

RECOVERING SOUTH AFRICA'S LOST TREASURES  
A SPIRITUALITY OF INTERDEPENDENCE AND GRATITUDE

by

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, is my own original work. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Léonciennne'.

Léonciennne LaBonté O.P.

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**I dedicate this thesis to my family: to my Dad, who went to his eternal reward while this thesis was still being written, to my Mum, my sisters and my brother, from whom I first learnt the meaning of interdependence and gratefulness.**

## ABSTRACT

South Africa is a country rich in minerals, animal and plant life, with sea ports and magnificent mountainous terrain. But her greatest treasure is her people.

This was not always self evident. The law and legacy of apartheid blinded her people to this truth, cutting them off from one another, creating suspicion and enmity between race groups, making each believe in a false ideology of self-determination. This law came to an end in April 1994 when for the first time, every adult South African was given the opportunity to cast her/his vote and determine their future as one nation.

South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 was nothing short of a miracle. While the world looked on, South Africa slipped from political oppression to political freedom. The world continues to look to South Africa for example and leadership. But South Africans themselves still experience a fair amount of unfreedom and restlessness. The experience of 27<sup>th</sup> April 1994 brought great expectations but this was short lived. Enthusiasm quickly changed to disillusionment and despondency. April 27<sup>th</sup> brought South Africans face to face with their new reality, namely, that South Africa is one country and one nation. From an era which stressed exclusivity, separation, apartheid - everything which had left her alienated: person from person, group from group, country from the world, South Africa is called to inclusivity, interdependence and integration. Her people had a taste of this on that miraculous day. Now all they seem to be aware of is a restlessness which still persists. Restlessness in itself is neither negative nor bad. On the contrary, such an awareness is simply an alert-call that something is not as it should or could be. Bernard Lonergan reminds us that such awareness is the first step towards conversion. Awareness enables one to stop and question the source of one's restlessness in order to make responsible decisions. According to Richard Woods, there is a new hunger for spirituality/for God in the world today. Where would the questions of South Africans lead them, if this people directed the source of their restlessness to a hunger for God?

In the light of this awareness a new spirituality is proposed to address South Africa's new reality, namely: *that only when South Africans begin to see themselves as a-part-of as opposed to separate from (apartheid) one another, will true freedom prevail and gratitude replace restlessness.* This is summed up as a spirituality of interdependence and gratitude.

Christian spirituality implies consciousness of the context in order to make a Christian response in a given situation and to commit oneself to a way of life which is at once contextual and rooted in scripture. Aware of their history, therefore, South Africans are invited into a process of conversion and transformation, a radical change of mind and heart as they commit themselves to building a new nation. This calls for new ways of thinking and being. From thinking and acting in a limited and exclusive way, South Africans are challenged to an inclusive life style, to take a stand and to witness to all that stands in opposition to

apartheid, to see their newly acquired rights as a gift which bonds them as a people and not as an 'entitlement' which alienates them once again one from another, to recognize the giftedness of every person and to use their rights to witness to their interdependence! To recognize and accept every citizen is itself an experience which is only possible after some measure of conversion. South Africa's legacy of apartheid did not encourage her people to acknowledge one another, still less to appreciate the giftedness inherent in each person. This is a radical call to self-transcendence and conversion both of which are at the heart of the spiritual life.

Radical transformation is necessary if South Africans want to continue building their country where others have left off while simultaneously *creating something new*. This means learning to see and accept that their greatest asset and treasure are not precious metals mined from the depths of the earth, but every person irrespective of colour, class, gender, creed or age - all belong to one country and one nation; to one universe and ultimately to One God. This does not imply neglecting oneself, one's group or one's clan, but beginning to see oneself as a-part-of the great network within the country and universe, giving life to and receiving life from one another.

While Bernard Lonergan's levels of conversion offer a key to a way of being fully human and authentic both for the individual and society, Paul Camenisch reminds us that the best measure of genuine gift-giving is the measure of 'self' in a gift, no matter how rich and influential the donor or poor and weak the recipient because in such an exchange the real gift is oneself.

Conversion, transformation, self-giving, interdependence and gratitude ... are all elements found in the eucharist. For South Africans the challenge to become a eucharistic people involves continuous personal and communal conversion; it involves radical self-giving so that others may live. Many South Africans have given their lives for the sake of the country's freedom and democracy. Many continue to do the same today. These are not extraordinary people. They are ordinary South Africans who dare to allow God's all pervading Holy Spirit to grasp and possess their life and to stretch them beyond themselves. These people continue to offer a way open into the next millennium. Like South Africa's Bill of Rights which seeks to dignify *all* her citizens, a spirituality of interdependence and gratitude is within reach of *every* South African as they reflect on who they are, where they have come from and how they can move forward together into the next millennium.

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## RECOVERING SOUTH AFRICA'S LOST TREASURES:

*A Spirituality Of Interdependence and Gratitude*

	page
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
Theme	7
Plan	8
Method	9
<b>CHAPTER 1: CLARIFICATIONS AND DEFINITIONS OF KEY WORDS</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 Spirituality	10
1.1.1 Christian Spirituality	10
1.1.2 African Christian Spirituality	14
1.1.3 New Needs Call for a New Spirituality: Interdependence and Gratitude	16
1.2 Entitlement	18
1.3 Heresy	24
1.4 Gift And Gratitude	28
1.5 Conclusion	40
<b>CHAPTER 2: READING THE SIGNS OF OUR TIMES</b>	<b>42</b>
2.1 South Africa's Contemporary Situation	42
2.2 Entitlement: A Modern Day Heresy?	44
2.3 Searching For The Truth	45
2.4 Conclusion: A New Crossroads	46
<b>CHAPTER 3: CONVERSION</b>	<b>48</b>
3.1 Intellectual Conversion	52
3.2 Moral Conversion	58
3.3 Affective Conversion	62
3.4 Religious Conversion	65
3.5 Socio-Political Conversion	70
3.6 Conclusion	75
<b>CHAPTER 4: REMEMBER, RE-MEMBER AND GIVE THANKS</b>	<b>76</b>
4.1 Scripture Reflection	76
4.1.1 The Role of Symbols in Scripture	76
4.1.2 Exodus 25-33 - After the Exodus Experience	77
4.1.3 The Road to Emmaus - Lk 24:13-35	81
4.2 Theological Reflection: The Role of Symbols in the Eucharist	83
4.2.1 Eucharist: Remembrance And Thanksgiving	84
4.3 Remember, Re-member and Give Thanks	91
4.4 Conclusion	94
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION: BECOMING A EUCHARISTIC PEOPLE</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>101</b>

### Abbreviations

EM	Eucharisticum Mysterium
GIRM	General Instruction on the Roman Missal cf. Documents of Vatican Council II
GS	Gaudium et Spes
LM	Lumen Gentium
PBC	The Pontifical Biblical Commission
SC	Sacrosanctum Concilium
WCC	World Council of Churches



## RECOVERING SOUTH AFRICA'S LOST TREASURES:

### *A Spirituality Of Interdependence and Gratitude*

#### ***Introduction***

South Africa is a country rich in minerals, animal and plant life, with sea ports and magnificent mountainous terrain. But her greatest treasure are her people.

This was not always self evident. The law and legacy of apartheid blinded her people to this truth, cutting them off from one another, creating suspicion and enmity between race groups, making each believe in a false ideology of self-determination for each group. Some went with the system while some visionaries saw and fought for a unified nation. And so it was that for years the people of South Africa fought for their freedom and for a dream or vision for which they were prepared to make sacrifices - even give their life! Many did. Then came the great day: 27 April 1994 when every adult South African was given the opportunity to cast her/his vote. They stood in long queues: old and young; rich and poor; black and white; women and men - they stood shoulder to shoulder. No one minded the long queues nor the long hours of waiting. The day they had lived for and for which many had died had at last arrived and those who survived were privileged to be part of it, not simply as spectators but as participants. Every vote, every voice, every contribution was helping to make a difference, was helping towards transforming the old into something new, was bringing new life to all her people. It was exciting. For the first time, every person mattered; everyone was counted; everyone was given her/his dignity and with dignity each helped transform the country. Their newly acquired dignity was a gift to be used at the service of the group/of the country and they were proud to be of service. Everyone almost automatically thought beyond their small selves or their small world and it was exciting, life-giving.

It is six years since South Africa's first democratic election - since the victorious cry in South Africa was heard: "Free, Free at last"! the words of Martin Luther King echoed by Nelson Mandela.

But is South Africa really free? In what does real freedom lie? Are there still areas of unfreedom? South Africa may have attained political freedom but still be in bondage economically (poverty and unemployment still exist and seems to be on the increase), psychologically (wounds and/or guilt caused through apartheid continue to torture sensitive hearts), spiritually. Few people will disagree

that the prevailing mood in the country is one of general despondency. If one were to 'measure' the mood by means of a questionnaire, many people would respond with dissatisfaction, high-lighting the high crime rate, violence, rape, lack of housing, bad administration, unemployment, poor government, poor health and education facilities, fraud etc. *before* remembering their equal citizenship and human dignity. Many will point to the large numbers emigrating and the many refugees. Some even long for the 'old regime' - the flesh pots of Egypt!

What has gone wrong? Was April 1994 an illusion, a dream or was it *really real*? No, this was no dream. It was real. For somehow when South Africans *remember* 27 April 1994 and retell the story, or look at photographs or newspaper clippings of that special day they come alive again.

What has gone wrong? Could it be that their newly acquired dignity which came with democracy made them turn in on themselves? Could it be that they have lost their ability to think beyond themselves and so have become narrow and selfish?

*South Africans still experience restlessness and unfreedom even though their longed-for political freedom has been gained. The overall mood in the country is that things are not as they should or could be; that there is surely more to life than political freedom. Why the restlessness? What is lacking? What still keeps this people in bondage?*

*One possible reason for this restlessness is that, although the law of apartheid no longer exists, the effects of apartheid still linger in the hearts of the people. Prejudice and fear continue to keep people apart from one another.*

*This thesis therefore proposes that only when South Africans begin to see themselves as 'a-part-of' as opposed to 'separate from' (apartheid) one another, will true freedom prevail and gratitude replace restlessness.*

In many cultures story-telling is an important part of life. It is a way of recalling, keeping alive and passing on family treasures. It is a way of teaching and bringing home very real values in a powerful and lasting way. Some stories recount straight forward historical facts, while other stories are cultural myths based on truth. The power of story telling is its ability "to engage the reader in its 'narrative world' and the system of values contained therein" (PBC 1994:41). A story aims to bring about a new way of understanding life by functioning "as a 'mirror', in the sense that it projects a certain

image - a 'narrative world' - which exercises an influence upon readers' perceptions in such a way as to bring them to adopt certain values rather than others" (:41-42).

In the following story the reader is invited to enter as if it were one's own and to consider the implications for a people challenged to move beyond the boundaries which have kept them alienated from one another.

There was once a family of ten who lived in a village just outside a busy town. There was mother, father, five daughters and three sons. The youngest was a boy, John. By the time John was born, his eldest sister Mary was married with her own home and family. But the family remained fairly close-knit. John knew he was loved especially as he was the youngest. He had all the attention of his parents, his brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and friends. He was a bright boy and loved school. He had all he needed and yes, and even more than he wanted. Yet he felt something was missing. What was it? One day, during the school holidays as he wandered aimlessly around in the garden at home, he came across the shed at the far end of their plot. He had not been in there for a long time. As he had nothing special to do that day, he went in. The shed had previously been used for garden tools but in recent years was simply used to store unwanted odds and ends. It was not bolted and John went in. The only window let in the sunlight and glistened on some cobwebs, but on the whole the shed was clean. John looked around. He picked up an old spade, turned it over and put it down. Why was it still there if there was no more use for it? Then his eye caught sight of a sickle hanging over a rafter. Another unwanted tool. There were a few other tools, a table, some chairs, and a few other items. "Why do people keep rubbish?" he thought, as he continued to walk slowly round inspecting everything within reach. Indeed as he looked around, he saw more things that seemed quite useless. "Why keep rubbish?" he kept repeating. "Why not get rid of all this junk?" Then his eye caught sight of an old suitcase and John thought: "If there is more rubbish in this, I'm getting rid of all of it, and quickly; and if it is empty I will clear the shed by putting all these old things into the case and clearing them all out!" John opened the case. It was not locked and simple to open. It was full to the brim - full with all sorts of old things. He made himself comfortable as he prepared himself to go through his findings. There was some linen, fairly worn out and discoloured. He wandered who it belonged to and why it had been kept. As he moved another piece of cloth, he found an old bible. "Who did it belong to?" he wondered. "How many people have read from this holy book or listened to these words and found hope, courage and strength?" He continued rummaging and found an old

album. This fascinated him as he paged through. The opening page had the names of his great-grand parents and grand parents in beautiful calligraphy. This was a family album. Although he did not know most of the people in the photographs, he knew that this was *his family*. He felt that he had come across a treasure. Why was it hidden in this old suitcase? He paged through slowly, pondering on each picture and person. He found himself looking at each with a kind of reverence. After the last picture, he laid the album down gently beside the bible. He would rescue these two books from where they had been hidden and bring them out into the open. He had many questions to ask his parents, especially about these people with whom he knew he was so intimately connected. He looked around the shed again. The spade, the sickle, all the things he had considered to be junk - each had a hidden story. Why were they still kept? He suddenly became aware of himself. Who was he? How was he connected to all these treasures? One thing he did know, he was part of and connected to all these treasures. He did not know how, but suddenly a strange awe came over him. He was part of something much larger than himself, something much larger than he had been aware of. He found himself speaking aloud, claiming his past and thanking those who had gone before him: the one who had used the spade and sickle, those who had used the linen, the ones in the album, those who had read from the old bible. . . . When John left the shed, something had happened to him. He had changed. He belonged to a big family. If it were not for them - each one - he would not *be* who he was now, he would not *have* all he now had. There was so much he had taken for granted, so much he had demanded, so much he did not appreciate. He made up his mind. He too would do something, first for his immediate family, but also for those who would follow him. He no longer felt listless and aimless. His visit to the shed opened him up to the realization - the treasure - that he was part of a greater reality than himself. The discovery filled him with a new passion for life.

This story tells of a boy who was fortunate to grow up in an atmosphere of family love yet whose world-view and life experience was limited by the very same family because they did not seem to need others. Until John went to the shed he believed that he had everything and lacked nothing. Yet he was aware of a restlessness deep within. Only when he realized that he was part of a greater network than his immediate family did his life begin to take on meaning.

When one puts John in the place of South Africans who have been brought up in an apartheid society, in a milieu where one's interest, love and care was limited to one's own family, race or clan because

of a system that kept people alienated from one another, what are the implications for a new democratic South Africa?

In the story John moved fairly quickly from a sense of being estranged from his past by its alienating remnants to a sense of belonging to a bigger reality. In actual day to day living, any movement from estrangement to belonging takes time. Conscious choices need to be made and constant effort is needed to continually move beyond the boundaries which alienate or enslave one. Such deliberate choosing is a call to conversion. Conversion will be dealt with in chapter 3. For the present we recall the question at the heart of this paper:

*Why do South Africans still experience restlessness and unfreedom even though their longed-for political freedom has been gained? What is lacking?*

### **Theme**

South Africa's transition to democracy was nothing short of a miracle. While the world looked on, the country slipped from political oppression to political freedom. The world continues to look at South Africa for example and leadership. Can South Africa sustain her freedom? Can she continue to give life to her people and to the world?

In an age where peoples rights are continually stressed, South Africans seem to have lost the wonder and awe that all is gift. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution is meant to safe-guard the dignity of every South African citizen. Although human dignity is a basic human need and right, human dignity can be said to be a gift, in the sense that life itself is a gift! This does not take away from human dignity being a need and right and that every person has a right to life, to respect, to good health, education, a healthy environment etc., but it does put the emphasis on gift and service, on mutual giving and receiving, on co-responsibility rather than on entitlement as simply receiving or worse, unreasonably demanding. The notion that all is gift implies giving *and* receiving, a notion which only becomes real when people transcend themselves and move beyond even that which they are entitled to. Once again this implies a radical change of heart - a call to conversion.

Conversion, which leads to interior freedom and fullness of life, is at the heart of every spirituality as it will be in this thesis which is in the field of *Spirituality*. Because this spirituality concerns South Africans in particular, it will be necessary to ground it in the South African context and therefore aspects from South African history, sociology, politics or economics will be included.

Christian spirituality emerges out of specific needs at a given time. In the years preceding the 1994 elections South Africa witnessed various spiritualities each responding to the needs of the times. Since the 1994 democratic elections their political change has brought new needs.

An interesting phenomenon since South Africa's democratic election is the frequent use of the word 'entitlement'. This was not a word frequently used or heard previously because the majority of the people were either not entitled to much or anything at all. Conscious of this, and in the light of where their newly acquired entitlement is leading (sadly, not always pro-life), this thesis seeks to offer a *counter-cultural* yet deeply Christian and African value, namely that of *interdependence and gratitude* as a new spirituality and way of life/way to life for South Africa today. It seeks to do this by pointing out that all of life is gift and that the greatest gift/treasure in South Africa is *all* her people. This is the treasure lost through apartheid and which South Africa's new democracy is challenged to retrieve.

Since I am a South African and a Roman Catholic, this work will naturally be influenced by who I am and consequently be written from a Christian perspective and for Christians in particular but it is hoped that it will be wide enough to embrace peoples of other faiths and nationalities as well.

### ***Plan***

As this work is in the field of *spirituality*, it will be necessary to first clarify the meaning of spirituality, ground it in the South African context and show how new needs call for a new spirituality. We will then look at nuances in the word entitlement and show how this word is used and abused in the contemporary South African situation. As one's attitude to life can make or break a person, so entitlement and gift are keys to life or death. Bernard Lonergan's levels of conversion, will help show how South Africans have the key to life in their hands but first need a change of heart (not simply a change of government!). To ground this spirituality in scripture and theology - the foundation of Christian spirituality - two specific scripture texts and a reflection on the eucharist have been chosen

for their common theme of 'remembering' - *anamnesis*. By drawing parallels from scripture, theology and the South African situation around the theme of 'remembering' I will show how memory can act as a positive power enabling people to re-member as they recall the past, celebrate the present and strengthen hope as they move together into the future. Finally I state that South Africans are called to become a eucharistic people - interdependent and grateful. Through radical self-giving, they can then offer a universal way of hope into the next millennium.

### *Method*

This thesis will use a phenomenological approach in order to clarify the South African context. But the South African context will not be treated in isolation. Rather it will be woven into the various sections in each chapter. It could be regarded as the warp while the rest of the work forms the weft as in weaving. As the country's past is considered and her present yearnings for a fuller life for all are brought to the fore, it will become clearer that the only way forward is through radical conversion.

The various levels of conversion will be considered and suggested as the basis on which to 'build' a new spirituality for contemporary South Africa. Conversion, while being something deeply personal will be viewed as a call to a change of attitude and behaviour both for the individual as well as for the country as a whole. Having come to some understanding concerning the meaning and demands of conversion, a scriptural and theological reflection will be used to ground the theme of interdependence and gratitude and show how, when South Africans have rediscovered and recovered their lost treasures, viz: *one another* by recognizing the interdependence and giftedness of every citizen, then will fulness of life overflow from grateful hearts. Such a spirituality which is an ongoing process will help all on their journey to wholeness and true freedom.

## ***1. CLARIFICATIONS AND DEFINITIONS OF KEY WORDS***

In this chapter we will be investigating the meanings of some of the key words and concepts being dealt with in this thesis. We will begin with their broad and general understanding and then hone into the nuances and meanings as understood in the South African context.

### ***1.1 Spirituality***

In recent years there has been a growing and widespread hunger for spirituality in all its forms. This hunger has made itself felt in peoples from all walks of life, often leading “people to seek wisdom in unfamiliar places” (Woods 1998:9). What was or is this wisdom that people were and still are searching for? In other words, what is spirituality? Where is it found?

Spirituality has to do with our life in the Spirit i.e. our life in and with God, and as God is present to all humanity and not to Christians alone, spirituality is not confined to Christians but to other religions as well. There are various other spiritualities which stem from other religions or religious beliefs e.g. Buddhist and Hindu spiritualities. This paper is confined to Christian spirituality. Therefore all that follows will be seen primarily from a Christian perspective even though a great deal goes beyond the boundaries of the Christian faith.

There is no one single definition of spirituality. Nevertheless when we use the word or say that people are looking for meaning or wisdom, what is basically meant is that people are searching for “resources to sustain the spiritual quest” (:9).

#### ***1.1.1 Christian Spirituality***

Within the Christian tradition, spirituality is rooted in three things. “First, while drawing on ordinary experience and even religious insights from elsewhere, Christian spiritualities are rooted in the Scriptures and particularly in the Gospels. Second, spiritual traditions are not derived from abstract theory but from attempts to live out gospel values in a positive yet critical way within specific historical and cultural contexts. Third, the experiences and insights of individuals and groups are not



isolated but are related to the wider Christian tradition of beliefs, practices and community life” (Woods 1998:10).

Christian spirituality is holistic. Although prayer is fundamental and basic, Christian spirituality goes beyond prayer especially beyond formal prayer, or even narrowly religious activities. Christian spirituality “concerns the whole of human life” (:10), it embraces one’s entire being: one’s understanding, emotions, imagination, will, one’s whole being and one’s whole life “viewed in terms of a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and within a community of believers” (:10). In its original Christian understanding, the word spirituality, as it refers to experience, expressed the common life experience of *all* Christians who live a life according to the Holy Spirit. As such it is a word which is dynamic and alive, taking on the experience, form and expressions of Christians alive in the Spirit.

Like anything connected with life, therefore, neither the term spirituality, nor its understanding remained static. Sadly, from a term referring to the lived Christian experience of all Christians, the meaning of spirituality gradually became so narrowed down as to embrace only those souls whose life in the spirit was seen as striving for what was perceived as perfection. Such perfection “became a matter of the individual, interior practice of special spiritual exercises requiring careful guidance by experts” (Komonchak 1987:972). For many Christians, therefore, spirituality has been one of the most misunderstood and misinterpreted words in the Christian tradition. The idea or sense of spirituality reflecting the lived experience of all Christians and being all embracing was gradually lost until it took on the meaning of something reserved for the ‘special’ ones: for clergy and religious and the small minority of intensely ‘pious’ lay people.

But as Christianity is not simply a system of beliefs about God but a *life to be lived fully and by all* so spirituality expresses the common ‘spiritual’ life experience of *all* those who live a life according to God’s Holy Spirit. Thank goodness then for the modern day hunger for spirituality, for the restlessness in people’s hearts that has enabled us to rediscover some of our rich Christian spiritual heritage and traditions and to reinterpret them for our times. In his book, *Mysticism and Prophecy*, Richard Woods points out that over the past few decades many spiritual writers and theologians have attempted to describe contemporary spirituality. The following are what some writers have to say

about contemporary spirituality. Note that each writer brings his/her own spiritual experience with him/her.

William Stringfellow, in his book, *"The Politics of Spirituality"*: understands spirituality as

... whatever else may be affirmed about a spirituality which has biblical precedent and style, spiritual maturity or spiritual fulfillment necessarily involves the whole person - body, mind, soul, place, relationships - in connection with the whole of creation throughout the era of time. Biblical spirituality encompasses the whole person in the totality of existence in the world, not some fragment or scrap or incident of a person" (Woods 1998:15-16).

Kevin W. Irwin, writing in the context of liturgy and prayer, speaks of spirituality as the

"experience of our relationship with God in faith and the ways in which we live out our faith. Spirituality involves our coming to know God, our response to God, and the prayer and work we perform in faith. For Christians, spirituality occurs in and among the community of the Church, the community formed by hearing and responding to the same call and invitation from God" (:16).

For Joann Wolski Conn:

"The term spirituality refers to both a lived experience and an academic discipline. For Christians, it means one's entire life as understood, felt, imagined, and decided upon in relationship to God, in Christ Jesus, empowered by the Spirit. It also indicates the interdisciplinary study of this religious experience, including the attempt to promote its mature development" (:16).

Victor Phalana, in a workshop on African Christian Spirituality, held for novices in Gauteng, says:

"I personally see Spirituality as a process of growing and maturing in the divine. It has to do with living the experience and the presence of the divine in one's daily life and action. It is the mode of living, a way of living our Christian life or African traditional values, and it includes the religious experience of the one who encounters the divine."  
(hand-out: Workshop on African Spirituality, Gauteng 1998).

A final quote and explanation of Christian spirituality comes from Richard McBrien. For him:

Christian spirituality has to do with *our way of being Christian*, in response to the call of God, issued through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit" (McBrien 1994:1020).

McBrien then goes on to elaborate on the rich variety within Christian spirituality. As a call which is initiated by God and to which we respond with Christ, in the Spirit, Christian spirituality is like God's prism through which God's white light penetrates and breaks forth into a rainbow of colour to embrace every aspect of life. Each aspect opens us up to and reveals to us the richness of God's life into which we are invited to participate. For example:

Christian spirituality is: *Trinitarian*: i.e. rooted in the triune God; it is *Christological*: centered on Jesus Christ; *ecclesiological*: situated in the Church; *pneumatological*: ever responsive to the Holy Spirit; and *eschatological*: oriented always to the coming of God's reign partial now and in all its fullness at the end of human history. Christian spirituality is also *visionary* in that it involves a new way of seeing reality and of seeing through things to their spiritual core. As such, it is also *sacramental*, pointing beyond created reality to the hidden presence of God within all of created reality. Christian spirituality is *relational*. No one is an island. "We are, by definition, relational beings: beings in relation to God, neighbor, world, and self. To be human is to live in community" (:1020) or to use the (African) Ubuntu understanding: we are who we are, and we become whom we are meant to be, only in and through others! Christian spirituality calls us to inter-relatedness with God, with all of humanity, and with the whole cosmos. Finally, Christian spirituality is *transformational*. Christian life in the Spirit is life consciously lived in the presence and power of the Spirit which "heals, reconciles, renews, gives life, bestows peace, sustains hope, brings joy, and creates unity" (:1020). It integrates and brings "all things together in Christ" (Eph 1:10 ff).

"Christian spirituality requires that the Spirit be allowed to work" (:1020). Christian spirituality is first and foremost the work of the Spirit. It is not something we do for God but something God does in and through us, not in any forceful way but in a way in which God's Holy Spirit takes the initiative and we are called to respond, so that ultimately the transformation of the world into the Reign of God might continue to occur and become a reality.

"To be *spiritual* means to know, and to live according to the knowledge, that there is more to life than meets the eye. To be *spiritual* means, beyond that, to know, and to live according to the knowledge, that God is present to us in grace as the principle of personal, interpersonal, social, and even cosmic transformation. To be *open to the Spirit* is to accept explicitly who we are and who we are called always to become, and to direct our lives accordingly, in response to God's grace within us" (:1019).

If Christian spirituality is about life as it is lived, it follows that over the centuries, different spiritualities have been high-lighted as different aspects of life in the Spirit have been stressed. Whenever an area of life was seen to be in need of God's transforming grace, a new spirituality was called for. Each era through history found an answer to its problems when these were viewed with and in the light of God's Holy Spirit.

A Christian interpretation of the South African context, where restlessness in people's hearts seems to point to a hunger for 'something more', may be understood as the presence of the Spirit initiating a process of transformation; a process which involves the whole person and embraces every aspect of life. Such a process or spirituality occurs in and among the Christian community and overflows into society as a whole. This is a Christian spirituality which is rooted in South Africa's reality, yet is *visionary*: inviting all to a new way of seeing; *sacramental*: pointing beyond the known to the hidden gifts of her people; *relational*: recovering the gift of her people as one nation; *transformational*: accepting their inter-dependence and thus holding out a vision of hope for the future.

### *1.1.2 African Christian Spirituality*

Christian spirituality is *incarnational*. Rooted in Christ and in the Scriptures, it takes flesh in people adopting, challenging and 'christianizing' their customs and cultures. Christian spirituality goes beyond private experience, even beyond any one cultural group's experience, expanding and extending to global experiences.

Since the end of the nineteenth century there has been a growing interest in African theology and spirituality<sup>1</sup>. African spirituality is based on the cultural values, symbols and attitudes of Africans. African spirituality goes beyond private experience. Indeed the idea of private experience is alien in Africa. The African world view is holistic, integrated, interdependent, connected. No person, animal or thing exists in isolation. There is only life in being connected to God (the Supreme Being), to the ancestors (the living-dead), to humanity and to nature.

African spirituality is being in communion and harmony with God, with the ancestors, people and nature which in turn enriches and enhances the life of the people. Gabriel Setiloane endorses and affirms John Mbiti who "changes the Cartesian dictum to 'I belong, therefore I am' ... Belonging is at the root and essence of being" (Setiloane 1986:10). The sense of belonging "extends far beyond the family, the clan and the tribe" (:10). Indeed, it extends even beyond human beings such that our interdependence includes the participation of all creation: planets, plant life, animals life etc.

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<sup>1</sup> *African Theology*: Benezet Bujo gives us a good insight into the development of African theology. (pp 49-73)

At the source and heart of life is God. God is (among other descriptive names) *Motlhodi*: the Source of Being; *Unkulunkulu*: the great great One; and *Modimo*: the one who penetrates and permeates all being/existence (:50). While God holds the most supreme place in the life of Africans, God is nonetheless at the heart of life. Far from being a God who is distant as is sometimes portrayed in western spirituality, the God of Africa is a God who creates life, participates in life, sustains life and transforms life. This view of God is not confined to African spirituality even if it is central to it. Julian of Norwich, the great English mystic, speaks of God's involvement in life in this same way. In her *Showings* she speaks of humanity's relationship with God as humanity being enclosed in God and God in humanity: ... "in him [God] we are enclosed and he in us" (LT, 1978 Chapter 57:285). In Africa, even though the ancestors play a major role in life of the people, God is *the* source, *the* origin, *the* sustainer and *the* end of all life. Because of this, everything is sacred; everything and every person deserves respect and reverence.

This is not meant to canonize all that is African. Africans do not deny the existence of evil. Evil exists and is real, but God's Holy Spirit - *uMoya Ocwebile*<sup>2</sup> - which pervades all things, is an enabling power stronger than all evil. A person full of the spirit manifests it externally, it simply cannot be hidden or kept for oneself. Phalana speaks of *Moya* or Spirit in Africa being greatly respected: *Moya's* enabling power, he says, can make people stagger, palpitate, cry out, dance wildly, fall, have intense religious emotions, etc. But *Moya* also carries the meaning of wind, breath or the human disposition towards good or evil. Benezet Bujo too tells of negative elements in African religion: "Of course African religion contains negative elements, ... it has a dimension of fear; but so does every other religion. These negative elements should not be exaggerated anywhere" (Bujo 1986:31). African spirituality is therefore neither canonized per se nor must it be disregarded. Rather as African spirituality is enfleshed in the humanity of Africa, like any other Christian spirituality it too needs to be challenged and purified by the scriptures for it to be authentically African and Christian.

It has already been pointed out that spirituality in Africa embraces all of life. Unlike "Christian theology" which "always tended to split [humanity] into body and soul, and to preach the salvation of the soul" (:31) African spirituality is holistic, "living in a network of living relationships with God

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<sup>2</sup> In this section, I am indebted to Rev Victor Phalana for all the explanations given for "Spirit" in the following African languages.

and with nature” (:32) embracing the totality of life. Life was always held sacred. Unfortunately when the early missionaries came with their interpretation of Christianity they failed to see that the Christianity which they brought was a Christianity incarnated in their flesh and customs and that these needed to be incarnated in the flesh and customs of Africa. In the light of their western Christianity, therefore, many African customs were seen as pagan and condemned. In failing “to distinguish between the positive and negative elements in the culture” according to gospel values, “many vital elements were destroyed, and the opportunity of really incarnating the Christian message in Africa was lost.” (:48).

Yet something has remained and today Africa is coming out into the open and daring to share some of her rich customs which she has salvaged over the centuries. Many of these customs serve to deepen our understanding of the good news of Jesus Christ. The gospels, in turn, encourage and challenge Africa to come out of hiding so that her customs may be appreciated by all and, where necessary, be purified by the same good news of Jesus Christ. It is this interaction which we call inculturating and incarnating the gospel. And it is the daily lived experience of the gospel in Africa by Africans that we call African Christian Spirituality.

### *1.1.3 New Needs call for a New Spirituality: Interdependence and Gratitude*

The incarnational character of Christian spirituality is a way of understanding and enfleshing the gospel within a specific culture and era, e.g. Liberation spirituality grew out of a “theology of liberation ... in Latin America after the close of Vatican Council II in 1965” (Wakefield 1983:247). Liberation theology/spirituality gave rise to other theologies/spiritualities such as Black theology/spirituality and Feminist theology/spirituality. These theologies/spiritualities have impacted on the world and other cultures have interpreted them according to their own needs.

South Africa too had its own form of Liberation theology and spirituality before 1994 which grew out of her cry for liberation from unjust structures. Since then her political scenario has changed. New needs have surfaced and a new spirituality is called for. In 1.1.1 above, it was mentioned that throughout history, each era found an answer to its problems when these were viewed with and in the light of God’s Holy Spirit. Whenever an area of life is seen to be in need of God’s transforming grace, there is a need for Christian spirituality. Christian spirituality embraces and transforms all

aspects of life. Contemporary Christian spirituality grows out of and is a Christian response to a specific situation and need.

What are some of South Africa's new needs which call for a new spirituality? Reflecting on the needs in South Africa the socio-political situation presents us with situations and problems from which a variety of spiritualities are possible. For example, a spirituality which seeks to dignify people through job creation and employment; a spirituality which dignifies and empowers women or children; or a spirituality which promotes holistic education and creative economics especially in the light of the spiraling level of crime etc. Each of the above themes (and many others besides these) emerge out of a given contemporary South African situation. Each is important and needs to be dealt with, one might say, immediately. However, in this paper the theme of *interdependence and gratitude* has been chosen as a possible new spirituality for South Africa. Why interdependence and gratitude? What needs suggest this particular theme? Is interdependence and its complement, gratitude, not basic to Christianity and to Africa?

Indeed it is. Interdependence and gratitude are themes integral to Africa, no matter what ethnic group one belongs to. Such themes have no colour, race, creed, culture, sex, age, religion, political bias or economic affinities. Interdependence and its complement, gratitude, are themes basic to all of life whether this is acknowledged or not. Every person, and indeed, the whole cosmos is interconnected and interdependent, gifting the universe and humanity with life. Africa's holistic view of the world and the Christian belief that "in [Christ] all things hold together" (Col 1:17) affirm this. Thus it can be said that the theme of interdependence and its complement, gratitude, is deeply African, integral to Christianity and profoundly human. Such a theme which was unheard of in apartheid South Africa. Interdependence and gratitude has been chosen as a spirituality which stands in stark contradiction to South Africa's legacy of apartheid in which the majority of the people were systematically robbed of their basic human rights through a false ideology which promoted the idea of separate development. Human rights have now been restored but a new challenge is held out to all, namely: *That the people of South Africa accept their rights as a gift which not only came with the demise of apartheid, but a gift which consciously stands in opposition to apartheid and invites them as a nation to use their rights to witness to their interdependence.* A basic attitude of gratefulness is more than the occasional 'thank you'. It is a way of life which simultaneously proclaims a sense of belonging. Interdependence and gratitude as Christian and African values touch the core of life convincing all

South Africans of their basic need and right to be acknowledged as persons. Gratitude challenges and calls forth the very best in everyone so that together they build this new nation.

To conclude: Christian spirituality is a way of being fully human, fully alive and deeply Christian, in response to the call of God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christian spirituality is incarnational, clothing itself in a specific era and culture as it seeks to answer the spiritual need of a specific people, situation and need.

African Christian spirituality and all contemporary spiritualities emerge out of specific cultures, situations and needs, ready to embrace and transform all aspects of life. Rooted in the scriptures African Christian spirituality seeks to advance the reign of God exactly there where transformation is needed and from there it overflows into the universe.

South Africa's new democracy calls for new ways of looking at reality and searching for new ways in which to bring God's transforming love to all.

## *1.2 Entitlement*

The word 'entitlement' carries some universal meaning, but seems to have a special nuance in South Africa. It was not a word used or heard much previously simply because political oppression had robbed the majority of the people of just about everything, including their human dignity. These were literally entitled to *no-thing*: not to land or occupation, not even to choosing whom they could marry or where they could live or worship. However, since 1994 when the democratic rights of all the people were restored, the word 'entitlement' is frequently used and heard. This is a new phenomenon and while it is basically good, some negative undertones are present.

The Collins dictionary explains the word 'entitlement' as "giving a person the right to do or have something; qualify; allow". Entitlement has to do with rights: the right to 'have' or 'own' something; it 'qualifies' so that a person is ready for and has the right to perform certain tasks; and it 'allows' one to do these tasks responsibly. In this section we will look at each aspect in turn and note the common thread and the nuances as we go along. Although there is a universal understanding of the word entitlement, we are particularly interested in its meaning for South Africa. This will help towards a working definition for this paper.



*Entitlement gives one the right to 'have' or 'own' something.*

Life is a gift from God and it is given us together with certain basic human rights: eg. the right to shelter, food, clothing, education, health care, etc. 'Entitlement' can have both positive and negative effects on people; it can make people other-centred and generous or self-centred and selfish. Entitlement, as mentioned, was not a word frequently used or heard in the 'old' South Africa. A brief look at history will give some indication why.

When one looks at South African politics over the past 300 years, one sees how the indigenous peoples of South Africa have been systematically stripped of their basic human rights and human dignity. In the years which followed the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652 many wars and frequent legislation by both British and Boers saw racial policies rob indigenous people of dignity, culture, right of ownership of ancestral land, family life, education, freedom. The legalization of apartheid by the Afrikaners in 1948 was the culmination of what was already being practiced under British rule. Hay says David Bosch captures the mind of the Afrikaner when the latter describes them as a people "engaged in a battle of survival" because of the experiences they endured in the British concentration camps where "[m]ore than 26 000 Afrikaner women and children died ..." (Hay 1998:22).

The great pity, Hay continues, is "that the Afrikaner[s] did not learn sufficiently from this experience but rather they replicated over decades the very thing they condemned, only more consciously and systematically" (:22) when they legalized apartheid, thereby negating the United Nations Charter which calls for and upholds the dignity and right of every human being. The apartheid law intensified and entrenched the colonial system which subjugated Africans, Coloureds and Indians. The very oppression which the Afrikaner experienced at the hands of the British, they now inflicted on the non-white races. In effect, the law placed the 'white' race *above* the 'non-white' races giving the whites rights and privileges based on the colour of skin.

Consequently, the opposite 'naturally' followed: non-whites were systematically robbed of any rights or privileges. 'Entitlement' was based on the colour of one's skin, not on human life or merit. The apartheid law was based on 'divide and rule' policy - and divide it did! 'Entitlement' and privileges began to be based on colour to such an extent that one found people 'measuring' the degrees of 'whiteness' of one's pigmentation - for the sake of better opportunities; ... of being 'entitled' to/for... Apartheid means separation. During this time not only were race groups separated, separation

happened within families and groups. The pain caused by apartheid with its opportunities or lack of opportunities still runs deep within families and society although some reconciliation and healing has begun. This is another topic.

I.J. Mosala, in recognising a history of black people before the coming of white people to South Africa, notes that blacks owned and tilled their land, had domesticated animals, and had developed social structures, based on kinship and lineage. With colonialism there was dispossession, forcible removal from their land and cattle, culminating in the 1913 Land Act which legalised the removal of land from blacks. After this there was increasing economic exploitation, until 1948 when it was reinforced and amplified by the policy of the state. "Since then the history and culture of black people has been nothing less than a litany of extreme suffering, degradation and further alienation" (:23). Noteworthy here is the fact that when blacks owned and tilled their land, the understanding of entitlement went far beyond the immediate or extended family, although family always ranked highest. Hospitality was placed high on the value scale. Friends, neighbours and visitors were treated as 'part of the family'. The produce of the land and the cattle, when slaughtered, were 'ours to share'. The land, viewed as sacred, had its secrets - medicinal secrets - which were passed on from generation to generation. To have was not to hold selfishly on to what one had, but to give thanks for, to appease the ancestors and to share. With the dispossession of land and forced removals from land and cattle, a lot of this changed. Apartheid, the struggle and the 'wars' which followed strangled almost all of this. The influence of urbanization and western civilization brought an increase in family break down and added to the degradation of blacks by creating false hopes of a better future. As a consequence the majority of the people lived only to survive. In a situation where survival is the primary value, 'I, me and mine' take precedence over 'you, yours, they and theirs'. The attitude of: this belongs to us, changed to this is mine! don't touch. Entitlement as the right to have began to create selfish people.

Apartheid as law is now something of the past but the effects still live on. A new kind of selfishness has emerged, one founded on the grounds of entitlement.

Rex Van Schalkwyk acknowledges the legitimacy of 'entitlement' when he says that "The issue of land redistribution is undoubtedly of crucial importance and there are grave moral and economic issues arising from the systematic policy of dispossession and forced removal which occurred in the past" (Van Schalkwyk 1998:65) but he also points out the negative attitude to entitlement in the

country when he says that the “word ‘demand’ has become part of the labour and industrial lexicon of South Africa” (:61) and that those who assert “entitlement of right ... are deaf to the voice of reason” (:72). He admits that demands are often justified and that they “increase in proportion to the indignation of the cause”, nevertheless there will always be “[U]nreasonable demands ... as well as the extortionate demands of those who exploit the instability of our social fabric for their own benefit” (:61).

Van Schalkwyk quotes Rabbi David Lappin who distinguishes between the positive and negative attitude towards entitlement by what the rabbi calls the ethical framework. Lappin distinguishes “...between those conscious actions performed in expectation of benefit and those performed in reciprocation of benefit. The former are actions of self-interest, expedience and politics, but the latter are an expression of ethics. If the obligation to reciprocate is absent it is not possible to formulate an ‘ethical framework’. A person’s indebtedness is discharged by reciprocation but if there is no discomfort at being indebted there is no impulse towards reciprocation. Such conduct is, according to the rabbi’s definition, unethical. ‘This becomes a serious problem ... in our society, where entitlement is stressed as a value far more than contributiveness ... If the population is taught that everyone is entitled to a job, how can we expect employees to contribute more to their work than the minimum requirements? Communicating entitlement to people breeds a culture of self-interest and expedience in which people act only in expectation of benefit. In such an environment, an ethical culture cannot take root.’” Van Schalkwyk goes on to say that “The phenomenon of entitlement and the corresponding absence of an ethical restraint is responsible for much of the misery with which the criminal plague has affected our society. If you want a car, you take it, if you want a woman, you take her and if you want a life, you extinguish it. Nothing, no law, no principle, no restraint should stand between you and your desires. It is, in fact, consumerism in anarchy” (:67-68).

Van Schalkwyk cites other examples pointing out the length to which people will go and the corruption involved in order to further their own selfish ends. As one reads on, one gets the impression that he is very biased and prejudiced in his view of ‘entitlement’: a typical response of a ‘once privileged white’ to a new democracy in which all may share equally in the country’s resources. Whatever one’s personal view, the examples cited are taken from the local news and are known to anyone who has been in the country in the last six years. The real point at issue is what Rabbi Lappin calls the ethical framework. A negative element to entitlement is the “unreciprocated benefit: the

unqualified expectation of an entitlement" (:69) even at the cost of moral principles. For Van Schalkwyk the "most enduring characteristic" encountered in "entitlement of right ... is that it cannot be engaged in rational debate. Those who assert this right are deaf to the voice of reason" (:72). Van Schalkwyk's work gives the impression that he has gone out of his way to emphasize the negative aspect of 'entitlement'. While this negative aspect does exist as a new phenomenon in South Africa, everything is not as bleak as it is made it out to be.

Entitlement as the right to have and share; to respect and to reverence; to give and receive; to acknowledge another's giftedness and the other as gift, did not simply survive the evils of apartheid, but was purified and strengthened in individuals and groups who were constantly challenged to transcend the status quo and take responsibility for the country and nation. It is this aspect of entitlement that we wish to pursue.

*Entitlement 'qualifies'; 'allows'*

Entitlement as qualifying and allowing someone to do something, almost immediately brings to mind the example of a person passing the driver's test and being qualified to drive a vehicle. These days the examination and testing for a driver's license has become sophisticated. There are a number of tests before one is qualified or even allowed on the road. The reason is simple. Driving a car demands responsibility. Each time one puts the key into the ignition, one implicitly and explicitly accepts responsibility for one's own life and the life of others.

This example of entitlement as qualifying a person can be used in many other areas of life: in school, at the work place, at home, in ministry. Every qualification 'entitles' a person to perform a certain task responsibly. It gives one the 'right', not to dominate and 'walk-over' people but of 'being allowed to'. There is an unspoken sense here of being entrusted with a privilege by a higher authority. The response to such trust is shown in responsibility and accountability.

Under the apartheid regime, the majority of South Africans were 'not allowed' - by law - to have or qualify for certain positions on the basis of colour. The Group Areas Act<sup>3</sup> caused untold suffering to African, Coloured and Indians as "People were moved from their ancestral lands; dumped in the middle of nowhere; their community fabric destroyed; their places of worship vandalised, destroyed or left to stand in waste far away from the new settlements" (:24). Whether one was qualified (had the means) to live in the city or not, one was not 'allowed' to, not 'entitled' to, on the basis of colour. Work opportunities were available or not available on the same principle: colour. Even if a black person was more highly educated and qualified than a white person, the doors were closed because of colour. To aggravate the situation, if this person was black and female, the door was not just closed but bolted!

The political situation has changed. The doors have been flung open. Irrespective of race, colour, creed or sex, opportunities are open to all. But with the package comes responsibility. We admit that gross imbalances and atrocities which took place during the apartheid era still need to be addressed and not swept under the carpet. This is not the aim of this paper. Here we simply wish to highlight some of the nuances in the word 'entitlement', so that, given the history of how the majority of South Africans were robbed of the basic necessities of life, they may develop a critical mind about what they now have in order that the best be brought out of all people for the sake of the country and world.

In summary: 'Entitlement' as *qualifying* is based on personhood, on every person being acknowledged and accepted for who s/he is as a creature made in the image of God, no matter what the person's colour, creed, sex or race. 'Entitlement' based on *being allowed to* calls forth responsibility and accountability. No one is an island. Every action has repercussions and affects others. 'Entitlement' as *having* enables one to be generous, seeing beyond one's own needs to those of others. 'Entitlement' before the colonial era and especially before 1948 enabled people to share and enrich each others lives. Colonialism and apartheid changed the lives of people such that many merely survived. Yet there were some people who transcended mere survival and continued to live a generous life.

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<sup>3</sup> The Group Areas Act was a law which forced people to live where the government moved them; people were forced to attend school or clinics, marry and worship in their 'own areas'. Business continued in the cities which meant long distance travel to and from the work place.

South Africa's new democracy brought change and the promise of a new life for all when people's rights and dignity were recognised and restored. But after years of being 'no-bodies' this newly acquired 'entitlement' found many people unprepared for the responsibility and generosity which is intrinsic to any 'entitlement'.

South Africa's democracy brought political freedom. But freedom goes beyond politics as the restlessness and dissatisfaction among her people testify. Legitimate and responsible 'entitlement' challenges South Africans to be creative in building relationships even as they together build up country and world. 'Entitlement' is a gift which comes with responsibility. When the various aspects in the concept of 'entitlement' are held together, nation building is well on the way. But when one stresses one aspect at the expense of the other, truth is distorted and becomes, as it were, lopsided. Herein lies the subtle beginnings of heresy.

### *1.3 Heresy*

In every heresy there is an element of truth. Heresies have a subtle way of distorting what is true and beautiful and holy. South Africa's new democracy has brought her people their long overdue entitlement. This is something to celebrate. Why speak of heresy? What is being distorted? And how is this being done?

Before focusing on the South African situation and the possibility of a new heresy creeping in, a brief overview of the origins and general use of the word heresy needs to be established.

When the word, heresy first appears in the NT, it is not in the modern canonical-theological sense. Coming from the Greek word, which meant to choose, it had a neutral and nonpejorative sense. It could stand for "the choice of doctrine which puts forth claims to authority" (Rahner 1969:16), as in choosing a certain teaching or school of thought (this was the understanding of the Greeks) or it could be used to designate a religious party within Judaism e.g. the Pharisees or Sadducees. Paul uses the word in this sense when he calls the Pharisees "the strictest sect [heresy] of our religion" (Act 26:5)' (Mc Donald 1967:1062). However, "When St. Paul uses the term heresy in a Christian context, the meaning is pejorative, standing for splinter groupings or movements within the Christian community which threaten Church unity (Gal 5.20; 1 Cor 11.19)" (:1062).

A further development is found in 2 Pet 2.1ff which reads: "As there were false prophets in the past history of our people, so you too will have your false teachers, who will insinuate their own disruptive views and disown the Master who purchased their freedom. They will destroy themselves very quickly; but there will be many who copy their shameful behaviour and the Way of Truth will be brought into disrepute on their account..." With this text the use of the word, heresy, takes on a sharp indication of the departure from Christian teaching. And it is this sense of the word which became predominant in the course of history. Because heresy was seen as a departure from Christian truth i.e. a departure from *the Way*, it was regarded as a grave crime in the early church. Those who fell into heresy were regarded as public sinners and had to make public reparation before being re-admitted into the church.

From the late second century, the word heresy was seen more and more as a "departure from the doctrine of the Lord as preached by the apostles" and a "departure from Christian truth" (Rahner 1969:16). Christian truth was understood to be wider than the NT writings and included dogmas. From this time, the understanding and history of heresy and heresies developed, and are to a large extent parallel to the history of dogmas.

As such, the word, heresy may come across as easy to define. Not so. Alas, history reveals that at times an idea or belief was too hastily written off as heretical and many people were unjustly condemned in the process. Galileo, Darwin and Eckhart come immediately to mind as people whose theories and works were first condemned and later exonerated.<sup>4</sup> Heresy is ambiguous by nature. It is not merely the antithesis of Christian truth or Christian dogmas for "heresy is never explained by the error as such (as a firmly held negation), but by the truth contained in the error, though one-sidedly stressed" (:19). What is really being said here is that in every heresy there is an element of truth. If error was simply error there would be no further questioning. But what constitutes a heresy is the one-sided, over-stressing of a particular aspect of a truth. "Heresies ... are almost always to be understood as views of the truth from a certain angle, which are given a falsely radical character and

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<sup>4</sup> Galileo Galilei was condemned by the Holy Office for attempting to prove the Copernican theory which "advocated a sun-centred universe in which the earth was a planet that revolved both on its axis and around the sun" (Langford 1966:251); Charles R. Darwin was denounced for his theory of evolution (Coonen 1966:651) while Meister Eckhart was condemned for his daring, playful but profound expressions, designed to provoke his hearers into attending to the divine presence within, and to the world outside (Woods 2000:346).

then split off' (:21). Seen in this light, heresies may be found in truths which go beyond dogmatic truths. We have seen that the original meaning of heresy could mean simply "to choose" i.e. being able *to select* from different schools of thought or it could mean *separation* as in belonging to different religious sects. Both these understandings belong to the fact that human beings are created with free will. To be able to choose simply means that humans are able to select and separate one 'thing' from another. So far this understanding is neutral.

Where does heresy come in? In other words, what makes our ability to choose, to select, to separate, negative? In the light of what has been said above, heresy becomes negative when choices are made in a self-centered selective way. Such choosing separates people, one from another. The undertones of this sort of choosing becomes *selective* and *separatist*. No longer is choosing simply between this item or that, but between you and me; between *your* way and *my* way; between what *I* think or believe and what *you* think and believe. Instead of the emphasis being placed on the objects of choice, emphasis is on the subjects who are choosing, placing one *above* the other; making one better, greater, richer, more intelligent etc., than the other. The gift of free choice is distorted and used to make people selective of and *separate* from one another.

This understanding is very similar to Paul's pejorative understanding of the word, when he speaks of splinter groups or movements in the Christian community which threaten the Church's unity. What began as something good and had the potential to enrich and build the people began to deteriorate into separatism and destroy unity.

One possible criteria for understanding heresy may be whether a certain understanding and its lived experience enhances life for all (including the whole cosmos) or saps and destroys life. There are no quick and easy answers. Coming to a fuller understanding of truth is a dynamic and progressive process which calls for head and heart listening, awareness, recognition, honesty, courage, all that would be needed for discerning and responding to the way of the Spirit so that our thoughts, words and actions enhance life and do not destroy life.

The truth being considered in this paper is the fundamental truth that all of life, even that which humanity is entitled to either because it is a basic human right or because people have worked hard for, is fundamentally gift, freely given and received, which simultaneously implies interdependence,



co-responsibility and accountability. Such an attitude does not allow anything to control life, not even basic human rights. Such an attitude includes an awareness of the other, a consciousness that every choice made has repercussions which either enhance or destroy life.

What does this have to say to the peoples of South Africa? For the majority of South Africans the joy and freedom of at last being acknowledged as people, as human beings, as citizens, as having the right to determine their own future is cause for celebration. Why dampen this celebration with guilt-trip ideas of gratefulness, responsibility, accountability, heresy ...?

No one denies the truth of South Africa's new freedom. Nor does anyone want to spoil the party. But the truth is that entitlement, deserved as it may be, is also gift. The challenge is to hold in balance giftedness and rights. A genuine sense that all is gift will not rob humanity of their rights but enable *all* to acknowledge and respect their own rights, the rights of others and the rights of the planet.

Heresy is subtle. It has a way of stealthily creeping in and destroying the truth as a worm gnaws and destroys a precious garment. Beginning with the truth or disguised as truth, heresy's true colours are revealed by its fruit: division. Entitlement as gift calls forth acknowledgment and respect of the other, and interdependence and connectedness with the whole. But entitlement which over-emphasises the individual's rights irrespective of the other is destructive. "By their fruits you will know them" [Mt. 7:20].

In summary: Initially heresy simply meant being able to choose. Gradually the meaning changed and took on a destructive subtlety eating into truth like a worm and dividing communities. In this context South Africa's new democracy has at last acknowledged the basic human rights for/of all her people. This is cause to celebrate. But when rights are over-stressed and become my rights, come what may, exploitation of the other, of the country, of the planet creeps in. Basic rights no longer connect people in loving concern but separate them through selfish greed, fraud, murder, crime - sin. The human rights charter which is meant to protect and enhance life is distorted so that it becomes something which gives people a false 'right' to exploit and destroy life!

The challenge facing South Africans as a people and nation is to hold in balance their giftedness and rights. A genuine sense that all is gift will not rob them of their rights but enable them to

acknowledge and respect the rights of every citizen and build a new nation founded on interdependence and gratefulness.

#### 1.4 Gift and Gratitude<sup>5</sup>

At the heart of Christian spirituality is the theme of gift and gratitude, a theme integrally connected with relationships. Christian spirituality is - among other things - relational. Relatedness is found first and foremost within the Trinity, but also between God and humanity, humans among themselves and humanity with the cosmos. The Christ-event which is the source of Christian spirituality is an experience of the total self-giving of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Speaking on the Incarnation, Rahner speaks of God, as "the Absolute" who, "in ... pure freedom ... in and by the fact that he empties *himself* gives away *himself*" (Rahner, Vol 4: 1966:114).

Gratitude is a response to another for a gift received. The reciprocity in gift and gratitude is a reciprocity of self; of two people in a relationship of self giving; of self emptying and receiving. The theme of gift and gratitude is basic to life and found in the ideal values upheld by every culture.

For Brother David Steindl-Rast gratefulness is "the measure of our aliveness" (1984:12) and awareness to all the surprises of life. "[Surprise] in the full sense means somehow gratuitous" (:9). This is not limited to the unpredictable. "Even the predictable turns into surprise the moment we stop taking it for granted" (:9). South Africa's peaceful democratic election and transition of 1994 was indeed a surprise both for her people and the world. Kaizer Nyatumba reminds South Africans that "Carping about new SA ignores miracle of transition" ... "We have a lot to be thankful for", (Star, 15 March 2000:16). Gratefulness involves the whole person: intellect, will and feelings. While "... intellect should be alert enough to look through the predictable husks of things to their core and find there a kernel of surprise" (:13) the "will must acknowledge its gift character" (:14).

According to Steindl-Rast the one reason why people find it difficult to acknowledge a gift as a gift is the fear that "when I acknowledge something as gift, I admit my dependence on the giver" (:15). This fear is understandable. "Mere dependence is slavery" (:16) but in sincere gift-giving there is a

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<sup>5</sup> The words: *Gratitude* and *Gratefulness* are used interchangeably in this thesis.

give and take by both parties. "The receiver of the gift depends on the giver ... But the circle of gratefulness is incomplete until the giver of the gift becomes the receiver: the receiver of thanks" (:17).

Paul F. Camenisch, writing of 'Gift and Gratitude in Ethics' finds the two categories of 'gift and gratitude' on the increase in contemporary ethical writings and especially in religious writings. He points out how different writers have stressed that all is gift. He quotes Fletcher in saying that "Christian ethics ... should be a eucharistic ethic, an ethic of thanksgiving" (1981:1)<sup>6</sup>. Steindl-Rast speaks of gift and gratitude as mutual interdependence. He writes: "The greatest gift one can give is thanksgiving... in giving thanks we give ourselves. One who says 'Thank you' to another really says, 'We belong together'" (Steindl-Rast 1984:17).

Camenisch's interest lies in the moral relation and obligations between donor and recipient regarding gift and gratitude. This is an important aspect of this paper in the light of South Africa's apartheid past and new call to interdependence.

Like the word love, the word gift means different things to different people. Camenisch sums up his definition of the core reality of gift as "unearned benefit received from a donor" (1981:1). He then elaborates and unpacks his definition in fuller detail: gift, he continues, is

"(1) some value (2) intentionally bestowed by a donor, who gives it primarily to benefit the recipient, upon (3) a recipient who (a) accepts it knowing that it is given as a gift, (b) agreeing with the donor that it is a benefit, (c) who has no right to or claim upon it and (d) who is not expected to pay for it in the future in any usual way (i.e., in no specific way in which roughly equivalent value is returned); and (4) which brings into being a new moral relationship between recipient and donor and the acceptance of limits upon the use of the gift" (:2).

Regarding "gratitude" he writes:

"Gratitude" refers "to the expected and appropriate, but not, in the fullest sense, obligatory attitudinal response of the recipient to the gift which is rightly expected to be manifested in the recipient's subsequent conduct toward the donor, toward the gift and, in some cases toward relevant third parties" (:2).

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<sup>6</sup> I am particularly indebted to Paul F. Camenisch for his contribution to the meaning of "Gift and Gratitude" in his work on *Gift and Gratitude in Ethics*.

Various aspects in these two definitions will be dealt with so as to absorb the richness within each.

*Gift as Moral relation*

A gift is always “something of value given to one unearned and undeserved” (:2) at some cost to the donor and to the benefit of the recipient. Gifts are given for a reason, the most fundamental of which is the “deep seated and universal desire to give oneself” (:2). Camenisch stresses the fact that a gift only becomes a gift through the will and the intention of the donor. He speaks of the relation between giver and recipient in gift-giving and receiving, as a moral responsibility. The moral relationship is mutual. Generally one gives gifts to those whom one knows. In this case the gift befits the recipient and both parties are affirmed, the one through giving, the other in the response of gratitude which ensues.

A gift can also produce negative vibes, for example when the donor “is seen as powerful and bountiful, and the recipient, conversely, as weak, needy, impoverished, even dependent” (:3). Not every exchange of gift is between equals nor can one presume that gifts are always given for the good of the other. Much depends on the donor’s intentions. Gifts can be used to dominate another, to win power for oneself, to boost one’s ego or for any other selfish aim. Whether this kind of ‘gifting’ deserves the name gift is questionable.

The best measure of real gift-giving is the measure of ‘self’ given in a gift, no matter how influential the donor is. Genuine self-giving never makes the recipient feel belittled or weak or dependent, no matter how materially poor the recipient. The reason is simple. In such an exchange the recipient is capable of the same reality of self-giving! This sort of giving affirms both parties. Nevertheless Camenisch holds that no matter whether the gift-giving calls forth positive or negative responses “gift is more than a simple transfer of some value between two agents, ... it is the ground for and a part of a much more complex reality - a moral relationship which is more profound and more enduring in its impact on the participants than is the simple act of transfer itself” (:4).

### *Gifts and Obligations*

For Camenisch the moral relationship which begins in these transfers includes some sort of moral obligation. Even the popular view that a gift is a gift only when there are no strings attached has moral implications. This is not immediately or easily recognizable and is often denied but as Camenisch argues “if there are no strings attached to gifts, why have so many of us wanted to decline gifts from persons with whom we wished to have no further relations? Was it not precisely because we perceived that, in accepting the gift, we were consenting to such relations in a morally significant way? And if there are no obligations attached to gifts and their acceptance, why is ingratitude so universally and so vehemently condemned as a moral failure or defect?” (:5).

While “not all the elements of this moral relationship can be expressed in terms of obligations” (:5), because gift-giving and gratitude are often spontaneous and natural arising out of genuine love, it is nevertheless important that moral obligations are looked at seriously because this is often the expected, if not explicit, response.

It is important to recognize and state that gift is not a naked, unadorned phenomenon; it is not something which is transferred from here to there like a piece of paper tossed by the wind from one place to another. Unlike the paper which comes from no-one and is being blown to no-one, a gift exchange happens “between two persons whose being as moral agents is involved in the gift event in several ways” (:6). When such gift-giving is a giving of oneself and when this exchange occurs between mature people, the moral relations are reciprocal. Each party has the “rights *and* duties, or benefits *and* costs arising from the relation” (:5). Neither is permanent donor or permanent recipient, for this would no longer fall within the range of mutual relation but rather of donor and beggar or dependent. For Steindl-Rast, ‘*and*’ is the decisive word, holding the giving and receiving exchange in balance and expressing mutual reciprocity of the self-gift.

A wide variety of gift relations exists and within these certain gift obligations. Camenisch speaks of “three distinct categories of such obligations” namely (1) grateful conduct (2) grateful use and (3) feeling grateful for the gift or feeling grateful towards the giver. All three elements are part of the total gift relation. *Grateful conduct* can be demonstrated in a myriad of ways from a simple ‘thank you’ and/or a return gift, to dedicating one’s entire life to serving the donor. Grateful conduct has direct relations to the donor. *Grateful use* is more concerned with the recipient’s relation to the gift

itself. Yet there is a sense in which even when gifts are given 'with no strings attached' one is aware of the donor and there is a certain obligation to use the gift in a way which is fitting (whatever this may mean). Both grateful conduct and grateful use point to gratefulness to the donor. In both instances one can 'see' gratefulness.

The third element, however, "the attitudinal element in the duty of grateful response, that of gratitude" is difficult to discern or to clarify:

"The acceptance of a gift implies that the recipient feels gratitude for what is being offered. Therefore, to avoid misleading others, gifts should not be accepted unless such is felt. Exceptions occur where the recipient is willing to go through the rather harmless charade of "grateful" acceptance in the absence of any felt gratitude to protect a valued relationship. But this does not change the fact that it is generally assumed that a grateful response will spring from the recipient's gratitude to the giver for the gift. However, the recipient is not obligated to feel such gratitude, for one's attitudinal or affective self is not sufficiently under one's direct control to be subject to moral obligations" (:10-11).

In the South African context this attitudinal element in gift and gratitude is a difficult and sensitive subject. The question arises: In a country where the legal system created division, inequality, and subdivisions of people so that some 'had' and others 'had not', who needs to be grateful to whom, now that the political scene has changed? This was the reaction I received at the mere mention of gift and gratitude in South Africa: the so-called 'donors' are seen as 'thieves' who are returning what rightly belonged to the indigenous peoples, while the former consider themselves as having worked hard for what they now own.

This sort of reaction was a real challenge to this topic, this thesis and to this spirituality. But challenge can be good. It forces one to look again, to question, to listen. At no time is the pain, hurt, humiliation and anger of the previously oppressed people played down. Much pain still lies deep in many hearts and needs to be acknowledged and addressed. But South Africa is in a new political arena. There is a new call for *all her* people.

In a milieu of pain, humiliation and degradation people found ways not only of surviving but of living! They never forgot their family stories and songs. Between tears, they found reason to laugh. The little they had they shared. They continually reminded one another in a variety of creative ways that one day it would be different; that one day they would have their own land, homes, and country. They kept hope alive and would not allow their dream to die.

Now South Africa is free. And while there are issues still in the process of being addressed, rights not gifts have been restored! Why be grateful and to whom?

A kind of proportionality governs a recipients' obligations and a donor's motivations. In the South African situation the donors are indebted to the recipients in such a way that that which is given is often not gift but right or entitlement. Lyons, in Camenisch, "suggests that we have a right to be helped when our benefit exceeds the cost to the one helping *and* there is no real risk to the helper's life. Such a right would in these cases cancel gratitude and its attendant obligations since we do not owe gratitude to another for respecting our rights" (:13). True, one does not owe gratitude to another for one's rights. No one can command gratitude or gratefulness, yet as Berger states "Gratitude ... is a response to benevolence" and Camenisch responds to this by saying that "regardless of the benefits and their costs, the mere fact of the donor's good will toward me brings some obligation to bear. In fact, Kant ... goes so far as to suggest that 'Even a mere heartfelt benevolence, apart from any such act (of benevolence), is already a ground of obligation to gratitude'" (:13).

It seems that even if all that is received is basic rights, an *attitude* of gratefulness - which cannot be weighed, measured or commanded - is certainly not an inappropriate response to life. Such an attitude allows people to take control of their life, to make deliberate and responsible choices, and not become slaves to circumstances. Such an attitude, when it has become part of life, can only add greater inner freedom to political freedom, because one realizes that life and happiness do not depend on *what one has* but on *who one is*. This realization brings an inner peace which enables a person to be outward looking and other-centred.

#### *The Non-Obligatory Side of Gifts and Gratitude*

Having acknowledged that, even in the no-strings attached view of gifts, a moral obligation does exist in gift-giving and receiving, and the intention of the donor affects the response of the recipient, we now turn our attention to the non-obligatory side of gifts and gratitude.

The first thing to note is that "gift is more and richer than obligation" and "gratitude is more than debt or obligation" (:14). Indeed, the more one stresses obligation, the more the many rich elements of gift and gratitude are distorted, obscured or even lost. The more one speaks of obligation and duty

where gift is concerned, the less free, open, spontaneous and personally involving the relationship. Therefore to stress obligation strongly or "to rely exclusively on the language of obligation is to lose sight of gifts as the free and joyous coming together of two persons in a mutually enriching and caring relationship" ... in a ... "mutual celebration of the presence of the other as gift" (:15). This beauty was virtually impossible during the apartheid era. It is something South Africans will either have to learn or relearn as they move together into the new millennia.

How then does one speak of these beautiful, freeing and life-giving dimensions of gift and gratitude so that one captures the reality and the tone and goes beyond obligation and duty? To Camenisch this is not easy as the term gratitude itself stands in some tension with the idea of being obligated. For example someone may ask: "Do you feel obligated to Tom for what he did?" and the response is: "Well, no. But I certainly feel grateful?" (:15). It seems that part of this tension arises from the fact that obligation is seen as coming from the 'outside' whereas *gratitude is an attitude which wells up from within and flows out* so that one does not feel pushed or pressurized to feel grateful. Rather one experiences an inner freedom which enables one to simply be grateful or as Camenisch describes and defines it: "One simply *is* grateful. Thus a grateful response is, by definition, more spontaneous, more autonomous than an act constrained by a sense of being under an obligation" (:15). Such spontaneity and autonomy also allows a grateful response to be more open, flexible and creative than obligation which is often specific in its direction and content. This makes the grateful person freer than the obligated one. Such a person is aware of his/her gratefulness but does not experience being constrained or pressurized to express gratitude in a confining or precise way or, for that matter, within a specified time. One's creativity is given space, time and scope. Unlike some obligations, this is dignifying!

Such a definition and description of gratitude and gratefulness is immediately attractive. It has an affirming nature about it as it calls forth a creative and more authentic response from a recipient. It is this kind of 'gratitude' that is used to express the non-obligatory dimensions of the gift relation.

But, as has been pointed out, gratitude also has some hint of obligation about it. How can this kind of gratitude be non-obligatory? Here Camenisch speaks of two situations in which gifts can be given: a) gifts can be given to initiate a relation; or b) gifts can be given to deepen an existing relationship. He speaks of these as *initiating gifts* or *sustaining gifts*.



a) *Initiating gifts*: In this kind of gift-giving, a relationship is being initiated, being called into being. The relationship does not exist. A gift is offered and a response is being called forth. Camenisch speaks of this as 'gift-call' because there is as yet no relationship. The call is not a form of response but rather an interpretation of the gift and its meaning which no doubt could invite a response.

At this stage Camenisch chooses to introduce the theme of 'grace' which can also be understood as initiating gift, given or offered to one unearned, which invites one into a relationship with God and calls for a response which goes beyond pure obligation. "*Grace has never had a single meaning in Catholic theology or doctrine. In the most basic sense ... grace refers to the favor God bestows upon us: the gift of divine life itself*" (McBrien 1994:171). The different meanings of grace depend on the contexts in which the term is used, for example: in the Old Testament grace designates a quality which shows favour through gifts (Gen 33:11), children (Gen 33:5), deliverance (Ps 4:2). Nevertheless this favour is shown "*freely*" (:172). In the New Testament grace takes on a variety of meanings, for example, "*the goodwill of God* (Acts 14:26) ... *the Gospel itself* (Acts 13:43) ... *the principle of Christian life, action and mission* (Acts 6:8) ... *power* (Rom 12:3). (:173). The doctrine of grace, rich as it is, developed in response to certain major heresies.<sup>7</sup> Basic to the many meanings of grace is that "of freely bestowed love" in which "God does not confer on [humanity] merely created gifts as a token of [God's] love. God communicates *himself*" (Rahner 1975:588) inviting humanity into an intimate relationship of love which, however, must "be freely accepted by [humanity] through [their] self-commitment to God in faith and love" (Neuner & Dupuis 1992:597). Although humanity's response to this relationship is in itself made possible by God's grace, humanity remains free to accept or decline.

Initiating gifts have no obligation attached and leave the recipient free to accept or decline but either way, the decision affects the donor who remains vulnerable until the acceptance or rejection is made known. As most gifts involve a certain self-giving by the donor, acceptance or rejection will be seen as acceptance or rejection, not simply of some thing but acceptance or rejection of a possible relationship. While this can cause pain and hurt to the donor, strictly speaking there is no moral

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<sup>7</sup> For further reading on the Catholic Church's teaching on grace, see: Neuner J. & Dupuis J: "*The Christian Faith*"

McBrien R: *Catholicism*

Rahner K: *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*

obligation on the side of the recipient to oblige the donor. Such a situation therefore, cannot be said to be right or wrong; still less, sinful. Because there is no penalty to declining the invitation and no obligation attached to the invitation, because the recipient is free to respond out of his/her own convictions and values, a grateful and free response which comes from within is all the more valuable to both parties.

Yet the recipient does, in a sense, lose out if the choice is made to decline the gift/call/invitation, not because of a moral violation but because of a "lost opportunity to grow and enrich one's life. Invitations, gifts and calls present the prospective recipient with opportunities to enter into relations with others which can be mutually rewarding, which can enrich one's world by including other persons, by calling forth untapped potential, by offering new challenges which cannot be met in the old established ways" (Camenisch 1981:17-18). Thus an opportunity for growth and enrichment is lost when the gift is declined. This involves a different kind of morality. It is not based on laws or obligations, nor on doing the right or wrong thing, nor are punishment or failure involved, but a morality which misses out on opportunities for a richer and fuller life for oneself and others.

If this is so, can one really speak of a *free response*? Is there not in some sense an element of ought, of obligation? Ought one not desire a richer, fuller life which comes from answering invitations? Ought one not to do this in order to become one's best self? Yes. But one remains free. Any genuine choosing is free choosing. Therefore to choose not to enter into a new relationship is a free choice, just as to choose to enter into a relationship is and must be a free choice. To choose not to enter into a new relationship may mean that one has missed an opportunity to move beyond oneself and one's small world into a richer and broader one. Gifts are invitations which allow for flexibility and creativity, for deepening and extending relations.

Many South Africans are beginning to find themselves in this initial stage of gift-giving. For too long they have been separated from one another by the Group Areas Act. Now barriers are down and for the first time they are beginning to discover one another. Gift-giving which reaches beyond one's own and initiates new relationships is a new challenge. Donors make themselves vulnerable to

recipients who in turn have to work through layers of mistrust before responding favourably. Both are called to transcend the known and move beyond. Both are called to conversion<sup>8</sup>.

b) *Sustaining Gifts*: In this situation gifts sustain and deepen an already existing relationship. The gift becomes a symbol of something larger than itself. Symbols express that which they symbolize. As such it is “not something separate from the symbolized ... which indicates the object but does not contain it. On the contrary, the symbol is the reality, constituted by the thing symbolized as an inner moment ... of itself, which reveals and proclaims the thing symbolized, and is itself full of the thing symbolized, being its concrete form of existence” (Rahner 1966:251). Put another way, a symbol does not “represent an absent and merely promised reality”, rather it “exhibits this reality as something present, by means of the symbol formed by it” (:245). Symbols are dynamic. They involve us. Unlike signs which merely point to or represent something but which do not involve one in any significant way, symbols have a power of drawing us into the reality to which they point, into the mystery they represent.

Sustaining gifts act as symbols in an already existing relationship. In the gift two persons meet and the meeting is one of trust, not as in initiating gifts which is a trust which hopes for a response, but a trust which knows that a relation exists and is ‘content’ to leave the recipient free to respond in his/her own time and manner. If grace as initiating gift invites humanity into a relationship with God, grace as sustaining gift sustains and deepens this relationship through the action of the Holy Spirit who “dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful” (LG #4).

Sustaining gifts are defined in terms of relations. Such gifts are a way of reaffirming and deepening the relation and as relations are always in process, so the recipient’s acceptance acts as a reaffirmation and deepening of the relation. This, of course, is not the only reason for gift-giving as if the relation constantly needs confirmation. Gift-giving “will be given also as an embodiment of the meaning of the relation - the desire of the friends or covenant partners to share things as well as themselves with one another, the desire to enrich one another’s life, to bring them joy and pleasure, to express their affection for one another” (Camenisch 1981:19). In such gift-giving ‘the other’ is the important party. The gift is the symbol, the outward ‘sign’ of a deeper reality of a love relation. If the gift would

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<sup>8</sup> Conversion will be dealt with in Chapter 3.

become a formal reaffirmation, there is probably no relation left to be sustained and sooner or later both will end. Gifts which are genuine symbols of a love relation are always "expressions of freedom" and mutual respect and self-giving where "in the act of giving itself without abandoning itself" (Splett 1975:1656-7) ... the partners are drawn into the mystery of one another. Such giving has, as it were, the power to unify and set free at the same time.

Although many South Africans are only beginning to 'discover' one another now, many good and lasting friendships were made across the colour and culture lines during the apartheid era. Perhaps one could say that many of these relationships struck the first blows to the apartheid wall.

Having seen that both gift and gratitude have an obligatory and non-obligatory side, one may ask what makes the difference. The answer lies in the relationship between recipient and donor. When obligations are violated in an obligatory gift relation, the judgment is harsh, whereas failure to fulfill non-obligatory elements are treated with gentleness and understanding. In the same vein, obligations which are violated are violations in the strong sense, they are moral failures, whereas failure to fulfill non-obligatory elements are seen as missed opportunities for growth.

At no time is this meant to sound as if this is an either-or situation. A mixture of the two sides remains in gift and gratitude. Between a calculated response on the one hand and a pure expression of love on the other, there are many ways and reasons to respond.

#### *Gifts, Gratitude and Moral Agenthood*

Until now gift and gratitude were viewed primarily as action: giving and receiving. We turn our attention now to the agent, to one's motivation, to the inner springs of moral action, to gratitude as a way of life.

Having agreed that one cannot oblige another to *feel* gratitude for a gift, no one would argue against the fact that feeling gratitude towards a giver is an entirely appropriate response. "Where gratitude arises as an authentic, spontaneous response to a gift, it is not puzzling that it can motivate an agent to certain kinds of action" (Camenisch 1981:23). Such gratitude or thankfulness wells up from within and acts like a bubbling spring which fills up and flows out into action. This action is not

confined to gratitude to the donor. Although actions may begin in a private way, the grateful person "having experienced the goodness of unearned benefits and of the kinds of relations they entail now wants to reciprocate, and to do similar things for others" (:23). Thus gratitude "can motivate us to a general way of life in which the giftedness of our total existence comes to color our entire outlook" (:23). This sort of gratefulness stretches and expands one's world and one's relations. From a one-to-one social exchange and bond of friendship, one's relations expand to include the world. True, every relationship will not be at the same depth but "gratitude as the salient characteristic, the dominant mood or theme of a total way of life" (:23) will flow out of those few but special relations where gift-giving and receiving are affirmations of appreciation and love.

"The person or group living out of such a comprehensive sense of gratitude will live with a joyful sense of the interrelatedness of things whereby life is enriched by the generosity of persons or powers outside themselves. Their lives will reflect the conviction that the goodness of life is not grounded primarily in themselves, in their own efforts and accomplishments - what they have earned, nor in their rights - that to which they have a legitimate, even an enforceable claim. As Tournier ... rightly notes, 'No gift can bring joy to the one who has a right to everything'" (:23).

"Gratitude is closely bound up with generosity" (:24). A grateful person cannot but move out and beyond his/her own world. Awareness and assimilation of the goodness and kindness one has received enables one to introject a more friendly world.

But not everyone is ready to share and not necessarily because people are stingy but simply because pain and fear can block out beauty. Pain and fear are still very much a part of South Africa's present reality ...

nevertheless

South Africa needs prophets of hope, people who will not deny the ugly, the bad, the evil and the sin, but who still point out areas of goodness, of beauty, of opportunities for growth, creativity and enrichment; people who will challenge others to open their eyes and see that "the life of gratitude arising from seeing oneself largely as the beneficiary of the generosity of others is a distinctive mode of life" ... that "such a positive, grateful outlook can sometimes dominate the life of an entire culture" (:24). Some may consider this far fetched. Yet just ten minutes set aside in one's busy schedule to consider how one is the beneficiary of the generosity of others will fill one with amazement. For example: consider the people involved in providing one's early cup of tea; breakfast; hot water; municipal services, transport, South Africa's freedom and democracy etc?

The list is endless. Interdependence, especially when it cut across racial lines, existed even in the height of the apartheid era, but it was neither acknowledged nor appreciated as such. Reflection on humans' inter-connectedness with life, their interdependence on one another and the whole of creation cannot but evoke an awareness which gives rise to gratitude. Such an awareness and attitude to life is open to and affects all people irrespective of colour, class, sex, creed or age. An integrated way of life which overflows into gratefulness is basic to Africa and to Christianity. It has been said that the Christian ethic should be an ethic of thanksgiving, of gratefulness. Perhaps this is why the eucharist is the heart of the Christian life and worship. We will return to this in Chapter 5.

In conclusion: Gift and gratitude are at the heart of life. Gratitude implies a response to a gift given and received; it implies a relationship. And life is comprised of relationships. Some gifts initiate relationships while other gifts sustain them. In any exchange at some moment both donor and recipient stand vulnerable before the other because the gift is not simply something but oneself! In this open moment, there is no greater or smaller, no colour, class or creed. Just two people who are part of the great network of humanity and the universe, vulnerable to each other, waiting and free to make their contribution to life through their own self-gift.

In the South African situation some gift-giving is initiating new relationships; some gift-giving is sustaining existing relationships. People have begun to acknowledge themselves as gifted, graced and part of a greater reality, one which not only connects them as a nation but one which embraces Africa and the world.

### *1.5 Conclusion*

This chapter considered the general and specific meanings of Spirituality, Entitlement, Heresy, and Gift and Gratitude. At each stage a connection or comparison was made with the South African experience.

Christian spirituality is about life in the Spirit while being rooted in daily life experience. Inspired by the scriptures especially the gospels it seeks to advance the reign of God wherever transformation is needed and overflows into the universe.

South Africa's new democracy brought political freedom and entitlement to all her people. Old barriers which once separated people are broken down. Dignity is restored and opportunities are open to all. South Africans are no longer 'separated' from one another. They are one nation. They belong to one another. Their entitlement, their right to life, is a gift and a responsibility. When they can hold both aspects together, they are well on the way to nation building.

But they run the risk of falling into heresy when entitlement is over stressed and responsibility is neglected. Heresies contain elements of truth but have a way of subtly destroying that which is good. South Africa's new democracy has at last acknowledged the basic human rights of all. This is cause to celebrate and to celebrate together. However when 'rights' become demands, come what may, exploitation begins. Basic rights no longer connect people in loving concern but separates them from one another in selfish greed, fraud and murder, all that is called crime and sin.

The challenge facing this people and nation is to hold in balance their giftedness and their rights. A genuine sense that all is gift will not rob them of their rights but enable them to see beyond *me and mine and what I can get*, to *yours and ours and what I can offer*. They will know and live the meaning of interdependence and gratefulness not out of some sense of duty but from a sense of belonging.

South Africa's new reality calls for a new critical look at contemporary needs in order to search for new ways in which to bring God's transforming love to all.

## ***CHAPTER 2. READING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES***

The quest for meaning is probably as old as humanity itself. It seems true to say that in every generation one finds people who have tried to “understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of (our) world” (GS #4) in order to offer a service to humanity. Speaking of the mission of the Catholic church in the modern world, Vatican Council II says that “At all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (:#4) in order to help people reflect on this present life, its meaning and relation to life hereafter.

Awareness of the signs of the times is meant to enable us to become aware of and reflect on God’s presence or absence in a particular situation. We have already noted that particular spiritualities arose in response to God’s call to address particular needs.

What is South Africa’s particular situation which is in need of God’s transforming love? Elements of South African history have constantly been high lighted in Chapter 1. Other examples will be found in Chapter 3. All the examples show the need for change, conversion, healing. The reader is invited to extract these areas as areas in need of God’s transforming love. In addition, a few extracts from recent newspapers are given below. Here the bad news which, sadly, often makes the headlines and dominates the news will be given. The ‘good news’ which is often hidden or in small print will be high lighted in Chapter 5.

### ***2.1 South Africa’s Contemporary Situation***

One need not page too far into any newspaper or listen too long to the radio or television to realise that 90% of the news which is written or broadcast is bad news! Why is it that only the bad news seems to make the headlines? What does this do to a people? Is the situation really so bad? Is the future really so bleak? Or is there a chance, however small, that the 10% good news may slowly but steadily come out from the middle or back pages and make it to the front page and even the headlines? Or better still, that the good news may ‘dominate’ media reports. What a difference this would make to society!



The following are a few extracts of 'bad news' from newspapers. Extracts such as these help to bring or deepen a sense of disillusionment, despondency and restlessness that sometimes borders on despair in the country.

The Star ... 22 December 1998: A study by the Human Sciences Research Council shows that, coupled with "ignorance of the criminal justice system ... relating to gender crimes" and "an embarrassment to talk about crimes committed against them, including rape", most women find themselves neglected or discriminated against by the police and courts because, "[w]hereas the system was seen to be harsh and insensitive towards victims, especially women, it was seen to be lenient towards perpetrators ..."

The Star ... 28 July 1999: Angus Tshabalala researching for Soul City says that "in South Africa, violence against women has reached alarming proportions ... that every six days a woman is killed by an abusive partner" and that worse still "society tended to condone violence against women ... as a private matter between husband and wife".

The Star ... 1 November 1999: "Victim of senseless violence ... Rethabile Tsunyane (9), a Grade 2 pupil, was shot and killed on Saturday afternoon ... in an apparent case of road rage."

The Star ... 3 November 1999: There is growing "concern as more and more cases of sexual abuse by young teenagers are reported to police, already under strain from huge caseload".

Saturday Star ... 4 March 2000: "Wemmer Pan lost its lustre as a place for carefree leisure pursuits when Cedric Maake instituted his reign of terror ... A smile followed by a fatal hammer attack or a shot to the head was Cedric Maake's modus operandi ... The trial of Cedric Maupa Maake has sent a chill through a society that has labelled him the country's most notorious serial killer..."

The Star ... 9 March 2000: "An Alexandra family mourned the brutal slaying of a woman, allegedly by her former lover, as the world commemorated International Women's Day yesterday".

Such attacks against women and children which appear almost daily in the newspapers seem to continue without any social analysis and a way forward. While it is true that much of the above existed throughout history and in South Africa even during the apartheid era, with the dawn of democracy certain expectations arose of a 'new South Africa' where dignity and equality would be upheld, where all would have the *right* to be, the *right* to choose and the *right* to live freely and holistically. Was this a new ideology, something unattainable or was it a utopian dream, idealistic but willing to enter into a dialectical relationship with the social order and evolve mutually?<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Karl Mannheim claims that the "criterion" for distinguishing between an ideology and utopia "is their realization. Ideas which later turned out to have been only distorted representations of a past or potential social order were ideological, while those which were adequately realized in the succeeding social order were relative utopias" (Mannheim 1979:184)

Expectations of a better life was seen to be more than another ideology. Yet media reports and the disillusionment and despondency that exists attest to something going horribly wrong.

What is wrong? The above excerpts of bad news are only a very few from the many one could choose, but they are capable of giving rise to pertinent questions, calling for positive action. However, people can also ask the wrong questions, questions which lead to deeper despondency and hopelessness. Only when South Africans recognize and learn to name their unfreedoms will they be able to ask intelligent, action-packed questions.

Perhaps beginning with the positive and recognizing that something is missing will call forth such questioning. When people begin to see themselves as part of a wider network of people, they will begin to ask questions which highlight values of mutual sharing, of respect, of co-responsibility, etc., questions which lead to positive action. The Ubuntu values of interconnectedness and belonging which are basic to nature and to Christianity, hold out challenges and values of life not death, although there may be times when death is the only way to life.

## 2.2 *"Entitlement": A modern day heresy?*

The meaning of 'entitlement' has already been treated in 1.2. Among other things it was noted that entitlement is a gift which comes with human life. It is basic to human dignity and all life. As South Africa's old dispensation systematically robbed the majority of her people of their land, identity and dignity, what these people had previously owned and been entitled to was taken away. Yet as we have also seen, many were able to transcend their plight and move out in love and generosity to others. With the 1994 elections the political scene changed and the people's dignity was restored. At last all are entitled to the benefits of the country. But it was also noted that entitlement qualifies a person to carry out certain actions and duties with responsibility and accountability. Entitlement is something positive, challenging, even demanding. It calls forth the best in a person and when lived in a responsible way, makes for a mature person, culture and society. Entitlement is a gift which calls for recognition, respect and celebration. The Bill of Rights in South Africa's Constitution enumerates the *rights* of its citizens, what all are *entitled to*. The Bill energizes and empowers as it tries to recognize every person and group and right the past. The Bill of Rights is written to protect each citizen and to build the nation.

Where then, does heresy come in? How does one come to speak of heresy in the face of a basic gift? To have longed for, lived for and died for what every citizen is entitled to, how can this now destroy a nation? A heresy, it was agreed, is the over-stressing of one aspect of a truth such that domination and division begin to exist between those who hold different opinions. This is where awareness of the subtle nuances of entitlement is necessary. When rights are pushed to extremes such that people are prepared to kill for what they consider theirs, then entitlement becomes a negative element in life, separating and dividing people from one another and from the whole as each holds tightly onto what s/he is *entitled to*. Such entitlement no longer enhances life but destroys and kills. Such a self-centred attitude to entitlement may be a natural reaction to South Africa's past but it cannot be permanently excusable. The gift of entitlement must not be allowed to deteriorate into heresy. By searching for the truth, reaction can be converted into *response*.

### 2.3 *Searching for the Truth*

If the gift of entitlement has the potential to build or destroy, how can people change their way of thinking and acting so that all can benefit and celebrate their 'rights'? What do they need to do or perhaps become, so that a new kind of apartheid - *separatism* - does not creep in?

To begin with it is necessary to acknowledge that after years of oppression, the people of South Africa are at last free and their rights have been restored. This means that all are entitled to the basic needs of life and this is reason to celebrate.

In the same breath, it is necessary to recognize that together with attaining citizenship comes responsibility and accountability. This means that although every citizen is entitled to the basic needs of life, that these are theirs by right and that they can therefore expect them, their *attitude* to these needs and to life as a whole is what really matters. For example: the truth about such basic needs as water, food, shelter, education, health care, employment etc. is that every person needs these to live and develop physically, mentally, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. But as one receives these necessities of life, one can simply accept them without further thought or they can connect one to the many people behind the scenes who provide these facilities.

The truth that needs to be recovered is that even the most basic necessities of life are gifts, given by God through human agents with an obligation attached: the obligation to enhance one's own life and the life of others. Nothing is given simply for oneself. All of life is a gift to be lived with and for others.

Apartheid divided people, democracy can 'connect' them. Everyone has the *right* to choose and make their own decisions. This is the time to choose to re-connect with the many from whom they were once separated. Basic needs - that which all are entitled to - can be a vehicle, if people so choose.

#### **2.4 Conclusion: A New Crossroads**

From all that has been said above, the situation raises some important questions and challenges for all South Africans and for Christians in particular. Before moving on, let us briefly summarize our journey thus far.

New spiritualities arise in response to specific situations in need of God's redeeming love. The joy and enthusiasm of South Africa's new democracy is often overshadowed by reports of crime and violence which take precedence in media reports. South Africa's newly acquired democracy has restored the rights and dignity of her people but an over-stressing of my rights to the detriment of the rights of others poses a threat to what is essentially gift. Six years down the line, a new challenge to see the rights of others beyond me and mine to the truth of interdependence and connectedness is being held out to all.

For many the past was one of deprivation, survival and of living on the edge. A swing to the opposite extreme, therefore, is somewhat 'natural'. But this paper is concerned with rational beings who have the ability to think, to reflect, to make choices, to decide their course of life and how they wish to live. Humans are gifted with the power to choose what they wish to become.

South Africans stand at a new crossroads. Their new democracy has empowered them to make pro-life choices for themselves and the country as a whole. Where do they go from here? Political freedom is not enough. Interior change is needed to boost their political change and set their hearts free from the restlessness that pursues them. There are many ways for this to be done. The TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) provided one way by setting up structures which enabled

people to come to some inner release. This thesis proposes another way, a way considered vital for all people whoever and wherever they may be: it is the way which stands in opposition to apartheid by acknowledging the gift and therefore the interdependence of all people. It is offered as a new spirituality for an old people wanting to build a new country and a new nation. What it proposes is a spirituality in which the people of South Africa learn see one another and all of life as gift and thus become an appreciative nation. This is no easy spirituality no matter how easy it may look or sound. When South Africans dig into their past, into their cultural and religious treasure boxes, they will see that interdependence, gratefulness and sharing was an integral part of life, though often hidden or disguised. The challenge facing them is to find ways of recovering this treasure and bringing it out into the open.

This calls for a new way of seeing and a new way of being. To see one another as gift and to be an appreciative person, people and nation in South Africa today demands a radical change of heart, a conversion on every level of life. The new crossroads at which this people now stands demands some hard choices in order to change the status quo of moral and social decline in which blaming and mistrust continue to exist to new and creative ways of being.

Bernard Lonergan's theme of Conversion will be studied in some detail and proposed as a way of radically changing 'life-sapping' attitudes into a life-giving new spirituality which brings freedom, hope and enthusiasm and leads to creative and responsible action.

### 3. CONVERSION

Christian spirituality is a way of being fully human, fully alive and deeply Christian, in response to the call of God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. When one looks at life, at one's own and life in general, this fullness is not what one finds. How then do Christians grow into being fully human and fully alive? What is needed if Christians are to take seriously their relationship with God? The very desire expressed in these questions is a call to conversion, even if the word is not used. Conversion has to do with purifying, sustaining and deepening one's relationship with God, self and neighbour. Conversion is at the heart of all spirituality.

What is conversion? Lonergan speaks of conversion as "a radical transformation ... on all levels of living, an interlocked series of changes and developments. What hitherto was unnoticed becomes vivid and present. What had been of no concern becomes a matter of high import. So great a change in one's apprehensions and one's values accompanies no less a change in oneself, in one's relations to other persons, and in one's relations to God" (Lonergan 1978:13). He goes on to say that not all conversion is as total as this, nor is conversion a once-for-all act. Conversion has many dimensions and is an ongoing process. Before looking at these dimensions, as Lonergan understands them, let us look briefly at the concept of conversion within scripture.

#### *'Conversion' in Scripture*

Conversion can be viewed from humanity's point of view or from God's.

In the OT, "the concept of conversion is communicated by the Hebrew word *shub* which means "to turn" ... "turning again" or a "return". (Stuhlmuehler 1996:172). This turning implies a radical change of one's orientation, a coming home to one's real self and to God. Such an understanding places the action on the part of humanity. God is, as it were, passive. But texts on God giving the grace to turn are also evident, as in 2 Sam 12:1-25 when God initiates David's repentance through the prophet, Nathan.

The "OT also indicates that God engages in 'turning': 'Lord, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger' (Ps 85:1-3)" (:172). The movement is two-way, it is relational.

In the NT two Greek words: *metanoia* and *epistrophe* communicate the concepts of conversion and repentance respectively. While often used interchangeably, these two words have a subtle difference. “*Metanoia* has more to do with the internal process of conversion; *epistrophe* suggests the external effects of the process of conversion, the inevitable and radical changes in one’s existence and way of life which follow the internal acceptance of the invitation to conversion. True conversion incorporates both interior and exterior movements” (:172).

Jesus’ whole life, his ministry and his teaching was a call to repentance, a call to change one’s life and return to God. It was a call to “come home to oneself” (Lk 15:17 ff) and to restore one’s relationship and friendship with God. Conversion implies radical interior change: *metanoia* which of necessity overflows into life, into a call to repentance - *epistrophe*. A conversion experience can be lived in a variety of ways, but it will always demand some change in one’s lifestyle, some form of discipleship that will be visible to others.

The call to conversion is a call to “radical transformation” (Lonergan 1978:13) but this is not merely a “private matter, as though it were only a concern of the individual, the ordering of his own relationship to God and his neighbor, of his inward and outward life, of his own achievement of pure and essential being” (Barth 1978:39). Though a personal experience, such encounter with God of necessity includes crossing “the threshold of our private existence and (moving) out into the open” (:39). Saul/Paul’s encounter with the risen Lord is a classic example of someone whose conversion experience did not simply change his attitude towards Christ and the early Christians in a private sort of way but overflowed into a radical change of life so that the news spread: “After that I went to Syria and Cilicia, and was still not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judaea, who had heard nothing except that their one-time persecutor was now preaching the faith he had previously tried to destroy; and they gave glory to God for me” (Gal.1:22-24).

Even though Paul’s conversion experience was so drastic, Paul himself realised that conversion is an ongoing process of transformation, a daily renewal and living out of one’s initial response to the call of Christ. Paul realised that this conversion process is a lifetime journey of coming home to oneself and to God, a lifetime journey of transformation into the image of the One in whose image humankind is made: “All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected

in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18)" (StuhlmueLLer 1996:173).

Conversion is about making radical choices. It is about being aware of where one is emotionally, psychologically and spiritually, and making choices and decisions about where and how one wants to continue on life's journey. Conversion is a call to holistic transformation and fullness of life. As our spiritual life is intimately connected to the rest of life so the call to conversion is intimately connected to and affects transformation in all areas of life. "A changed relation to God brings or follows changes that are personal, social, moral, and intellectual" (Lonergan 1978:13).

The scriptural pattern of conversion of "hearing the voice of God or a mediated word of life; initial response and acceptance; some active personal engagement in the process of transformation; ritualizing the decision; living out that decision over a lifetime of gradual transformation" (StuhlmueLLer 1996:173) is generally accepted as the norm of the conversion process. But there is no fixed rule concerning how conversion takes place. Theological reflection, liturgical reform, and, more recently, a renewed interest in the spiritual life, all contribute to and enrich our understanding of conversion.

One of the most influential theologians who has contributed to this understanding and enrichment is Bernard Lonergan who, in his works, points out three different types of conversion: intellectual, moral and religious. His interpreters expand on his work to include affective conversion and socio-political conversion. While each of these conversion events is inter-related, each event has its own nuance. For this reason, each will first be considered on its own before considering their inter-relatedness.

#### *'Conversion' according to Bernard Lonergan*

If conversion implies a 'turning from' to a 'turning towards', then *awareness* of what one is choosing and doing becomes key to conversion. Lonergan speaks of four levels of consciousness:

1) experiencing, 2) understanding, 3) judging, 4) deciding. Each of these levels of consciousness operates in every aspect of our day to day decisions and choices. Each level acts as a stage and is therefore, dependent on the preceding stage: "[W]ithout experience there is no understanding, without understanding there is no judgment, without judgment no decision". Each stage is also a conscious



stage: "[W]e are *aware* in our experiencing, *aware* in our understanding, *aware* in our judging, *aware* of deciding" (Gregson 1988:18-19). Each of these levels of consciousness is necessary in the process of true conversion.

According to Gregson: "[N]ot only does each level depend on the previous level, understanding on experience, judgment on understanding, decision on judgment; but once a particular level has achieved its goal, one spontaneously goes on to the next level" (:19). At first sight this sounds simple and obvious, but where and how does one begin if there is no awareness of an experience or no experience at all in a certain area of life? "Until I have experienced something, I haven't experienced it, and I know I haven't experienced it and no amount of argument by myself or others is going to persuade me otherwise" (:19).

How, then, does one begin to change if there is no felt need (experience) to change? Perhaps at this stage, and for the South African context, it is sufficient to acknowledge that while South Africans may not yet be aware of their need for interior change and conversion, the awareness of their restlessness acts as an initial alarm that something is not quite as they had hoped, or as it could or should be. This restlessness *becomes* their experience and *this is* their starting point. It is the beginning of the road to growth and wholeness. For "as we consciously move from level to level, not only are our operations different, we ourselves are different. In fact ... there is a dual creation in anything we engage in. We not only create relationships or objects, we create ourselves in doing so. Whenever we act, our own character is formed as well" (:20).

Conversion begins with an awareness, however vague, that something is not 'right' and can be different. As efforts are made to understand one's experience, judgement and appropriate, responsible decisions follow which determine the next step.

Accepting the definition that conversion is the decision to turn away from the ego-centred self, from all that detracts from and breaks relationship with God, neighbour and one's true self, that it is a turning *away from* all that is sinful *to* restoration of one's friendship with God and neighbour, a coming home to oneself and to God; that conversion is basically and radically a change of attitude which influences and changes one's lifestyle, we now take a closer look at the different levels of conversion put forth by Bernard Lonergan and his interpreters.

### 3.1 *Intellectual Conversion*

According to Lonergan, intellectual conversion is the radical decision to clarify for oneself and let go of “misleading myth(s) concerning reality, objectivity and human knowledge” (Lonergan 1972:238). These myths claim that all reality, objectivity and human knowledge is founded only in what can be seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelt. In other words the world of the senses alone is what matters. It would imply that all one has to do to know would be to ‘open one’s eyes and look’. But knowing does not automatically follow on from seeing. One needs to understand what it is one sees and to make some judgment about it. “Knowing is not merely taking a good look, it is attending *and* understanding *and* judging” (Gregson 1988:26). What one sees “is but a tiny fragment of the world mediated by meaning” (Lonergan 1972: 238). If what we could ‘see’, alone amounted to knowing then our knowing would be limited to that which one can see, taste, touch, smell, hear. Beauty, trust, love, care and fidelity which cannot be seen would be disregarded. Yet the world of meaning extends beyond the sense experience and beyond the individual to include the “internal and external experience of a cultural community” (:238). Thus beauty, trust, love, care and fidelity can only be known by moving beyond the physical senses and using our understanding and judgment to recognize their presence.

Intellectual conversion is the recognition and ability to move beyond the senses and through the operations of experience, understanding, judging and deciding as we strive to ‘know’. The very process of moving through the stages of experience, understanding, judgment and decision, each time letting go of the previous stage in order to come to deeper truth and knowledge, is a process of going beyond, of self-transcendence, of conversion.

Gregson points out that not only do characteristics such as love, fidelity and trust disappear if knowing is reduced to “looking”, the whole social order vanishes as well. One does not *see* a nation, or a city ... one does not *see* a wife, or a president or a criminal ...” (Gregson 1988:27). We may see a group of people or a woman but we only know that a nation is a nation, a city is a city, the woman is a wife or president etc. through our experience, questioning, and evaluating. If we don’t use all that we are, then our conclusions are merely arbitrary, subjective and prejudiced.

In summary, intellectual conversion is the realization that deeper meaning and fuller knowledge can only be reached when people dare to go beyond the physical senses and engage in experiencing,

understanding, and judging all that they encounter in the search for truth. Intellectual conversion implies that communities, countries and the world are constituted not simply by what is seen but *how* each is experienced, understood, and judged through personal and interpersonal relationships, so that even human frailty and mistakes can become means to growth.

### *Progress and Decline*

The use of our resources to the fullest generally speaks of advance and progress. Yet life reveals a reality of progress *and* decline: “[O]ur real world is an often confusing and even disheartening mixture of progress and decline”. It is precisely Lonergan’s acute awareness “of the moral complexity of our world” that enables him to further his search and help and challenge us to “distinguish progress from decline and to challenge us to contribute to the one and to help to reverse the other” (:28).

Gregson sees “the nature and structure of progress relatively easy to grasp. It is the cumulative effect of our personal and communal response to the imperatives of our consciousness: Be attentive; Be intelligent; Be reasonable; Be responsible” (:28). It is the cumulative effect of being true to our deepest self, of responding both as individuals and community to the imperatives of our consciousness, such that the level of:

experience ..... calls us to Be attentive!  
 understanding .... calls us to Be intelligent!  
 judging ..... calls us to Be reasonable! and  
 deciding ..... calls us to Be responsible!

Choosing to respond to each experience brings new understandings and new truths so that responsible decisions which are made are genuinely progressive for the individual and for the community.

This being so, what is decline? It is the opposite of the process of all that adds up to progress. It “is a cumulative result, but, this time, of inattentiveness, of failures to understand, of wrong judgments, and of evil choices. It is the consequence of refusing to follow the imperatives of our experiential, intellectual, reasonable, and responsible consciousness” (:28-29). This refusal to move in this direction brings disharmony, confusion and decline. It gives value to what is not conducive to life and is thus destructive in the way it discredits and ridicules the type of “intelligence, judgment, and

responsibility that could reverse the situation" (:29). An inertia and laziness, which is more than simply a lack of responsibility sets in which is very difficult to reverse.

### *Biases*

But does anyone in their right mind really choose decline? Is progress not an innate desire in humanity? Then why does humanity choose to be inattentive, uncomprehending, unreasonable and consequently irresponsible? According to Lonergan: "Just as insight can be desired, so too it can be unwanted" (Lonergan 1973:191). One can refuse further insight by refusing to search and question beyond what is presently known and comfortable. Gregson summarizes Lonergan's suggestion that humans are subject to four biases which affect their choices as: "neurotic bias, egotistic bias, group bias and the bias of common sense" (Gregson 1988:29). Humans have certain spontaneous inclinations towards a certain type of good e.g. we spontaneously move towards pleasure rather than pain; towards self-interest and self-gratification rather than what is more ultimately good whether for ourselves or for others. Choices which immediately satisfy are often the first choice rather than that which in the long run is more valuable. Yet growth and progress come from choosing what is valuable. If this is also satisfying, well and good but nice feelings are not a criteria for choices of value. The strong tendency to choose pleasure above pain, the immediately satisfying over what is truly valuable is at the root of each of our biases. The choices of satisfaction over value bring immediate satisfaction and pleasure but they likewise bring both a bad conscience and some measure of individual and/or social decline, what is here described as the restlessness and unfreedom experienced by many South Africans.

A closer look at each of these biases will help to show how they hinder or affect *pro life* choices.

"Neurotic bias works primarily on an unconscious basis ... caused by a major trauma to our physiological/psychological constitution" (:31). The pain, hurt and trauma itself are so suppressed that anything which comes close to touching this area is viewed as a threat and avoided. This is not a "conscious act" but works "in the censorship which governs the emergence of psychic contents" (Lonergan 1973:191). New insights therefore, are not immediately welcome. On the contrary they are generally avoided in sophisticated and subtle ways to avoid pain. "The consequence is that certain experiences do not get attended to, and therefore do not get understood, and the truth is not

discovered nor is the way to heal the trauma discovered, and effective action is not taken" (Gregson 1988:31). As long as the trauma is left unattended, it rules and distorts our life, our choices and our values, in a hidden but real way. Our performance, instead of flowing from inner peace and harmony, reveals restlessness, insecurity and divided attention. Lonergan points out that some of our fragmentary life is revealed in our dreams. These revelations are beyond our control but when adhered to, they can help reorientate our lives and help us come to new insights in an unthreatening way.

The trauma caused by racial discrimination touched many South Africans very, very deeply, causing much pain, hurt, resentment and anger. Humiliation was experienced on every level: physically, economically, psychologically, and spiritually. The TRC was a platform where some 'stories' could be told, the truth revealed and a process of healing begin. But not even the TRC, for all their wonderful work, could really reach the total depth of the suffering caused by racial discrimination. Too much pain and hurt still lie deep within and consequently continues to affect people's choices and values. As night dreams can be an unthreatening aid to insight and healing, so can fantasies and day-dreams for a new South Africa bring an awareness of that which needs redemption and healing so that we may move forward together.

Egotistic or individual bias speaks for itself: self-interest rather than the general good is at the centre of everything. "With remarkable acumen one solves one's own problems. With startling modesty one does not venture to raise the relevant further questions. Can one's solution be generalized? Is it compatible with the social order that exists? Is it compatible with any social order that proximately or even remotely is possible?" (Lonergan 1973:220). When one does ask questions, it is solely to serve one's own concerns and solve one's own problems. "Egoism, then, is an incomplete development of intelligence" (:220) which leaves the self-centred inquirer with a certain unease. This feeling of unease is present in neurotic bias, but there the root is for the most part unconscious, whereas "[I]n the egoist there are additional grounds for an uneasy conscience, for it is not by sheer inadvertence but also by a conscious self-orientation that he devotes his energies to sizing up the social order, ferreting out its weak points and its loop-holes, and discovering devices that give access to its rewards while evading its demands for proportionate contributions" (:221). Egoism is spontaneous. It is a deliberate preference for self over others, where intelligence, if used, is used for one's own self interest. The egoist's world is like that of the infant whose some total of the world is itself and its own immediate needs. Such a person refuses to question and go beyond the immediate

in order to choose that which is of value and remains in the stage of self-interest and personal satisfaction. The consequence is some measure of immediate satisfaction, but ultimately it results in an isolation of oneself from others.

In our South African situation one must ask: how much of this egotistic bias is contributing to the restlessness experienced in the country in the last six years? It was noted at the beginning that as South Africans stood in long queues on the 27th April 1994, they stood together with a common aim and common goal. They now have their democracy, what has happened since then? Have they shrunk with self-interest and self-gain? Entitlement as 'my right' without simultaneous co-responsibility is one form of ego-centricism present in the country. Media reports frequently record fraud and the misappropriation of common funds: "...millions of rands worth of rampant fraud and corruption in the administration of more than 30 local government pension funds" has been unearthed. "[T]he funds had ghost beneficiaries ..." (Star: Business Report, 26 August 1999)!

"As individual bias, so also group bias rests on an interference with the development of practical common sense" (Lonergan 1973:222). While egotistic bias finds one overly concerned with one's own interests and unconcerned with others, group bias is concerned with group interests but in the 'narrow sense of group'. In other words, a group becomes so closed in on itself that the members have no thought of the needs or interests of the wider community and society. The group's resources, imagination, creativity, affectivity and loyalty, are called upon and used but only for its own ends. Group bias resists human intelligence that involves critical questioning and intrudes into their comfort zone. "If societal progress is groups working together, attentively, intelligently, reasonably and responsibly, then decline is the cumulative result of groups working against one another, and trying to keep both from themselves and from the public forum whatever might call into question their own particular status" (Gregson 1988:32-33).

South Africa's apartheid laws which entrenched separation, first of racial groups and then of ethnic groups, sought to do just this: make each group 'self-governing' so that each group would be so busy getting its own house in order, it would not have time to call another group into question. It did not work out this way. "The sins of group bias may be secret and almost unconscious. But what originally was a neglected possibility, in time becomes a grotesquely distorted reality ... exposed to the inspection of the multitude" (Lonergan 1973:225). Not every group was simply interested in its own agenda. There were those who had a vision and a dream for the country 'as a whole' and who dared to challenge individual groups so that change became inevitable.

Lonergan calls the fourth bias the 'common sense or general bias'. "It is the tendency in all of us to seek short term and immediate solutions even to complex problems" (Gregson 1988:33). It is the 'Kwik-Fix' method which does not ask further questions. The big mistake about 'common sense' is its inability to criticize and analyze itself. True, there is a time for 'immediate' aid or even immediate answers but when this becomes the norm, common sense becomes narrow, inward looking and destructive. "General bias of common sense involves sins of refusal as well as of mere omission" (Lonergan 1973:228). Questions to long-term solutions must be asked and pursued, however complex and theoretical they may seem. Our search is a search not for immediate satisfaction but the ultimate good. Failure to pursue long-term solutions has, according to Lonergan, three negative consequences: a) "repeated exclusion of timely and fruitful ideas involves a cumulative departure from coherence. ... The dynamic of progress is replaced by sluggishness and then by stagnation" (:229); b) intelligence becomes more and more detached and disinterested. Culture, religion and philosophy are treated as divorced from each other and from concrete daily living. Lonergan speaks of this as the 'social surd'. c) the surrender of detached and disinterested intelligence. Lonergan considers our looking for "Kwik-fix" answers from culture, religion and philosophy as a minor surrender of intelligence in comparison to what he considers a serious major surrender, namely, a surrendering of the speculative level of intelligence. This is equivalent to surrendering the potential for the "development of a new culture, a new religion, a new philosophy" (:230) which is radically new and simultaneously "empirical, scientific, realistic" (:230).

Each of these biases is to a greater or lesser degree present in every person. They are generally spoken of in terms of one's prejudices. In South Africa, whether one was on the side of the privileged or oppressed, the effects of years of forced separation lie deep. Suspicion and fear still keep people apart. As a nation South Africans have to learn to make conscious choices to bridge the gaps which exist between individuals or groups and work on long term solutions for all.

To sum up: Intellectual conversion implies a knowledge which goes beyond what one can physically see; it embraces a world of meaning which is mediated by more than what can be perceived through the senses and it is a call to live life, consciously aware of what is going on within and around us. To come to this kind of knowledge it is necessary that experiences are experienced and intelligent questions are asked in order to come to greater understanding. This in turn will enable reasonable

judgments that lead to responsible decisions and actions. Personal biases often stand in the way of such questioning. Intellectual conversion is a call to be aware of our biases and how these influence our choices. Choosing the immediate may bring immediate satisfaction but not necessarily lasting value.

According to Lonergan, recognizing and accepting this process toward greater insight and truth, and recognizing that this implies a call to change, is itself an experience "radical enough to be called conversion, an intellectual conversion" which like any conversion is a call to choose and change direction. Therefore "... following the dynamic orientation of our consciousness leads to progress, not following it or refusing to follow it leads to decline" (Gregson 1988:34). Either way has consequences for one's behaviour. The choice is free.

### *3.2 Moral Conversion*

While intellectual conversion focused on the self-transcendence of the mind, this section focuses on moral conversion, on the power of the human spirit to transcend itself, to go beyond personal and immediate satisfaction and choose what is true, what is really good and all that leads to responsible action. Such decisions are value-based, calling forth and demanding 'self-transcendent action'.

Here questions take on a new focus, namely: what is to be done. We are not simply interested in what is, but what might be, as well as the possible consequences of such action, positive or negative. The process of deliberating and evaluating moves us from superficial satisfactions to the realm of more lasting values. The notion of value transcends the good which seeks superficial satisfactions or cosmetic approval. Values are not dependent on praise or blame. Values are "a transcendental principle of appraisal and criticism giving rise to instances of the good in choices and actions" (Doran 1977:46). This power to choose is a power given to every human being, enabling us to move beyond to the ever fuller realization of what is truly good and lasting.

"Moral conversion, then, is a shift of the criterion of one's decisions and choices from satisfactions to values" (:57). Such criterion do not lie simply in feelings: in what is agreeable or not; in what satisfies or not; nor in what is immediately worthwhile or not but "in the measure of self-transcendence toward which our response carries us" (:57).



Our practical response to real value pulls us beyond knowledge to action; beyond deliberating and evaluating to personal, responsible decision and action: "What am I going to *do*?" This question does not ask for a judgment of fact or judgment of value but for a decision. "And because this question is pressed by the same drive for self-transcendence which urged the questions for understanding and judgment, it is realized concretely as an exigence or drive for self-consistency in knowing and deciding, as an imperious demand arising from within us that we conform our decision to our best judgment of what we *should* do" (Gregson 1988:38).

But such decisions are not simply head-decisions. Our feelings are very much part of us and of our decisions. Moral growth, therefore, also entails the development of feelings, especially those feelings which are "so deep and strong, especially when deliberately reinforced, that they channel attention, shape one's horizon, direct one's life" (Doran 1977:58). Doran speaks of the "transcendental significance of feelings" being at, what one may call, the starting point of value.

Not every conscious and deliberate choice is based on value "for even these responses regard two kinds of objects: the satisfying and dissatisfying, pleasure or pain, on the one hand, and on the other, the valuable, the truly good" (Gregson 1988:41). Values cannot be based on feelings alone. At times that which is valuable is also satisfying and self-transcendence not only comes easily but may be hardly noticeable. This is not the more frequent way things happen. All too often, that which is valuable is dissatisfying and not immediately attractive. At such times self-transcendence means going beyond one's feelings and overcoming the disagreeable for the sake of the truly good which one is called to do. "Thus while feelings are the sources of values, they are not an unambiguous source, and require critical discernment" (:41)<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> This section on feelings and values, and the need for self-transcendence has close links with the Ignatian "Rules for Discernment of Spirits". In his "Rules" St. Ignatius cautions the discerning person to be aware of and understand the different movements in the soul. The bottom line is whether one's experiences ultimately draws one closer to God or away from God, eg. we read in:

Rule: 315.2 ... "it is characteristic of the evil spirit to harass with anxiety, to afflict with sadness, to raise obstacles backed by fallacious reasonings that disturb the soul. Thus he seeks to prevent the soul from advancing. It is characteristic of the good spirit, however, to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and peace. This He does by making all easy, by removing all obstacles so that the soul goes forward in doing good." However, 331.3 ... "both the good angel and the evil spirit can give consolation to a soul, but for a quite different purpose. The good angel consoles for the progress of the soul, that it may advance and rise to what is more perfect. The evil spirit consoles for purposes that are the contrary, and that

Value then, is more than simply that which satisfies the individual or the group. Values may include feelings of satisfaction, but these are not the most important criteria as one enters into a process whereby one decides for oneself what one is to make of oneself, or where one “takes a stand reflecting his dynamic orientation to the authenticity of self-transcendence” (Doran 1977:59). This kind of choosing presupposes that this person is in touch with her/his feelings; that s/he has reached some level of maturity so that s/he is able to recognize and name her/his feelings and biases as s/he prepares to choose that which is truly good. This is a process. No one is born with high moral values but everyone has the potential to choose that which is truly good. “A person who would consistently affirm and choose what is truly good would have achieved the self-transcendence which is the authentic realization of his conscious intentionality. Obviously, such sustained authenticity demands that feelings be ‘cultivated, enlightened, strengthened, refined, criticized and pruned of oddities’ ... In this way, ... the development of knowledge and the development of moral feeling lead to the existential discovery of oneself as a moral being, the realization that one not only chooses between courses of action but also thereby makes oneself an authentic human being or an inauthentic one” (:59-60).

So one grows into one’s best self, not simply through acquired knowledge but through a process of deliberating, evaluating, deciding and acting on acquired knowledge as it pertains to one’s life in the light of one’s values. Moral conversion involves the decision to choose according to values which go beyond one’s own personal satisfaction or selfish aims. Such decisions are made as one grows and matures. For infants the world is as big (or as small) as the infant and all of life goes around me and my needs. For young children or minors coaxing, persuading, bribing or even punishment is necessary to do what is right. But as one grows, matures and comes to a deeper knowledge of life, “our responses to human values are strengthened and refined” (Lonergan 1972:240). One learns to recognize and interiorize values so that responses are no longer reactions to external forces but responses from one’s own inner value-centered world, one’s own interior world, one’s own well of wisdom. One moves from “the initial infantile bundle of needs and clamors and gratifications” to “the deep set joy and solid peace, the power and the vigor, of being in love with God.” In this process

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after wards he might draw the soul to his own perverse intentions and wickedness.” Therefore, 333.5. “We must carefully observe the whole course of our thoughts” and understand where they are ultimately leading. (Puhl, L 1951:141-150 *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*)

one changes, grows, matures. One becomes more fully human as one chooses and acts responsibly and in turn, every responsible action enables wholistic growth. "Human doing is free and responsible. Within it is contained the reality of morals, of building up or destroying character, of achieving personality or failing in that task. By his own acts the human subject makes himself what he is to be, and he does so freely and responsibly; indeed, he does so precisely because his acts are the free and responsible expressions of himself" (Doran 1977:42-43).

Moral conversion involves the decision to transcend one's selfish aims, but such a decision remains a free decision. We remain free to choose our destiny in life. Put in this way, perhaps it sounds a little ridiculous. Who wants less than the best for oneself? Yet when we stop and consider the implications such change entails, and all that needs to change in oneself and society, we often meet with such strong resistance that "one may come to hate the truly good, and love the really evil" (:61). This is what happens when one is alienated from oneself, when one "disregards the dynamism of his spirit with its imperatives, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible, and consequently fails to promote himself or allow himself to be promoted to the authenticity of self-transcendence" (:61).

The deliberate decision to go beyond one's small world-view and to move from an original refusal to change is itself a conversion and no small step in a person's life. It is the decision "to take cognizance ... to know for oneself, to uncover the inattention, obtuseness, silliness, irresponsibility" [the bias] "that gave rise to the feeling one does not want, ... to correct the aberrant attitude ... and ... to uncover the feeling that gave rise to the inattention, obtuseness, silliness, irresponsibility one does not want" (:61-62). Such a decision may be quite traumatic or paralyzing. On the other hand, it can be really freeing, but this is only possible when one knows that one is loved deeply and unconditionally. Then one moves freely from reactions sparked off by external forces to responses from interiorized values; from irresponsible selfishness to a commitment which measures the motives and consequences of personal choices against ethical norms and ideals that attract the conscience to selfless choices and judges its lapses into selfishness, enabling a purification of choices. Such choices not only affect that which is chosen or rejected but the one who is making such choices. Each moment of choice is a call to transcend

oneself, revealing who we are and who we can become. Each moment is a moment of grace<sup>11</sup>, a moment when one is called to take charge of one's life and with God's spirit to consciously be attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible as one makes choices for wholeness.

Growing up in apartheid South Africa, most South Africans breathed in segregation from the moment of birth. Biases were 'inherited' and entrenched by the laws of the country. In the post apartheid era when South Africans have the right to choose and may come and go and stay at will, there are still many fears and prejudices to be overcome. Laws may have changed but deep-seated prejudices and feelings of 'them and us' still exist. The ability to move beyond self toward others can only begin when biases are recognized and named. This will no doubt take much honesty and courage. At first reluctance will be experienced but once the value of moving towards those different from ourselves is considered, smaller and then greater steps to move beyond one's small world will be taken.

To sum up: One's desire for knowledge enables one to act intelligently and become one's best self. Such knowledge calls for transcendence of old or unreflected ways of thinking. But decisions are not simply cognitive. They take in the whole person. Feelings play an important role and, although they are not the determinants for choosing the truly good, nevertheless need to be listened to because values are mostly apprehended in feelings. Feelings, though, are ambiguous. Therefore, while they reveal something about oneself, one's biases and one's values, they must not, in themselves, be allowed to control or determine our decisions for the truly good.

### 3.3 *Affective Conversion*

As social beings, involved in interpersonal relationships of all kinds, moral conversion involves a radical, personal decision to act freely and honestly so that we become the best we can ever be. This is a process of development, a way to becoming authentic, a journey of ongoing conversion which begins at birth and continues to death. But this growth is not a continuous upward or forward thrust. It is often a case of taking two steps forward and one step back. Minors need much persuasion and

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<sup>11</sup> The word 'grace' is used here to mean: *God's enabling Self-gift* which draws us to respond to God's invitation to "communion with God in Jesus and his Spirit".  
(Ernst C. 1974:29 *Theology Today: The Theology of Grace*)

coaxing into doing what is right but with time and growth a certain degree of autonomy appears, and they want to do things for themselves without adult interference. Mistakes are made along the way, "still, despite the time and pain involved, [they] do gradually grow in knowledge and develop [their] response to value; [they] become more and more [themselves], straining toward authenticity" (Gregson 1988:49). This process we recognized and named moral conversion.

Moral conversion, like any conversion, is no easy matter. Yearning for authenticity does not make the process or journey simple or easy. Change is not generally welcome. Moving into new horizons, into new ways of thinking and acting, into new ways of living, more often than not meets with resistance and fear of the unknown. "[T]o contemplate a radical change in the style of our concrete living is to invite an experience of dread" (:52). The longing for authenticity can become clouded by this feeling of dread so that fear can *affect* a decision. But this reaction is generally spontaneous rather than deliberate, a beginning not an end, a challenge rather than an achievement.

Conversion is an ongoing process. The decision to change is not made once and for all. Choices must be continuously renewed and deepened. Moral conversion needs continual purification as does every decision concerning conversion. Option for life is an option for change, for conversion of mind and heart, of word and deed. While the experiences of fear or dread act as indicators of areas of unfreedom, areas of life which are still in need of conversion, the desire for authenticity can help one rise above these. The desire itself is not magic, but it can be powerful enough to get one moving.

Lonergan points out that a person is affectively self-transcendent when the individual breaks out of one's own world and spontaneously acts not just for self but for others as well. (Lonergan 1972:104-105). The best example of such transcendence is that of being in love. Being-in-love is a dynamic state which radically transforms a person's life from her/his small world-view and absorption in self to another way of seeing the world. This transformation Lonergan calls 'affective conversion'. "Such conversion turns one's self, shifts one's orientation, from an absorption in one's own interest to concern for the good of others" (Gregson 1988:52).

Affective conversion takes moral conversion a step further. For affective conversion not only makes a decision and commitment to a course of action for the truly good, but carries out the decision "over the long haul of serious obstacles" (:53) forgetful of self. Affective conversion puts the need of the other over and above one's own preferences. It challenges every person (not just some specially

heroic people, as if they have something the rest do not) to transcend one's self in love. Thus we have people like Nelson Mandela, who after 27 years in prison, could come out, not simply free from prison walls, but free from hatred and resentment and ready to serve the *whole* country. This sort of transcending love enfleshed in Mandela cuts across all barriers, those created by apartheid and those created by human prejudice. This is a person who always has a hand reached out in love, to the old and young, black and white, women and men, South Africans and foreigners and very specially, to the children.

"Affective conversion should be understood as a matter of *both passion and commitment*" (:53) as we come face to face with situations where we need to be in touch with our feelings and our biases. "Affective commitment *is* the transformation of our deepest life of feeling". But unless we are aware of our feelings especially those biases which turn us in on ourselves, we will not be able to take this radical step of transformation. Our feelings have power. When we can acknowledge them and trace their root causes and begin to deal with these, we can re-direct and channel their energy (passion) from self into loving service (commitment).

To summarize: Conversion is fundamentally a 'turning from' to 'turning to'. This process is integral to self-development and self-creating. But despite our deep desire for authenticity, which drives us towards searching for and living the truth, our journey of searching, knowing and living the truth is constantly up against our many limitations of incomplete development. Unresolved issues and biases weigh us down and either stand totally in the way of self-transcendence or, at least, in the way of sustained self-transcendence.

Personal development cannot be presumed to be wholistic. Physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual growth do not develop automatically or at the same rate. In particular, wholistic growth is not totally dependent on one's own efforts. Gregson recognizes that coming to wholeness is partly due to personal responsible decisions and actions but it is also essentially, gift.

Each has the responsibility to do his/her part, God will do the rest! The power of radical affective conversion which leads to full transformation lies in religious conversion.

### 3.4 *Religious Conversion*

It has been pointed out that spirituality is concerned with the whole person and every aspect of life; that it is a way of being fully human, fully alive and deeply Christian in response to the call of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit; and that conversion is at the heart of the spiritual life. Without contradicting any of this, in a very real sense it can be said that religious conversion is at the heart of the spiritual life. At this level of conversion we surrender to the Holy Spirit; here we allow ourselves to be grasped by God; here we meet our real selves - and one another. The experience is initiated by God. We are called to respond.

Religious conversion is rooted in religious experience, in our relationship with God. Lonergan quotes Paul Tillich's description of religious experience as "being grasped by ultimate concern" and Rudolf Otto's "mysterium tremendum/holy mystery", but for Lonergan himself, religious experience is "other-worldly falling in love. It is total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations" (Lonergan 1972:240) as one is directed from one's interior world. It is being in love with a God who loved us first (1 Jn 4:10) and whose love is without limit and without conditions, a love which floods our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (Rom 5:5). This Creator-creature love relationship stresses "the personality's openness, acceptance of mystery, willingness to plunge into dark depths ... where a God too vast and too good for our comprehension takes us into the divine interiority" (Gregson 1988:62). This is a two-way love-relationship: God's love is a power which draws a person and simultaneously leaves the other free to respond.

"Self-transcendence and God's love structure Lonergan's discussion of religious conversion" (:61). Religious conversion is rooted in and flows out of a love affair. Such an experience is an experience of being loved for who one is unconditionally and unrestrictedly by the One who knows us through and through. Such an experience is not the result of our knowledge or choosing nor can we turn such an experience on or off. Although conscious, the experience of this love "is an experience of the holy" (Lonergan 1972:106), it is an experience of God's love which comes from our world of interiority and moves us beyond knowing and choosing to "a new horizon in which the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of that love will transform our knowing" (:106).

This conscious experience of God's unconditional love is the basis for and proper fulfillment of our capacity for self-transcendence. Such an experience of unconditional love will never leave us the same. It is itself transforming. As our love-relationship grows, we are continually transformed into people whose love cannot be contained but which of necessity overflows. Religious conversion leads to a life of prayer and deeper union with God and of loving service to neighbour, without counting the cost. This is our goal. This is what we are striving for - union with God. But even the most perfect among us is imperfect in love. We are often drifters, going along with the crowd, rather than personally and deliberately choosing authenticity and daring to stand up and be counted. And so many of us do not take prayer or our relationship with God seriously, we do not move beyond our small world. We allow the world 'outside' to direct us and consequently our religious progress is slow, stunted or may even regress and die.

Religious experience which puts us in touch with our world of interiority may be expressed in different ways. On the one hand such experience which leads to conversion may be concerned with the base and focus of this experience: i.e. with "the mysterium tremendum et fascinans itself": God, holy mystery who fascinates us and draws us to Him/Herself in an intimate love-relationship. This is an experience of being grasped by the Spirit. On the other hand such a religious experience which leads to conversion may be manifested, seen, through a change in attitudes in the person concerned. Galatians 5:22 ff is an example of this second expression of religious conversion: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control".

Both these expressions of religious experience, first and foremost acknowledge the potential of an interior world available to all people. For those who dare to appropriate this interior world, progress is not something external. It cannot be measured although it can be seen: "By their fruits you will know them" (Mt 7:16).

Religious conversion is the deliberate choice of an individual to allow oneself to be grasped by the Spirit and to choose to follow where the Spirit leads. Such a decision calls for self-transcendence, for self-surrender and total self-giving which is unconditional and permanent. Such surrender is not an act of the moment but a way of life which is at once passive and dynamic. Permanence does not come from one single act of choosing but from many renewed acts of self-surrender until it becomes a way of life. Each deliberate choice is a conversion experience in which one opens oneself to "God's



love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5), each is a decision to let God change our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh so that we move beyond ourselves to others (Lonergan 1972:241).

Such a decision is gift itself, a gift, given freely and generously but which simultaneously leaves a person free to choose. When the decision is made to open one's heart to the Spirit, God's love floods the heart and changes these hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. This is a radical decision to take but it is the only decision for those who take their relationship with God seriously. The heart as a symbol of love and the idea of falling in love with God may sound exciting but with it comes the heart which was pierced, opened, to let all in. No matter how we look at it, it is in the heart of God that true conversion takes place. There we realize that we are loved for who we are, unconditionally and unrestrictedly, by the One who knows us through and through. There we realize that no sin is too great for God's love and forgiveness. There we find our true selves, and our neighbour. And who is our neighbour? Anyone and everyone! This is a powerful statement for many South Africans whose hearts have been pierced, not with the sword of love but with the sword of humiliation, anger, resentment, detention, physical and psychological torture etc.

It is within this context of religious experience that we come face to face with the problem of evil.

#### *Religious Experience and the Problem of Evil*

If the Spirit dwells within, why does evil exist? That evil exists, no one denies. But what is our good and loving God doing about the question of evil around us and within us? Why does God allow evil to exist?

It is not the purpose of this thesis to delve into the philosophy of the problem of evil, nevertheless, a brief word on evil is in place.

"The problem of evil emerges only for those who believe in an all-powerful and all-good God" (Stewart 1970:247). Such is the dilemma at the heart of the Judeo-Christian tradition which holds that God is all-powerful and completely benevolent in spite of the presence of evil in the world. There are no easy solutions to the problem (if indeed there are any) but the "most prevalent theme ... is the emphasis on human free will. God chose to create beings having free will. We could not be truly free unless we were free to do evil; therefore the possibility of evil is inherent in our free will. We may not be able to explain why God created us with free will, or why God created anything for that matter.

But if we believe that there is some ultimate value to be gained by our having the power of free choice, then we have one explanation for our capacity to do evil" (:250-251).

To choose to be led by the Spirit does not take away one's free will. At any time one can take back this permission to be Spirit-led and the Spirit would obey. Free will is a gift, given and respected by God. Every human being has the potential and the ability to reflect and make choices - choices which are pro-life, choices to transcend one's lower instincts, choices to avoid sin. Unfortunately all too often we choose to take the easy way out and give into ourselves, to whatever is convenient or comfortable (cf. 3.2). These choices are not always life-giving and are at times, even sinful. At the heart of such choices one does not find God but rather I and me. No longer is one guided by the Spirit but by one's own instincts or selfish aims.

Sin "is the basic withdrawing of *myself* from ... God. I do not want to depend on his charity. I desire to be *autonomous*" (Fuchs 1978:249) against God in whom alone one finds one's true identity. Basically the "main element in any sin is a *no* to God" (:253) in preference to one's own will - a *no* which *separates* one from God.

But sin is not merely a private thing. "Sin in the Bible means something more than individual acts of wrongdoing. There is another dimension to the whole experience of sin" ... namely, "the corporate or social dimension of sin" (Nolan 1988:42). "All sin is both personal and social at the same time" (:43). Sin is an offence against God *and* people: "'Whatever you do to even the least of these people, you do to me' (Mt 25:40, 45)" (:38). Therefore, when we say that sin separates us from God, we simultaneously imply that sin separates us from one another as well. While all sin is personal in that only an individual commits sin, "all sins also have a social dimension because sins have social consequences (they affect other people), sins become institutionalised and systematised in the structures, laws and customs of a society ..." (:43). One of the consequences and visible signs of sin is suffering. In South Africa the laws and structures of apartheid, of *legalised separation*, were not merely seen as sinful but as "intrinsically evil" (:87)<sup>12</sup>. These have caused intense and immeasurable

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<sup>12</sup> "The principle of apartheid as something intrinsically evil" was declared by the South African Bishops Conference in their "Statement on Apartheid" issued by the Plenary Session of the Conference held in Pretoria, July 2nd-6th, 1957:15

pain and suffering, much of which is still in need of conversion and healing. "...[S]ocial sin is a structural phenomenon. Conversion from social sin is possible only if efforts are made to see that structures are changed" (Henriot 1978:325). Apartheid as law ceased with the 1994 Democratic elections but the effects of apartheid still exist. Personal conversion must be coupled with a commitment to ongoing structural conversion.

A sinner "cannot change unless Christ by his grace" calls one "to make a new choice for God ... to love God once more" (Fuchs 1978:253) and to be re-connected to God and neighbour.

Religious conversion is a call to return to one's Source and to allow oneself to be directed by God's love. As one freely opens oneself and surrenders to such love one is being transformed. Love always transforms. Love never leaves one the same. People in love are always thinking of and concerned about the other. Love always moves beyond self to the other. Such a love-relationship, transforms hearts from stone into hearts of flesh. Hearts are opened, pierced, not by reaction, resentment and anger, but in compassion and forgiveness. From such a love-relationship flow "new habits or forms introduced into human subjectivity to meet the problem of evil" (Doran 1977:84). Then not only is the problem of evil met, but the love of God directs one to reach out and work for harmony with the order of the universe and for the good of all persons. This love "adopts the dialectical attitude of meeting evil with good, of loving one's enemies, of praying for those who persecute and calumniate one, and so makes of the social surd a potential good through a self-sacrificing love that matches the dialectical method of intelligence grasping the absurdity of evil and refusing to systematize and perpetuate it by treating it as intelligible; [this] love repents of former blindness and involvement in individual, group, and general bias, of past flights from self-knowledge, rationalizations of wrong, surrender to evil and commitment to error, and ... repents not by feelings of guilt but by acts of will informed by understanding and reasonableness" (:85-86).

Such self-sacrificing and transforming love not only offers a solution to the problem of evil but brings a new dimension filled with hope, something so needed in South Africa and the world. For such love deliberately and freely chooses to overrule any existing order which is not life giving and consequently not in harmony with God's will for the universe. Such love chooses to pull humanity out of self-centredness, out of anything which destroys the soul of humanity or the universe. Religious conversion is "a call to collaboration in which men contribute to a common fund of knowledge in virtue of their own experience, understanding, and judgment, but also receive from this

fund in a manner other than that which informs their contribution" (:88). Religious conversion calls for an openness to give and receive, to live and work in harmony with the rest of humanity and the whole cosmos, to collaborate in establishing God's reign. It is rooted in and flows out of a love relation with God which cannot be contained but which overflows into love of neighbour and which has ripple effects on the wider society.

### 3.5 *Socio-Political Conversion*

Up to this point we have been considering various conversion events which focus primarily on the individual. But the individual is a person within a community of persons: be it family, clan, nation or society as a whole. Hence, every now and again our conversion considerations have touched on or spilled over and gone beyond the individual's conversion experience. This final reflection on conversion, will focus on the socio-political dimension of conversion, on the transformation of society as a whole. Lonergan does not specifically speak of socio-political conversion. This is the work of his interpreters who have gleaned their material from Lonergan's works.

Lonergan, quoting an ancient and traditional view of society as "the organized collaboration of individuals for the pursuit of a common aim or aims" (Lonergan 1972:359) points out that all human beings irrespective of culture, race, time or place, have basic concrete desires or 'needs' such as food, drink, clothing, shelter, intimacy, children. These basic needs are common to humanity throughout all ages. The differences and nuances are found in the "*dynamic functional relations* between desires and their fulfillment" (Gregson 1988:257). In other words, it is in the common sense, practical means of attaining these needs that one comes across difference and variety. People express a variety of ways to attain these needs and with experience and repetition develop new, advanced ways and skills which form different *patterns*. Lonergan speaks of at least seven patterns which attend to our needs: "biological, aesthetic, artistic, dramatic, practical, intellectual and mystical" (Lonergan 1973:385). What is important here is not the number but how our patterns are determined by our interest or the purpose of the need. As ancient as this truth may be, many people are only now beginning to discover that what unites humans is more than what is different.

The word 'pattern' implies repetition and recurring. As 'patterns' are repeated, they are purified and developed. No person or group has a monopoly of one pattern nor does anyone live out of only one

pattern. "Human experience is 'polymorphic': the streams of conscious living flows in many different patterns and many blends of patterns" (Gregson 1988:259).

Every person is born into a family, society and historical situation which are embedded "in biological, genetic, neurological and psychic sets of schemes of recurrence, relating us unconsciously and consciously to others" (:259-260). Each of these communities impacts on daily life and influences behaviour patterns.

The interlocking schemes or patterns in society are complex. Society is not made up of totally autonomous self-sufficient groups of people. As a group itself is interdependent with each of its members, so is society. Lonergan indicates how recurrent patterns of cooperation in production labour can, and often are, the products of human ingenuity and practical intelligence (Lonergan 1973:207-209).

It cannot be emphasized enough that society is made up of human beings. Therefore at each step of this process of interdependence there is need for good leadership to hold the different strands and new insights together and to direct these energies towards the common goal. This is the role of politics. But each person is called to be a leader in some way. Lonergan speaks of the interdependence and sharing of practical intelligence which is continually needed and recurring as cooperation for the "good of order". The emphasis here is not on order as in law and order but rather on goodness (cf 3.2). This is a *goodness* which is recurrent and sustained by *order* through working together and keeping with society's common aims.

Lonergan insists that the social good of order is "not some design for utopia, some theoretic ideal, some set of ethical precepts, some code of laws, or some super-institution. It is quite concrete" (:49) rooted in human reality, dependent on human development, skill, labour, ingenuity and above all in how humans cooperate or fail to cooperate with one another.

All the great institutions of history are "expressions or products of human cooperation" (Gregson 1988: 263). This is often forgotten or the point missed because our understanding of institution is limited to bricks and concrete, rather than the people who use these materials. If we allowed ourselves to dwell on the people behind the skyscrapers in South Africa, we would see that a variety of relationships existed during the erection of these buildings. These relationships ranged from the

impersonal relationship between employer and employee, which was also between white and black, to deep friendships across racial lines. Social institutions are different from 'material blocks'. Like language which changes with new needs, so too social institutions. They are never static. How they change is dependent on society itself - on human choices.

"The good of order is intrinsically oriented toward freedom" (:264) a freedom which comes from and is *enriched* by the good of order. Social institutions and human cooperation then means "that the good of order is intrinsically oriented towards values" (:264) towards transcendence, going beyond one's own selfish gain or immediate satisfaction.

"Lonergan's understanding of freedom is intrinsic to the related and recurrent operations of conscious attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility. These "transcendental imperatives are the gentle invitations of conscience" (:264). They neither force nor shout out their commands but as they gradually become a way of life, we discover how inattentive, unintelligent, unreasonable and irresponsible we often are as individuals and collectively.

Community, the basis of society, is not something abstract. It is founded on reality, made up of real, live human persons. "Like consciousness itself, [community] is no guarantee of intelligence, goodness, or holiness" (:265). Conscious living can be marked by attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility *or* inattentiveness, stupidity, unreasonableness and irresponsibility.

If common meaning i.e. a common conscious intentionality, constitutes community, then divergent meanings divide community! For South Africans, a classic example was the law of apartheid. This did not only divide community but ravaged and destroyed the lives and cultures of people. It created class distinctions and class oppression based on colour which had consequences on labour, technology, economics and politics.

This sad reality existed, *as law* from 1948-1994. At first it seemed a helpless and hopeless situation but as people began to wake from their stupor and pay critical attention to the concrete situation, as they began to ask intelligent and critical questions, their understanding was awakened. Understanding led to evaluating the situation and making judgments about their reality. This was not a smooth

journey. There were many obstacles, much harassment, threats, detention and imprisonment etc. but once the process was begun there was no turning back.

Loneragan stresses that basic needs are “not to be confused either with animal impulse or with egotistic scheming” (Loneragan 1973:212). Our desires for particular recurrent needs bring forth the good of a social order where these needs can be met and where such good of order is oriented towards human freedom and wholeness.

This may be true for a society in which there is some level of freedom, where communities are not intimidated when they begin to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable and begin to take responsibility. This was not South Africa’s reality. Basic freedom was the very thing which was lacking. Yet, if allowed to, human desires bring out the creativity and creativeness in humanity as humans pursue vital, social, cultural, personal or religious values. South Africa’s concrete situation was no exception. As difficult as it was, people found creative, life-giving ways to transcend their depressing reality. Loneragan speaks of difficult situations as opportunities for creativity and development. Difficulties and tensions are natural to human life. When they are acknowledged their power can be transformed into a creative response, giving rise to practical intelligence which comes up with new possibilities, new skills, new insights, new tools, new ways of cooperating to attain the human good. New ways of living always stand in tension with old routines and established patterns. Tension and change are not naturally welcome, yet tension alerts and challenges us to move on, to transcend the known, the comfortable, the complacent.

If difficulties and tensions are creative powers in building community and society, what breaks down community and society? Loneragan speaks of the “dialectic of community” or divergent meanings of community. As long as there is common meaning, common conscious intentionality, there is community, the basis of society. And so, even when South Africans were separated by law, their common conscious intention and desires not only kept them connected but drove them to work for the full realization of a new society. The difficulties experienced along the way put them at continuous crossroads where new choices had to be made.

Their choices were not always pro-life. Their attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness or responsible cooperation was not consistent nor always genuinely progressive. Progress was slow, and

often felt like two steps forward and one step back. Sometimes the effort to rise above the difficulties and tensions was just too demanding. At other times a sort of communal laziness, complacency or despondency with no desire to know or raise further relevant questions in order to understand correctly was strong. Biases took over and dulled people's attention so that further relevant questioning was temporarily halted. But thank God it was temporary.

Today a new awareness has been awakened; new questions are being asked which challenge the common sense biases which had narrowed down knowledge, insight and appreciation of anything not its own.

Societies and histories are often trapped in general bias and this is the beginning of their end. Lonergan describes this decline as "the longer cycle of decline" where "the dismissal of intelligence, the continued and extensive flight from understanding, are justified by hard-headed appeals to 'reality'" (Gregson 1988:273). History and the present then become overloaded with false facts, with blaming the past so that the present situation is ignored or missed. General bias is dangerous. It encourages complacency while accepting the status quo. It drugs and puts people on the road of decline. Intelligence then seems to have less and less relevance in society and politics. "The quiet voice of reason seems foolish nonsense amid the noise of solemn assemblies caught in the cycle of decline" (:274). False facts grasp the imagination but are not recognized for their perverseness. Lonergan speaks of this as "the social surd". It is where intelligence is no longer genuinely critical of reality. Reality is itself falsely conceived of as economic development, military equipment and political dominance, all that totals up to war, destruction, terrorism and oppression.

1994 was not the end of the journey. It was the beginning. This is a new moment of truth, a new situation which calls for new questions. Socio-political conversion is a conversion call to transcend individual, group and especially general bias and work and live for the good of order. Socio-political conversion incorporates, depends on and is integrally connected and related to religious, intellectual and moral conversions.

Beyond this is the call to live and participate in the "Triune Community" in our daily living. This is not a call to escapism. Rather it is an invitation to make the Church's mission of transforming the church itself and the world in the light of Christ's preaching and practice real and concrete. Thus it is a call to be attentive to present reality, to the pain and suffering, to evil, and to search for



meaningful ways of addressing these. It is a call to transcend one's own interests and collaborate creatively with intelligence (and faith) to find just structures which build one another and society as a whole. There are many opportunities for transformation and mutual up-building embedded in the Christian liturgies and Christian communities of worship, prayer and redemptive action. It is the mission of the church to be a creatively transformative and healing presence in the world. Today many of the churches have taken up where the TRC has 'ended'. Although this is not the task of this work, these topics are closely connected and interrelated.

### *3.6 Conclusion*

Beginning with scripture, we have seen that conversion is at the heart of Christian spirituality. Conversion is dynamic, relational, concerned with purifying, sustaining and deepening one's relationship with God, self and neighbour. Thus it involves movement between and within God, the individual, society and creation as a whole. Any genuine conversion in one area of life of necessity impacts and affects the other areas of life. This could be seen in the different conversion events according to Lonergan and his interpreters. Although each event has been treated 'separately', it has been almost impossible to keep them totally apart. This is not surprising. A person is one whole yet a person is only a person in relation to God, others and creation.

Reference to the South African situation highlighted areas in need of conversion in order that South Africans may come to holistic transformation and fullness of life. At no time was the process of conversion meant to sound easy. People don't spontaneously welcome real change. Nevertheless, the deep desire for authenticity, for truth, for community and for union with God may be strong enough to draw one out of oneself, to dare to be attentive, intelligent, and reasonable, and to take responsibility in cooperating with God in order to realize God's reign on earth.

Before taking these steps further we must first root our spirituality in the scriptures and in theology.

## CHAPTER 4: REMEMBER, RE-MEMBER AND GIVE THANKS

Christian spirituality is concerned with the *whole* of life. Christ came to bring fullness of life (Jn 10:10). As such, Christian spiritualities are rooted in the scriptures and are a way of living out gospel values. It follows therefore, that Christians who take seriously the call to live life fully, will look to the scriptures for guidance and direction.

The first section of this chapter will be a reflection on two scripture texts: one from the Old Testament (Exodus 25-33) and one from the New Testament (Luke 24:13-35); the second section is a theological reflection on the eucharist and finally, the third section focuses on the positive power of remembering/memory with special emphasis on 'remembrance, belonging and thanksgiving', themes rooted in biblical tradition. The reflection will use the medium of symbol, drawing parallels between scripture, theology and the South African situation, recalling God's saving actions in the past, celebrating God's saving actions in the present and strengthening our hope in God's faithful promises as we move into the next millennium.

### 4.1 Scripture Reflection

#### 4.1.1 The Role of Symbols in Scripture

The texts of scripture are made up of many different genres, history, biography, poems, song, letters, short story, gospel, myths, among others, and are "open to a variety of different modes of analysis ... which can deepen an understanding of the various kinds of media" (Haight 1990:114). According to Sandra Schneiders "Every text means more and other than it meant at its creation" (1991:153) and is therefore, open to new interpretations in response to new questions. Such interpretations "make the text speak" and "exploit the potentiality of the text to illuminate the faith of the community without violating the canons of good exegetical and critical method" (:165).

Among the different modes of speech which can deepen and enrich our understanding of scripture and theology is that of symbol.

The meaning and use of symbols has already been mentioned in the section on *Sustaining gifts* (cf 1.4). Taken from everyday concrete experiences, symbols have the power of pointing to and

revealing something beyond themselves in a way which involves one and draws one into the mystery to which they point. Their dynamism constantly invites persons to participate in that which they symbolize, in new and deeper encounters with the 'transcendent' (Haight 1990:134). Because symbols both reveal and conceal, their interpretation is never fully exhausted. Symbols do not act in or out of a vacuum. Historical and cultural backgrounds, religious questions and expectations of the writer and reader all play an important part in the way symbols 'speak'. Symbols therefore open up new levels of reality and mystery, and in the process mediate change, conversion and transformation as they invite one into mystery, "empower the community", and "empower human living"(:166).

"Scripture is made up of a complex set of symbols that make present to consciousness something other than themselves, namely an encounter with God's Presence in the Church" (:132) and the world. The dynamism of the symbol with its nature to both reveal and conceal makes scripture "transparent to truth" so that a text "transcends history" and offers new possibilities (Schneiders 1991:115) to today's quest for meaning.

Whenever one enters the symbolic world of scripture one comes with one's own historical and cultural background. The two scripture texts will be reflected upon in the light of the South African context. While there are a number of scripture texts from which one could choose to reflect upon when considering the South African context, the following texts have been chosen for their common theme of remembering - *anamnesis*.

#### ***4.1.2 Exodus 25-33 - After the Exodus Experience***

The book of Exodus is one of the lasting symbols of theology and spirituality. Its importance seems to lie in the fact that within it is a message for any person or nation in almost any kind of need. In particular "it expresses an experience that is closely related to one of the fundamental and lasting human needs, that of freedom and independence" (Iersel & Weiler 1987:XV). Iersel and Weiler claim that the theme of freedom and independence is especially relevant because today, more than ever before, humanity is keenly aware of its unfreedoms, of new situations of oppression on individual, group and community levels, unfreedoms which arise from relations between individuals, groups or societies.

In the chapter on spirituality (cf 1.1.1) it was noted that Christian spiritualities reflect different periods, phases and aspects of the Christian journey throughout history. The Exodus experience has continued to be a powerful symbol throughout history. Modern usage with its many new interpretations serves to remind us of God's faithfulness shown in and through God's words and deeds in history.

In South Africa, the years preceding the first democratic elections in 1994 was a time when the majority of her people experienced oppression and some, exile. In those years stark parallels could be seen between the South African situation and the slavery and oppression of the Israelites in Egypt. Like the Israelites, the people cried for freedom from unjust rulers and laws. Their cry penetrated all aspects of life, economics, politics, worship, theology and spirituality. Their cry, although often silent, was audible and visible in their daily living. In the country, bumper stickers and unofficial hand-outs were a constant reminder of their plight. But their cry went beyond South Africa's borders and reached far into the whole world. Beyond this, their cry reached God. And God heard as God had heard the cry of the Israelites many years before: "And Yahweh said, 'I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow'..." (Ex 3:7-8).

This first part of Ex 1:1-15:21 focuses on Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and closes with a song of praise to Yahweh. Yahweh is given the credit and acknowledged as *the Deliverer*.

God delivered South Africa too from her bondage and slavery. And South Africans also sang God's praises: 'We are free, free at last!'

But in recent times awareness of a restlessness persists. Why?

Before coming to the second major theme of Exodus which begins with chapter 19, there is the journey through the wilderness (15:22-18:27). This is a journey with a refrain of thirst, hunger, grumbling, satisfaction; thirst, grumbling, satisfaction [water] and a condition to walk according to God's way (15:22-27); hunger, grumbling, satisfaction [manna and quails] and a condition to obey Yahweh (16:19; 28). In chapter 17, once again the people grumble for water and they receive it. A striking feature here is the repeated *grumbling* in these few verses. One does not deny the needs of

the people and that these were basic and real. No water meant death. The people's complaint was legitimate but after each cry of distress, their need or desire was granted. Yet when one reads these few lines, there is no mention of gratitude, praise or thanksgiving. The last we heard of praise to Yahweh is in chapter 15. True, the scriptures do not record every detail, but one cannot help noticing the omission and wondering if this is just another of those instances in scripture which is presumed, or if the writer deliberately omitted this aspect because it simply was not expressed by the people?

The third theme of Exodus focuses on the Covenant at Sinai. Moses leads the liberated Israelites to Sinai, the mountain of God, where God had first revealed to Moses God's own name: Yahweh, and Moses' mission. Against the background of majestic theophany (19:3-8) God made a covenant with the people: "... if you obey my voice and hold fast to my covenant ... I will count you ... a consecrated nation" and the people respond: "All that Yahweh has said, we will do" (19:3-8). This is a covenant initiated by Yahweh God, a covenant of love: "You yourselves have seen what I did ... how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself" (19:4), to which the people, having seen the wonders of God, freely responded by accepting to faithfully walk in the ways of Yahweh.

The Sinai covenant, unlike covenants made before with individuals, forms and binds the whole nation and the whole nation receives a law: the Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant. These together present Israel with fundamental moral and religious laws which become for Israel the charter for life and a witness against other nations.

How does this parallel with South Africa? 27 April 1994 was a miracle day. The word 'miracle' was used without shyness or embarrassment. People recognized and acknowledged that this was the work of God, that South Africa too had been carried on 'eagle's wings' and everyone celebrated God's greatness. On that day a new nation was born. For the first time *all* the people of the country could call themselves South Africans. Every vote accepted responsibility for building this new nation. The African Charter of Human Rights and United Nations Charter became South Africa's charter of life too. New laws were drawn up and a new constitution was written. The constitution which advocates 'One *law* for one *nation*' (The Constitution, 1996) was finally adopted on 8 May 1996. There was great excitement.

A new nation was being born with enthusiasm, vigor and commitment. Why then the restlessness later?

During the time that Moses was up the mountain the Israelites grew restless and impatient, became fickle and *turned against God*. "Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, 'Go down now, because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have apostasised. They have been quick to leave the way I marked out for them; they have made themselves a calf of molten metal and have worshipped it and offered it sacrifice' (32:7-8).

As long as God was first in the lives of the Israelites, as long as they remembered Yahweh and remained faithful to the covenant, all went well. But as soon as they lost sight of God, when they turned to the golden calf and were unfaithful to the covenant, chaos, pain, suffering and division entered into their lives.

What could possibly be the golden calf in South Africa today? It seems that just as the Israelites quickly got impatient, forgot the God who saved them, lost their spirit of endurance, took the law into their own hands (32:1-6) and were unfaithful to their part of the covenant agreement, so too in this country. Among some South Africans there is an impatience which borders on intolerance. People want results and want them now! They want the jobs, houses, education and all the better opportunities they were promised. They *want* and are prepared to get them by any means: demanding, stealing, murder, rape ... In the process moral, religious and social values disappear. Personal gain - the golden calf - takes precedence over the good of order.

But all is not gloom and doom. In the midst of this infidelity which led to chaos, Moses prayed and pleaded for the people (32:11-14; 30-35). This was followed by another theophany of God's intimate relationship with Moses. Once again the covenant was renewed and at the insistence of Moses God promised to take back unfaithful Israel and to stay with them on their journey (34:1ff). Who is Moses for South Africa? Who are the people who support, plead for and intercede on behalf of the country? These people exist. They are ordinary South African women and men whose faith, love and sacrifice act like the pulse of life. These people keep the heart of South Africa alive and beating. Their lives inspire and challenge the rest of the nation to think beyond their own selfish interests, to acknowledge and celebrate God's deeds, to work together to build one nation and to recognize the miracles taking place in South Africa. Their self-giving challenges the nation to stop complaining and to be aware that "We have a lot to be thankful for" (*Star*, 15 March 2000).

The Exodus event is a lasting symbol. It recalls God's saving deeds, Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, her election as a nation and God's covenant with Israel through Moses. For the Jews this is such a wonder-full event that it is *recalled* every year. The story is told over and over again, the *memory* is kept alive and it is done in the context of the Passover meal on the feast of Passover (12:1ff) when Israel *celebrates* the wonders of Yahweh. It is a way of *remembering*, *re-membering*, *keeping hope alive and giving thanks*.

In South Africa, public holidays serve as an opportunity to remember important historical happenings in the country e.g. 21 March commemorates the women of Sharpville who were shot and killed when they marched to the Sharpville police station in protest of the pass-law, and 16 June recalls the youth who were killed during the Soweto uprising in 1976.<sup>13</sup> These days enable the people to connect with their past, to *remember* those who gave their lives for the freedom of the country and to *give thanks*. The public holidays of 27 April and 24 September have a different tone but they too, are days on which the people *remember*, *re-member* and *give thanks*. On the 27 April the people remember and give thanks for their political freedom and on 24 September they celebrate their diversity by acknowledging their various cultures and celebrating these.

#### 4.1.3 The Road to Emmaus - Lk 24:13-35

Like the Exodus story, the account from Lk 24:13-35 of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, has also been a powerful symbol of God's presence in human history and fits the South African context of enthusiasm, disillusionment and new hope.

The story takes place after the resurrection. Two disciples leave Jerusalem and are on their way to Emmaus when Jesus joins them although they do not recognize him. They are disillusioned and their hopes have been shattered by the "recent happenings" (vs 13) which took place in Jerusalem. Only recently they were filled with hope and expectancy. Now as they walk and talk "their faces downcast" (vs 17) they experience confusion, discouragement and puzzlement in the light of Jesus' crucifixion (which they had supposedly witnessed) and the women's report concerning the angels' declaration that this same Jesus is alive.

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<sup>13</sup> The pass-law system restricted the freedom of movement of blacks. For further reading on the pass-laws, the Sharpville massacre and the Soweto uprising, see: Sparks A: *The mind of South Africa*

What has this first part of the Emmaus story to say to South Africa today? Unlike the Emmaus story, there was much hope and enthusiasm in the country during and immediately after the 1994 elections. No one could have imagined or anticipated such a miraculous outcome. But, like the two disciples, for many their hopes soon changed into disillusionment and discouragement.

In the heart of the disciples' discouragement Jesus appeared "but something prevented them from recognizing him" (vs 16). When Jesus asked the reason for their sadness, they were astonished but did not hesitate to share their experience. This opening was enough for Jesus to get his word in, "explain the scriptures" (vs 27) and show how all that happened was according to God's plan of salvation.

As one reads the scriptures it all sounds so easy because one knows the whole story. But the disciples were puzzled. Was the cruel death of Jesus, which they had witnessed, God's will? One can only imagine how the disciples' faith was stretched to the limits as Jesus spoke. This was a totally new way of thinking. Yet Luke does not speak of faith, he speaks of a fire beginning to re-ignite in their hearts (vs 32), something more akin to love, which they would only become aware of later.

"It is nearly evening" and Jesus made as if to go on "but they pressed him to stay with them" (vs 28-29). Something about this stranger and the way he shared his faith-story rooted them and they did not want to let go of him so soon. "So he went in to stay with them ... [W]hile he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them ... [T]heir eyes were opened ... they recognized him" ... and they said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us?" (vs.30-32). Immediately, filled with hope, joy and enthusiasm, they returned to Jerusalem with the good news: "Yes, it is true. The Lord is risen ..." (vs 35).

The Emmaus story shows how it is possible through conversation to bring each other down or re-ignite the fire in one another, how words can bring hope or despair, how people can be bearers of good news or bad news. At the beginning of the account Luke tells us that the two disciples were "talking or discussing among themselves" and "were downcast" (vs 17). Their world went around their own disappointment and closed their hearts to new possibilities. Yet there was still *space in their hearts* to accept the stranger who joined them. When Jesus joined them he brought in a new



element which made their “hearts burn within [them]”. Filled with new hope, they returned to Jerusalem to proclaim the good news (vs 32).

Story-telling is important. The word is important. But story-telling is not enough. The disciples’ hearts gradually caught fire again as Jesus spoke to them on the road. Yet only when he went in [at their invitation] and dined with them, “while he was at table with them, [when] he took the bread and said the blessing; ... broke it and handed it to them” (vs 31) were their eyes opened, their hope restored and were they filled with new enthusiasm. The disciples recognized Jesus in the context of the eucharist. Even today, it is in the breaking open of the word and the breaking of bread that hearts are broken open to let others in and give them new hope.

Both these texts are symbolically rich. Both Moses and the two Emmaus disciples encounter God in a powerful way. Although similar themes can be found in both texts, they are not parallel. One theme which can be found in both but which may not be so obvious at first, is that of *remembering (anamnesis)*. In the Exodus story God’s wonderful deeds, God’s accompanying presence and God’s compassion are recalled and made present again. God is at the heart of this story, first revealing who God is and then transforming Israel into a nation by making a covenant with them. The Emmaus story also recounts God’s deeds, although in a different way from the Exodus. Here God in Jesus is at the heart of the story. Transformation begins to take place when Jesus joins the disciples and explains the scriptures to the disciples, pointing out and reminding them of God’s faithfulness. In the Exodus experience the Israelites are told to remember and celebrate God’s deeds annually at the feast of Passover. There is no parallel command in the Emmaus story although Christians continue to remember God’s faithful love as they break the word and break bread at each eucharistic celebration. The eucharist, the Christian celebration where we remember, re-member and give thanks in ritual is the focus of our next section.

#### ***4.2 Theological Reflection: The Role of Symbols in the Eucharist***

Most of what has been said under 4.1 above concerning symbols applies to the use of symbols within theology as well. “Theology is a symbolic discipline” which engages symbols that express Christian faith in “the systematic effort to understand reality, God, the world, human existence, and history ...” (Haight 1990:143). Symbols draw us into mystery; into an encounter with the transcendent. The

“Sacraments ... are a particular kind of symbol” which effectively mediate “the divine-human encounter” (Schneiders 1991:40).

In the eucharist the “mystery of Christ’s presence and action is symbolically realized in all of the saving actions of the community but is most clearly and powerfully articulated in that sacramental action in which the community comes together (becomes corporate) to do explicitly that which all of its action is in reality: thanksgiving to God in the Spirit for the salvation wrought in Jesus Christ and commitment to extending that salvation to the ends of the earth by doing in memory of Jesus what Jesus did for us, namely, laying down our lives for those we love” (:41). Without undermining the other sacraments, “the Eucharist, the community’s liturgical self-expression as worshipping and ministering body of Christ, has a peculiar power to bring this mystery to full and explicit articulation” (:41).

#### *4.2.1 Eucharist: Remembrance and Thanksgiving*

“The Eucharist is a specifically Christian event with its origins in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus” (Francis in StuhlmueLLer 1996:270). As such, the eucharist did not exist in the Old Testament although “it has deep roots there” (:270). “The term eucharist is from the Greek ... meaning thanksgiving. Because Christ offered a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing when he consecrated the bread and wine at the Last Supper, the word has always been connected with the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper... although other names also are used: Table of the Lord, Lord’s Supper, ... agape ... breaking of bread” (Dewan in McDonald 1967:599).

The earliest account of the eucharistic celebration in the early church is found in St Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians 11:17-34. Before the liturgical meal the Corinthians held an ordinary meal, the earliest form of agape. But this meal deteriorated into selfish greed and neglect of the truly needy. Paul disapproves of this custom (v. 34) and condemns these abuses (vv. 21-22). In a context where greed and selfishness threatened to destroy the community, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the eucharist is a gift from the Lord to be shared by all. “For the tradition I received from the Lord and also handed on to you is that on the night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and after he had given thanks, he broke it, and he said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in

remembrance (*anamnesis*) of me.' And in the same way, with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me'" (1 Cor. 11:23-25).

As a "simple meal among brothers and sisters in Christ, a meal like many others they might share together" the eucharist is a meal which is "symbolically transformed to be the ritual action which proclaims, realizes and celebrates all that God has done, is doing and will do in Christ" (Lawler 1987:132). It is a meal in which we not only remember God but God remembers us and the covenant God made and sealed in the blood of Jesus. "The eucharist ... always includes both word and sacrament" and "is a proclamation and a celebration of the work of God" (WCC, 1982:#3). At the Last Supper Jesus recalled the great actions of God in history and then revealed himself as the fulfillment of God's promise. At the heart of the eucharistic mystery is the biblical notion of remembrance and memorial. The eucharist is a memorial in which the wonders which God has done in Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, are remembered and celebrated. The eucharist does not only celebrate what God has done in the past, but how God continues to act in the present and God's promise to continue to act in the future. It is a memorial which celebrates God's steadfast love which *was, is and always will be*.

The liturgical celebration of the eucharist is a single whole consisting of various elements. In a recent talk Durmuid O'Murchu, quoting John Shea, described the church's mission in terms of the eucharist and captured the various elements in three moments, namely: to gather the people; to tell their stories and to break bread together.<sup>14</sup> These three moments in the eucharistic meal form a kind of movement from alienation to integration; it is a ritual in which the people are invited to remember; re-member and give thanks for all that God is doing in their own life and in history. These three moments will be the basis for reflection on the eucharist.

### *To gather the people*

*Gathering* is the first gesture of the community, but for it to be authentic i.e. for the gathering to go beyond mere physical togetherness, "the concrete situation of the community requires that each person revise his life" and remember again that the celebration of "the Lord's Body takes place in a

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<sup>14</sup> Taken from a talk given by Durmuid O'Murchu in Pretoria, July 1999.

community which knows very well that it is celebrating the Lord's Supper" and is therefore "responsible for the Lord's Body" (Segundo 1974:99). Segundo seems to play on words as he brings out the truth that the community is the Lord's Body and the Lord's Body is the community and that consequently, each member has a responsibility for the whole.

*Gathering* for the eucharist is the first move towards celebrating the eucharist. "The Church ... earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, ... they should take part in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God's word, and be nourished at the table of the Lord's Body. They should give thanks to God" (SC # 48).

But for many this is a giant step. "To celebrate the Eucharist and to live a Eucharistic life has everything to do with gratitude. Living Eucharistically is living life as a gift, a gift for which one is grateful. But gratitude is not the most obvious response to life" (Nouwen 1994:30). As people gather, each comes with their own experience of struggle, pain, joy, success, failure, sin. The eucharist, therefore, "begins with a cry for God's mercy" (:31). The minister invites the assembly to "prepare to celebrate the sacred mysteries" (*Penitential Rite*)<sup>15</sup> by recalling, remembering, all that separates them one from the other. The Penitential Rite invites the community to be in touch with their concrete situation, it "calls the community into question ... to discern Christ's Body" (Segundo 1974:99), to recognize its failure to take responsibility and to bring all before God and the gathered community for pardon, forgiveness and healing. As a community the people confess their sinfulness; as a community they receive pardon.

This confession and cry for mercy is possible only when individuals and community recognize and accept their "co-responsibility for the evil that surrounds and pervades us. As long as we remain stuck in our complaints about the terrible times in which we live and the terrible situations we have to bear and the terrible fate we have to suffer, we can never come to contrition" (Nouwen 1994:32).

The moment of *Kyrie* is a call to conversion. It is a moment when all levels of conversion are tapped into. The community is invited to recall their sinfulness by bringing all the alienated parts of life for

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<sup>15</sup> From the ritual for the celebration of the eucharist according to the Roman Rite.

forgiveness and healing. Lonergan's challenge to conversion may be applied here as the gathered community is asked to look at their small worlds, their biases and prejudices, and recognize how these have continued to alienate them from their neighbours and God and deprive them of the sense of belonging which leaves them restless and forever searching. The community is invited to recognize that the conflicts and alienation in their personal lives impact on the conflicts and alienation on national and world level and that "only by claiming responsibility for them can we move beyond them" (:32). When the community cries *Kyrie* it is, therefore, not just for themselves, but for the world.

The symbolic action of *gathering* is more than mere physical togetherness. It is an invitation to enter into the mystery of becoming the Body of Christ and is often shown in gesture by exchanging a sign of peace. This gesture is more than a mere sign. It is a symbolic action of reconciliation and acceptance and may also serve as a readiness to move on.

#### *To Tell Their Stories*

"Although the Mass is made up of the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist, the two parts are so closely connected as to form one act of worship. The table of God's word and of Christ's body is prepared and from it the faithful are instructed and nourished. When the scriptures are read in the church, God Himself speaks to his people, and it is Christ, present in his word, who proclaims the Gospel." The general instructions go on to emphasize the need to listen to the readings with respect for not only are they the "principal elements of the liturgy" but they are "God's word ... addressed to all [people] of every era and ... understandable in itself" (GIRM # 8-9).

For the author of the letter to the Hebrews the "Word of God is something alive and active: it cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely: it can slip through the place where the soul is divided from the spirit, or joints from the marrow; it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts. No created thing can hide from him; everything is uncovered and open to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves" (Hebr 4:12-13). The symbolic dynamism of God's word draws people of every era and culture into its mystery. It is alive and active and has the power to instruct, challenge and nourish.

After the scripture readings, "a homily, as a living explanation of the word ... is an integral part of the service" (GIRM # 9). It is common practice that the homily is given by the priest or deacon. But

other alternatives and as a way of allowing "active, and full participation of the people" (: # 3) are also encouraged e.g. a shared homily or faith sharing. Yet another form practiced especially in smaller communities, is when people *tell their stories* or share experiences *before* the scripture readings and then listen to God's word, which is alive and active, to find encouragement and nourishment. The leader, in this case, may then offer a final word or exhortation which embraces and extends beyond the liturgical community to encompass the needs of all God's people. There is more participation in this latter form. Story telling has a way of opening hearts as people listen to and share in one another's pain and joy. Feelings of belonging begin to stir as the community learns to see connections between their own lives and the word of God.

In many ways this form of the liturgy of the Word is more demanding. First, it calls for time. People who come to the liturgy to get it over with generally do not come *to tell their stories* still less to listen to others. How can one who is full of self listen to and receive another? Once again, this is a call to conversion. Most people are not aware of the process of conversion which they undergo when they listen to others but each time they dare to listen to another's story they make themselves vulnerable to the other person. Vulnerability knocks gently or sometimes harshly and challenges one's affectivity. Vulnerable hearts are hearts which have allowed themselves to be broken open and to feel another's experience. The affective conversion which takes place challenges the hearers to face their own biases, question the status quo and to take action. In the process both story teller and hearers are being changed, converted. New relationships are being formed.

When the community has *told their stories* they are ready to listen to God's story. The eucharist is a celebration and proclamation of the work of God. Lawler speaks of the eucharistic meal as a simple meal which is transformed into a ritual memorial where we share our stories and the wonders God has done in history through Jesus in the Holy Spirit (Lawler 1987:132). It is a ritual meal which "remembers" (*anamnesis*) and makes real again the paschal mystery of God's love revealed in Jesus. As people remember experiences and share stories, they "re-member"; they make community. As they remember the wonderful deeds of God throughout history, they become aware of God's working in their own life and are filled with wonder and praise. As they allow themselves to be grasped by the mystery of God's love they almost naturally overflow into thanksgiving and aptly so, for this is the meaning of the word: eucharist namely, *to give thanks*.

"When therefore the faithful hear the Word of God, they should realize that the wonders it proclaims culminate in the Paschal Mystery, of which the memorial is sacramentally celebrated in the Mass. In this way the faithful will be nourished by the Word of God which they have received and in a spirit of thanksgiving will be led on to a fruitful participation in the mysteries of salvation. Thus the Church is nourished by the bread of life which she finds at the table both of the Word of God and of the Body of Christ" (EM #10)

*To break bread*

"Meals play a very important part in human experiences; not simply because eating is vital, literally, but also because meals, when shared with people, can create, or express a bond between table-companions" (Simon 1999:142). It is natural therefore, that meals on their own or as part of a larger ritual, are often used "to express and strengthen" (:142) bonds between members of a family, community or religious group and any of these groups with the divine. Thus sacred meals were and continue to be part of many peoples' cultural experience.

Generally, meals consist of two elements, food and drink. In the liturgy of the eucharist, bread and wine are used. Bread is broken and shared and all drink from the one cup. These elements and gestures are rich in symbolism. "Sharing in bread broken from the same loaf is a symbol of fraternal unity" (Dewan in McDonald 1967:599) as is drinking from the one cup. In addition, wine (and in particular, red wine) which was the "commonly accepted beverage with meals at the time of Christ and so used ... at the Last Supper" represents Christ's blood and a sharing in Christ's life. "Food symbols of spiritual nourishment have ever been especially meaningful signs of sharing in divinity, or partaking a divine life and power" (:599-600). Partaking in this sacred meal, then, unites us with Christ.

But it also unites us with one another. Celebrating the eucharist also has a social dimension. Most celebrations include a social banquet. A meal is a family ceremony; a family ritual and symbol "involving actions and objects, gestures and stories and songs" (Guzie 1974:76). By sharing in the same food, table-companions entrust themselves to one another and become more united in heart and mind. By sharing in the eucharist, Christians share most intimately in the life of Christ and each other: "His body and blood and their body and blood ... become one" (Nouwen 1994:72-73). This

is the “core of the Eucharistic celebration and the Eucharistic life” (:70). This is communion which creates community with Christ and each other. “Participation in the inner life of God leads us to a new way of participation in each other’s lives” (:76).

“The Eucharistic body of Christ has profoundly influenced St. Paul’s doctrine of the Church as the body of Christ: ‘Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread’ (1 Cor 10.17). The ‘one body’ has here the same meaning as ‘the body of the Lord’ in the preceding verse, i.e., the real body of the risen Lord. By their contact with the Eucharistic body, Christians come into vital, dynamic union with the person of Christ. That they are identified with the body of Christ is no mere metaphor, borrowed from social or civil life, for the power and life of the Spirit of Christ is present in each of them (1 Cor 6.15; 12.27; Eph 5.30). The communion ... sharing, partaking: (1 Cor 10.16) of the individual Christian with the Eucharistic body is thus the cause of their union, communion among themselves (Acts 2.42)” (Bernas in McDonald 1967:598).

It has already been pointed out that the eucharist is a memorial meal. At the last supper Jesus “took bread and the cup, gave thanks, broke and gave to his disciples, saying: “Take and eat, this is my body. Take and drink, this is the cup of my blood.” (GIRM # 48). Then he added: “Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19). Jesus commands his followers to celebrate this ritual meal of blessing and thanksgiving in his memory. The eucharist as a ritual meal commemorating the Lord’s Supper “is a mystery not only of refreshment, life and joy, but also of fraternal union. The early Christians were quick to understand this and often called their Eucharistic celebrations agapes (love feasts)” (Dewan in McDonald 1967:607).

When Christians gather to remember and celebrate the ritual of the Lord’s Supper, the biblical notion of remembering (*anamnesis*) with its *power* of recalling the wonders of God in the past such that the experience is real again, invites participants to enter anew into the wonders of God and make them their own. When participants respond positively, they are transformed. Existing bonds of friendship are deepened and strengthened and new bonds are formed. Re-membering takes place as they remember and break bread together.



### 4.3 Remember, Re-member and Give Thanks

'Remembering' - '*Anamnesis*' - is power. Remembering makes memories real and alive again, and memories enable us to recreate and re-live an event. Keeping the memory of the Exodus experience alive is so important for Jews, it is commemorated (*anamnesis*) and celebrated every year at Passover (Ex 13:10). The Passover ritual which involves all who are present recalls the wonders God worked for their ancestors when God freed them from slavery, brought them into the promised land and formed them into a nation. Each year as Jews all over the world continue to celebrate Passover, bonds are strengthened and their hope, that they will one day be reunited in Jerusalem, is kept alive. In the Emmaus story, as Jesus explains the scriptures and reminds (*anamnesis*) the disillusioned disciples of God's faithfulness throughout history, he stretches them to see beyond his pain, suffering and death (and their disillusionment) to his resurrection. As God's faithfulness is recalled, transformation begins to take place in the hearts of the disciples, and they hurry back to the Jerusalem community from which they had moved in their pain. For Christians, the eucharist is the community's corporate celebration of thanksgiving to God in the Spirit for God's saving action wrought in Jesus Christ. As God's saving word, made flesh in Jesus, is recalled and celebrated, Christians commit themselves to continue God's saving work, in memory of Jesus. Any power can be used to build or destroy. This final section looks at the possibilities and potential within South Africa when her people use the power of memory as an enabling gift.

The TRC gave South Africans a platform to tell their stories so that the process of reconciliation and healing could begin. These stories reopened old wounds and brought up much pain, hurt and bitterness. It is often not enough to tell one's story just once and expect instant healing. Because wounds have deep roots, stories need to be told over and over again. However, not all stories tell of pain and degradation although these may be the most 'urgent'. Lonergan's call to intellectual conversion to 'see beyond the obvious' may be seen as a call to be creative by becoming aware of other elements in even the most horrific experiences. For example, in South Africa, in the midst of grave atrocities, there were kind people, courageous people who opposed injustice, people who stood with the victims or marginalized, people who gave their lives. There were genuinely kind people who helped where they could and shared the little they had. There were the artists who, through their satire kept hope alive and there were the clowns who always managed to evoke some laughter. The gift of

these people fanned the dwindling faith of others. Above all, there were the many who gave their lives in death so that those who followed would live!

To choose to focus on different elements in people's stories, is not to deny their pain and suffering. Rather, as people open up and share painful memories, awareness is created on all sides and many areas in need of conversion and healing are brought to the fore. In addition to these, there are experiences of courage and risk, experiences which reveal humanity's ability to endure in dark faith, to encourage others, and to transcend negativity. As stories and experiences are recalled, remembered and shared, hearts are stirred and enkindled with new fire. Re-membering begins to take place. The big picture enables people to see beyond their own limited experiences. Hearts are opened to see and receive another's pain, which is often greater than one's own. Hearts are opened to see and receive how others, most of these personally unknown but intimately and passionately bound up with the South African scene, gave freely, not just something, but their very lives for the country.

When people dare to make themselves vulnerable before one another, transformation can take place. For a moment, both the one who gives and the one who receives are one in their vulnerability. Colour, race, creed and gender are immaterial. In this open moment both are faced with choices: choices which may lead to death or life. When both giver and receiver can see and experience themselves as part of a larger network of people to which they belong and become aware of the countless gifts they have received, they begin to ask questions, questions which concern their contribution and responsibility for building the future.

In the section on gratitude, Camenisch acknowledges a tension between the obligatory and non-obligatory side of gift and gratitude. He offers a distinction by suggesting that obligation is generally seen as coming from 'outside' whereas *gratitude is an attitude which wells up from 'within' and flows out* so that one does not feel pushed or pressurized to feel grateful. In inner freedom "one simply is grateful" (:15). Such gratitude is a *power* which gets people moving. It is a power which, while being "more spontaneous, more autonomous than an act constrained by a sense of being under obligation" (:15) moves one to ask intelligent questions which lead to action. Gift and gratitude can shape one's entire life, attitudes and behaviour. It can (some say, it must) shape the life of *all people* as individuals and as community in order that a thankful, affirmative, life-giving attitude is generated

to the world and to existence itself. Only then can relationships with self, others, the whole cosmos and with God be sustained.

Simmel in Camenisch writes: "Gratitude ... is the moral memory of mankind ... If every grateful action, which lingers on from good turns received in the past, were suddenly eliminated, society (at least as we know it) would break apart" (:25). Every person, no matter how horrific his/her personal history is, has received gifts without measure from parents, family, friends, nature, universe and/or God. In the opening story, John had received all a person could wish for yet he was still aimless and restless. Until he discovered the treasure box, opened it and made the decision to enquire about its contents, his life was too insular, too self-centred. Once he made this decision to act on his findings, a new world opened up to him. Not only did he discover that the world was bigger than he but this discovery that he belonged to a greater reality filled him with a new zest for life.

Digging into the treasure box of life is the invitation to every South African. This treasure box is not made of wood or metal, neither is it made of gold or silver; rather it is made of the flesh and blood of the people. And it contains the life of the people, living and dead. When South Africans dare to take the risk and open up to each other, they will discover and recover their lost treasures, *they will find one another and their real selves*. They will discover that they belong to one another and that apartheid was a heresy which for a time blinded them to their reality. As they open up their treasure boxes and reveal the 'contents' of their lives to each other, they will *re-member and want to give thanks*.

Gratitude is founded on the notion of gift rather than of right. Christian spirituality creates visionaries who have eyes to see beyond their own needs, it gives them that inner vision which recognizes and acknowledges ALL as gift. Gratitude comes because God's gifts are valued even in the midst of recognizing them as needs and basic human rights. Nothing is taken for granted nor is anything separated from the whole.

Several times mention has been made of people in the country who give and sustain life through their own generous spirit of self-giving in visible and invisible ways. With this new way of seeing it is time to look at this new South Africa and see that building this country is not just beginning nor are people

starting from zero. Re-membering has begun a long time ago. The following are recent accounts of generous self-giving, the good news that often takes a back seat in media reports.

- Durban Westville University offers a course for up and coming black opera singers. The "Three Tenors of SA" give hope and encouragement to other youth that opera and classical music is not limited to white or the Western world. (TV: World Watch by Sarah Crowe, 11 October 1998).
- The Star ... Wednesday 28 July 1999 Angus Tshabalala writes that the message of Soul City is that "men are equal to women, and that violence against women is totally unacceptable ... Soul City has formed a partnership with the National Network on Violence against Women to provide support to audiences in need of help during the fourth series broadcast ... screened on SABC 1 every Wednesday at 8.30 pm." This network is a "coalition of government and non-governmental organisations working to eradicate violence against women."
- Daily Dispatch ... 13 March 2000: "Soweto youths throw arms away" in a stand against crime.
- The Star ... 9 March 2000 "Velma's on a (flying) high, saving lives" tells of how a "young SA female pilot's dreams of helping people has been realised in flood operations in Mozambique."
- The Sunday Times ... 2 April 2000: "Police inspector Eugene Sitzer has thrown down the gauntlet to parents of truant schoolchildren, warning: if you don't make sure they come to school, I'll take you to court. And his threats have worked... The mother of one of the 10 children ... said... 'I am grateful for what the police are doing.'"

There are many other people whose self-giving is cause to celebrate and give thanks. These are only a very, very few examples of what can happen when people choose to get involved. These people were free to sit back and simply enjoy their own rights and benefits. They would have been entitled to it. One may ask: why did they not do just that? What makes them want to live for others?

One possible answer may be that they too experienced a kind of restlessness - not the kind which stems from selfishness and slavish needs but a restlessness which Lonergan speaks of as a tension which is creative energy, which enables one to move beyond self to the other and see that all one has is in some way from another, that all is gift - even life itself! and that therefore they are indebted, literally for everything. This changes their way of seeing. They see themselves as belonging to and connected to a greater reality than themselves, and they *are moved from within to also contribute to life*. Their contribution springs from a heart overflowing with gratitude.

It has been said that "Christian ethics ... should be a eucharistic ethic, an ethic of thanksgiving" (Camenisch 1981:1). What has just been said about contributing to the network of giftedness in life is the responsibility of all people. What then makes any of this specific for Christians? There is only one answer to this: The love of God made manifest in Jesus.

When Paul contemplated the wonders of God revealed in the Jesus who broke into his life and heart on the road to Damascus, he was filled with thanksgiving. All his letters carry this theme of gratitude. It is often his opening greeting (cf 1 Cor 1:4-9; Eph 1:17; Phil 1:3 ff; Col 1:3 ff; 1 Thes 1:2 ff; 2 Thes 1:3 ff; 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 1:3; Phm 1:4). He was conscious of his "debt of gratitude" to Prisca and Aquila who risked death to save his life. He was also conscious of many people who had directly or indirectly helped him in his life and ministry, people without whom he could not have accomplished all he did, people who had enriched his personal life and public ministry, that this is recorded in scripture (Rom 16:1-16).

#### *4.4 Conclusion*

God's word, which is alive and active is ever open to new interpretations in response to new situations, questions and needs. Before 1994 the scriptures spoke differently to South Africa than they do today. Whereas the Exodus story had previously spoken to the majority of South Africans of deliverance from unjust structures, the Exodus story now calls *all* South Africans to a new way of living. From a people alienated from each other, *all* are called to form *one nation*. There have been glimpses and brief experiences of corporate-ness but like the Emmaus disciples, disillusionment and discouragement blind them to the presence of the risen Lord in their midst. Yet all is not gloom and doom. A common theme in both the Exodus and Emmaus stories is that of *remembering* - *anamnesis* and remembering is power especially when God's faithful love is at the heart of what is recalled. Then memory links persons and events, makes connections and gets people moving. This is what happens each time Christians celebrate the eucharist. South Africans are still on the Exodus journey, not from one land to another but from one way of life to a new way of life. Like the Emmaus disciples they are challenged to open their hearts to the stranger who walks alongside them. When they dare to take the risk and open up the treasure boxes of their lives to one another, recalling and sharing experiences, awareness of the interconnectedness and interdependence of humanity grows, hearts begin to catch fire, relationships are formed and strengthened, and people are gradually transformed into a grateful community. Then they will not only share the eucharist, they will be a eucharistic people.

## 5. CONCLUSION: BECOMING A EUCHARISTIC PEOPLE

This thesis began with a recognition and acknowledgement that a restlessness still persists in the people of South Africa six years after their miraculous democratic elections of 1994. The experience of 27<sup>th</sup> April 1994 brought great expectations but this was short lived. Enthusiasm quickly changed to disillusionment and despondency. April 27<sup>th</sup> brought South Africans face to face with their new reality, namely, that South Africa is one country and one nation. From an era which stressed exclusivity, separation, apartheid - everything which had left her alienated: person from person, group from group, country from the world, South Africa is called to inclusivity, interdependence and integration. Her people had a taste of this on that miraculous day. Now all they seem to be aware of is a restlessness which still persists. Restlessness in itself is neither negative nor bad. On the contrary, such an awareness is simply an alert-call that something is not as it should or could be. Lonergan reminds us that such awareness is the first step towards conversion. Awareness enables one to stop and question the source of one's restlessness. According to Woods, there is a new hunger for spirituality/for God in the world today. Where would our questioning lead if we directed the source of our restlessness to a hunger for God? St Augustine, reflecting on his restless spirit wrote: "... You have made us for yourself [O Lord] and our heart is restless until it rests in you" (1960:43). This is where humanity's restlessness will ultimately find its peace. Restlessness, therefore, can act as a grace inviting one to "choose life" (Deut 30:15-20). It is a matter of conscious choosing!

In the light of this awareness a new spirituality is proposed to address South Africa's new reality, namely: *that only when South Africans begin to see themselves as a-part-of as opposed to separate from (apartheid) one another and gratitude replaces restlessness, will true freedom prevail*. This is summed up as a spirituality of interdependence and gratitude.

Christian spirituality is alive, dynamic and incarnational. Rooted in South Africa's contemporary situation, it takes on the experience and expressions of contemporary South Africans by inviting them into a process of conversion and transformation. Conversion here entails a total *metanoia* and *epistrophe*, i.e. a radical change of mind and heart which overflows into action. This process of transformation is a lifetime journey of coming home to oneself and to God, and then moving out in love to others. Only one who is conscious of God's unconditional love is capable of embarking on such a journey of faith or rather, such a relationship of love. Such an experience of unconditional

love is itself transforming. It never leaves one the same but instead leads one to deeper union with God and loving service to neighbour.

South Africa is in transition, in process, on a journey which calls for a radical conversion of mind and heart. Building a *new* South Africa implies living a *new way of life*. This calls for a new way of thinking and being. From thinking and acting in a limited and exclusive way, South Africans are challenged to an inclusive life style, to take a stand and witness to all that stands in opposition to apartheid, to see their newly acquired rights as a gift which bonds them as a people and not as an 'entitlement' which alienates them once again one from another, to recognize the giftedness of every person and to use their rights to witness to their interdependence! To recognize every citizen is itself an experience which is only possible after some measure of conversion. South Africa's legacy of apartheid did not encourage her people to acknowledge one another, still less appreciate the giftedness inherent in each person. This is a radical call to self-transcendence and conversion, both of which are at the heart of the spiritual life.

"Lonergan's transcendental method is a way of being fully human and authentic" (Johnston 1996:111) i.e. being true to one's deepest self and calling forth the same in others. To be true to this "deepest thrust of the human spirit one must obey certain transcendental precepts" viz: "Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable". Adherence to these "precepts leads to intellectual self-transcendence and intellectual conversion" (:112). In the South African context, in order to build a *new* South Africa, it is important that one is *attentive to and aware of* the status quo so that one is able to question intelligently and reasonably. Yet "to be human and authentic it is not enough to be intelligent and reasonable; one must also be moral. One must transcend self ethically" i.e. "[b]e responsible ... this precept leads to ethical conversion whereby one makes decisions not for personal satisfaction but from commitment to the objective good" (:112). In other words knowledge is not enough, responsible action must follow. Thus it is that South Africans are challenged to recognize and accept their human rights as a *gift* despite the fact that these are rights to which they are entitled; to celebrate this gift and to use these to build up the community. In this way, their rights will not control them into becoming less than who they are meant to be, rather their rights will call forth mutual respect and be used for mutual enrichment. Speaking at a gathering to celebrate Human Rights Day, Wirba Alidu Yonye, visiting SA from Cameroon, said it is a "big achievement" to have a public holiday in recognition of human rights. "In most African countries they don't have a public holiday declared for human rights ... it's a privilege. This is a starting point" (*The Natal Witness* 22 March 2000). For

Rabbi Lappin recognizing 'entitlement' as gift is to simultaneously accept that one is indebted to reciprocate benefits by contributing to the common good. It stretches one to think beyond one's own needs. He goes on to criticize the media for "not set[ting] standards ... to which people can aspire. Instead ... standards will be lowered to you" (quoted in Van Scalkwyk 1998:176). To see their basic human rights as a gift and privilege which connects them and calls for co-responsibility and accountability is a new way of thinking and acting. This is the ethical transcendence to which people are challenged to rise. It is a way which cuts across selfishness and self-centredness for the sake of the common good. It does not contradict self-development and advancement but it challenges people to "Be ambitious for the higher gifts ... faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these ... love" (1 Cor 12:31; 13:13).

Intellectual, moral and affective conversion are important but to effect any significant socio-political change "the crowning precept is concerned with love. [This] is nothing other than the greatest commandment, to love with one's whole heart and soul and mind and strength...[This] is religious conversion" (Johnston 1966:112); this is self-transcendence which leads to fulness of life (Jn10:10). Johnston describes Lonergan's language on religious conversion as "passionate language" (:113) akin to that of the mystics. Using the analogy of a love relation between a man and woman, Lonergan describes religious conversion as "other-worldly falling in love" (Lonergan 1972:240) in which one is "held, grasped, possessed" (:242) with a passion that moves one out in loving service. But passionate loving and living also entails passion as in suffering and death. "It was necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into his glory" (Lk 24:26) is what Christ said to the Emmaus disciples. The way to life is through death. Perhaps such terminology was not used for the many who gave their lives in the pursuit of freedom in this country and for those who are the bearers of good news today, yet without a passion for life there is no life.

Camenisch reminds us that the best measure of real gift-giving is the measure of self in a gift, no matter how rich and influential the donor or poor and weak the recipient because in such an exchange the real gift is oneself. Each time Christians gather to celebrate the eucharist, they remember Christ's total self-giving. In the three moments used for our theological reflection on the eucharist, those who gather to celebrate this memorial feast are invited to the same self-giving as they cry *kyrie*, share their life stories and eat of the one loaf.



South Africans are challenged to have a passion for life but what will fire them and get them moving? This thesis proposed that the motivation is seeing all life as gift, and for South Africans, in particular, to see their long awaited human rights as a gift. Just the mention of such a proposal drew some very emotional and angry responses. Anger is an emotion which often gets people moving passionately. This is a good enough starting point. In the process of building a new South Africa mistakes will be made, pain and joy, success and failure, selfishness and generosity, death and life will be encountered but those honestly involved in this process will not be drifters. The passion for 'more', for life, will impel them to respond to the ongoing calls to conversion. What was initially an awareness of a persistent restlessness will now be a passion which will move them to stop, reflect, question, judge, decide and respond responsibly. As none of this can be done in isolation they will realise their interdependence and belonging to something greater than themselves and therefore, their indebtedness and co-responsibility.

Such radical transformation is necessary if South Africans want to continue building their country where others have left off while simultaneously *creating something new*. This means learning to see and accept that their greatest asset and treasure is not precious metals mined from the depths of the earth, but every person irrespective of colour, class, gender, creed or age, all belong to one country and one nation, to one universe and ultimately to One God. This does not imply neglecting oneself, one's group or one's clan, but beginning to see oneself as a-part-of the great network within the country and universe, giving life to and receiving from one another. In the process one becomes more human, more whole, more of whom one is and is meant to be. Thus community forms the individual and the individual forms the community. This is the meaning of "Ubuntu". This is what it means to be the "Body of Christ" (1 Cor 12-14).

Becoming a grateful people, a eucharistic people, is no easy calling. Through ongoing personal and communal conversion, it involves radical self-giving so that others may live. It involves pain, birthing pains. People whose whole life is pervaded with gratitude have a way of giving life to others simply by their *being*. These are not extraordinary people but people who have allowed God's all pervading Holy Spirit to grasp and possess their life and to stretch them beyond themselves. These people exist in the country and act as a way forward for South Africa, for Africa and for the world. They offer a way of hope into the next millennium. Like South Africa's Bill of Rights which seeks to dignify *all* her citizens, a spirituality of interdependence and gratitude is within reach of *every* South African

as they reflect on who they are as South Africans, where they have come from and how they can move forward together into the new millennium, and beyond, into the kingdom of God.

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