

BLACK THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO RACISM AS A THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM

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[A public lecture delivered at Union Theological Seminary, New York, where he taught for the Fall Semester as Henry Luce Visiting Professor of World Christianity, November 10, 1992]

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In this paper, we shall focus our attention on the response of Black theology to white racial domination which has become a theological problem for the church. Before we embark on that task, allow me the liberty of making few preliminary remarks about what black theology.

Black theology can be defined as a conscious and systematic theological reflection on black experience which is characterized by oppression and suffering in white racist societies in North America and South Africa. In other words, Black theology, an aspect of a world-wide theological movement known as liberation theology, owes its origin to the unique experience of the people of colour, especially of African descent, in white dominated societies where the people's blackness was taken and rationalized by white people as giving them enough reason to subject black people to the life of domination, exploitation, oppression and humiliation. Hence, in both North America and South Africa, there has been and there exists a conscious or unconscious belief in the superiority of all white people, a superiority which entitles them to a position of political and economic power, dominance and privilege in relation to black people, who were regarded as inherently inferior and doomed to servitude. Black theology born out of the situation of black oppression and dehumanization is therefore directed against major social evils that the dominant white groups are perpetrating against blackhumanity. Black theology is characterized by its conscious decision to take a stand for black humanity over against white domination and oppression. This consciously accepted partisanship means that black theology attempts to be a critical re-

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flection on the historical praxis in which the powerful white Christians dominate and oppress the powerless black Christians, on one hand. On the other, black theology represents an articulated form of black resistance to white power structure, hoping thereby to inspire and arm the oppressed blacks in their struggle for the liberating transformation of unjust racist social structures in which they live.

II. THE ROOTS OF RACISM IN THE WESTERN CHURCH.

The diversity of human race and their different cultural manifestations in themselves have not always been and need not be understood as problematic in the church when they are accepted as gifts that the Creator has endowed humans beings for their mutual enrichment. This was certainly true in the early church which was an ethnic and social admixture of different races that reflected the pluralism of the Hellenistic world. This healthy coexistence of different races in the church of Christ in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Gal. 3:28), because they are one in Jesus Christ, did not last for long for many reasons. Among others, one need to mention but two important ones. First, the church underwent a major transformation during the Constantinian era, when it reflected a change from being a scarcely tolerated and often persecuted minority missionary movement into an established, official institution with the power to determine life within its members as well as in society. Once the Emperor became a Christian, he began to assert his power on behalf of the church when he opened the entire society for christianization (Driver 1986:29). In gratitude to Constantine, the church and its religious authorities were taken over and coopted by the ruling class which expected them to construct a theology whose purpose was to advance and legitimate the cause and interests of the Roman empire (Maimela 1987:134).

Secondly, the collapse of the churches in North Africa and Asia Minor under the assault of Islam transformed the church into "the church of the so-called "white nations, of the Christian Occident and Orient" (Gollwitzer 1979: 154) with dire consequences for the people of colour all over the world. With deep insights, Gollwitzer (1979:154) points out that this transformation of the church from its ethnic pluralism into a western, "white" church offered:

.... the white people, endowed with the mobility and activity characteristic of the temperate zones and especially of that peculiar continent of Europe, an unheard of self-confidence which first "proved itself in the struggle against Islam and in the crusades, but then reached out over

the entire globe in the age of great discoveries 'empowering' the Europeans to regard all non-christian people as destined by God for domination and exploitation. So the coasts of Africa and India were plundered by the Portuguese. The Pope divided up the New World between the Spanish and the Portuguese. The Aztec and Inca peoples were destroyed in a manifold Auschwitz.

The upshot of what is being claimed here is that racial problems have their roots in the Constantinian takeover of the church and its subsequent christianization of the white nations which, during the modern European colonial period, resulted in a theological self-understanding of the western world that equated Christianity with western culture. Concomitant with this was the belief that those who belonged to western Christianity were superior to non-christians who happened to be the people of colour (Gollwitzer 1979: 155). Once religious privilege of belonging to the church of Jesus Christ who is Saviour and Lord of the universe had been transformed into the political, economic and social privilege of God's chosen people who happened to be white, it was a matter of time before social structures were created through which the so-called "white people" would enforce their presumed racial supremacy and thereby subject the people of colour to "white" plunder, domination, exploitation and oppression. (1) It was during the European colonization of Africa, Asia and Latin America that a colonial theology was developed to give religious sanction for slavery and socio-political and economic bondage to which people of colour have been subjected to in racist societies over many centuries up to the present (Gollwitzer 1979: 156-167).

However, in order to avoid discussing the problematic nature of racism in generalities, I want now to focus attention on the South African racial situation of which I speak as a product and victim, to illustrate how the Constantinian model of a triumphal church and triumphal colonial state have worked hand in glove to create the racism from which we are still struggling to liberate ourselves from. The problem of racial division was exacerbated by the fact that a "pinky"¹ colonial tribe which wields all the political and economic power appropriated for itself the symbol of Israel in a sense that people of pink colour in South Africa were specially chosen by God for a mission in the world. Therefore, the whole group of "white" people *qua* people came to regard themselves as God's chosen race or anointed, called upon to gov-

1 I have deliberately chosen to use the word "white" synonymously with the word "pinky" in this article. This is intended to challenge the conventional belief that the so-called "whites" are people without colour, whereas the rest of humanity is assumed to be "the people of colour". I am suggesting that "whites" too are a people of colour, a "pink" colour which must be named.

ern and spread western civilization and Christianity even at the cost of fanatical persecutions of those who are regarded as unworthy human beings, the so-called the heathens who happened to be the people of black colour.

Because the Apartheid system of “white” [read: pink] racial domination has its origin during the British rule in the seventeenth century and was merely perfected by the Afrikaners in 1948, it is important that we discuss the phases of its development.

In the first phase, it were the British imperialists who undergirded their colonial activities by understanding the British people as the elect of God, who felt called upon to a mission history of bringing freedom to humanity. This mission was expressed in political and messianic terms whose best representative, Cecil Rhodes, declared that ‘only one race,’ his own, ‘was destined to help on God’s work and fulfil His purpose in the world ... and to bring nearer the reign of justice, liberty and peace’ because they as English people *qua* people approached God’s ideal type (cited by van Jaarsveld 1964: 3-4).

Put simply, the British imperialism was underpinned by the belief that they were a “new” Israel chosen to fulfil a divine mission, and more importantly that their election was determined by their racial, cultural superiority over those they were destined to rule. Concomitant with this was that the British people had a certain rightness to be elected to dominate the world, to spread the British civilization even at the cost of intolerable persecution of the so-called “heathens” who must be made British at all costs or die at the hands of the anointed ones and with the approval this domesticated British “God” (Maimela 1987: 8f, 30, 38). Commenting on the marriage between the throne and altar which enabled such a small island to rule over 500 million people during the height of its power, de Gruchy points out that there existed an inseparable relationship between God, the Church and the British Empire. As a consequence, de Gruchy (1977: 45), goes on to say: “Few, whether Anglicans or Non-conformists, apparently found anything incongruous about the Union Jack coexisting alongside the Cross and Altar, even when tattered and blood-spattered from encounters with the natives ... in the service of God and Queen.”

Of course, de Gruchy’s perceptive observations refer to the brutal British rule that managed to bring both the Boers and Blacks in South Africa to their knees by repressive forces, believing that the expansion of British imperialism and exploitation of the so-called inferior races were serving divine providential purposes of bringing the gospel and civilization to the ‘pagans’ and uncivilized Boers. In consequence, the God the British churches talked about was nothing but a fine and loyal ‘English’ God who regarded the

Crown and the British people as 'his' anointed or chosen race called upon to govern and spread British civilization.

In second stage, the Afrikaners too coopted the Dutch Reformed churches to provide them with spiritual resources to meet the threat of British imperialism on one hand, and the black majority who through intermarriage would dilute their white group identity. In the process an Afrikaner nationalism emerged and the Church, wishing to have unquestioning loyalty and authority over the lives of its followers, was just too willing to wed itself to this Afrikaner nationalism. Just as the British had done before, the theology that was propounded by the Dutch Reformed church gave the Afrikaners a theological sense of being a chosen people with a mission, namely, to create a new "white" [read: pink] nation in dark Africa as a beacon of Christian civilization. The Afrikaner leaders became men and women of calling to fulfil God's will, and this was true from Piet Retief in the nineteenth century in his struggle against the British 'Pharaohs' to Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of Apartheid policy in the twentieth century in his struggle to prevent black majority from engulfing his "volk" (van Jaarsveld 1977: 17). Believing that part of their mission was to preserve the chosen white race in its pure form, and therefore that it is against the divine will to be cast into a melting-pot through interracial marriage, a leading Afrikaner, Dr. Mansvelt, in 1892 reminded the white race that:

.... after their having opened the way for the spread of the Gospel and civilization, I do not believe that Providence has destined (the Afrikaner) to disappear from history without trace and to give it to others (cited in van Jaarsveld 1977:22).

It is against the background of the Afrikaners' understanding of their divine calling that Apartheid was formulated and carried out. Theology was used to underpin this ideology when it was argued that God has sharply divided human races and the Afrikaner's calling was to help this goal of permanent separation of races attainable, thereby prevent the admixture of races which would destroy 'western civilization' and the 'God-given' identity of the so-called "white" race. Rationalizing their subjugation and oppression of black people, the Afrikaners argued that they have been placed in Africa by God and commanded:

... to act as the guardian, master and spiritual leader to the black man. To do that the white man has to have at his command the authority needed to uplift, christianize and evangelize the black man; the purpose is that the black man who is still a child from the point of view of civi-

lization, shall grow and develop in due course in his own area, with his own language according to his nature and traditions (van Jaarsveld 1977:25).

Carrying out the policies of Apartheid which were believed to be in accordance with God's will the Afrikaners could, for a long time, not understand why the entire world faulted them for what they were doing in service of God. Here again, as in the British imperialism, we are confronted with a triumphal nationalism of the "pinkies" and triumphal "white" church - both of which have tried to create God in their own image, a God who is a loyal white-bearded Monarch who is giving 'divine' tasks and missions only to "white" people while at the same time this God is not bothered about the enormous suffering that the racial policy of Apartheid has subjected black people.

Put somewhat differently, the racial divisions that South Africans have suffered over the years are a product of European cultural and religious triumphalism that has given rise to and feeds on the theology of glory, a theology which has to do with the "success motif" of Western Christendom which has forgotten its origin in the crucified Christ, by allowing Christianity to be transformed into a religion of the successful, and the mighty who exercise power to determine life both in church and society. This theology of glory has encouraged South African "pinkies" to develop an attitude of priding themselves as worthier persons than the so-called people of colour [read: blacks] by virtue of belonging to Western civilization and by being the elect of God to promote Christianity. Thus, unable to pass judgment on "pinkie" humanity which has become proud and triumphant because of their alleged superiority of their cultural and educational achievements, the theology of glory has allowed itself to be used as an alibi for the justification of the concrete and unjust suffering of the people of black colour in a world dominated by the so-called "whites" [read: "non-coloured"] solely because of their black colour.

III. RACISM AS A THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM

The racism of the "pinkies" has become a theological problem for the people of colour simply because racism is not merely a racial prejudice or negative attitude towards a person whose colour differs from one's own. Nor is racism merely a vague feeling of racial superiority in relation to other people. Rather racism is a social, political, economic and cultural system of domination which white people employ to exclude the people of colour on basis of race for the purpose of subjugating them. It creates beliefs and myths about the cultural and biological superiority of the dominant racial group in order

to justify the unequal distribution of resources between the dominant and the dominated groups (Boesak 1983: 3). It exalts a particular biological characteristic to a universal principle determining what it means to be human. In other words, racial prejudices and stereotypes were developed in South Africa to rationalize the depersonalization and domination of black people; these stereotypes portrayed blacks as inherently inferior. This racial domination and the negation of blacks have their roots in the early history between Africans and colonialist in South Africa, when the former could not compete on equal terms militarily, economically and scientifically. The Apartheid policy was thus a culmination of a long process of development. The black experience in white dominated South Africa has been aptly described by Boesak(1976:26) when he writes:

Blackness is a reality that embraces the totality of black existence. To paraphrase a central message of "The message of the People of South Africa: People's blackness dooms them to live the life of second-class citizens. It determines who their friends may be, whom they can marry, what work they can do and that the work they eventually do is considered inferior to that of white people. Their blackness determines that if they do the same jobs as white people they get paid less. It not only determines what education they can get; it often means that they will get no education at all.... It determines where they can medical treatment, if they are fortunate enough to live in an area where they will not die of malnutrition and neglect before they reach the age of five. It determines their whole life, very single day.... To be black in South Africa means to be classified a "non-white": a non-person, less than white and therefore less than human.

Boesak (1977:57) goes on to say that black experience should be understood as a by-product of white power structure, and notes that:

The "white power structure", far from being a just term, represents a reality Blacks encounter every day. It represent the economic, political, cultural, religious, and psychological forces which confine the realities of Black existence. Concretely, for Black South Africans the white power structure is manifested in apartheid The White power structure represents full control of Whites over the instruments of power and over the major resources of the country. It represents an unending spiral of violence inherent in the system of apartheid. It is this structure which ensures that the future of Black children is as uncertain as the present is for their parents.

Put somewhat differently, in racist societies the colour of one's skin and race become salvation principles, determining whether a person is declared justified or unjustified to enjoy certain economic, political and cultural rights and privileges. Because colour and race are salvation principles, it is not enough to be baptized after confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Rather a person is expected to possess yet another attribute, which in the nature of the case, must be reserved only for a select few. Hence, Apartheid was designed and practice in such a way that the people of colour would be continually reminded that they are unworthy persons, regardless of whether or not they are Christians, simply because they do not possess that extra attribute, namely: white skin. The consequence of elevating the genetic and factors of race into the criterion of determining between the worthy and unworthy, and between the superior and inferior human beings has been devastating for the people of colour who were made to feel inadequate. Condemning the negative effects of the Apartheid system on the blacks, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1983:46-47), with deep insight, writes:

Apartheid is intrinsically and irredeemably evil. For my part, its most vicious, indeed its most blasphemous aspect, is not the great suffering it causes its victims, but that it can make a child of God doubt that he is a child of God. For that alone, it deserves to be condemned as a heresy. Real peace and security will come to our beloved land only when Apartheid has been dismantled.

At the same time, Apartheid system taught "whites" [read: pinkies], regardless of whether or not they are Christians, that they deserve a particular life-style and enormous political and economic privileges which are due to them by some natural right: that is, by virtue of their right colour.

In the light of this "white" racial domination and dehumanization of the people of black colour in South Africa, one would have expected the church and its theologians to be prophetic in its denunciation of the racial prejudices, injustice and oppression perpetrated by the people of pink colour. Regrettably, however, theology in South Africa has largely been done by middle class theologians of pink colour and some privileged black priests who are comfortably situated in the society. The result has been the development of a colonial theology which, consciously or unconsciously taken a preferential option for the powerful in order to serve the socioeconomic and political interests of white dominant society. This colonial theology could justifiably be characterized as the enemy of the oppressed black people. For the distinguishing feature of this colonial theology lies in the fact that it taught and continues to teach an authoritarian God, who, as the Supreme

Ruler of the universe, establishes racial classes in every society. Thus this God insists that there will always be the rich “pink” people and poor black people in the society, because this colonial and capitalist God accepts poverty as part of the divine will for the underdogs, most particularly for the people of black colour. To ensure that this situation of unequal distribution of material resources remains unchanged, the colonial theology of the pink people taught and continues to teach that God has established law and order in every society in favour of “white” folks, and demands obedience to the authority of both the church and state (Araya 1987:27-29; Nelson-Pallmeyer 1986:19; Kairos Document 1985:3-7). This attempted theological justification of the glaring unequal distribution of socioeconomic and political rights and privileges between different classes in “white” [read: pink] dominated societies has led as astute politician, Napoleon, to remark rather perceptively about the ideological function of religion, when he writes:

As far as I am concerned, I do not see in religion the mystery of the incarnation but the mystery of social order: it links the idea of inequality to heaven which prevents the rich person from being murdered by the poor. How can there be order in the state without religion? Society cannot exist without inequality of fortunes and the inequality of fortunes could not subsist without religion. Whenever a half-starved person is near another who is gluttoned, it is impossible to reconcile the difference if there is not an authority to say to him: “God wills it so, it is necessary that there be rich and poor in the world, but afterwards in eternity there will be a different distribution.” (Cited in Carter 1981:37).

IV. BLACK THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO “WHITE” RACISM

It is against this painful background of racial oppression and dehumanization of the black personhood as well as attempts by colonial theologians to justify the domination and privileges of the “whites” [pinkies] that black theology was born, as a theological protest against “white” inhumanity to black people. It is a theology which aims at reflecting on the black experience under “white” domination and exploitation in the light of the gospel. As blacks began to re-read the Bible in the light of their social experience in the so-called Christian country that they discovered that there is a fundamental contradiction between what the Bible proclaims and the message that their so-called “white” masters taught them. Thus beginning with their concrete experiences of oppression and suffering in a white dominated society where the Christian faith is being used as an oppressive instrument of legitimizing the socioeco-

conomic and political interests of the “pinkies”, black Christians could not help but become suspicious not only about the situation of injustice and oppression under which they suffered but also become suspicious about colonial theologies which unashamedly gave tacit support to the privileged status of people “pink” colour in relation to the people of colour. Commenting on the co-optation of theology by “white” dominant classes to give religious sanction to the socio-political and economic bondage to which the people of colour are subject, James Cone (1970:22; also see Allan Boesak 1976:30-36, 107-116), with deep insight, observes:

white theology has not been involved in the struggle for black liberation. It has been basically a theology of the white oppressors, giving religious sanction to the genocide of Indians and the enslavement of black people. From the very beginning to the present day American white theological thought has been “patriotic,” either by defining the theological task independently from black suffering (the liberal northern approach) or by defining Christianity as compatible with racism (the conservative southern approach). In both cases theology becomes the servant of the state, and that can only mean death to black people.

It is this hermeneutics of suspicion, namely, that in all human societies “anything and everything involving ideas, including theology, is intimately bound up with the existing social situation in at least unconscious way” (Segundo 1976:8) , that has helped black Christians to begin the task of unmasking the reality of oppression and the ideological mechanism that underpin and morally justify the social forces that foster and perpetuate the domination of black people. According to Segundo (1976:28), one of those mechanisms is the ideology which claims to be colour-blind and yet allows white Christians to construct the entire social edifice in which the causes of the oppressed people’s suffering is not even mentioned or discussed.

It is against this black experience of being oppressed by “pink” Christians that black Christians began to relate their own experiences of dehumanization to the biblical message of the God of love proclaimed in the Scriptures, asking questions such as: Why did God create me black? Why does God allow the “pinkies” who call themselves Christians to oppress black people, whom God also loves, simply because of their colour? What does God say, and what is God willing to do about this situation of oppression? As they wrestled with these existential questions, it dawned on the believing blacks that the reality of the politics of domination by the “pinkies” they see and experience in their lives differed from what they found in the Bible. For in the Bible God is not revealed as a category to be manipulated for the mainte-

nance of the privileged status quo of white domination. Rather God is portrayed there as the liberator God who wages a battle against injustice and human misery in order to establish justice and freedom for the oppressed (Cone 1975:4-5, 8-11, 122-124; Also see Araya 1987:27; Boesak 1976: 16-25, Maimela 1987:665-73, 92-97, 106-108, 116-120; Mofokeng 1983: 24-108, 160-185,238-263; Mofokeng 1987:5-16).

Black theologians find it significant that the God of the Exodus is portrayed as the God of mercy, who condescended from his or her throne of justice not to any human situation but to the deep dungeon of slavery in which the oppressed slaves were suffering in order to bring them out and create a new people (Ex 3:7)). The same God continued to express the divine concern for the underdogs by calling and sending the Hebrew prophets to denounce injustice and exploitation perpetrated by the powerful against the powerless widows and orphans. God's advocacy for the powerless and oppressed was brought to new heights in the coming of Jesus in and through who God chose to be born by poor parents, to live as a poor and oppressed human being, who suffered and was crucified as the rejected outcast in order to give the oppressed poor and the downtrodden new life and hope. According to black theologians, the incarnation is the event which clearly demonstrates that the biblical God is the God who takes the sides of the oppressed and the defenceless, the outcasts, the excluded and the despised. Archbishop Tutu puts in eloquently in this way:

In the process of saving the world, of establishing His Kingdom, God, our God demonstrated that He was no neutral God, but a thoroughly biased God who was for ever taking the side of the oppressed, of the weak, of the exploited, of the hungry and homeless, of the refugees, of the scum of society... So my dear friends we celebrate, worship and adore God, the biased God, He who is not neutral, the God who always takes sides (cited in Maimela 1986:46).

Agreeing with Archbishop Tutu, black theologians call every theologian to become candid and to put his or her cards on the table, and to declare on which side of the liberation struggle he or she stands, thereby declaring whose socioeconomic and political interests his or her theology is serving. It is for this reason that they challenge the Church to take a preferential option for the poor and oppressed in their struggle for liberation. In support of their challenge, they point out that this divine preferential option for the poor and the oppressed is central to the biblical message, running through the pages of both the Old and New Testaments (see Psalms. 118:7, 107:4-6, 113:7, 140:12

146:7-9; Prov. 14:31, 22:22-23; Is. 25:4, Mt 5:3ff; Lk 1:53, 4:18-19, 6:17, 20-22).

The challenge that black theology poses to the church, namely, that it should take a preferential option for the oppressed and poor black masses, thereby becoming the advocate and defender of the powerless, has invoked a great hostility from both the conservative and liberal white theologians. They argue that the church cannot take a preferential option for the oppressed because this would mean that God is now portrayed as against the rich and dominant Christians. Bound by the ideology of justification by faith through grace, white theologians resist any meaningful discussion of God in relation to the problems of racial oppression and suffering of the black people. In their view such a discussion would necessarily lead to the problem of work righteousness, namely that black oppression and poverty would be sacralized and turned into virtues on the basis of which the oppressed black masses could demand special favour from God. Against this view, "white" theologians who, more often than not, have taken preferential options for the "pinkies" are quick to add that all people, be they pink or black or yellow, are saved by God's grace and not by good works, and therefore questions of wealth and poverty, of "white" [pink] oppressors and oppressed blacks, are of little importance to theological discourse.

What is often missed by the critics of black theology is that what is at stake is not whether or not the oppressed are sinners or should be favoured by God. Rather black theology of liberation tries to witness to the transcendental and universal love of God, the love which unconditionally accepts the unacceptable, the rejected and humiliated black humanity (Rm 5:6-8). This divine love demonstrates its historical efficacy by seeking the dominated and marginalized people, especially the people of colour in racist societies, simply because they are oppressed and defenceless before the cruel reality of historical structures of injustice that threaten to destroy the life of millions of dehumanized black people.

In order to overcome this threat, black theology argues that it is necessary to portray God as one who assumes the role of an advocate for the cause of the oppressed people regardless of the moral and personal dispositions of the downtrodden people. Rather God chooses to be their advocate simply because the oppressed people need God's defence. Therefore, what is at stake here is not the poor's merit, virtue, or moral worthiness on account of which the oppressed black masses might solicit God's acceptance. It is the justice of God's kingdom which demands that the oppressed people must have life in all its fullness. And for that to happen God, out of love and mercy, assumes the role of being the advocate, by making the cause of the defenceless and

oppressed people God's own cause. Regarding this divine advocacy for the poor, one of the foremost theologian of the twentieth century who cannot be accused of one-sided partisanship for the poor, Karl Barth, has this to say about God's preferential option for the poor and the underdogs:

God always takes His stand unconditionally and passionately on this side and on this side alone: against the lofty and on behalf of the lowly; against those who already enjoy right and privilege and on behalf of those who are denied it and deprived of it (cited in Ayara 1987:44).

To appreciate the significance of what is being suggested here, it is important to note that wealth and poverty, which are consequences of unequal distribution of resources, are directly related to that fundamental sin of a breach of fellowship between humans and God (Gn 3.). After this tragic rapture the book of Genesis tells us how the consequences of sin began to be incarnated between and among human beings, manifesting themselves through destructive social relationships (Gn 4.). In order to confront and overcome this sinful social condition, God steps in as the God of the oppressed and defenceless people. In other words, God's advocacy for the poor and the downtrodden should be understood as a precondition for the liberation of both "pink" oppressors and oppressed blacks. Therefore, God assumes the role of an advocate of the underdogs in order to become the liberator of the dominant "pinkies who must also be liberated from their wealth, power and oppressive tendencies which hold them in bondage, thus preventing them from becoming partners with the oppressed blacks in their struggle against social consequences of sin in order to build up, together and alongside God, a just society in accordance with the values of the kingdom of God.

In taking the cause of the oppressed black people, God thus declares that the divine self is no longer prepared to put up with the social situations in which black people are oppressed and humiliated simply because they are black (Maimela 1986:44-50, Maimela 1987:96-97, 106-108, 115-120). Consequently, black theologians argue that, just God liberated the people of Israel not only from spiritual sins and guilt but also from oppressive socio-economic and political deprivation in Egypt, God will again liberate the oppressed black people not only from their personal sins and guilt but also from historical structures of evil, exploitation and oppression which have been perpetrated by white power structures.

Thus drawing their inspiration from a biblical theological vision which portrays God as the liberator of the oppressed and powerless slaves, black theology attempts to provide the struggling black masses with an alternative

theological models (visions) with which to both resist the extreme demands of white racial oppression and work for the liberation of all people. In so doing, encouraged and empowers the oppressed people, especially the black people, in South Africa to become the subjects of their own liberation, and creators of just and humane social structures so that freedom, justice and human rights might become the common property of the majority of the human family.

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