forced to think that it was time to recognise black trade Unions and to scrap Job reservation. This was mainly due to what happened on June 16th. Without these events, the government would probably have stuck to their guns. The 50/50 language requirement was dropped, and a little effort was made to improve the schooling system of blacks.³⁰²

However, the anti-apartheid movement had increased its momentum and confidence at home and abroad. AZAPO (Azanian People's Organisation; formed in 1978), a Teachers Action Committee, the Black Parents Associations were formed. AZAPO though it leaned towards the PAC, was very much based on BC.

Consequently, a new era was coming into force. Outside South Africa

³⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 264-287.

in the US, there was a call for disinvestment (i.e. not putting money in South Africa) and divestment (i.e. getting rid of US firms and assets in South Africa). The Soweto upheaval was a turning point in the history of South Africa.

6.6.Botha' Era

In 1978, Vorster retired, one of the contributing factors was the Soweto uprising. P.W. Botha came to power. He tried to improve relations with African nations, Black Unions were legalised. An attempt was made to give apartheid a "human face" especially in urban industry. The government was not very successful, as was seen in the uprising which came in 1984 onwards.

Since the seminary was closed the people who had been involved had to find new things to do. This imbroglio was faced by the rector.

6.6.1 After the Banning

Sebidi resigned from his post on the 15th of December 1977. He had two alternatives either to go back to his Institute or to go back to the Diocese of Klerksdorp under Bishop Verstraete. But he was not comfortable with either choice as he says "I was confused, I was angry, there were all sorts of things when the Seminary was closed. So I decided to go to my base at Regina Mundi... with my colleagues Buti Tlhagale, Stan Ndebele and other priests.

In 1978 he got a job with Theological Education by Extension College (TEEC) as a course writer in Moral Theology. He 1979 he decided to get married. Sebidi has never believed in being a card

carrying member of any organisation. Because of his neutrality he was able to chair political meetings at Regina Mundi in 1978,79,80. As he says I was the unofficial mediator between AZAPO and UDF. In 1985 I managed to set up a big meeting at Regina Mundi where UDF and AZAPO came to shake hands Archbishop Tutu was there. This was the last big political venture I performed. In 1986 I concentrated on educational matters because I got two degrees from Wits University in education"³⁰³ (a B.Ed and M.Ed).

6.7 Ministers' United for Christian Co-responsibility (MUCCOR)

After Sebidi's marriage, the PBPSG suffered a lot, and it almost died. But already the seeds of ecumenism had been sown, especially on the 24th of October 1977 when the Catholic priests led the march with the other churches to John Vorster Square. They made a long statement ³⁰⁴. The other churches came to recognise that the PBPSG was a pressure group that worked for their interests as well. In the 1980's the PBPSG metaphosised to Ministers' United For Christian Co-responsibility (MUCCOR). Sebidi became the first president and Frank Chikane the vice president.³⁰⁵ MUCCOR

was a shift from the PBPSG to say that the role and responsibility is not only to pledge solidarity with people, but we have a responsibility to other members of society. This was a movement that grew out of the PBPSG, after the burials of 1976. It was saying that priests should not only come together at a time when there is suffering, death and when people are being buried, but

³⁰³ Sebidi, same interview.

³⁰⁴ See De Gruchy, *The Church struggle in South Africa*, p.179-80.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

the priests have an ongoing responsibility within society. Therefore, they got involved in social upliftment projects within the community, so it was a transition from the PBPSG to MUCCOR. Almost a continuum³⁰⁶

Today it is not as influential as it was because times have changed. There is a new South Africa which has changing roles of the different players on the political arena.

The period 1975 - 1978 was a time when Black Consciousness was at its peak. The result of conscientising people was the Soweto revolt of 1976. In the Catholic church the first black rector was appointed by the end of 1975. He was heavily influenced by BC and generally believed that the black people deserved more. The political situation also influenced what happened at the seminary. The church cannot be divorced from its situation, it is supposed to be with the people at all times. The priests formed the solidarity group which was associated with the needs of the people. The climax in this period is the closing of the seminary, the banning of all BCM and personal and also the banning and detaining of some ministers who were considered to be activist whilst they were fulfilling the demands of the gospel.

6.8 Amalgamation of the Two Seminaries in 1981

In March 1981 the seminary re-opened as a multiracial institute. In the sermon of the opening mass the chairman for seminarians for SACBC, Archbishop George Daniel of Pretoria said, "we are all baptised in the one spirit and are all made one". He continued to say that the seminary was re-opened so that, "you may love one another in unity. So that this country maybe united to make it more like the kingdom of God". At the opening there were twenty

³⁰⁶ Lenkoe, same interview

eight students from all over South Africa.³⁰⁷ By the end of the year twenty students managed to finish their first year.³⁰⁸

Mkhatshwa saw this as a natural consequence because the church was preaching unity so in order to practice unity it had to be seen in its structures. There was also the economic reality, it was too expensive to run two seminaries. And also there were "those people who felt that as long as you leave blacks separately you will continue to have problems. If you bring them together with whites you will have a much better way of influencing future directions".³⁰⁹

For Sebidi the unity of the seminary showed that the church had begun to see the needs of the black people.³¹⁰ But Tlhagale saw this re-opening from a different perspective. He said that when the seminary re-opened "everybody was opposed to it. They thought that it was a sell out..... This was because it was the height of Black Consciousness. It was a time when people wanted to be on their own, because there were some kinds of contradiction the black priests were hammering for non-racialism, when that opportunity came it was a forced opportunity, was not a spontaneous removal of racism"³¹¹ It was forced due to the circumstances; it was the only option. At this time the idea was that "black man you are on your own", the blacks were supposed to do their own thing. To amalgamate was going contrary to what the

³⁰⁷ "South Africans Study Together for Priesthood", Cf. *Southern Cross* (8th March 1981).

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, (20th December 1981), "A year to give seminarian their bearing".

³⁰⁹ Mkhatshwa, same interview.

³¹⁰ Sebidi, same interview

³¹¹ Tlhagale, same interview.

Black Consciousness was preaching. This concept is explained further by Magrath who compares it to the early attempts of the 1970s to amalgamate he says that

This was one of the problems, by 1970 they began to criticise the clergy as to why we had two seminaries. Rome was asking the question rather strongly that we cannot have two seminaries on racial terms they must be united. But the fact is at that time, there were more white students than black students. Because of the political disturbances, the black people were not joining up. The fact would have been that if the seminaries had amalgamated in the 1970s the whites would have taken over. So it would have been a white seminary with a few blacks. What the country needed was a black seminary with a few whites"³¹².

We see that there were people who support the idea of having two seminaries. They thought that it was time for that. Also for practical reasons it was going to be very difficult to manage two seminaries. But at the same time we have a contradiction in what the players felt. The BC was advocating that blacks develop on their own, that they become self-assertive before they can come together with the whites. For this reason, the amalgamation was an opting out of the whole Black Consciousness mood and ideology.

³¹²

Magrath, interview in Cedara on the 19th of July 1996.

7.0 Conclusion and Epilogue

We have established that Black Consciousness did have an impact on the South African society. This was seen through the establishment of organisations like SASO, BCP, BPC and BAWU. The Soweto uprising were a watershed in the manifestations of this ideology. This consequently, led to the banning and many leaders including the proponent of Black Consciousness died in Prison. All spheres of life were greatly affected the churches were not an exception! The ministers, seminarians were actively involved in the BCM. This was done through projects and seminars sometimes carried at parish level and at the seminary.³¹³ The Black clergy by constantly raising issues and questions the drew attention of the people to the fact that there was discrimination which needed to be addressed. Tlhagale says that, Black Consciousness and the church raised the awareness of the people and kept the voice of the voiceless heard especially when the leaders were in detention. As he expands

BC contributed to the 1976 protest...(and) the labour movements. The blacks as whole began to affirm and assert themselves and I would say these are some of the contributions that were made. Obviously, not just by the clergy. They were made in conjunction with the secular leadership in the various institutions and movements in terms of bringing about change in this country".³¹⁴

Even though Church caucus groups like SPOBA and PBPSG had no large following they had the support of Black Consciousness Movement. In this way they managed to act as a pressure group. As Sebidi concluded, "we put so much pressure on the church that most of the improvement you see today are because of the PBPSG. We were a

³¹³ Mkhathshwa, same interview.

³¹⁴ Tlhagale, same Interview.

feared group... and occupied a high moral ground"³¹⁵ For Mtetwa Black Consciousness, "will be our conscience as long as the status quo prevails...as an ideology and as a philosophy, for those who have defected from the liberalist camp. And also ...as long as economic emancipation... and racism is looming large"³¹⁶

Hence, it appears inevitable that Black Consciousness, Black Theology, Black Caucuses are going to be with us for a long time to come. They are going to form a platform where grievances pertaining specifically to the black people will be thrashed out. Black people cannot just forget about their history and say that now since we are in a new South African things are well. Things are not well, many issues still need to be addressed. The imbalances which were created by the white people will take more than a century to destroy and reconstruct. It took the whites three centuries! How long is it going to take the blacks to rebuild what was once upon a time their own?

³¹⁵ Sebidi, same interview.

³¹⁶ Mtetwa, same interview.

8.0 Appendix A

1) TIME CHART

years

1965	Mkhatshwa ordained
1965	Seminary National Meeting this month
1966	UCM formed
1966	Mokoka ordained
1966	Seminarians whites and black meet in Roma
1966	1st Petition to the SACBC
1966	Seminary past union formed SPOBA
1968	Petition to the SACBC
1969	SASO breaks From NUSAS
1969	3rd Petition to the SACBC (dismissed as not truly representative of black membership in Church)
1970	The Black Priest Manifesto
197	Organising committee for Priest's council formed
1970	SACOP meet
1970	Students Protest at change of rector
1971	New Rector for S.A Seminary, Fr. D. Scholten
1971	Memorandum on Cardinal McCann's comments
1971	Priest's Council established
1971	Black Demonstrations
1971	Black Theology Seminar at Roodeport
1971	Seminary closes early
1973	Many new students at St.Peter's
1974	Priest Council sets up a Black affairs department.
1975	New Rector for St.Peters, Fr. Johnson S.J.
1975	Black Rector for St.Peter's, Fr. J. Sebidi
1976	Lectures Suspended at St.Peter's
1976	June 16 - Soweto uprisings
1977	St. Peter's Closes indefinitely

1978 Bannings of all BCM
 1981 Amalgamation of the two Seminaries

2) APOSTOLIC DELEGATES TO SOUTH AFRICA

1. His Excellency, the Most Rev. Archbishop Bernard J. Gilswijk O.P., (1922-1944), Died 22nd December 1944.
2. His Excellency, the Most Rev. Martin Lucas SVD (1945-1952), died 3rd March 1969.
3. His Excellency, the Most Rev. Archbishop Celestino Damiano (1952-1960, died 2nd October, 1967.
4. His Excellency, the Most Rev. Joseph F. McGeough (1960-1967) died 5th November, 1970.
5. His Excellency, the most Rev. John Godon DCL (1967-1971) died 30th January 1981.
6. His Excellency, the most Rev. Archbishop Alfredo Poletini (1971-1979), died 23rd April 1980.
7. His Excellency, the most reverend Archbishop I Edward Cassidy DCL (1981-1984) Cardinal 28th June 1991.
8. His Excellency, the Most Rev. Joseph Mees (1985-1987), retired.
9. His Excellency the Most Rev. Ambrose de Paoli DCL 1987 -).

'Our Church has let us down'

A group of African priests, gravely concerned about the role that Africans are allowed to play in the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa, met recently to discuss their grievances. In the belief that all other avenues are closed to them, they decided to publish their views in the manifesto that appears below. Those who signed it are:

The Rev. FATHER P. MANGALISO MKHATSHWA, The Rev. FATHER D. MOETATELE, The Rev. FATHER J. L. LOUWFANT, The Rev. FATHER C. MOKOKA, The Rev. DR. A. MABONA.

"INGANE engakhali ifela embelekweni": A Zulu proverb meaning that when someone fails to voice his grievances in time, he has only himself to blame if this results in a tragedy.

There was a time when most people believed that Africans had infinite patience. Their mental inertia and natural laziness were partly responsible for this.

Be that as it may, we want to state that the African is capable of an agonising "ENOUGH ENOUGH" in spite of our ordination to the priesthood, we have been treated like glorified altar-boys.

We kept quiet even when it was our duty to speak up. We were afraid that our White colleagues would misunderstand our stand. Consequently the bad situation became worse.

After a long, prayerful self-examination we resolved to ventilate our grievances and take the public into our confidence. For one thing, Church politics are hidden from the rank and file; for another, our fellow-men have the right to know the truth about their priests.

We are primarily concerned with the well-being of our Church. How long must we plead for its Africanisation in Southern Africa? No less an authority than the Supreme Pontiff has endorsed this urgent matter. Addressing the African Bishops on his recent visit to Uganda, the Pope said: "You can give the Church the precious and original contribution of negritude which she needs particularly."

At the same time Cardinal Zoungwana reminded his colleagues that before they could realise the Pope's ambition it was imperative to rediscover what he called "the African Soul".

The Black clergy have realised that aping Europe is not the answer to Africa's religious needs. Bishops and priests have expressed the need for Africanisation in Southern Africa.

Unfortunately the whole discussion has been treated as a big joke. African priests feel the frustration most, because the whole affair of indigenisation concerns them as spiritual leaders of their people.

The main objective of every

available. But alas! power corrupts. The Government's policy of restricting free entry of Whites into our townships has much to recommend it.

The Catholics pretend to condemn apartheid. And yet, in practice, they cherish it. The Church practices segregation in her seminaries, convents, hospitals, schools, monasteries, associations and churches long before the present Government legislated against social integration. The bishops, priests and religious are divided on the question of apartheid.

The statement of one late Metropolitan is still fresh in our minds. Bishop C. van Velsen made a public defence of apartheid when he was interviewed by the "Sunday Tribune" in March last year.

We know from reliable sources that a number of bishops and priests are sympathetic towards the policy. Quite rightly, of course, they condemn some aspects of its implementation, particularly those which bring suffering and injustice.

If we understand the philosophers of separate development correctly, they argue that "as long as the Blacks are in our midst, their position will always be precarious and uncertain. Racial frictions will be inevitable. The Whites do not want to mix socially with Black people. They believe in preserving their identity as a White nation. So why encourage, let alone foist, integration on them? It won't work."

Let's be honest. The Whites would never accept a Black or multiracial government. Whites in South Africa are not prepared to serve under Africans in any capacity. Socially, culturally and intellectually, the Whites consider themselves quite different from the Blacks. The obvious conclusion is that most Whites have stepped out of the concept of integration.

Among other things, they feel that one can't break down traditions which are more than three centuries old, by the stroke of the pen.

As Christians we believe in a multiracial society. We feel this is the only way in which real Christianity can be practised. Unfortunately we haven't a free choice. Segregation, apartheid, is imposed on us and living in a materialistic world won't help. So, if we have to have apartheid, we might as

well as change dramatically.

The African wants to rediscover his personality and identity. He wishes to develop all his faculties — mental, physical, aesthetic. We wonder whether he can achieve this in the midst of White people. Competition will always be in their favour.

Don't get us wrong. We are not preaching racialism, because we despise and loathe racists. What we are preaching is REALISM and common sense.

Having set the scene, we want to enumerate a few grievances.

- We deplore as well as condemn the *baaskap* and *missieskap* of the White clergy and religious over their African counterparts. You will destroy our morale, personality and professional efficiency by the raw deal you constantly give us.

- We deplore your perpetuation of the false image of the African priest as a "glorified altar-boy" who happens to share in the White priesthood.

- With tears in our eyes, we

deplore the marooning and exiling of some African priests without any redress. Even in a court of law, the accused is entitled to a fair, unbiased defence.

- We humbly invite our Bishops to know their African parishes better. A fleeting, snap purple appearance on confirmation days leaves much to be desired.

- We respectfully request the Hierarchy to open up new avenues for our priests, such as specialised apostolate, serving on the so-called national commissions, playing a meaningful role in the administration of dioceses and so on.

- We ask the Hierarchy to expedite Africanisation. For instance, why can't Soweto have its own Black Bishops? Why should our townships be dominated by the White clergy and African priests be dumped in the bush, in non-viable parishes?

- We loathe the unwarranted, self appointed surveillance of the White priests over their Black colleagues.

- We deplore the tripe that



some missionaries write about Africans.

We would like to add a few other suggestions.

The Bishops would do well to broaden their outlook on the apostolate of the Church. Individual bishops must be ready to "sacrifice" some of their priests to serve the interests of the Church even outside the diocese.

We suggest that a department of African Affairs be created on a national level. Its main duty would be to look after the interests of the Black Catholics. It ought to be comprised of professionals, both lay and clerical, plus ordinary men with common sense.

We prefer to manage or mismanage ourselves, otherwise we shall for ever remain

Black boys under the rectorship of the White boys. If the Catholic Church has hitherto failed to produce African pastors and rectors, then there must be something radically wrong with their training and apprenticeship. The Government is Africanising its civil institutions. Why must the Church lag behind this progress?

Let our White colleagues cease to pretend to be impeccable angels at our expense.

By the way of conclusion, we would like to reassure readers that we are sincere men who wish to put things right in the Church. Please do not misunderstand us. We have in the past presented to the Hierarchy resolutions that were passed in July, 1968, but to no effect.

If anybody suspects us of

inadvising or defeatism for that matter, then our message has been misunderstood. We would be hypocrites if we pretended to be contented with the status quo, thus colleagues can rest assured that in any eventuality we shall be their best allies.

Should a fruitful dialogue emerge from this meditation to much the better for the Church. We invite you to join us in reciting an act of loyalty: "We, the undersigned, profess and embrace the Catholic teaching in all its entirety. We firmly believe that Christ's Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. We hope to live, work and die as true sons of our beloved Brother and Saviour Christ."

New Nation 7/6/91



FLASHBACK: The founders of the Black Priests' Manifesto (BPM) take a smoke break during the conference that established the organisation in 1970. From left to right, C Mokoka, A Mabona, Fr Smangalisso Mkhathshwa, D Moetapele and J Louwfont.

In a consultation meeting held as part of the BPM's 21st anniversary celebrations at Victory Park in Johannesburg last month, black Catholic priests from all over South Africa gathered to discuss the theme: 'The Black Priests Manifesto Revisited - The New Challenge facing the Catholic Church'. The delegates elected Sister Bernard Ncube, as Interim national coordinator of the organisation.

The founders of the BPM stunned the Catholic hierarchy when they released a public document in 1970 calling for the Africanisation of the Catholic Church. They complained of being treated as "glorified altar boys" and spoke out against "the baasskap and mieslesskap" in the Church.

Last month's meeting was intended to help participants map out the future role of the church in the context of the transition taking place in the country.

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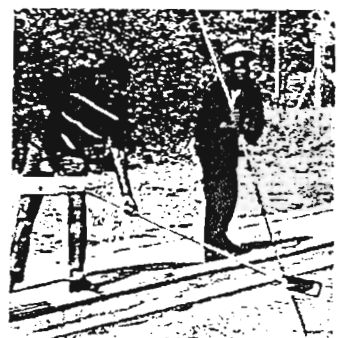
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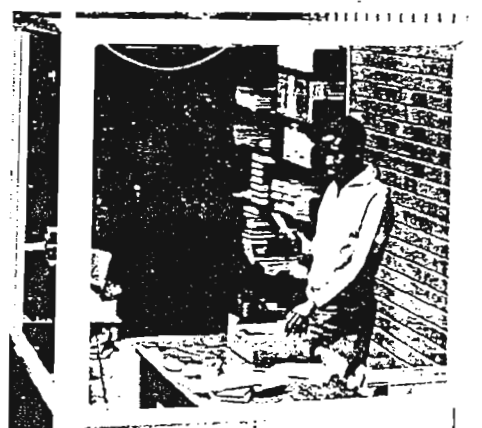
*Fr. Norbert, O.F.M.
(Philosophy)*



Work in the Garden



*Joseph Mtombeni
Johannes Maladje
Cleaning the Pool*



The Librarian Vincent Maphai in his new office.



Nceba Saneka



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Sr. Francis and Lucky Sibiyi



Fr. Luke – Fr. Michael



Johannes Mdhluli 1st year. Decorating the students' block



Staff Meeting



Fr. Finbar Synnott and



Fr. J. Maneschg (H. Scripture)



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PRESS RELEASE

GENERAL SECRETARIATE
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from/van
ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD

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ALGEMENE SEKRETARIAAT
van die S.A. KATOLIEKE
BISKOPSRAAD

for release/vir publikasie
21 DECEMBER 1977

The Administrative Board of the Southern African Catholic Bishop's Conference has decided with regret that St. Peter's Seminary, at Hammanskraal will not re-open in 1978.

The decision was taken because of the small number of Seminarians likely to be enrolled in the coming year, probably less than ten, with little likelihood of a significant increase in the next few years.

The Board of Bishops does not feel justified in maintaining a staff and sustaining heavy costs to keep the Seminary going for so few students.

The Board is advising Bishops who have students enrolled at St. Peter's to make arrangements for them to continue their studies for the priesthood elsewhere.

The Board is also recommending certain measures to the Plenary Session of the Conference of Bishops concerning the training of priests in the Southern African context.

RE: St. Peter's Seminary DATE: 15th December 1977 REF: ADS.

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Five priests ask for more

CAPE TOWN. — A group of five African priests has issued a statement to the secular Press, asking for greater "Africanization" of the Catholic Church in South Africa and criticizing aspects of Church administration.

Claiming that in spite of their ordination, they are treated like "glorified altar boys," they quote Pope Paul as saying, when he visited Uganda last year: "You (the African bishops) can give the Church the precious and original contribution of negritude which she needs particularly."

The report of the statement appears in the Rand Daily Mail of January 23.

The priests make wide and sweeping criticisms of the dealings of the White clergy with non-White priests, but insist that they are not preaching racialism but "realism and common sense."

"We respectfully request the Hierarchy to open up new avenues for our priests, such as specialized apostolate, serving on the so-called national commissions, playing a meaningful role in the administration of the diocese, and so on.

"Black bishop"

"We ask the hierarchy to expedite Africanization. For instance, why can't Soweto (the African township complex near Johannesburg) have its own Black bishop?"

"We suggest that a department of African Affairs be created on a national level. Its main duty would be to look after the interests of the Black Catholics.

"If anybody suspects us of mud-slinging, or defeatism for that matter, then our message has been misunderstood. Our colleagues can rest assured that in any eventuality we shall be their best allies."

The statement, as reported, closes with an invitation to readers to join them in reciting an act of loyalty:

"We, the undersigned, profess and embrace the Catholic teaching in all its entirety. We firmly believe that Christ's Church is

one, holy, catholic and apostolic. We hope to live, work and die as true sons of our beloved Brother and Saviour Christ."

The report says the statement is signed by Frs. P. Mangaliso Mkhathshwa, D. Mootetei, J. L. Louwfaat, C. Mokoka and Dr. A. Mabona. See "Topics" page 8.

AFRICAN SEMINARY HEAD COMMENTS

FOLLOWING is the comment of Fr. Oswin Magrath, Rector of St. Peter's Seminary, Hammanskraal:

The manifesto in the Rand Daily Mail of January 23 by the committee of the Old Boys' Association of St. Peter's Seminary, of which I have been Rector since 1958, was unexpected to me, but reflects a situation of which I have long been aware.

I am also aware that the situation, as seen by Africans, or at least by some Africans, is not perceived very much by the majority of White priests and bishops. The chief value of the manifesto may be to indicate to these what is being felt and said.

While I myself would confirm practically all the complaints made in the manifesto, I am also aware that to most White clergy they may seem to be exaggerations of what are exceptional incidents, or misunderstandings of well-intentioned attitudes. What is perhaps now needed is support or criticism from Africans of the statements made if its relevance is to be brought home.

SELECTION

Engaged in training of African priests myself, I would pick out the following as perhaps one of the most significant sentences: "If the Catholic Church has hitherto failed to produce African pastors and rectors, then there must be something radically wrong with their training and apprenticeship."

I would, however, suggest that it is not primarily the training or even the apprenticeship afterwards that is in itself at fault, but the general background within which and under which it has to function, which vitiates it.

It is against this general background, indicated in many features in the manifesto, that when African priests are appointed to responsible posts they fail to fill them competently.

A vicious circle thus develops: Africans fail because of lack of Africanization. Africanization seems impossible because Africans fail.

Perhaps their suggestion of a department of African affairs might break the deadlock. On the other hand it could tend towards two segregated churches, united perhaps under the Pope but hardly among themselves.

Prayer then talks



Archbishop Denis Hurley, OMI, of Durban (left) and Archbishop John Gordon, the Apostle Delegate to Southern Africa, join in the opening prayers at the Catholic Africa Organization Conference which began in Mariannhill last week. The conference was attended by Archbishop John Fitzgerald of Bloemfontein, Bishop Henry Kahlen of Umtata, Mgr. Lynch of Zululand, Mgr. Buthelet of Umlunkulu, and other members of the hierarchy, as well as delegates representing thousands of African parishioners in Southern Africa. Report, page 7.

Pontifical MC

VATICAN CITY. — Pope Paul has appointed a master of pontifical ceremonies for the first time since the late Cardinal Dante was made a cardinal in 1965. He is Mgr. Virgilio Noe, who retains his post as undersecretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship. — (N.C.)

Training in trades

SYDNEY. — Australian Catholic Relief (ACR) has given a grant of more than R9,000 to help to expand an Anglican project in the New Hebrides aimed at training South Pacific island school drop-outs in a variety of trades. — (N.C.)

Bishops told: Don't abdicate

COCHIN, India. — Cardinal Valerian Gracias of Bombay has appealed to the bishops of India not to abdicate their authority. But in his address this month opening the 10-day meeting of the Indian Bishops' Conference, Cardinal Gracias also told the bishops: "If we have sullied the fair image of authority, turning it into a cold instrument of power, let us do something about it."

"Both superiors and subjects have a duty to restore the fair name of authority. Any abuse on either side breeds tyranny or anarchy."

At a press conference on January 5 before the meeting opened, Archbishop Angelito Fernandes of Delhi, secretary-general of the conference, said the conference would attempt a "crash orientation" programme for the Church in India and would discuss the emergence of laymen, particularly youth.

The purpose of Church renewal is not served by a few faddists running ahead but by the entire people of God marching together.

The bishops would also discuss the family to find out "who are the key people" in Church renewal. — (N.C.)

Pope appoints Suenens to Mariology job

VATICAN CITY. — Pope Paul has named Cardinal Leo Suenens of Malines-Brussels, Belgium, president of the permanent committee for international Mariological and Marian congresses.

The Belgian cardinal replaces John Cardinal Wright, former bishop of Pittsburgh, who held the post for a year and relinquished it because of his appointment as prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy.

Cardinal Suenens, whose public criticisms of the style of papal government and of the system of papal nuncios has aroused outspoken indignation, was Pope Paul's personal choice for the presidency of the committee.



Fr. Andrew Werner, OMI, late of Bloemfontein, who has died. Obituary, back page.

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i) Formal interview

ii) Personal Communication

B) MANUSCRIPTS

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B) JOURNALS

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