

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

**A CRITICAL STUDY OF CHRISTOLOGY IN LATIN
AMERICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND BLACK
THEOLOGY WITH A VIEW TO FORMULATING A
RELEVANT CHRISTOLOGY FOR SOUTH AFRICA TODAY**

SOLOMON JACOB

PIETERMARITZBURG

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that the situation in South Africa has changed sufficiently to warrant a review of Latin American liberation and Black christologies, both of which have been regarded as particularly relevant to that context, and offers a significantly fresh approach to liberation christology in the new situation.

The first chapter describes the changes that have taken place in the country and gives reasons why a new christology is necessary. The second chapter outlines the chief requirements for a proper revisionary christology and offers criteria for assessing its credibility (relevance) and appropriateness (normativeness).

Chapters three and four summarize respectively the presuppositions, basic approach, and main themes (under convenient heads: Bible and Tradition, Jesus Christ Liberator, Christology and Discipleship) of the two christologies under review, and thus lays the basis for the critique and constructive christology presented in the concluding chapter.

The concluding chapter offers pointers toward a new christology of liberation. It begins with an outline of certain key issues -

humanization, political liberation, salvation from sin, reconciliation, and reconstruction - that any christology must address adequately if it is to be

relevant and credible for South Africans today, and presents the notion of "freedom" (a much broader notion of freedom than liberation christologies have cared to stress) as the most appropriate paradigm of analysis. Its most significant departure is that it offers a fundamentally different understanding of the dialectic operating within the hermeneutical circle. It takes a wider view of the nature of the community which forms the locus of christological reflection so that the racial/partisan dimension is no longer primary, locates the norm of appropriateness neither in Scripture nor tradition but in a dynamic dialogue with a present Christ and past traditions (including Scripture), and, taking account of the difficulties of biblical interpretation, speaks of Jesus as Liberator with particular reference to the theme of the Kingdom and Love, emphasizing Jesus' role as Redeemer, Reconciler, and Re-creator.

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Last but most importantly my wife Isobel and daughter Christel have been a source of strength and love throughout the period of this study and to them this work is affectionately dedicated.

Rev S Jacob

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that the whole of this work, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my original work.

Rev S Jacob

DEDICATION

**TO ISOBEL AND CHRISTEL
FOR THEIR ENCOURAGEMENT, LOVE, INSPIRATION,
AND SACRIFICE**

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION.

The South African socio-political order has for many centuries been organized on a racial basis with whites achieving and maintaining political hegemony at the expense of blacks. This racist political order existed from the earliest days of white settlement in the Cape of Good Hope, and in the following centuries racism became increasingly entrenched as the supreme organizing principle in South African society. This racializing of the South African political order reached its climax in the Apartheid superstructure whose foundation was firmly laid by the Nationalist Party which came to power in 1948.

The distinctive characteristic of Apartheid ideology was the introduction of a tighter, more systematic and strictly enforced control by the State over the movement, employment, and location of blacks. The Nationalist government had since 1948 passed major pieces of legislation under which the whole Apartheid policy was enforced: the exclusion of blacks from parliamentary representation, laws relegating blacks

to second class citizenship in the homelands and the maze of security legislation against opponents of the government.⁽¹⁾

In the period covering forty three years it is possible to discern two emphases in the policy of Apartheid.⁽²⁾ First, decisive moves were taken to reduce and eliminate the political rights of blacks in relation to the central parliament and related government structures. Second, there were effective moves to channel African, Coloured and Indian political aspirations into separate political institutions. In the case of Africans these institutions were territorially based in the "homelands". In the case of Coloureds and Indians there has been a policy of ambiguous "parallelism" in political structures.⁽³⁾

The effect of racist policies on the South African black community is well known and is described in detail in various publications.⁽⁴⁾ In short, the South African black community experienced dispossession, and dehumanization, and severe oppression at the hands of the white minority government and of white power.

The response of South African black people to the racializing of the political order was from the first one of protest. This protest took various forms. At

first black political organizations made appeals to those in power in the hope that negotiation might lead to a more just and democratic order.⁽⁵⁾ As racism became further entrenched black response turned from dialogue to non-violent protest.⁽⁶⁾ With the severe onslaught of Apartheid policies and the unbearable suffering that it brought to blacks, black protest became more and more militant.⁽⁷⁾ With the option of negotiation excluded by government, the harassment and imprisonment of political activists, and the severe limitations placed on political activity, Black liberation movements resorted to the armed struggle.

The era of Apartheid faced three major responses that challenged white domination and white rule and forced the South African government to effect positive change - Black Resistance and Black Consciousness, South Africa's Isolation from the International Community, and the Church Struggle Against Apartheid.

1.1.1. BLACK RESISTANCE AND BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS.

The Black response to Apartheid has taken various forms, but the two main streams of black resistance are African Nationalism and Black Consciousness.⁽⁸⁾ The roots of African resistance in South Africa go back to the nineteenth century when missionary schools began to question the morality of a social and

political order which denied them racial equality.⁽⁹⁾ It was from these beginnings that mass political movements arose. African resistance was spearheaded by the African National Congress (ANC) which was established in 1912. The ANC insisted on freedom from white domination and demanded political independence. After 1948 the ANC took a more aggressive stance against Apartheid, rejecting segregation, Apartheid and white trusteeship.⁽¹⁰⁾

African resistance grew and gained momentum in the fifties, in the face of systematic and consistent refusals by the Apartheid government to countenance African demands or even to acknowledge that Africans had legitimate grievances which should be addressed by fundamental changes in racial policy.⁽¹¹⁾ In 1955 the historic Congress of the People, a united front of all the anti-racist forces, met at Kliptown in the Transvaal and adopted the Freedom Charter.⁽¹²⁾ The Freedom Charter provided the different national organizations of the African, Coloured and Indian people with a common programme of national liberation. Since then the ANC has developed into a broadly based movement including Africans, Indians, Coloureds and Whites.

Another significant stream of African resistance is represented by the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). In

1958 Robert Sobukwe broke away from the ANC and formed the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) which called for a political outlook clearly based on African nationalism.⁽¹³⁾ The PAC rejected Apartheid as well as multiracialism.⁽¹⁴⁾ The organisation is an exclusive Africanist movement with a commitment to a post-Apartheid non-racialism.⁽¹⁵⁾ The PAC campaign against the pass laws led to the Sharpville massacre of 1960, when sixty nine Africans were killed and one hundred and seventy eight wounded in police action.⁽¹⁶⁾ On 8 April 1960 the government passed the Unlawful Organizations Act banning the ANC and PAC. Mandela and Sobukwe were soon arrested and imprisoned, and the liberation movements went into exile to engage in the armed struggle against the South African regime. Half a century of non-violence had failed to ensure political change.

The emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in the late 1960's and the subsequent spread of "*Black Consciousness*" or "*black power*" amongst Africans, Coloureds and Indians had significant political implications.⁽¹⁷⁾ The Black Consciousness era grew out of an increased realization amongst black intellectuals of their own systematic exploitation and in reaction to white liberal paternalism. It was fuelled by resistance to the government sponsored ideology of ethnicity which sought to justify the

Bantustan system and the Bantu education system designed to create a culturally subservient black people. Another factor that influenced the development of Black Consciousness was the growing mood among blacks in general against multiracialism⁽¹⁸⁾, a multiracialism that was being offered by whites who claimed to be liberals but who were only prepared to go as far as arranging multiracial get togethers, e.g. tea parties, while they did not do anything significant to challenge the Apartheid system. Most of these "liberals" were English-speaking Christians that expressed opposition to Afrikaaner Nationalist racialism; and their brand of multiracialism was regarded by the majority of blacks as "false bourgeois multiracialism" because they found that the many whites who were prepared to mix with blacks were paternalistic and preferred to mix with the educated black elite, and this for many blacks was a "false" multiracialism.⁽¹⁹⁾

The Black Consciousness movement declared itself to be working for the liberation of the black person from the psychological oppression that resulted from living in a white racist society. It argued that blacks had to liberate themselves psychologically and shed the slave mentality induced by white liberalism and institutionalized racism. In its quest for a policy for the future the movement adopted a range of

economic principles broadly typical of African socialism.

A major impact of the Black Consciousness Movement was that it raised the level of consciousness of blacks by a process of conscientization. It did this with remarkable success among the black intelligentsia. Though the Black Consciousness Movement drew on the intellectual tradition of the Africanists such as Potlake Leballo, Zeph Mothopeng, and Peter Raboroko, its main emphases were philosophic and introspective, and it attempted to popularize its ideas through "*black communalism*"⁽²⁰⁾ in which property was communally owned and labour communally appropriated. This was given effect through economic cooperatives, literacy campaigns, health projects and cultural activity.

In 1977 the white government banned the Black Consciousness Movement and forced large numbers of politicized urban blacks to leave the country, and to continue the struggle in exile. Nevertheless, the spirit of Black Consciousness continued to empower the people within the country as black protest became more militant. The combination of the resistance of anti-Apartheid forces within the country and the diplomatic and armed struggle waged from abroad pushed South Africa into a new era of change. Whatever happens in

the future African Nationalism and Black Consciousness have ensured that South African blacks have a sophisticated leadership that is not politically naive or suicidal in its quest for a free, just and participatory society in South Africa.

1.1.2. SOUTH AFRICA'S ISOLATION FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

On the international scene the struggle continued in exile with international communities supporting the liberation movements and effectively isolating South Africa politically, diplomatically, economically and culturally.

The end of the eighties marked South Africa's effective isolation from the community of nations. Most international governments, with a few exceptions, (United Kingdom, Germany) imposed some kind of sanctions related to trade, disinvestment, arms, sports, and cultural boycotts. South Africa responded to diplomatic and economic pressures by making some political concessions to blacks, e.g., allowing them to participate in local government. It is clear that the new mechanisms for change were a response to political and economic demands made on the state and to the pressures of economic sanctions. The effect, therefore of, comprehensive mandatory sanctions was that it is regulative, that is, the regime would

continue with its efforts to win foreign confidence by promises of reform and some constitutional change.

In the early 90's the South African government gave in to the pressure of anti-Apartheid forces both from within and without the country. The result was that it set in motion a process of change which started with discussions between Mandela and State President PW Botha in 1986. A major turning point in this process was the speech made by Botha's successor, President FW De Klerk, to Parliament in 1990. In his opening address De Klerk said:

"The general election on 6 September 1989 placed our country irrevocably on the road of drastic change. Underlying this is the growing realization by an increasing number of South Africans that only a negotiated understanding among representative leaders of the entire population is able to ensure lasting peace.

The alternative is growing violence, tension and conflict. This is unacceptable and in nobody's interest. The well-being of all in this country is linked inextricably to the ability of leaders to come to terms with one another on a new dispensation. No-one can escape this simple truth."⁽²¹⁾

President De Klerk then announced a series of dramatic changes to national life.⁽²²⁾ He announced the government's intention to work towards a new socio-economic and political order: a new democratic constitution, universal franchise, majority rule in a unitary state, protection for minorities, equal

justice for all under a human rights manifesto, no discrimination, freedom of religion and a sound economy based on economic principles and private enterprise. He stated that the governments programme would include better education, health services, housing and social conditions for all. Democratization was the objective, and a fully fledged process of negotiation was to be initiated between various political groupings.

International governments responded to De Klerk's attempts at reform by lifting some of the sanctions that had hitherto been in place.⁽²³⁾ The Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Harare in October 1991 lifted "*person -to-person*" sanctions but continued to impose financial and sports sanctions until elections for a new democratic government were successfully held and a new constitution guaranteed. This relaxation of sanctions meant the immediate lifting of Commonwealth art and cultural boycotts and the restrictions on visa requirements. The South African government became increasingly anxious to proceed to an early political settlement in order to address the country's serious economic problems.

On 30 November 1991 a new era dawned on South African politics with the first meeting of the all-party conference comprising 20 leading political

organizations in the country.⁽²⁴⁾ At this meeting the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa 1) was inaugurated. The Codesa Convention met on 20-21 December 1991 to consider a number of items placed on the agenda by members of the all-party conference. The main items for discussion were:

"the creation of a free political climate; general constitutional principles; a constitution making body or process; transitional arrangement or interim government; the future of the independent national states; the role of the international community; time frames; and the implementation of Codesa decisions".⁽²⁵⁾

Whilst the establishment of Codesa I (1991) marked the first step towards achieving the goal of a non-racial democracy which many hoped would bring peace, freedom and justice to all South Africans, and a generally optimistic outlook prevailed thereafter, at Codesa II the parties failed to reach agreement on key political issues and this failure led to its collapse.⁽²⁶⁾

Consequently both the government and the political parties sought a new negotiating forum to decide the political future of South Africa.⁽²⁷⁾ This new forum called the "Multi-party Negotiations Council" met in May 1993, and it reached agreement by "sufficient consensus" on a broad range of issues, including the form of state, violence, Transitional Executive Council, fundamental human rights, interim

constitution, independent media and electoral commissions, the repeal of discriminatory legislation, and regionalisation.⁽²⁸⁾ By June 1993 a date had been set for the first non-racial elections and the Negotiations Council accepted a two-phased approach to drafting the new constitution: the country would be run by a Transitional Executive Authority while the new constitution would be drawn up by an elected constituent assembly.⁽²⁹⁾ There was great progress in the latter part of 1993 when the Council adopted draft legislation for the Independent Electoral Commission Bill, the Independent Media Commission Bill, the Independent Broadcasting Bill, and the Transitional Executive Council Bill.⁽³⁰⁾

The passing of the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) Bill by Parliament in September 1993, and the adoption of an interim constitution in December of that same year, set the country firmly on the path of democracy.⁽³¹⁾ As President FW De Klerk put it:

"By accepting a new constitution we took South Africa over the threshold of history into a new era with all its dangers, opportunities, and challenges."
(³²)

The vast majority of South Africans were pleased with this progress and eagerly awaited the first democratic elections in South Africa's history. These historic elections were set for the 26-28 April 1994. By the

time of the elections negotiations had successfully drawn the majority of political groupings, including the strong Inkatha Freedom Party into the election process. However some groups, e.g., the Conservative Party, and the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), refused to participate in the elections because they believed that the solutions offered did not address effectively their desire for self-determination and federalism. Azapo, a representative of the Black Consciousness movement, also opposed the elections because it believed that only a duly elected constituent assembly could legitimately initiate and supervise the necessary transition to democracy.

Despite these and other drawbacks that bedeviled the process of transition to democracy, and in the face of many uncertainties and fears, the country's first non-racial and fully democratic elections took place on 26-28 April 1994. The ANC won the majority of seats in the new parliament, with the National Party taking second place, and the Inkatha Freedom Party a clear third.

When ANC President Nelson Mandela was installed as the new President of South Africa on 10 May 1994, one chapter of South African history had come to an end and a new one opened, a transition dramatically epitomized in the journey of a man from prisoner to

State President. For then and there it became clear that a new era had indeed dawned, and the people had entered the "new" South Africa that so many had been waiting for for so long. The struggle for liberation has been vindicated.

To sum up, it seems that South Africa is now firmly set on the road to transition into "*the new South Africa*". There are political groupings that are dissatisfied with the outcome of the elections and the process of transition, and one might expect that they will from time to time threaten to destroy what took many years to achieve. These however will be temporary setbacks as the difficulties they pose are overcome by new processes and resolutions.

There is reason for optimism as South Africa enters a new era. Agreement on human rights principles and the institution of a new dispensation were reached relatively quickly between the major players, and the seemingly insurmountable difficulties proved ultimately surmountable. The elections were far more peaceful than most expected and were declared free and fair, and the new government has been able to take charge and establish a relatively stable political and economic climate. Within a few years the South African socio-political landscape will have been altered beyond recognition. Old ways of thinking and

being will have little place in the new order. Whether or not theological responses will adapt effectively to this new situation remains to be seen. What is clear is that the mere repetition of previous theological positions will not do. The situation has changed sufficiently to warrant a radical review of theological insights and responses, and theologians are challenged in a new context to engage in a creative and relevant theology appropriate to these changed and changing circumstances.

1.1.3. THE CHURCH STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID.

The history of Apartheid is also the history of the Church in South Africa. The churches in South Africa have played an ambiguous role ever since christianity arrived on the shores of the Cape in 1652.⁽³³⁾ At times the Church in South Africa favoured the political system while at other times it took a stance on the side of revolutionary change.⁽³⁴⁾

The Nationalist Party ideologists turned to Afrikaaner theologians for scriptural and theological justification for their racial policies. In this way racial segregation found its base in Afrikaaner religious beliefs and Afrikaaner Nationalism. Afrikaaner theologians provided the framework and justification for what eventually became Apartheid.

(³⁵) However, in recent years many Afrikaaner theologians have retracted from this pro-Apartheid theological position. The Dutch Reformed Churches that provided theological support for Apartheid have also come to recognise that the system can no longer be given theological justification. This is epitomised in the Rustenberg Declaration made by ninety seven South African churches including representatives from the White Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa at Rustenberg on 5-9 November 1990. (³⁶)

"We denounce Apartheid in its intention, its implementation and its consequences as an evil policy. The practice and defence of Apartheid as though it were biblical and theologically legitimated is an act of disobedience to God, a denial of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a sin against our unity in the Holy Spirit". (³⁷)

In 1948 the mainline English speaking Churches, the Presbyterian Church of Africa, The Methodist Church of South Africa, The Baptist Union of South Africa, The Episcopal Synod of the Church of the Province and the Congregational Assembly expressed their opposition to Apartheid. (³⁸) This opposition in theory continued to the end. In 1968 the South African Council of Churches representing thirteen member Churches and fifteen million members issued the *"Message to the People of South Africa"*. (³⁹)

The *"Message"* made it clear that Apartheid is a false

Gospel; that separation on the grounds of race, nationality, language and culture have no place in a Christian country; that Apartheid and separate development are contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that Christians are called to live in obedience to Jesus Christ even if it is contrary to the customs and laws of the country. This process begun by the churches turned full cycle in 1982 with the Declaration of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (NGSK) which rejected Apartheid as a heresy. This declaration was subsequently endorsed by the South African Council of Churches and the majority of its member churches⁽⁴⁰⁾ and by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC).

This struggle of the South African Churches against Apartheid did not end with the declaration that Apartheid is a heresy. Three further notable declarations and actions were to follow in the Churches witness against Apartheid. First, there was the call "to end unjust rule" on 16 June 1985. The call was accompanied by the theological rationale that stated among other things:

"We have taken the reluctant and drastic step of declaring Apartheid to be contrary to the declared will of God, and some Churches have declared its theological justification to be a heresy. We now pray that God will replace the present structures of oppression with ones that are just, and remove from power those who persist in

defying His laws, installing in their place leaders who will govern with justice and mercy".⁽⁴¹⁾

Second, an ecumenical conference called by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Harare in 1985 to consider action against Apartheid adopted the Harare Declaration.⁽⁴²⁾ The Harare Declaration called on the world community to intensify economic and diplomatic pressures on South Africa in a bid to force South Africa to dismantle Apartheid and to transfer power to the majority of its people.

Third, in May 1987 the Lusaka Statement was produced at an ecumenical conference held in Lusaka, Zambia. The Lusaka Statement called for international support for the frontline states and liberation movements and it urged unity amongst the forces opposing Apartheid.⁽⁴³⁾

The Roman Catholic Church's position regarding Apartheid is stated in the Bishop's Statement of 1972.⁽⁴⁴⁾

"Realising that South Africa has entered a critical phase in the rejection by the majority of its people of a social and political system of oppression, we add our corporate voice as leaders of the Catholic Church in this country to the cry for a radical revision of this system. People starved of freedom, deprived of their just rights and humiliated in their personal and corporate dignity will not rest until a proper balance of justice is achieved.

We affirm in this we are on the side of the oppressed and, as we have committed ourselves to working within our church for a clearer expression of solidarity with the poor and the deprived, so we commit ourselves equally to working for peace through justice in fraternal collaboration with all other churches, agencies and persons dedicated to this cause.

We again profess our conviction, so often repeated, that the only solution of our racial tensions consists in conceding full citizen and human rights to all persons in the Republic, not by choice on the false grounds of colour but on the grounds of the common humanity of all men, taught by our Lord." (⁴⁵)


The Church-State conflict continued with statements, challenges, legislation and action by the government. The Church in turn responded with statements, delegations and public action. The Church struggle continued throughout the Apartheid era.


1.2. THE THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE.

Christian theological response to the development of a racial socio-political order was, as already suggested, a mixed one. While pro-racist groups evolved a theology which sought to justify the racist order in South Africa, anti-Apartheid groups developed theologies of protest.

The response of the anti-Apartheid churches, and Christian groups are contained in statements or declarations which clearly constitute a theology of

protest. The basis of this theology of protest is to be found in a traditional understanding of creation and salvation. A theology of creation provided the basis for the view that all people are equal and equally valuable before God because all people are created in the image of God. A theology of salvation presented Jesus Christ as the Lord of all life who desires reconciliation and unity rather than racism and division. In short, this traditional response may be described as a "*confessional*" theology.

 The theological rationale of these churches and groups is to be found in the various statements they have issued from time to time. While these statements vary in their details they share a common theological rationale. They are united in their traditional trinitarian and christocentric approach and in the call to true Christian discipleship. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to describe in detail the many statements that have been issued by the groups mentioned. It is sufficient for the present purpose to refer to a few documents which represent fairly the general theological thrust of the various anti-Apartheid Christian groups which espouse a confessional approach focusing chiefly on two comprehensive documents: The Message to the People of South Africa (SACC) and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church Statement on Apartheid and a Confession of



Faith (NGSK).⁽⁴⁶⁾

That they espouse traditional trinitarianism is clear from the frequency with which the persons of the trinity are mentioned and the way in which the statements characterize the different persons in the Godhead.⁽⁴⁷⁾ All of them speak of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

Their theological approach is based on an affirmation that God is the master of the world, that he acts in history to shape the world and control it according to his purpose; that he overthrows the sin that corrupts his creation.⁽⁴⁸⁾ God is seen as creator and provider, as the one who creates and sustains the world. He acts as judge, is gracious, and loving.⁽⁴⁹⁾ As Father he is the originator of humanity and unites people into one family.⁽⁵⁰⁾ He creates all people in his own image and all people are of equal value. The theology of the Church affirms the nature of human beings as equal in the sight of God and the call for people to live in community as a family.⁽⁵¹⁾ God is a God of Justice and righteousness and seeks to uplift the poor and the oppressed. God is the peacemaker who rules with justice for the poor and the oppressed.⁽⁵²⁾ **end*

The Holy Spirit is the divine power available to people and enables them to live according to God's

will and purpose. The Church affirms faith in the Holy Spirit who is the pledge of God's coming Kingdom and who gives power to judge, to love, to serve all people in the struggle for justice.⁽⁵³⁾ The Gospel affirms that the Kingdom of God is already present in Christ and the Holy Spirit.⁽⁵⁴⁾ and for the sake of the Kingdom Christians must be involved in the world.⁽⁵⁵⁾

The documents also argue from the basis of a traditional christology, using the insights of the Bible and tradition to interpret the nature and significance of the person and work of Christ as these relate to the South African context. The focus of their theology is the person and work of Christ whose saving and reconciling work breaks down barriers that separate people and unites them in a single humanity.⁽⁵⁶⁾ The Churches affirm that "*Jesus is Lord*". The lordship of Christ is recognized as being over all life.⁽⁵⁷⁾ This includes a call to reconciliation, justice and freedom in religion and society, in Church and State.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Christ demands a change in sinful society. Through his death and resurrection Christ assures the forgiveness of the sin that separates and denies reconciliation. Separation has been overcome and salvation is effected through Christ's work⁽⁵⁹⁾ as he breaks down barriers that divide human beings⁽⁶⁰⁾ Christ is the truth that sets people free and liberates them from bondage to

fullness of life.⁽⁶¹⁾ Thus Christ is seen as saviour, liberator and Lord.

In these statements the Biblical witness or "Word of God" is the basis for the assertions made about God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and about the Gospel with its demands for unity, justice and peace.

"The Word of God is the supreme authority and guiding principle revealing all that we need to know about God's will for the whole existence of human beings. It is this Word that gives life and offers liberation that is total and complete."⁽⁶²⁾

Anything that is contrary to the Word of God must be rejected for the Word of God is not to be subjected to cultural and racist ideology.⁽⁶³⁾

The Church proclaims the Gospel as the good news in the situation of sin and separation. The Gospel removes the barriers between peoples.⁽⁶⁴⁾ It is the Gospel of salvation that offers hope and security to the whole life of persons as it is interpreted in the socio-political and universal sense.⁽⁶⁵⁾

This is the biblical and theological rationale for the rejection of racial segregation and Apartheid, the false Gospel, and for the basis for the call to obedience to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.⁽⁶⁶⁾ The call to the church is that the Gospel is to be lived

out in the context of struggle for a just society.⁽⁶⁷⁾ This is to be achieved through obedience which leads to reconciliation. The task of the Christian is to work for reconciliation⁽⁶⁸⁾ and the exercise of friendship and forgiveness.⁽⁶⁹⁾ Unity is a gift from God. The unity of the Church must be visibly manifest in the people of God. The indivisibility of the body of Christ demands that barriers of race and culture, sex and language be transcended. Anything that threatens the unity of the people of God should be resisted.⁽⁷⁰⁾

The Church's duty is to bear witness in situations of conflict to the significance of the good news in Jesus Christ⁽⁷¹⁾, and Christian discipleship demands that the church confronts racism with love and service⁽⁷²⁾ and attempts to reform the world as part of our worship of God. The Gospel demands obedience to God rather than human beings⁽⁷³⁾ and *"obedience to earthly authorities is only obedience in God."*⁽⁷⁴⁾ When the Church abandons its obedience to Christ it breaks its link with the Kingdom of God.⁽⁷⁵⁾

These responses of the Churches and Christian groups are genuine attempts to address the problem of Apartheid and to formulate a theology relevant to the struggle for liberation from racial oppression. However, while the call for reconciliation and unity, justice and peace are still relevant these statements

display a number of serious limitations.

First, the approach of these statements is "confessional." They accept certain principles or assertions derived from the Bible and tradition and attempt to reinterpret them in the South African context. The assertions themselves are accepted as given and the traditional notion of the authority of the Bible accepted uncritically. In this sense the approach is orthodox and does not take account of critical approaches to the Bible and tradition.

Second, while there is a call to obedience and for Christians to live according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and while this clearly implies a rejection of Apartheid and segregation, there is no clear working out of practical responses in the SA situation. While the principles expressed are positive the effect is a negative theology or a theological rationale which explains why Apartheid is a sin and why it should be rejected. This approach has not led to decisive practical action by Christian churches. The lack of a positively practical approach is reflected in the inability of the churches to come to terms with racism within their own institutions. This gap between theory and practice reflects a methodological error and weakens considerably the theological stance of these churches and groups.

Third, and this is related to the second point, the methodology is not a contextual one. The experience of South Africans is not taken seriously enough in the formulation of theological insights and the theological categories used remain vague and generalized. The Gospel is universal but it is also particular, and this particularism needs to be addressed by any theology seeking relevance in a specific context. The Kairos Theologians have levelled such a criticism against this theological approach.⁽⁷⁶⁾ What specifically does one do in the situation of oppression? In other words, what is the precise praxiological response of Christians within the situation? How do people discover and assert their own value and dignity? How do black Christians come to know and experience the Gospel within their own cultural experience? Does one continue to accept and imbibe Eurocentric or traditional theology without working out for oneself the answer to the question *"Who is Jesus Christ in South Africa?"* within one's own worldview or philosophical framework? What are the acceptable means of struggle and how do blacks express the God they know and experience? These crucial questions are not clearly addressed in this confessional approach.

This failure to provide a relevant theological response led to the development of other theologies

which sought to ask and answer these questions that are crucial to the majority of South African Christians.

The Kairos theologians offered an alternative perspective in their response to the South African situation.⁽⁷⁷⁾ The Kairos Document has had a significant theological impact upon South Africans. The Document is addressed mainly to the Church in South Africa, as a challenge to renewal and action. It recognizes the conflict in South Africa as a conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed. It says that in this context churches and Christians have been divided on both sides of the conflict, and that this division calls for a prophetic critique of "State Theology" and "Church Theology" (here also termed "confessional theology" because its theological responses often take the form of statements of confession and/or declarations which express the implications of faith in Jesus Christ in the South African situation) and a discovery of a "Prophetic Theology". Both "State Theology" and "Church Theology" are seen to be in the service of oppression.

"State Theology" is simply the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonises the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy".⁽⁷⁸⁾

"Church Theology"...In a limited,

guarded and cautious way this theology is critical of apartheid. Its criticism, however, is superficial and counter-productive because instead of engaging in an in-depth analysis of the signs of our times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation."⁽⁷⁹⁾

Church Theology tends to support reformism rather than address fundamental structural and institutional change.

The Kairos theologians argue for a Prophetic Theology which they say offers a positive critique of oppression and tyranny. It presents God as one who is on the side of the oppressed and Jesus as the Saviour who identifies with the poor and takes up the cause of the oppressed.⁽⁸⁰⁾

"The oppressed Christians of South Africa have known for a long time that they are united to Christ in their sufferings. By his own suffering and his death on the cross he became a victim of oppression and violence. He is with us in our oppression".⁽⁸¹⁾

Through participation in the cross of Christ the oppressed have hope of participation in the resurrection. It is this hope that guarantees the coming of God's Kingdom and the end of injustice and tyranny. Thus Christians are summoned to "*participate in the struggle for liberation and for a just society*"⁽⁸²⁾

"The Road to Damascus",⁽⁸³⁾ a document produced by South African theologians in partnership with theologians from the third world has made an attempt to address situations of oppression in different parts of the world including South Africa. This document is a development of the Kairos Document. Its christological perspective in a situation of oppression is to affirm that "Jesus was one of us".⁽⁸⁴⁾ He became incarnate among the poor, took sides with the oppressed, and supported their cause.⁽⁸⁵⁾ He condemned the rich.⁽⁸⁶⁾ He proclaimed the reign of God as good news to the poor.⁽⁸⁷⁾ It is Jesus who reveals the face of God to the poor and the oppressed.⁽⁸⁸⁾ In Jesus the poor see who leads them to freedom. This God who is angry with injustice is the God of the poor and the oppressed.⁽⁸⁹⁾ When faith in God is proclaimed in situations of political conflict,

"we are faced with a KAIROS, a moment of truth, a time for decision, a time of grace, a God-given opportunity for conversion and hope"⁽⁹⁰⁾

The Kairos Document and The Road to Damascus Document are superficial in their treatment of the fundamental theological issues involved. This is understandable given the brevity of these documents and the nature of the discussions which gave rise to their formulation. Their insights, however, are due largely to the influence of liberation theologies which offer a

fuller treatment of the "Prophetic Theology" approach of the Kairos and Damascus documents.

The two main theological streams that have proved to be most relevant to the context of oppression and liberation in South Africa are theologies of liberation - Latin American Liberation Theology and Black Theology.

With the radicalization of political protest in the 1960's there developed a Black Consciousness Movement which had a marked influence on theological thinking within the black South African Christian community. This gave rise to South African Black Theology which appropriated the traditional theology of creation and combined it with a radical theology of salvation. Central to this theology is a radical christology of liberation which presents Christ as "*Liberator*" and "*Black Messiah*". The point of departure of this theology is the black experience and its methodology is a critical reflection on praxis.

With the impact of Latin American Liberation Theology on the international theological scene Black Theology came under the influence of various aspects of Latin American Liberation Theology. Of particular significance is the Latin American model of social analysis.

Both theologies accept the centrality of christology to theology (eg Boesak, Sobrino).⁽⁹¹⁾ In attempting to formulate relevant christologies they have answered the central christological question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" by saying that Christ is the "*Liberator*" (Latin American Liberation Theology and Black Theology) and Jesus Christ is the "*Black Messiah*" (Black Theology). They arrive at these answers by way of a theological methodology which they both describe as critical reflection on praxis. (Gutierrez, Boesak)⁽⁹²⁾ The point of departure for such theological reflection is the situation of oppression and the struggle for liberation, And the definitive sociological categories that determine theological reflection are "*liberation*" and "*blackness*" (Gutierrez, Boesak).⁽⁹³⁾

While the situation/praxis provides the one pole for christological reflection, the so-called "*historical Jesus*" provides the other in a dialectical relationship (eg. Sobrino, Boff, Boesak, Mofokeng).⁽⁹⁴⁾ The stress on the historical Jesus asserts the historical dimension of faith and continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith (Sobrino, Cone, Boesak, contra Bultmann). The significance of the eschatological character of the Kingdom of God for a proper understanding of the historical Jesus is crucial for both Latin American Liberation Theology

and Black Theology (Boff, Sobrino, Boesak, Mofokeng).
(⁹⁵)

In their description of the historical Jesus and the interpretation of his message they appeal to the biblical text for evidence to support their claims, and reference is often made to the christological titles used by the biblical authors. Similarly arguments for the political relevance of Christ and the legitimacy of Christian political engagements arise out of particular interpretations of the biblical text - from the words and actions attributed to Jesus by the biblical witnesses, including the death and resurrection of Jesus (Sobrino, Mofokeng).
(⁹⁶) The pictures of Christ that emerge are not only those described in terms of christological titles used in the New Testament but also "*liberator*", "*Black Messiah*", "*downtrodden*" (Boff, Sobrino, Boesak, Maimela).(⁹⁷)

At the moment these traditional and liberation theological approaches still dominate the South African theological scene. These approaches evolved chiefly within the context of a racial socio-political dispensation and are in the main the response to Apartheid ideology and practice. Their social analysis based on the liberation model still presents the South African situation as a conflictual one in

which the oppressed blacks are in conflict with white oppressors and the struggle for liberation is a struggle for black liberation from white domination. The fundamental socio-political categories remain "*liberation*" and "*blackness*". Their answer to the question who is Jesus Christ is still that Jesus is "*Liberator*" and "*Black Messiah*".

The question that arises now is whether the above christologies may still be applied as they are in the present situation. With the changes that have taken place since February 1990 the South African political landscape has been radically altered. Today we witness a fundamental change in the socio-political order as the basic principles and practices of Apartheid are abandoned in favour of a search for a new and democratic alternative in which all people might enjoy freedom and justice.

In the first place racial separation/segregation is no longer a principle of socio-political organization. The scrapping of the Group Areas Act, the Separate Amenities Act and other Apartheid laws has ensured that Apartheid no longer has a *de jure* status. People may still willingly desire separation, but they may no longer argue that the political system is keeping them apart.

Second, the conflict is no longer simply a black-white conflict. Indeed the power struggles that emerged during the period of transition demonstrate that blacks are also in conflict with blacks. The unbanning of the Liberation Movements and political organizations provided the space for free political expression and association. It also provided blacks with the space for competition and ascendancy to political power. This has left the different ideological groupings vying for power and has led to conflict between the various black groups who were engaged in the liberation struggle. This power struggle continues within the new order. The two main groupings that were involved in the violent conflict are Inkatha and the African National Congress.⁽⁹⁸⁾ Admittedly political violence could be attributed to political, economic, and judicial causes. As Aitchison puts it:

"The violence was taking place in an environment of tremendous deprivation, inadequate schooling, inadequate policing, and enormous shortages of housing and land. All this fuelled the violence, as did the failure of the police/legal system to bring justice to the victims of violence."⁽⁹⁹⁾

Nevertheless, this deprivation is not the sole explanation for the violence that marred the South African scene. It is clear that the violence had a distinctly political ring and reflected the struggles

for power within the black community.

The transition to democracy witnessed a regrouping of political forces across the colour line. If one is to speak today of oppression and liberation it would be simplistic and inadequate to speak only in black-white categories. The situation is far more complex now than it was a few years ago. If the struggles of the people are to be represented fairly, one would need to take account of the ethnic, tribal, cultural, status, class, and material dimensions as well. A review of social-analytical models is necessary.

Third, the institution of the Multiparty Negotiations Council marked the beginning of a new phase in which negotiation politics gained ascendancy. The fact that conflicting parties sat together at the same table and successfully negotiated a new dispensation suggests that consensus politics might replace the politics of conflict. The constitution of a government of national unity has put conciliatory politics in the foreground. This does not mean that there is now no conflict. The crucial question is whether there is a fundamental conflict in South African society, what the nature of that conflict is, and how it is to be addressed and resolved.

The term "*liberation*" if it is still to be used will

have a different connotation from what it used to have. That is, it may no longer refer simply to the liberation of the black oppressed from the white oppressor. Sociological categories such as "blackness" will either need to take on a new meaning or be abandoned or replaced with more appropriate categories.

Fourth, the cultural issue is becoming a crucial one on all sides. South Africa is a culturally plural society in which the different cultural groups have been in tension for some time. While in the past there has been the need to stress the value of African culture in the face of western cultural domination, today the issue is one of tolerance and the recognition of a cultural pluralism. Theology is yet to address this question with sufficient effect.

Fifth, there will in the immediate future be a need for a theology to address the issues of reconciliation, restoration and reconstruction. Theological reflection must necessarily address the issues and challenges of restoration and reconstruction paying particular attention to reconciliation, reparation and restoration. The insights of Political Theology and political economy will have its place in this theology of reconstruction.

The new situation calls for a review of those theologies which seek to respond to a situation of oppression and change, because " *the reformulation of christology in a new situation is nothing else but an expression of faith in the universal significance of Christ.*"⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ and because Christians in South Africa need to reformulate their faith in a context that has changed if that faith is to be relevant to their new life situation. The theologies which emerged from the old situation of full blown Apartheid can no longer be adopted wholesale in this new situation.

It has already been suggested that the theologies which proved most relevant to the South African situation of struggle are Latin American Liberation Theology and Black Theology. It is the purpose of this present work to assess the adequacy of these christologies to the South African situation with a view to formulating a relevant christology for South Africa today. In doing this the question emerges as to the meaning and truth of such christological reflection, that is, its appropriateness to the norms of all Christian theological reflection (biblical witness and/or church tradition) and the credibility of the statements that it makes in the light of experience and reason (Ogden).⁽¹⁰¹⁾

With regard to the question of norm, both the nature

of the biblical witness and the necessity and possibility of any quest for the historical Jesus need to be taken into account. It seems that the christologies in question have yet to come to terms fully with these aspects of christological reflection. On the point of credibility the appropriateness of traditional christological titles and such religious-secular titles as "*liberator*" and "*Black Messiah*" need to be reassessed and such christological categories as "*liberation*" and "*blackness*" which are employed to assert the relevance of Christ need to be reviewed. Is one to appropriate, reinterpret or revise the approach of these theologies in the light of the present South African context? An adequate answer to this question can only be given after a detailed examination of Latin American liberation christology and the christology of Black Theology.

The reader might, in the course of reading the last three chapters, feel pressed to ask why questions of presuppositions and issues related to the use of the bible and tradition are given as much attention as they are. The answer is quite simple. Christological reflection is more than the just a series of statements about Jesus. It is a dynamic process that involves the whole person, and is profoundly influenced by what is presupposed; and the use that is made of the bible and ecclesiastical tradition in this

process is determined very much by how they and their place are conceived in those presuppositions. In other words, it is precisely because of what is presupposed, and of the place that Latin American liberation and Black theologians give to the bible and to ecclesiastical tradition that leads them to see and understand Jesus Christ as they do, and to respond to him as they feel. If one were to ignore this it can only be because one's conception of christology is too narrow and, indeed, one's own presuppositions are regarded as over-riding. This review takes the broader view. One needs, however, as far as this is possible, to be critically aware of the presuppositions underlying one's own views.

However, there is a prior question, that is, what does one consider to be essential to any christology? This is the question that the second chapter of the thesis attempts to answer. Chapters three and four attempt to provide detailed descriptions of Latin American liberation christology and the christology of Black theology respectively. These christologies having been thus considered, the final chapter attempts a critical review of these christologies with a view to proposing a way forward in formulating a relevant christology for South Africa today.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. The Population Registration Act (1950) for race classification and influx control, the Immorality Act (1950) which prevented sexual intercourse between Blacks and Whites and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) which prohibited intermarriage between blacks and Whites. The Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 which determined that blacks shall remain in the "bantustans". (M.Attwell, *South Africa: Background to the Crisis*, London, Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd, 1986, pp.80-81.)
2. P. Randall, (ed), *South Africa's Political Alternatives: Spro-cas Report*, No.10, Johannesburg, Raven Press, 1973, pp.21-22, 31-32.
3. South Africa's administrative system is built on an Apartheid basis. The country is under the overall control of the White parliament. There are separate governments for the "independent" homelands. The non-independent homelands have varying degrees of self-government. During the last forty three years of Nationalist Party rule the government removed the Coloureds from the common voters role and abolished the three parliamentary seats for the Africans occupied by White "native" representatives. In turn the Africans were given the Bantustan system and the coloureds and Indians participation in a tri-cameral Parliamentary system instituted in 1984 under a new constitution for the Republic of South Africa. (TRH Davenport, "From Referendum to Referendum 1961-1984" in T Cameron & SB Spies, (eds), *An Illustrated History of South Africa*, Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1986, p.314). The New Constitution is perceived by the majority of black South Africans as a way of co-opting Indians and Coloureds as junior partners into the Apartheid system, to the total exclusion of the African majority. The government clearly intended these changes to White domination which has had a deleterious effect on all South Africans. (P Randall, op.cit.,p.23). But the danger signals should have been clear to the authorities. The tri-cameral system sparked off the most serious challenge to the Apartheid system - it heralded the beginning of the end for Apartheid white rule. The overriding challenge facing the Republic of South Africa in 1993

remains the need to evolve a political system which would satisfy the aspirations of the majority of its people.

4. EH Brookes, *Apartheid: A Documentary Study of Modern South Africa*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968; H Wolpe, *Race, Class and the Apartheid State*, London, James Curry, 1988; Leggassick M, "Legislation, Ideology and Economy in Post-1948 South Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 1,1,1974; R Davies, D O'Meara, S Dlamini, *The Struggle For South Africa: A Reference Guide to Movements, Organizations and Institutions*, London, Zed Books Ltd, 1984; P Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, London, Hurst, 1970; T Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, Johannesburg, Raven Press, 1981; B Rogers, *Divide and Rule: South Africa's Bantustans*, London, IDAF, 1980; TRH Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History*, Cape Town, Macmillan Publishers Pty Ltd, 1987; RM Price & CG Rosberg, (eds), *The Apartheid Regime: Political Power and Racial Discrimination*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1980.
5. M Attwell, op.cit., pp.84-85; 98-99.
6. ibid., pp.85;87.
7. ibid., pp.88,99,100; P Randall, op.cit., p.43.
8. P Randall, op.cit., p.42.
9. idem.
10. RM Price & CG Rosberg, (eds), *The Apartheid Regime*, op.cit., pp.70-71
11. M Attwell, op.cit., pp.84-89; P Randall, op.cit., p.42.
12. The preamble to the Charter states:

"We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:

That South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people.

That our people have been robbed of their birthright to the land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality; That our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal

rights and opportunities: That only a democratic state, based on the will of the people can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief: And therefore we, the people of South Africa, black and white together equals, countrymen and brothers adopt this Freedom Charter". (R Suttner and J Cronin, 30 Years of the Freedom Charter, Johannesburg, Raven Press, 1985, p.262).

The Charter goes on to assert:

"The people shall govern; all national groups shall have the rights; the people shall share in the country's wealth; the land shall be shared among those who work it; all shall be equal before the law; all shall enjoy equal human rights; there shall be work and security; the doors of learning and of culture shall be opened; there shall be houses, security and comfort; there shall be peace and friendship". (R Suttner and J Cronin, 30 Years of the Freedom Charter. *ibid.*, pp.262-266.)

13. M Attwell, *op.cit.* pp.93-94.

14. *ibid.* p.94.

15. *idem.*

16. *ibid.* p.95.

17. P Randall, *op.cit.*, p.44.

Black Consciousness is to assert the black person's self-reliance and sense of his/her own worth. Its major objective is to overcome the dependence complex which many blacks manifest in relation to whites.

Black Power is an affirmation of the worth and dignity of the black person. (See BA Khoapa, "The New Black" in BS Biko, (ed), *Black Viewpoint*, SPRO-CAS, Black Community Programmes, Durban; 1972; NC Manganyi., "A Note on Black Consciousness" in *Being Black-in-the-world*, Johannesburg, SPRO-CAS/Raven Press, 1973; N Pityana., "What is Black Consciousness" in M Motlhabi, (ed), *Essays in Black Theology*, Black Theology Project. UCM. Johannesburg, 1972. p.40).

18. B Moore, *The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa*, Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1973, p.2.

19. B Moore, "What is Black Theology?" in B Moore, (ed), *Black Theology: The South African Voice*, London, C Hurst & Co., 1973, pp.3-5.
20. T. Lodge, op.cit., pp. 80, 323.
21. W De Klerk, *F W De Klerk: The Man in His Time*, Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1991, p.34.
22. ibid., pp.34-46.
23. *Natal Witness*, 22 October 1991.
24. *Natal Witness*, 29, 30, November 1991.
25. *Natal Witness*, 30 November 1991.
26. *Daily News*, 20 May 1992.
27. *Daily News*, 27 January 1993.
28. *Natal Witness*, 19 May 1993.
29. *Daily News*, 2 June 1993; *Natal Witness*, 1 July 1993.
30. *Natal Witness*, 8 September 1993.
31. *Natal Witness*, 23 December 1993.
32. *Natal Witness*, 23 December 1993.
33. JW De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1979, pp. 1, x-xi.
34. ibid.pp.53-101; 103-147.
35. WA De Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa: A Story of Afrikanerdom*. London, Collings, 1975, p.199; JW De Gruchy, op.cit., pp.33, 69ff.
36. The Rustenberg Declaration., in *History in the Making: Documents Reflecting a Changing South Africa*, Collection, South African History Archive, November, 1990. Vol.1. No.3. pp.60-67. The Rustenberg Declaration was made at a National Conference of Church leaders representative of a wide ecclesiastical and theological spectrum who gathered in Rustenberg. Transvaal on 5-9 November 1990 to consider the role of the Church in the transitionary phase in South Africa.
37. ibid., p.61.

38. JW De Gruchy, op.cit., pp.54-55.
39. JW De Gruchy and WP De Villiers, (eds), *The Message in Perspective*, Johannesburg, SACC, 1969.
40. JW De Gruchy and C.Villa Vicencio, (eds), *Apartheid is a Heresy*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1983, pp. 66-67, 175f.
41. "Theological Rationale to End Unjust Rule", Documentation 1 in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, No.52, September 1985, pp.57-58.
42. WCC: Harare Declaration, in S Jacob, (ed), *Hope in Crisis*, Johannesburg, SACC, 1986, Appendix 6, p.161.
43. The Lusaka Statement, *Ecunews*, Vol.13, No.2, June 1987.
44. SA Catholic Bishops Conference: Statement on Apartheid, in A Prior, (ed), *Catholics and Apartheid Society*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1982, p.181.
45. *ibid.*, p.187
46. A Message to the People of South Africa, in JW De Gruchy and C Villa-Vicencio, op.cit., pp.154-160; *A Statement on Apartheid and a Confession of Faith*, *ibid.*, pp.175-182.
47. *ibid.*, pp.179-181 (NGSK Statement) p.160 (PCSA Declaration).
48. *ibid.*, pp.154,157. (Message)
49. *ibid.*, pp.157-160 (Message & PCSA Declaration)
50. *ibid.*, p.160 (PCSA Declaration).
51. *ibid.*, pp.157-158. (Message)
52. *ibid.*, p.180-182 (NGSK Statement).
53. *ibid.*, p.160 (PCSA Declaration).
54. *ibid.*, p.154 (Message)
55. *ibid.*, pp.155, 164.(Message & ABRECSA Charter)
56. *ibid.*, pp.154,160 (Message & PCSA Declaration).
57. *ibid.*, p.161 (ABRECSA Charter)
58. *ibid.*, p.160 (PCSA Declaration)

59. *ibid.*, pp.154,157-158 (Message).
60. *ibid.*, p.160 (PCSA Declaration).
61. *ibid.*, p.154 (Message), p.182 (MCSA Resolution on Apartheid).
62. *ibid.*, p.161 (ABRECSA Charter).
63. *ibid.*, p.164.
64. *ibid.*, p.154 (Message).
65. *ibid.*, pp.154-155 (Message).
66. *ibid.*, p.154-155 (Message), p.161-162 (ABRECSA Charter).
67. *ibid.*, p.161 (ABRECSA Charter)
68. *ibid.*, p.158 (Message).
69. *ibid.*, pp.160 (PCSA Declaration).
70. *ibid.*, p.161 (ABRECSA Charter), p. 179 (NGSK Statement).
71. *ibid.*, p.155, 159 (Message).
72. *ibid.*, 154-156 (Message).
73. *ibid.*, p.161 (ABRECSA Charter) p.159.(Message)
74. *ibid.*, p.161 (ABRECSA Charter).
75. *ibid.*, p.159 (Message)
76. AM Barkat & J Mutambirwa, (eds), *Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa*, Geneva, WCC, November 1985. pp.9-35.
77. *ibid.*, p.5.
78. *ibid.*, p.13.
79. *ibid.*, p.17.
80. *ibid.*, p.25.
81. *ibid.*, p.25.
82. *ibid.*, p.28.
83. ICT, *The Road to Damascus:Kairos and Conversion*, Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers, 1989.

84. *ibid.*, p.8.
85. *idem.*
86. *idem.*
87. *ibid.*, p.8.
88. *ibid.*, p.9.
89. *idem.*
90. *idem.*
91. AA Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study of Black Theology and Black Power*, Johannesburg, Raven Press, 1976; J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1978.
92. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1973; AA Boesak, *op.cit.*
93. G Gutierrez., *op.cit.*
94. J Sobrino, *op.cit.*; L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1978; AA Boesak, *op.cit.*; TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among The Crossbearers: Toward a Black Christology*, Kampen, J H Kok, 1983.
95. L Boff, *op.cit.*; J Sobrino, *op.cit.*; AA Boesak, *op.cit.*; TA Mofokeng, *op.cit.*
96. J Sobrino, *op.cit.*; TA Mofokeng, *op.cit.*
97. L Boff, *op.cit.*; J Sobrino, *op.cit.*; AA Boesak, *op.cit.*; S Maimela, *Proclaim Freedom to My People*, Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers, 1987.
98. Inkatha was formed in 1976 and is largely based in Natal and tries to steer a middle course politically between African nationalism and co-option into the Apartheid homelands system. A political conflict situation and confrontation developed between Inkatha and the ANC supporters. (See John Aitchison, "The Opinion Polls: How do they fare?", Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, October 1991, p.1.)

In the late eighties and the early nineties a civil war situation developed within black

politics. Violence erupted in Natal with Inkatha trying to retain power and control in the region by embarking on a coercive recruiting campaign. Supporters of the ANC, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the UDF Alliance were attacked by Inkatha supporters. By the end of 1990 3699 had died in the political conflict. In 1991 2510 people had been killed. In the period September 1984 to December 1991 political violence had taken the lives of 11 748 people (*Daily News*, 23 December 1991). In the Transvaal Inkatha's recruiting campaign and its assertion as a national presence led to over 1000 people being killed in the politically motivated violence. Zulu migrant workers became embroiled in a conflict with local non-zulus and supporters of the ANC. In these instances of violent conflict between political groupings the police held a partisan position and acted against the opponents of Inkatha. The violence was aided by the right wing element both within and outside the police force and with the aim of damaging the image of the ANC in its struggle to rebuild the organization inside the country. (See John Aitchison. "The Pietermaritzburg Conflict - Experience and Analysis.", unpublished paper. Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1989.)

For the black people in the communities torn by violence, for those caught up in the conflict the consequences have been suffering and loss. The black communities have suffered both material and psychological deprivation.

In addition it is significant that most of the violence takes place in desolate social and material environments. Thus poverty and the destructive effects of Apartheid have given rise to socio-economic deprivation which in turn has influenced the violence. (See John Aitchison, *Interpreting Violence: The struggle to understand the Natal conflict*, Conference Paper for The Association for Sociology in SA, University of Stellenbosch, 1-4 July, 1990.)

In September 1991 twenty nine political, state and trade union organizations came together to sign the National Peace Accord. (*Sunday Times*, 15 Sept. 1991). The Peace Accord set up the machinery to monitor, mediate and investigate violence. The Peace Accord which was negotiated by the ANC, Nationalist Party, Inkatha, business and church leaders included clauses which addressed the issues of basic human rights, the right to freedom of speech and conscience, freedom of association, freedom of movement and

of peaceful assembly. Although the signing of the Peace Accord has been applauded both nationally and internationally as a major accomplishment there still remains much scepticism, even among the signatories, about whether it will bring an end to the violence and ensure peace. Black-black conflict continues, and it is clear that the conflict has deeply political party/group overtones because it is in the main a clash between ANC and Inkatha supporters.

99. J Aitchison, "The Natal Region and the Road to Democracy and Reconstruction", Unpublished Paper, Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1990. p.4.
100. J Sobrino, op.cit., p.348.
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CHAPTER TWO

PRESUPPOSITIONS FOR A REVISIONARY CHRISTOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the basis on which one may proceed to formulate a Christology that is relevant to the South African situation. That is, to explore what one might consider essential to such a Christology. Once this is achieved one may proceed to assess the adequacy of Latin American Liberation and Black Christologies and their relevance for the present South African context.

2.1. PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

One's understanding and approach to Christology is determined by the historical context in which one lives, the worldview that one adopts, and therefore one's philosophical presuppositions about the nature of reality and of knowledge or truth. Such presuppositions predetermine a Christology's philosophical approach and predispose it to a particular epistemology. If, for example, the controlling ontology is dualistic the approach leads to an epistemological disjunction between faith and experience and theory and praxis.

Every Christology has its basic presuppositions. These presuppositions prompt the questions put to Christology and they determine the direction in which a particular Christology proceeds, the method that it adopts and therefore the conclusions that it reaches. As R Bultmann pointed out in his discussion on hermeneutics:

"...interpretation, that is exegesis, is always based on principles and conceptions which guide exegesis as presuppositions, although interpreters are not aware of it." (1)

Every interpreter brings with him/her certain conceptions as presuppositions.(2) J Sobrino applies this insight to Christology in an illuminating way:

"A given Christology cannot be comprehended apart from its presuppositions... if we are to understand a given Christology, we must take conscious note of the generic interest which is at work in an author or a theological movement in the process of organizing and elaborating data to formulate a Christology." (3)

The crucial role that presuppositions play in the formulation of Christology is well illustrated by a comparison of the approaches of Cupitt and Cone in their discussions about Christ.

Don Cupitt in line with the Schweitzer-Bultmann view suggests that one cannot know anything for certain

about the person of Jesus.⁽⁴⁾ He suggests that this means that there are problems with basing one's knowledge of Jesus on certain attributes of his person as theologians derive these from the Gospels. For example, one could not say for certain whether Jesus is God, whether he was conscious of his divinity right from the start, whether he was opposed to Roman rule, or whether he was particularly compassionate toward the poor. For Cupitt Christianity should be focused on Jesus' words because his words reveal the real Jesus. The fact about Jesus is that he taught about the kingdom of God and his "linguistic tools" reveal what he tried to do and to show.⁽⁵⁾ According to Cupitt Jesus

"used language to act upon his hearer, directly to show the nearness of God and incite the hearer to decide for God. The form of Jesus' utterance, not the content, is the real clue."⁽⁶⁾

Jesus made sharp contrast between the present world-order and the coming new reality. He was an "eschatological prophet".⁽⁷⁾ Speaking of Jesus' activity Cupitt proposes that

"His words are his work, and in his words he still lives and still relates men to God".⁽⁸⁾

Access to the real Jesus, the historical Jesus, is gained through his words, and this Jesus is more

relevant than the Christ of faith to which Christian personalistic values are often traced.⁽⁹⁾ Hence for Cupitt the historical Jesus is of higher religious value than the Jesus described by most of the incarnationists.⁽¹⁰⁾ While one may argue that Cupitt is more "Bultmannian" than an "historical Jesus" person, Cupitt unlike Bultmann still argues that one can get to the real Jesus through the biblical text, through the reported words of Jesus. It seems that Cupitt draws a fundamental distinction between his historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. This leads him to give prime allegiance to the Jesus of history and to look for this Jesus in the reported words rather than in the reported deeds of Jesus. It is clear that he is operating within a dualistic framework which permits him to draw a distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, and to treat the work of Jesus as separate from his person and coinciding with his reported words rather than with his reported actions.

James Cone on the other hand identifies the historical Jesus with the Christ of faith.⁽¹¹⁾ Christology's point of departure in Cone's view is the *wasness* of Jesus which establishes Christ's inseparable relationship with the historical Jesus and the *isness* of Jesus which relates his past history to the present struggles.⁽¹²⁾ His past existence provides the clue

to his presence in contemporary human struggles, otherwise it is of no consequence to human existence. (13) For Cone Jesus' deeds are as important as his words and the person of Jesus is central to his Christology. The Crucified One is also the Risen Lord:

"Faith in the resurrection means that the historical Jesus, in his liberating words and deeds for the poor, was God's way of breaking into human history, redeeming humanity from injustice and violence, and bestowing power upon little ones in their struggle for freedom." (14)

Cone therefore emphasizes the experiential dimension of faith centred on the person of Jesus. Interest in Jesus' past cannot be separated from one's experience of Jesus in the present. For him there is no choice between Christology "from below" or "from above". Both should be kept in dialectical tension,

"recognizing that Christ's meaning for us today is found in our encounter with the historical Jesus as the Crucified and Risen Lord who is present with us in the struggle of freedom." (15)

Cone rejects Pannenberg's conclusion that Christ is absent from the present. He does this on the grounds of the testimony of the Scriptures, the promise and the presence of the Holy Spirit and the black experience of Christ in the present. (16) Who Jesus is today is found in relating Jesus's past with his

present activity. Black people affirm Jesus' past as it is disclosed in the life and death of Jesus. Jesus Christ is the divine person who transcends the limitations of history by making himself present in contemporary existence. As Cone puts it:

"Christologically, we are required to affirm Jesus Christ in terms of his past, present and future. This means that we do not have to choose between a Christology 'from below' (Pannenberg) or 'from above' (Barth) or even 'from before' (Moltmann). These three aspects of his history and person must be approached dialectically, recognizing that each is a valid experience of Jesus Christ when viewed in relation to others."⁽¹⁷⁾

Cupitt does not accept that the Christ that is preached is identical to the Jesus of history.⁽¹⁸⁾ He agrees with Nineham that it is no longer possible to trace the Christian understanding of Jesus' relationship with God directly to Jesus of Nazareth.⁽¹⁹⁾ The Christ of present-day faith is different from Jesus. It is not possible to base a doctrine of the incarnation on the evidence of the New Testament Gospels alone. Theologies that use this approach and emphasize Jesus' attributes run into difficulties. For the argument to work it must be based on historical certainty that Jesus did have the given qualities and it is difficult to establish these to any degree of certainty because historical knowledge about Jesus is very limited and it is plagued by the lack of

evidence.⁽²⁰⁾

Was Jesus a remote figure able to exercise a religious influence on the modern world? In responding to this question Cupitt assumes that language is a form of action, and that the *form* of Jesus' utterances rather than the *content* provides the clue to his approach that Jesus' "words are his work" and that in his words he lives and relates men to God.⁽²¹⁾ He assumes therefore that the "medium is the message". So a reconstructed Christology should focus on Jesus' words, upon him who had actually lived rather than the Christ of faith. For Cupitt an incarnational doctrine is a secondary mythological overlay which conceals a loss of contact with the real Jesus. The mythologization of Jesus is in danger of falsifying him.⁽²²⁾ Hence Cupitt's conclusion that "Jesus' words are his work" leads away from the doctrine of the incarnation and toward a historical Jesus. It follows then, that the life of Jesus and his message has to be understood historically, that is, in the context of his own time, and Christian belief cannot be a coherent system of timeless truths revealed at one moment in past history. The truth about Christ has to be rediscovered in every age because humankind is immersed in history. Cupitt moves away from the Christ of faith and focuses on the historical Jesus and the source for his Christology of Jesus' "words are his

work" is the synoptic Gospels.⁽²³⁾

Cone's attempt to develop a Christology "requires us to investigate the connection between Jesus' words and deeds in first century Palestine and our existence today."⁽²⁴⁾ For Cone this "is the crux of the christological issue that no Christian theology can avoid".⁽²⁵⁾

Cone presupposes that faith means that the historical Jesus "in his liberating words and deeds for the poor" was God's intervention in human history.⁽²⁶⁾ The meaning of Christ today is found in the encounter with the crucified and risen Lord. It focuses on an historical individual as well as a present reality experienced in struggle.⁽²⁷⁾ Cone's approach, based on Jesus' liberative words and deeds, leads him to a Christology based on the biblical portrayal of Jesus in his past and on his present involvement in the struggles of the oppressed today and to relate this to the praxis of freedom.⁽²⁸⁾ Cone's Christology is therefore dependent on the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith, holding both in dialectical tension, that is the Christology "from below" and the Christology "from above".⁽²⁹⁾ His historical Jesus is to be found in the words and deeds of Jesus. An encounter with Christ forces one to look beyond the immediate experience to other witnesses, that is,

Scripture, tradition and the social context. Jesus' humanity in history becomes the starting point of christological analysis. The source for Cone's Christology is the biblical witness as found in the Gospels and human experience of struggle. For Cone the historical Jesus emphasizes the social context of Christology and thereby establishes the importance of the racial identity of Jesus.⁽³⁰⁾

While Cupitt and Cone both emphasize the importance of the historical Jesus for Christology, Cupitt emphasizes the words as his work and Cone the words and deeds of Jesus. Cupitt rejects the doctrine of the incarnation. He does not believe that the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith can be identified. He sees difficulty in proposing Jesus' human solidarity with other human beings and seeks to find in Jesus something of a "history-transcending significance". Cupitt is not interested in the social importance of Jesus but in what sense can be made of Jesus. Cone like Cupitt places Jesus firmly in history, but in a more comprehensive manner - Jesus' words and deeds - and relates him to present day historical struggles. Cupitt does not regard the attributes of Jesus as being of supreme value because of the historical difficulty with establishing these. Cone relates Jesus' past with his present activity. Jesus transcends history as he becomes present in

contemporary existence. Cone's view is much more balanced and allows for a contemporary approach to Christology from the perspective of the poor, and his presuppositions embrace Jesus' words and deeds. This allows for a more relevant Christology in the present. The problem with Cupitt's view is that if Jesus' words are his works the focus of Christology shifts from the person and work of Jesus to Jesus' words. This kind of reductionism does not solve the historical problem that Cupitt raises, but merely shifts it from the person of Jesus to the words of Jesus.

The fundamental difference between Cupitt and Cone is that Cupitt operates within a dualistic framework, effecting a disjunction between the historical person of Jesus and his deeds, and further between the words of Jesus and his deeds, while Cone is operating with a philosophical framework that does not allow for such disjunctions.

This illustrates quite clearly that the presuppositions that one assumes determines the starting point of one's Christology and sets up a perspective that influences the inquiry as one proceeds to engage in theological reflection to construct a systematic and constructive Christology. It is vital therefore that one is aware of this in any attempt to formulate a relevant christology for the

new situation in South Africa, and also to declare and to clarify one's own presuppositions as far as one is conscious of these.

2.2. DEFINITION OF CHRISTOLOGY

It is common to find that theologians often start their writings on Christology by trying to provide a definition of Christology. The problem with definitions is that they attempt to sum up in a few words an extensive body of reflection. In other words, such definitions are usually the result rather than the starting point of reflection.⁽³¹⁾ On the other hand, it is wisdom to provide tentative parameters for this discussion in order to set the ground on which it will take place. Otherwise anything and everything could be included and this would be disastrous. What is attempted here is not so much a definition of Christology but a definition of the broad parameters within which christological reflection may take place.

Traditionally Christology has been defined as thought and speech about the person and work of Christ. Macquarrie represents such a traditional approach. He defines Christology as

"...the study which has for its subject-matter Jesus Christ, his person and his work, or, to put it in a slightly different way, who he was (or is), and

what he did (or does)." (³²)

He also speaks of christology as the "gospel that has been reflected upon and criticised". (³³) By Gospel Macquarrie means "the good news of Jesus Christ" as proclaimed in the New Testament. In both cases the emphasis appears to be on the intellectual aspect. While Christology does include this aspect there is more to Christology than this. Ogden provides a more comprehensive view of Christology. He speaks of Christology in two senses. In its wider sense it includes, thought and speech about Jesus Christ and more. (³⁴) This definition would cover Macquarrie's first definition, which is broad enough to "cover any and all thought and speech about Jesus who is said to be Christ", including the Christological titles of the New Testament. (³⁵)

In its narrower sense it is the result of critical reflection on the person and action of Christ. That is, "the process or the product of critically reflecting on the witness to Jesus as the Christ." (³⁶) This critical reflection relates to meaning and truth of the biblical witness to Christ for particular situations, including the present. Ogden refers to the first definition as the Christology of witness and to the second as a Christology of reflection. Macquarrie refers to this as an alternative definition to that of Christology in

its broad sense. It seems that Ogden takes a much clearer approach.

Both Macquarrie and Ogden see Christology as an intellectual process. But this is too narrow an approach. J Moltmann seems to provide a better approach. He suggests that there are three dimensions to Christology:

1. that Jesus is recognized as the Christ of God;
2. that God is believed to be the Father of Jesus Christ, who raised him from the dead; and
3. that the presence of Christ is experienced in the Spirit who is the giver of life.⁽³⁷⁾

The strength of Moltmann's approach is that he includes not only the mental or intellectual aspect but also the experiential aspect as integral to christological engagement. He speaks of recognition, faith and presence, all of which are personal dispositions and not merely intellectual activity. Christology therefore has to do with the total human being and incorporates thought and speech as well as human experience and feelings. The deeply personal dimension is integral to christology because christology is an activity of the total person rooted in faith and engaged in life, and involves a personal relationship with a deeply personal Christ.

2.3 BIBLE AND CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Any Christology, if it is to be adequate, needs to be appropriate to what it regards as the norm. It is necessary to have some criteria on the basis of which one may determine whether or not theological reflection is Christian, otherwise everything may become Christology. Often Christians have looked to the Bible and/or Christian tradition in order to establish such criteria. In other words, the Bible and/or Christian tradition are treated as normative for Christology.

In treating the suggestion that this norm is the biblical witness to Christ and/or the traditional doctrines of the church as these have been formulated in the course of the church's history, particularly by the Councils of Nicea and Chalcedon, Ogden has highlighted the difficulties with such an approach.

(³⁸) First, it does not fully recognize that the biblical picture of Christ is a symbolic/mythological one. Second, it fails to see that the traditional doctrines are not only outmoded and inadequate but also the content given to these suggest various interpretations of the incarnation and implicitly deny the humanity of Jesus. (³⁹)

In this Ogden has pointed to two important aspects

that any Christology must deal with, namely, the nature of the biblical witness and the role of Christian tradition. The Bible represents the primary witness to Jesus Christ who is the subject of christology. It represents a body of tradition which provides the only access to the Jesus who is said to have been a historical person. Apart from it there is no way of relating christological reflection to the biblical-historical person who is central to Christology. However, the biblical witness is a product of people who claimed to be witnesses to the Christ of their experience. Some traditions purport to be eye witness accounts of Jesus of Nazareth and others eye witness accounts of the Risen Christ. Those responsible for the traditions formulated this witness in a language conditioned by their own worldview and experience using concepts and symbols which made sense to them. It is the task of anyone doing Christology today to establish the truth of the biblical witness and to express this in the language that is meaningful to his/her own worldview and experience.

Ogden, following Bultmann, has suggested that the way forward is to review the nature of the biblical witness and perhaps demythologize it (Bultmann) and try to find alternative concepts and symbols so that the content of Christology is both appropriate and credible.⁽⁴⁰⁾ The main reason that Ogden gives for the

need for such a step is that the modern scientific worldview and "a distinctively modern understanding of human existence" have led to a questioning of the empirical value of all mythology and its irrelevance with regard to expressing "a strictly empirical kind of truth".⁽⁴¹⁾

However, this approach assumes the so-called "modern" worldview and the distinctions that flow from it. It would be wrong to assume that all South Africans share this view of the world. One needs to ask whether in fact those engaged in Christology do share such a worldview. If they do, then it seems that one could go the way of Bultmann and Ogden. If they do not, then one needs to come to terms with the particular worldview that they share and explore a response that is pertinent to that worldview. It may well be that the mythological concepts and symbols used in the formulation of the New Testament witness have meaning and convey a truth which is not a problem for people in South Africa. Nevertheless the need to reinterpret the Christology of the New Testament and of traditional christianity where this is relevant remains. The point is to come to terms with both in a way that is relevant to the worldview and the experience of South Africans. In this effort theologians will dialogue with the "modern" worldview and attempt to come to terms with it within the world-

church community.

The more central issue concerns the way in which the biblical witness can help one identify Jesus and provide a norm for determining the legitimacy of claims that one makes about Christ. Ogden has argued quite convincingly that biblical scholarship has failed to prove that the empirical-historical Jesus can be reached through the biblical witness.⁽⁴²⁾

For Ogden the fundamental question which Christology attempts to answer is, "Who is Jesus?". In doing this it also answers the question, "Who is God and who am I?"⁽⁴³⁾ It is precisely because one is concerned to know about oneself and about ultimate reality that the question

"'Who is Jesus?' needs to be asked in the distinctive sense in which it is asked in asking the question of Christology".⁽⁴⁴⁾

This is what Ogden calls the existential-historical question and it is different from historical questions asked about Jesus of the past in himself and any existential question considered independently of particular experiences. It is the question of the meaning of Jesus here and now. This is the question that Christology must address.

The answer to this question depends on who Jesus is,

that is, it concerns the identity of Jesus. Not the Jesus who is said to be Christ but the Jesus of the existential-historical question. One of the answers that is given is that this Jesus is the historical Jesus, that is, the actual Jesus of the past. The norm for assessing claims is then based either on the figure of Jesus or on what Jesus had or had not proclaimed.⁽⁴⁵⁾

However, with the rise of source and form criticism the possibility of such a quest was questioned because it had been established that even the earliest sources about Jesus were not historical reports. The dialectical theology of Karl Barth challenged the assumption that the historical Jesus is the real norm.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Barth appealed to the Word of God, to which Scripture is the witness, as the norm.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Bultmann too denied the necessity of this quest.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Nevertheless, the new questers (eg. Kasemann, Robinson) assumed the theological necessity and historical possibility of the quest for the historical Jesus, arguing for the continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ.⁽⁴⁹⁾

The position of Bultmann and Marxsen⁽⁵⁰⁾ on this subject is a reasonable one, that is, that the quest for the historical Jesus cannot help to justify the truth of the constitutive christological assertion.

That is a question of faith. For Marxsen historical-empirical inquiry into the Gospels only provides the earliest witness to Jesus and does not provide access to the actual Jesus himself.⁽⁵¹⁾ This earliest witness is the Jesus kerygma. It is the kerygma that is the measure of the appropriateness of the christological formulations. If one accepts that all that can be established through historical inquiry is what Jesus is represented to have said and done, then there is practically no distinction between the actual Jesus and the reported Jesus, while in theory there may be such a distinction. In other words the only basis available for a description of "Jesus" is what he is *represented* to have said and done. The "actual" Jesus that people refer to is in practice no different from the Jesus represented or reported in the biblical tradition. All in all it seems that the quest for the historical Jesus is historically problematic.⁽⁵²⁾

Recognising the inherent difficulty in attempting to establish the authenticity of the historical descriptions of a person from the remote past, let alone the supernatural claims made about that person, one cannot help but agree with Ogden's conclusion concerning Jesus in this regard:

"Strictly speaking, all we can ever hope to talk about is not what Jesus said and did, but what Jesus was heard to have said and seen to have done by those on

whose experience and memory of him we are utterly dependent." (⁵³)

The implications of this are quite serious for Christology. As Ogden points out claiming support in Jesus himself is very different from claiming support in the earliest witnesses to Jesus.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Any Christology that rests its case on the Jesus of the Bible has got to come to terms with this distinction. At the same time it has to be clear on precisely how the truth of the biblical witness must be established. In other words, an appropriate christology would develop a biblical hermeneutic which deals with the historical difficulty of establishing the actual words and deeds of Jesus and with how precisely the biblical witness might play a significant if not normative role. At the same time what is said about Jesus needs to correspond to the basic testimony of the biblical witness to Jesus, where this can be established to a reasonable degree.

This relates directly to the relevance of the New Testament witness to the present situation. Ogden suggests that Christological reflection is thoroughly conditioned both socially and culturally.⁽⁵⁵⁾ The criteria of appropriateness and credibility are "situation-dependent as well as situation-invariant."

(⁵⁶)

This means, in the first place, that the New Testament witness is to be interpreted in a way that touches the life experience of people, that is in a way that is credible. This requires the recognition that the New Testament witness is socially and culturally conditioned, arising from a concrete historical situation in the past and influenced by the worldview and culture of the time. This means that the ideological framework of the authors of that witness must be identified, and its witness de-ideologized as much as it needs to be demythologized, if it is to be practically as well as theoretically credible.⁽⁵⁷⁾ While it may not be the intention of the authors of the New Testament witness to use ideology for negative ends it is still necessary to question that ideology and not simply to take it on board as if it were an integral part of the New Testament message. For example, the apparent acceptance of slavery and the subordinate role of women by some New Testament authors needs to be viewed critically.

At the same time the biblical message needs to be interpreted politically so that it addresses questions of justice and moral responsibility in a way that is relevant to the total social and cultural order.⁽⁵⁸⁾ With regard to the political interpretation of the New Testament witness, it is vital that witness be interpreted in a way that is relevant to the political

experience of South Africans, especially because politics plays such a major role in the shaping of people's lives. If the New Testament witness is to be at all credible it ought to speak effectively to the needs of South Africans today. That witness is credible only if it is experienced as being transformative.

Similarly christological formulations originating outside South Africa, and indeed South African formulations from the past, have a role to play insofar as these are appropriate to the situation and practically credible. They also need to be deideologized. They have no higher status than other human formulations, because they have been formulated by human beings. An authentic South African christology would not look to foreign and ancient formulations to justify its own christological reflection. Rather, it would emerge from the South African socio-political and cultural context.

Further, it has been the experience of many South Africans that the traditional formulations of doctrine do not address adequately their experience. Equally various modern formulations are inappropriate because these are alien to the worldview and experience of many in South Africa. The task of any Christology seeking to be relevant to the South African situation

is to formulate a christology which is rooted in the worldview and experience of the people. This does not preclude dialogue with previous and other contemporary formulations. The role of these formulations is that where they provide helpful insights and challenges these will be taken into account. Their role should not be normative. Those responsible for such formulations have worked out for themselves a christology relevant to their own contexts. What they have accepted to be normative for themselves need not necessarily be normative for everyone else. No generation has an intrinsic claim to provide norms for another just as no community or individual has any intrinsic claim to provide norms for another. This applies to those who have formulated the biblical witness as much as it applies to those who have formulated christologies ever since.

While the formulation of christological assertions may be achieved through dialogue with the biblical witness and christian tradition both historical and contemporary, the credibility and appropriateness of such formulations in the South African situation are to be determined ultimately by what South African Christians believe and experience Christ to be in their own situation. The verification of christological formulations is to be found in christian praxis.

2.4 A SOUTH AFRICAN REVISIONARY CHRISTOLOGY

It seems therefore that any Christology that claims to be truly South African and relevant to the life experience of its people would have to fulfil certain basic requirements if its claims are to be justified and its reflection relevant.

First, the philosophical framework within which it operates has to be one which is shared by the people to whom a particular Christology claims to be relevant. If for instance a particular Christology claims to be relevant to the black experience its framework of reflection ought to be rooted in a worldview authentic to that experience. Its christological insights should not rest on presuppositions based on an alien view of reality. This is true for both its ontological and epistemological aspects.

Second, it needs to be clear on what it regards as "Christology". In other words, it would clarify if, for example, christological reflections is purely a rational exercise or whether it includes engagement in praxis.

Third, it has to be clear on what it regards as normative for Christology. It needs to be clear on

the role that the biblical witness and traditional formulations play in christological reflection. If they have a normative role one needs to know exactly how they can be normative.

Fourth, its biblical hermeneutic needs to be both appropriate and credible. Its treatment of the biblical witness ought to take full account of the nature of that witness, and come to terms with the historical difficulties associated with identifying and describing the biblical Jesus and establishing the authentic message of the New Testament witness. It needs also to articulate the content of that witness in a way that bridges the historical and cultural gap between the New Testament world and contemporary South African experience. If it is to be credible, its message has to be relevant to that experience.

Finally, its theological formulations should also be appropriate and credible. If it engages traditional and other contemporary formulations it should do so in a way that ensures their appropriateness to the South African experience. At the same time the resulting formulations ought to be rooted in the South African context. If such a christology is to be relevant it needs also to be credible. It has to make sense and do so in the daily life experience of people. In other words it has to be seen to be credible and

experienced as transformative.

The criteria for assessing the relevance of any Christology for the South African situation being thus established , one may now proceed to review both Latin American Liberation Theology and South African Black Theology to ascertain what contribution these theologies have to make to a relevant South African Christology. The following two chapters attempt such a review.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

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CHAPTER THREE

LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION CHRISTOLOGY

This chapter will attempt a description of the general thrust of Latin American Liberation Christology, and so aims to establish the framework of this Christology and to outline what appear to be clearly common themes. This is done in a manner that presents the views of Latin American liberation theologians as fully as possible, so that the reader becomes familiar with them. As indicated in the introduction, a critique of this christology is reserved for the final chapter. There are however certain factors which limit the extent to which a clear description might be achieved.

Latin American liberation theologians have produced various works on the subject but they are yet to work out a systematic Christology, except for Boff's *Jesus Christ Liberator*.⁽¹⁾ Further, it is difficult to speak of Latin American liberation Christology as if there were a single uniform perspective. There are a number of differing perspectives within the broad framework of what might be called a Latin American liberation Christology.⁽²⁾ Nevertheless, it is possible to glean from the work of these theologians some pointers

towards a liberation Christology.

It is useful to begin this review by noting the basic approach of Latin American liberation theology as a whole because its approach to Christology is determined by its approach to theology, for its christological formulations are situated within the general frame of reference of this theology.⁽³⁾

3.1. PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

Latin American liberation theologians take pains to outline and clarify their presuppositions because of the crucial role they believe these play in determining the direction and content of their Christology. As Jon Sobrino points out:

"A given Christology cannot be comprehended apart from its presuppositions."⁽⁴⁾

Other Latin American theologians too emphasize this key role. This is clear from the length to which they go to outline the philosophical presuppositions that govern their theology as a whole,⁽⁵⁾ and their christology in particular.⁽⁶⁾

One of the basic presuppositions of this theology is its assertion of the unity of reality. This is clear

from the key emphasis that is placed on the unity of history. According to Bonino the central premise of the theology of liberation is the indivisible unity of history.⁽⁷⁾ As Gutierrez aptly expresses it "there is only one history - a 'Christo-finalized' history".⁽⁸⁾ One may not, therefore speak of two histories, one sacred and one profane, close to each other or interrelated. History is a single process, integrated in Christ who is both the source and goal of this one history. Salvation in Christ engages every aspect of human life.⁽⁹⁾

It is this ontological unity that results in a similar approach to epistemological questions. Liberation Theology asserts that knowledge is linked to transformation as theory is linked to praxis.⁽¹⁰⁾ Faith is not reduced merely to an objective mental assent to a truth, but is also a commitment of the whole person to a cause. This existential and concrete historical approach to faith leads to the view that practice is indispensable to faith commitment. This is why Gutierrez emphasizes the need for engagement in the struggle for liberation:

"Participation in the process of liberation is an obligatory and privileged locus for Christian life and reflection."⁽¹¹⁾

For Bonino the biblical picture of Jesus confirms this

approach:

"This way of conceiving truth finds an explicit confirmation in the Johannine emphasis on 'doing the truth'. God's Word (his Logos) is an incarnate word, a human flesh which has pitched its tent in history. Knowledge of such Logos is fellowship, participation in this new 'life' which has been made available in the midst of the old 'world'. It is 'a new birth'".⁽¹²⁾

Truth, knowledge and faith are therefore at one with action, existence and praxis. The truth is done, knowledge is rooted in experience, and faith is lived.⁽¹³⁾

It is this perspective that underpins Latin American liberation Christology. As Sobrino has suggested in his discussion on the starting point of Latin American liberation Christology, Christology is the result of the actual person Jesus raising questions about himself:

"There is an important epistemological implication in the fact that we make the historical Jesus the starting point of Christology. It is Jesus himself, in his own historical life, who raises the whole question of his own person. We are forced into a very different position. Instead of asking questions, we ourselves are now called into question by Jesus. Thus it is the historical Jesus who brings Christology into crisis, effecting the epistemological break that is necessary if Christology is not to be simply the outcome of the natural person's inertial wishes and projections".⁽¹⁴⁾

It is in the relationship of Jesus to his followers that the truth about Jesus is revealed.⁽¹⁵⁾

For Gutierrez praxis is the actualization of Christian faith in the God revealed in Jesus.⁽¹⁶⁾ Therefore Gutierrez can go on to define Christian spirituality as:

"a concrete manner, inspired by the Spirit, of living the Gospel; it is a definite way of living "before the Lord", in solidarity with all men."⁽¹⁷⁾

What is clear from all this is that the ontological and epistemological approaches of Latin American liberation theologians are based on a particular understanding of the Incarnation as this is presented in the Bible, and on a perspective gained from the sociology of knowledge. Their christological perspectives are to be understood within this broad philosophical framework which asserts that history is one and that truth, knowledge and faith are indissolubly linked to action, transformation and praxis, to total liberation.

3.2 THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

First, the Latin American approach is trinitarian.⁽¹⁸⁾ In this it does not speculate about the trinity but

views theological reflection as a trinitarian process. While it sees Jesus as a unique revelation of God, it still recognizes that God "remains the ultimate horizon of human existence and history".⁽¹⁹⁾ Christological reflection is theological because it involves reflection on Jesus in relation to God and the kingdom of God. Sobrino insists, therefore that:

"reflection on Jesus can only be carried out in trinitarian terms."⁽²⁰⁾

Second, Liberation theology's approach to Christology is consistent with its method of theologizing. According to Gutierrez

"the theology of liberation offers us not so much a new theme for reflection as a new way to do theology."⁽²¹⁾

What makes it new is its commitment to the poor, its concern with the critical role of the relationship between power and knowledge in the theological process, and the way it relates historical situations and reflection.⁽²²⁾ This approach may be described as critical reflection on historical praxis in the light of the Word of God.⁽²³⁾ For Gutierrez this

"theology will be a critical reflection in and on historical praxis in confrontation with the word of the Lord lived and accepted in faith. It will be a reflection in and on faith as a liberating praxis."⁽²⁴⁾

Its method of reflection takes the "concrete situation" as its point of departure; thus affirming the historical and "particular" nature of theological reflection⁽²⁵⁾:

"Reflection on praxis, on human significant action, can only be authentic when it is done from within, in the vicinity of the strategic and tactical plane of human action. Without this, reflection would not be critical and projective conscience; it would not be a revision and projection of praxis as such." ⁽²⁶⁾

It is properly the critique of the praxis of the life of the believing community.⁽²⁷⁾ Reflection upon that praxis follows and constitutes theology by bringing praxis into close relation with the person of Jesus Christ.⁽²⁸⁾ As such it is a critical reflection on society and church in relation to the "Word of God":

"Theological reflection would then necessarily be a criticism of society and the Church insofar as they are called and addressed by the Word of God; it would be a critical theory, worked out in the light of the Word accepted in faith and inspired by a practical purpose - and therefore indissolubly linked to historical praxis." ⁽²⁹⁾

On the one hand, social analysis provides a description and analysis of historical experience. On the other hand, the "Word of God" or its equivalent norm of Christianity provides the basis for assessment and guides theological reflection.

The description of praxis, therefore, involves analysis of the historical context and takes full account of the social, political and ideological dimensions of human life:

"a praxis is not simply subjective or arbitrary; it means that a situation has been analyzed and assumed by means of an interpretative synthesis. In this way, the sociopolitical analysis and the ideological option implicit in it, which are included in the praxis adopted, are determinative integrants of theological reflection." ⁽³⁰⁾

This approach is greatly influenced by Marxist social theory. Liberation theology turns to Marxist analysis for its social categories because it believes that this provides the best socio-political analysis of history. However, as Bonino has pointed out, this use of Marxism is not "uncritical acceptance of all its philosophy" but represents a shift towards effective engagement made possible through a particular social analysis⁽³¹⁾:

"The Marxist scheme cannot be taken as a dogma but rather as a method which has to be applied to our own reality in terms of this reality, and this in turn reverts to a reconsideration of the method itself."

...the analysis has to be adequate to this reality and develop its own categories and methods." ⁽³²⁾

Consequently Latin American liberation theology assumes an analysis which presents history and society

as fundamentally conflictual in nature. The conflict is seen to be essentially one between dominator and dominated, between oppressor and oppressed. As Gutierrez points out:

"...liberation expresses the aspirations of oppressed peoples and social classes, emphasizing the conflictual aspect of the economic, social, and political process which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes". (33)

Hence the apparent "Marxist" in its sociological analysis. From the perspectives gained through the sociology of knowledge Latin American theologians addressed the situation of oppression by turning to the theory of dependence. They identified the problem in their situation as one of imbalance between the centre and the periphery. Gutierrez sums up their basic insights quite succinctly:

"The underdevelopment of poor countries, as an overall social fact, appears in its true light: as the historical by-product of the development of other countries. The dynamics of the capitalist economy lead to the establishment of a centre and a periphery, simultaneously generating progress and growing wealth for the few, and social imbalances, political tensions, and poverty for the many." (34)

This is why they prefer to use the notions of "domination" and "dependence" to interpret their own experience, and view development and underdevelopment

as two mutually related processes:

"The basic categories for understanding our history are not development and underdevelopment but domination and dependence. This is the crux of the matter". (35)

"development and underdevelopment are not two successive stages in an abstract and mechanical process but two dimensions of one single historical movement". (36)

Latin America is the dependent part of that process. Bonino suggests that the contradictions that arise in this situation give rise to the struggle for liberation from domination:

"the process we have analyzed, nevertheless, develops at the same time its own internal contradictions, in and through which dependent men and society claim their humanity and begin a struggle for liberation". (37)

The notion of "liberation" replaces "development" because it better expresses the aspirations of the oppressed. The relationship between development and liberation in the Latin American situation has been explained in detail by Gutierrez in his pioneering work, *A Theology of Liberation*. (38)

Having come to some understanding of the philosophical and theological presuppositions that directly influence Latin American Liberation Christology one may now proceed to consider the way in which this

Christology is done and to review some of its basic themes.

3.3. APPROACH TO CHRISTOLOGY

While Latin American liberation theologians do make statements which appear to be definitions of Christology, such statements are not intended to be definitions as such. Their concern is to root their reflection in historical experience, and to outline their christological approaches in a way that describes rather than expresses in neat definitions the insights of Latin American liberation Christology. This is not surprising because any attempt to fashion a theoretical base would go against the approach that is fundamental to their thinking, that is, they are not so much concerned to begin with a theoretical or doctrinal premise as they are with a living and dynamic approach to Christ. Christology is done. Hence the direct correlation between the content of christology and the meaning of existence and history:

"Theology in general and Christology in particular deal with themes that sum up the full, all-embracing meaning of existence and history. This comprehensive meaning derives from the very realities under study: God, Christ, liberation and the sinfulness of the world. " (39)

Faith assumes that these themes express the meaning of

life and history.⁽⁴⁰⁾ The theme of Christ is a "limit-theme" in that all other human limit-realities (eg liberation, love, truth, justice, sinfulness) revolve around it.⁽⁴¹⁾ Experience gives meaning to statements we can make about these realities, so that

"the real approach of theology is none other than the path of faith itself. No Christology can or does explain the reality of Christ from outside."⁽⁴²⁾

The task of Christology is to help people discover an effective way of living their faith as it helps them to understand Christ as the one who gives meaning to life and history and enables them to interpret their experience as a Christian experience.⁽⁴³⁾

As Sobrino points out, the purpose of such a Christology is to engage the Christian community in the process of liberation and to show that this process is a specifically Christian one:

"...this new reflection on Christ originated in the service of historical liberation and for the purpose of inviting the church, precisely in virtue of its faith in Christ, to insert itself into a task of liberation that would now be seen to be specifically Christian in form".⁽⁴⁴⁾

There are a number of ways in which a christology achieves this.⁽⁴⁵⁾ First, christology is done within the context of specific situations.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Christology

needs to take full account of the situation and the level at which meaning is required - whether at the mythological level or the concrete historical level.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Second, christology needs to be aware of, and take account of, the deep yearning that there is in people for liberation - the liberation of reason from dogmatic faith, and socio-political and economic liberation.⁽⁴⁸⁾ The thrust of christology depends on the emphasis placed on each of these.⁽⁴⁹⁾ While European christologies have emphasized the reason element, Latin American christology concentrates on "how the truth of Christ is capable of transforming a sinful world into the kingdom of God,"⁽⁵⁰⁾ with particular reference to socio-economic bondage.

Third, christology needs to be conscious of the impact of hermeneutics on its task.⁽⁵¹⁾ Hermeneutics has to do justice to the real situation so that Christ can be properly understood, and it has to do justice to the history of Jesus so that this "Christ" is not a pale reflection of the real Christ.⁽⁵²⁾ Hence approaches to the biblical text are aimed at investigating

"Whether the gospel texts present themselves as merely to be comprehended by the mind or as words to be realized in practice as well."⁽⁵³⁾

Fourth, Christology needs to take account of the element of discontinuity, that is, that total meaningfulness does not lie in history, but beyond it.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Christology emerges in the face of some ultimate dilemma, manifested for example in critical questions about the nature, meaning, and purpose of life, or about the contradictions between belief in God and people's experience of reality, and the task is to locate this dilemma which provides the motivation for critical questioning and, therefore, productive reflection ⁽⁵⁵⁾ One could either seek to reconcile God with all that is positive in reality (natural theology) or all that is negative (theodicy).⁽⁵⁶⁾ Christ affirms humanity either by enabling it to fulfil its potential or by criticizing it so that a new person is generated.⁽⁵⁷⁾ The former emphasis focuses on the risen Christ, while the latter on the crucified Jesus.⁽⁵⁸⁾ It is important where one's focus lies:

"In short, the dominant underlying presupposition will profoundly affect the way a given Christology views the relationship between Jesus' cross and resurrection, two basic data about Jesus that no Christology can ignore."⁽⁵⁹⁾

Fifth, christology must focus on its own role within theology as a whole.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Is Christology the centre of all theology or simply one part of it? Does theology derive its content from Jesus or not?⁽⁶¹⁾ The

alternative chosen determines the christological path one follows: ⁽⁶²⁾

"One view will tend to be more epiphanic, stressing that "God" revealed himself in Christ. The other view will be more operational, stressing that Jesus reveals not so much the mystery of God himself as something to be known cognitively but rather the way to God that now can and should be travelled by humanity." ⁽⁶³⁾

There is no disjunction between these two, but one will be more praxis oriented while the other will be more contemplative. ⁽⁶⁴⁾ The choice of Latin American Liberation Christology is a more praxis oriented one. The only Christology that matters is a historically relevant Christology. Divine presence and activity in history is central to this Christology, which is essentially a focus on God, but God in history and experience. As Boff puts it:

"Christology is nothing other than going beyond that which emerged in Jesus. What emerged in Jesus was the immediacy of God himself." ⁽⁶⁵⁾

Jesus is the paradigmatic example of God acting in history, and it is through him that God is present in the world and acts in history.

It is this Jesus that liberation theology regards as the way to liberation. As Sobrino puts it:

"Liberation theology is concentrated in Christology in so far as it reflects on Jesus himself as the way to liberation."
(⁶⁶)

A Jesus who is not concretely "the way to liberation" would be irrelevant to that experience.⁽⁶⁷⁾ This approach has led Latin American liberation theologians to explore a hermeneutic that would provide an authentic picture of the Christ of the gospels, one which speaks directly to their context of struggle for liberation.⁽⁶⁸⁾ This hermeneutic arises out of a specific social context, and attempts to show how Jesus is relevant to that context. It sees the meaning of Jesus in the light of the real problems of human experience, and therefore, as Boff suggests, is comprehensive in its scope, and concrete in its expression:

"Hermeneutics cannot be taken to mean simply the art of understanding ancient texts; it also means comprehending all manifestations of life and knowing how to relate them to an evangelical message, especially in matters concerning not only the individual but also the collective universality of people as expressed by such themes as the kingdom of God, of justice, of peace and reconciliation." (⁶⁹)

In this way Christ becomes the meeting point of hermeneutics, history and human beings.⁽⁷⁰⁾

The primary task of christology is the search for the

truth about Jesus Christ through dynamic reflection.
(⁷¹) There is a dialectical relation between "Jesus" and "historical praxis". Christological reflection is then the dynamic interaction of these two poles:

"In Latin America Christology is in fact being worked out by comparing the present-day situation with the historical Jesus".(⁷²)

This approach provides the basis for the expression of faith in Jesus Christ within the Latin American context, which is the purpose of Christology; and it begins by affirming that this Christ is the "Jesus of history":

"If the end of Christology is to profess that Jesus is the Christ, its starting point is the affirmation that this Christ is the Jesus of history".(⁷³)

The objective starting point is Jesus himself.(⁷⁴) The term "objective" here does not imply a non-biased perspective or view. It is used to refer to an aspect of christology just as it is often used in reference to the nature of revelation (objective/subjective aspects). Liberation theologians use the term in this context to refer to the "revealed" Jesus who is the object of christology, Jesus as he is presented, and this implies the quest for a focus on Christ which best reveals him in his universality.(⁷⁵) The subjective aspect refers to the understanding of

Christ in a particular context and through one's own experience. The subjective starting point, therefore, "is faith as lived experience".⁽⁷⁶⁾ The faith dimension is, according to Boff, crucial for christological reflection:

"To speak in a christological manner can never mean to speak about (in a detached way) Jesus... True theologians can speak only when Jesus Christ is their point of departure, that is, when touched by Jesus' reality lived in faith and love. Only then, after being inserted into his life, can theologians perceive his meaning and begin to see God in the human being and the human being in God."⁽⁷⁷⁾

Liberation Christology arises out of faith in Jesus, which is its *raison d'être*.⁽⁷⁸⁾ This faith is a continuing process of insertion into what Jesus symbolizes, to the degree that we can understand life, people and the world.⁽⁷⁹⁾ It is expressed in forms that are intelligible and this helps to clarify something of the mystery of Christ.

3.3.1 BIBLE AND CHRISTIAN TRADITION

The central question that Liberation Christology attempts to answer is the question "Who is Jesus Christ?" In formulating an answer to this question Latin American liberation theologians turn to the Bible, to the tradition of the Church, and to the

faith experience of Christians living in the Latin American context.⁽⁸⁰⁾ The guiding christological content is obtained from the Gospels and the New Testament, and conciliar christologies.⁽⁸¹⁾ Sobrino argues that the articulation of Christology stands in need of antecedent material concerning Christ in order to refer that Christology to Jesus, to his past.⁽⁸²⁾ Hence the importance of the accounts in the Gospels and the New Testament, and in the tradition and dogma of the Church.⁽⁸³⁾ Although liberation Christology acknowledges the importance of the christological formulations of the New Testament witness and ecclesial councils, methodologically it does not begin with them.⁽⁸⁴⁾ It nevertheless takes them seriously.⁽⁸⁵⁾

Sobrino has argued that the role of christological dogma is irreplaceable, and this for a number of reasons. First, it helps to set the limits of Christology, and thus ensures that the figure of Christ is not impoverished.⁽⁸⁶⁾ Second, the language and concepts of these formulations explain the mystery of Christ in a way that seeks to maintain this mystery. The language and concepts used do not provide clear and precise expositions.⁽⁸⁷⁾ Third, they explain the truth of the Christian faith, i.e. the unique and salvific nearness of God to his people in Jesus.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Dogmatic formulations, therefore, enrich and

radicalize Christology.⁽⁸⁹⁾

At the same time such dogmatic formulations are not dealt with in a strictly dogmatic way:

"Liberation theology has not concerned itself greatly with the task of dealing with theological themes from a strictly dogmatic standpoint, though that does not mean that it has not dealt with the basic contents that are enshrined in dogmatic formulas." (90)

In order for dogmatic formulations to be pastorally useful their assertions about Christ need to be reinterpreted, in a way that retains fidelity to the message of the past. One is permitted in this process to make novel statements about Christ which in turn are accepted as part of what Sobrino calls the "ecclesiality of faith", the faith of the church community.⁽⁹¹⁾

Yet, the content of dogma remains, to some degree, incomprehensible because it can never be fully grasped.⁽⁹²⁾ Access is achieved only on the basis of some other reality which we know that helps us to formulate dogma in a meaningful way.⁽⁹³⁾ Real experience (the "other reality") provides the basis for such formulation.⁽⁹⁴⁾ Dogma is a

"doxological formulation that marks the culmination of a whole process of Christian living and Christian

reflective thinking." ⁽⁹⁵⁾

Basic to dogmatic hermeneutics is the belief that submission to the truth of God goes hand in hand with concrete contexts of worship and discipleship:

"In its very essence, then, the ultimate truth of dogma cannot be separated from the liturgy and the following of Jesus."
⁽⁹⁶⁾

Dogma expresses the same thing that worship and praxis do, except in another way. As Sobrino puts it:

"the positive function of dogmas is to express in theological language the same thing that is expressed in the liturgy in hymns of praise and joyful thanksgiving and that is expressed in real life in the language of concrete praxis." ⁽⁹⁷⁾

The formulations of Nicea assert that Christ, the Son of God, is true God and true man; and those of Chalcedon assert the integrity of Christ's person.⁽⁹⁸⁾ Redemption was conceived as divinization.⁽⁹⁹⁾ Such credal statements are not meant to be abstract. They are contextually derived and relevant to the period in which they were formulated. As Sobrino explains:

"...The new terminological and conceptual elements are at the service of clarification and precision in a new situation, but the content continues to be the basic content of faith already present in the New Testament..."

"The conciliar formula is to be understood soteriologically, even when

it states the reality of Christ in himself. It is not primarily an attempt to explain the reality of Christ speculatively." ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

Such christological formulations remain "truth" only if they

"can be mediated historically in and through every kind of cultural, sociological, philosophical and theological analysis." ⁽¹⁰¹⁾

New cultural and social situations influence philosophical and theological reflection. They present people with a crisis of meaning and compel them to take another look at their understanding of existence and history.⁽¹⁰²⁾ And if such formulations are to be truth that is both credible and relevant they need to be mediated through the same analysis.⁽¹⁰³⁾ A new situation calls for the restoration of meaning to old formulations.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Viewed from the new situation in Latin America the old formulations lack "concreteness, historicity and relationality."⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

The most basic difficulty that people experience is not that they do not understand the christological terms used in the old formulations such as those of Nicea and Chalcedon, but that the formulas give the impression that one knows *a priori* who God is and what it means to be a human being.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ Liberation Christology calls into question this assumption that

human beings know *a priori* what human and divine natures are, since it is only on the basis of Christ that this knowledge is possible.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ As Sobrino explains in his comment on the Chalcedonian formula:

"The Chalcedonian formula presupposes certain concepts that in fact cannot be presupposed when it comes to Jesus. (It) assumes we know who and what God is and who and what human beings are. But we cannot explain the figure of Jesus by presupposing such concepts because Jesus himself calls into question people's very understanding of God and human beings. We may use 'divinity' and 'humanity' as nominal definitions to somehow break the hermeneutic circle, but we cannot use them as real definitions, already known, in order to understand Jesus. Our approach should start from the other end."⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

In other words, if one describes Jesus as both "God" and "Man" such a description implies knowledge of what God is and what man is. To assume such knowledge is to ignore that Jesus himself reveals both God and man. One does not fit Jesus into assumed categories but rather allows Jesus to define precisely what these categories are.

Further, the Chalcedonian formula lacks historicity and subsumes the humanity of Christ under the concept of nature. It lacks the historical categories pertaining to the life and experience of Jesus as the New Testament presents them⁽¹⁰⁹⁾, and it lacks relationality.⁽¹¹⁰⁾ It focuses on the internal relationship of Christ's humanity and divinity and so

ignores the basic assertion of the synoptic Gospels - that the truth about Jesus is to be found in his relationship with the Father and not to an eternal Logos.⁽¹¹¹⁾ It excludes the primary relationship of Jesus to the kingdom of God, and his proclamation of it in trust and obedience to God the Father.⁽¹¹²⁾ This primary relationship

"is the logical presupposition that lies behind the growing distance between ordinary dogmatic Christology on the one hand and the Christology of the New Testament on the other."⁽¹¹³⁾

The basic weakness of dogmatic Christology is that it fails to reveal the fundamental features of Jesus' own history.⁽¹¹⁴⁾ The New Testament makes it very clear

"that the humanity of the eternal Son has a concrete, well defined history; and that the reference pole is the Father and the kingdom of God."⁽¹¹⁵⁾

A more effective approach to Christology would start with the historical Jesus (Jesus of Nazareth, the real person behind the Gospel traditions) and so help to give meaning to these dogmatic formulations.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ This is why liberation Christology, recognizing the truth of dogmatic statements

"insists on re-creating the process that led to them, beginning with Jesus of Nazareth, and, further, holds that the re-creation of this process is the best way to come to an understanding of the

formulas." (¹¹⁷)

Liberation Christology, therefore, seeks a balance between past dogmatic formulations that assert Christ's divinity and a Christology based on the historical Jesus.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ It expresses the divinity of Jesus by reformulating related dogmatic formulations on the basis of Jesus history. Such statements are rooted in history, and interpreted in a contemporary and relevant way.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ At the same time his divinity is explained in a way that takes full account of a present experience of Jesus.⁽¹²⁰⁾ It seems that liberation theologians accept that it is possible by this means to arrive at statements which are not "dogmatic" in that such statements might be further revised or even replaced, provided that this process does not undermine the basic assertion of Jesus' divinity and humanity.

Classical credal statements do express certain basic truths that any christology needs to take seriously. L Boff suggests that these "definitive, irreformable, and imperishable" points are:⁽¹²¹⁾

1. If Jesus is not God then he does not save.
2. If Jesus is not human, human beings cannot appropriate salvation.
3. If humanity was not divinized in Jesus then

humanity cannot be divinized, which means that Jesus cannot be divine.

4. True humanity comes from God, and it is this humanity that God saved through the human Jesus.

However, liberation christology moves beyond these basic assertions to make explicit what is implicit in the credal formulations, i.e., that Christ reveals the christian reality of God.⁽¹²²⁾ In relation to Christ's divinity, for example, it seeks to understand and explain this in terms of what God is experienced to be. The fact that Jesus makes such a great impact on people that accept him as God suggests that the truth about Christ is both real and transcendent:

"Put systematically: Where there is an act of real faith in Jesus, there, implicitly but really, the transcendence of the content of this faith is asserted."⁽¹²³⁾

Discipleship is the full surrender of self to Jesus, and the point at which Jesus meets his followers; "transcendence (thus) appears in historical form."⁽¹²⁴⁾

The humanity of Jesus too is viewed in historical terms, with Jesus history providing the basis for the analysis and interpretation of credal formulations.⁽¹²⁵⁾ This is likened to the approach of the Gospels

which tell the story of Jesus.⁽¹²⁶⁾

Jesus is thus seen as both the agent and the product of history:

"True humanity in Jesus, then, means Jesus' history, both from the point of view of Jesus (divinity) as agent of that history and from that of Jesus (humanity) as its human product."⁽¹²⁷⁾

The stress on Jesus's partiality to the poor brings out this aspect of humanity more sharply:

"The most specific characteristic of liberation christology's presentation of the humanity of Jesus Christ is its insistence on the partisan quality of this humanity. Genuine humanity ...involves concretion in the first place...Jesus is true human being in being poor. He becomes the universal human being from a point of departure in the lowly human being."⁽¹²⁸⁾

This emphasis on the historical Jesus does not take away anything from Jesus' divinity or humanity, and is therefore not reductionist.⁽¹²⁹⁾ Traditional christological dogma sets the limits and provides the safeguard against such reductionism, while the originating event of Jesus of Nazareth provides the proper basis and corrective for appropriate dogmatic formulations:

"Dogma has a positive, regulative, and irreplaceable value for the maintenance of the radicality of the mystery of

Christ. But its formulation, however true and binding, ever runs the risk of all that is human and therefore must always be understood from within the original event that has rendered it possible: the reality of Jesus of Nazareth and the God revealed in him".
(¹³⁰)

Liberation Christology moves from the history of Jesus to the total Christ as the New Testament presents these, and from there to dogmatic formulations:

"Its approach to the dogmatic formulas has been 'ascending': from the history of Jesus to the fullness of Jesus as presented in the New Testament, and from that presentation to the dogmatic formulations." (¹³¹)

An analysis of Jesus in the past provides access to the Jesus who is present now. This concern with the present Jesus helps to keep Christology from becoming mere Jesuology (knowledge about Jesus). (¹³²) All this implies a hermeneutical shift of focus from the Christ of faith to the historical Jesus, and the indispensability of "praxis" which helps to bridge the gap between past and present. (¹³³)

In other words, the answer to the question "Who is Jesus Christ?" is found in a real "Christ" and not in an abstract one. (¹³⁴) And this Christ is the "total Christ". At the same time access to this Christ is achieved through a reflection on the "historical Jesus" and from a praxis in which Christ is experienced as present. As Sobrino puts it:

"both for reflection and life it is the historical Jesus who is the key providing access to the total Christ".
(¹³⁵)

Thus, Liberation Christology finds in the historical Jesus a normative understanding of the meaning of Christ for the Latin American situation.⁽¹³⁶⁾ This approach is opposed to that which gives methodological primacy to the Christ of faith (i.e. not the Jesus behind the Gospels but the picture of Jesus presented in the traditions produced by the church), the kerygmatic Christ, and results in a new understanding of faith in Christ.⁽¹³⁷⁾

The historical Jesus is the methodological point of departure:

"the historical Jesus is the methodological point of departure for the approach to Jesus the Christ, that is, to the 'object' of Christology".
(¹³⁸)

However, this search for the historical Jesus is not meant to address the general problem of the relation between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. As Sobrino points out:

"Latin American christology is not preoccupied with finding in Jesus that unrepeatable and unique element that will withdraw total faith in Christ from anthropological and sociological manipulations and thereby preserve the originality of faith in Christ. Its

prime concern is not 'to preserve a real and actual unique memory, and to represent it here and now,' although it readily concedes that this concern is of considerable importance."⁽¹³⁹⁾

One ought not to be preoccupied with a body of truth or seek to preserve a unique "memory". What is crucial lies behind this "memory". The "totality" of Jesus Christ is not the sum of the "historical Jesus" and the "kerygmatic Christ". These two moments help to clarify each other.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ So while the New Testament witness and the subsequent reflection and formulation of dogma by the Church both play an important role in this approach to Christology, the contribution of these to the content of liberation Christology is in their meaning which is revealed in the Jesus of history, i.e. the Jesus behind the New Testament traditions, the one also present today.⁽¹⁴¹⁾

This approach holds together the universal and particular dimensions of christological reflection. Meaning is given to the universality of Christ in a particular situation from the standpoint of the Christ of history. The historical Jesus is sought within the totality of the figure of Christ.⁽¹⁴²⁾ In this way a healthy balance is achieved and a middle way is found between the extreme positions of turning Christ into an abstraction and making ideological use of him.⁽¹⁴³⁾

In this Liberation Christology shares the approach of modern christologies which understand Jesus Christ through the life of Jesus of Nazareth.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ It displays a similar tendency to historicize Christ. Although Latin American Liberation Christology is in general agreement with such an approach, it has its reservations.⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ It accepts the emphasis that these christologies place on the humanity of Jesus, as a way of linking Christ's transcendence with history, and supports their assertion that "Jesus of Nazareth" is the key to his humanity.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾

In addition, this approach has revealed an important "double-relationality" essential to the process of christology: Christ is what he is in relation to God, and his will, which is the Kingdom of God; and there is an inherent relationship between what is said about Christ and christian praxis⁽¹⁴⁷⁾:

"The return to the historical Jesus has forced these christologies to the discovery of a double relationality. They discover, on the one hand, Christ's constitutive relationship to God, and more concretely, to God's ultimate will, which is the approach of the kingdom of God. On the other hand, they discover the intrinsic relationship of the content of Christ with the ecclesial practices of the communities that sprang up after the resurrection ...

This double historical relationality... of Jesus is of utmost importance if we are...to relate our christology to what Jesus himself related.⁽¹⁴⁸⁾

This implies that Christ is properly understood when the Kingdom of God is understood, and when the Spirit stirs up an active faith in believers.⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ This constitutes a move away from Christology "in itself" to a trinitarian and contextual approach to christology.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾

Basic to this approach is the attempt to demythologize the figure of Christ. This is expected to provide a more reliable picture of Jesus and to make it easier for people to relate to this Jesus.⁽¹⁵¹⁾ However, as Sobrino points out, demythologization provides knowledge about Christ but offers no guarantee that this will lead to a radical change in what it means to know Jesus.⁽¹⁵²⁾ And it will not change significantly the aim of Christology.⁽¹⁵³⁾

The problems of identity and relevance, as important though these are, are not the primary concern of Latin American christology; and such approaches do not help to change the harsh realities of suffering communities.⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ The more urgent consideration is the rescue of Christ "from manipulation and connivance with idols."⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ Demythologization does provide a concrete approach to Christ, and so avoids presenting him as an abstraction. Yet

*"Demythologizing Christ in Latin America
does not primarily mean giving an*

account of his historical faith in the face of rational criticism, although this too must be done; primarily it means avoiding a situation in which, by reason of Jesus' historical abstraction, reality can be left to its misery. More urgent than Christ's demythologization, therefore, will be his "depacification" ... Christ must not be forced to leave reality in peace."⁽¹⁵⁶⁾

A priority concern is that Christ should not be associated with idols (e.g. racism).⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ So the crisis in christology is not just the "name" of Christ, but, more importantly, what is being done in his name:

"A post-Enlightenment culture entertains doubts about Christ; Latin American reality produces indignation at what is done in his name."⁽¹⁵⁸⁾

Thus for Latin American Christology it is not sufficient simply to turn to the historical Jesus, or to accept the significance of this return; this return must be accompanied by a commitment to rescue Christ from abuse, to allow christology to facilitate social transformation. Only this "will do justice to Christ and be genuinely relevant."⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ In a situation in which Christ is abused the authentic Christ is asserted in a real and relevant way. As such, commitment to Christ is a commitment in the situation, a real and practical commitment that allows the authentic Christ to effect transformation and prevents Christ from being misrepresented, from being abused.

The real point of departure for Latin American Liberation Christology, then, is total faith in Christ. The METHODOLOGICAL point of departure is the historical Jesus, beginning with his practice. This is regarded as the best way to ensure the full profession of Christ.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ This reveals the basic dilemma of this christology - a disinterest in the quest for the historical Jesus coupled with a desire to establish a link with the teaching and practice of Jesus of Nazareth. However, this is how they wish to proceed.

Christian praxis is then the following of Jesus' practice, and the content of this practice is the liberation of the poor.⁽¹⁶¹⁾ Commitment to Jesus is at one and the same time a commitment to the poor because Jesus is understood to have been committed to the liberation of the poor. This response to the invitation to continue his practice is of primary importance:

"For us, then, the historical element in the historical Jesus is first and foremost an invitation (and a demand) to continue his practice- or, in Jesus' language, an invitation to his discipleship for a mission." (162)

The biblical text is understood within this common practice of a community engaged in renewal, one in which this continuation of the practice of Jesus is

safeguarded.⁽¹⁶³⁾ The text provides insight into the content about Jesus and his practice.

The search for Jesus concentrates on certain important events in Jesus' life and on his attitudes, and it focuses on his own transformation (the changes Jesus himself experiences as a human being as a result of his relation to the Kingdom), and the transformation that he achieves through his practice:

"Liberation christology seeks to present the history of Jesus formally as history which implies Jesus' practice and Jesus' 'becoming' through this practice the transformation of the world and human beings in conformity with the kingdom of God, and the actual transformation of Jesus with reference to the God of the kingdom. This doing and this becoming is seen by liberation christology as the correct way to present Jesus historically, including as it does the analysis of the concrete facts, the mysteries of his life, and his attitudes, to the extent that these are knowable from the gospels."⁽¹⁶⁴⁾

However, before attention is given to what precisely in the gospels provides the content for Latin American Christology, clarity needs to be obtained on how Latin American liberation theologians interpret the Bible as a whole and the gospels in particular. This raises the question of their approach to the biblical witness, that is, their biblical hermeneutics.

For Sobrino, the historical element in Jesus requires a new conception of hermeneutics.⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ The classical

understanding of hermeneutics has concentrated on the meaning and significance of a text of the past, and the reality it points to, taking into account the historical and cultural distance between past and present.⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ With the emphasis now placed on the historical element in Jesus, meaning is to be found in a text's past and present, meaning that relates to a common horizon of practice.⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ The text is to be understood within present community practice and will be directed to the renewal of the present.⁽¹⁶⁸⁾

Christ who is present now as he was in the past is the key to the revelation of God in history.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ This revelation will be meaningless if it is imprisoned in past history. The Bible operates as a paradigmatic message and may be read in the light of present events. The Bible, when it is re-read, incorporates the new meaning of new events.⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ This means its sense can be grasped only from the experience of the living spirit of the living community in which God is present. Hence the need for a hermeneutics that takes full account of this - a hermeneutics of liberation.

The hermeneutics of liberation is done from the situation of oppression and viewed in the light of Scripture.⁽¹⁷¹⁾ Latin American liberation theologians ask about the relevance of the Word of God from the situation of oppression, and they look at the

situation of oppression "in the light of faith" which in Scripture has the same meaning as "in the light of the word of God".⁽¹⁷²⁾

The hermeneutical key is that biblical truth is revealed in the dialectical relationship between Bible and praxis.⁽¹⁷³⁾ It is neither a question of the legitimation of one by the other nor a question of the chronological priority of either. Both are essential poles in the dialectical process in which faith is illuminated and praxis is inspired.⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ Praxis constitutes a horizon of understanding for the reading of the message of the Bible:⁽¹⁷⁵⁾

"In other words, what really generates the rereading of the Bible, and gives it its orientation, are successive practices. These cause the meaning of texts to "enlarge"; then this meaning is expressed in new texts, which in turn condition new practices - and so on, in a progressive enriching movement of the hermeneutic continuum."⁽¹⁷⁶⁾

When the Bible is read from a socio-historical and political perspective it reveals dimensions not seen and insights not captured in earlier readings. What is said is said in a contextual reading.⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ The praxis of faith has a contribution to make in a determinate social context to the "meaning" of the Bible, opening it up precisely as the "word of God".⁽¹⁷⁸⁾

At the same time, the interpreter needs to be aware of

the influence of ideology on the hermeneutical process. Hugo Assmann suggests that the central hermeneutical task is to allow the biblical texts to speak in a way that avoids their use as ideological legitimation, so that they can contribute a subversive language of liberation.⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ This language emerges out of a particular praxis and frees biblical hermeneutics from hidden ideological positions. However, as Gutierrez points out, the situation determines the perspective from which the Christian sources are read and the reading is an ideological-political reading.⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ It is not, therefore, that the hermeneutical process is free of ideological influence, rather it does not allow oppressive ideological abuse. And it achieves this by its vigilant ideological suspicion that exposes hidden ideological positions, as far as this is possible, and allows for a conscious appropriation of non-abusive ideological positions.

For Segundo it is invalid simply to transpose the categories that Jesus used to the present because this age is very different from that of Jesus' time. To simply transpose them is to read biblical categories in the light of our own ideological prejudices. In addition, the biblical message has its own bias. Segundo suggests a hermeneutical circle through which one might reduce the influence of ideological

prejudice, or the impact of externally imposed ideological systems, on contemporary biblical exegesis. This circle unites a revolutionary commitment with a new understanding of the Gospel message. It involves listening to the "de-ideologized Word of the Gospel" with a view to receiving a new orientation.⁽¹⁸¹⁾ This method assumes the experience of the poor and an act of commitment to find a solution to the problem. As Segundo puts it:

"a hermeneutic circle in theology always presupposes a profound human commitment, a partiality that is consciously accepted not on the basis of theological criteria, of course, but on the basis of human criteria."⁽¹⁸²⁾

Such a commitment is essential to a Christian interpretation of Scripture:

"there is no such thing as a Christian theology or a Christian interpretation of the Gospel message in the absence of a prior political commitment. Only the latter makes the former possible at all."⁽¹⁸³⁾

In this approach changes in experience lead to corresponding changes in interpretation of the biblical text. Dissatisfaction with present reality leads to questions being posed to the texts of Scripture. This necessitates a change in the interpretation of the texts, which is the only way to secure adequate answers.⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ In essence this approach

leads to exegetical suspicion of current biblical interpretations and provides the basis for a new interpretation of Scripture.⁽¹⁸⁵⁾

Couch on the other hand is critical of any approach which begins with a precommitment to liberation.⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ She proposes a way to avoid reading into the text one's own socio-political, philosophical, ethical and cultural conditioning, a way that does not begin with a "precommitment" to liberation, and one which allows for a dialectical relationship between the reading of reality and the reading of Scripture. Scripture is not approached through a preconditioning, a precommitment to liberation. Engagement is an active entering into God's purpose rather than human beings taking the initiative from a situation that is preconditioned by a precommitment to liberation.

However, the approach which argues a precommitment to liberation as a starting point seems no less committed to entering into God's purpose. Further, the "preconditioning" and "precommitment" is not an atheistic preconditioning and precommitment, for these themselves are a result of an already existing faith and a prior dialectical relation between faith and praxis in which Scripture has already played a significant role. It is not the case that liberation theologians had come to the Bible for the first time

when liberation theology was born. They had been theologizing before. What they have now, however, is what they believe to be a more effective and relevant biblical hermeneutic in which God's purpose is revealed in what is for them an authentic manner. Further, the situation is one in which the Risen Lord is present. Christ is not encapsulated within the biblical text or tradition.

Given the "hermeneutical circle", how does one approach and interpret the biblical text? Clodovis Boff believes that to treat the gospel as a set of norms to be applied is to fail to appreciate the internal complexity of both scripture and the present historical context, to present the gospel in such vague and general terms that it fails to be historically specific, and to preclude a critical approach.⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ Its chief weakness is that it does not take the historical context seriously.⁽¹⁸⁸⁾

C Boff is similarly unconvinced by what he terms the "correspondence of terms" approach. Although this model does take the historical context seriously its major weakness is that it is based on what it views to be close parallelism or correspondence between the text and its political context and a relevant theology in the present political context.⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ Thus, for example, a theology of liberation is developed for

oppressed communities today on the basis of correspondence with the biblical Exodus and the oppression of Hebrew slaves.⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ In a similar fashion Jesus is viewed in the light of his political context and lessons are drawn from this for christian responses in the present political context.⁽¹⁹¹⁾ If it can be shown that Jesus was a revolutionary or a pacifist then christians need respectively to be revolutionaries or pacifists.⁽¹⁹²⁾

The fundamental question is:

"Is the comportment of Christians linked to the behaviour, teachings, examples, and occurrences found in the Bible in such a way that there must be, as it were, a "term-for-term" correspondence between the Bible and the situation in which Christians live?"⁽¹⁹³⁾

C Boff questions whether there is justification for such a thematic identification between the two contexts that one may read "oppression" for "Egypt", "liberation" for "exodus," and "political assassination" for "cross"?⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ C Boff proposes what he calls the "correspondence of relationships" approach.⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ He argues that the process of redaction that the biblical traditions have gone through testify to the distance between the texts as we have them and the actual words and deeds of Jesus, a distance effected by the needs and contexts of the early christian communities.⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ It is this dialectical

process between text and context that produces tradition, and it is a process that has continued to the present. Early christian communities treated the words and deeds of Jesus with

"creative fidelity - as they attributed to Jesus even later developments undergone by his message and work, based on the identity of the Christ of glory with the historical Jesus." (197)

Sobrino adopts a similar view towards the biblical traditions, arguing that Liberation Christology has not developed criteria for judging the historicity of the gospels.⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ However it does tend to accept their basic historicity:

"Latin American christology holds a presupposition in favour of the basic historicity of the gospel narratives in virtue of the actual situation in which they were composed." (199)

This approach recognizes that people have access to Jesus through the Bible, and that the problem of mediation is to be seen in the light of biblical criticism:

"We realize, then, that there are at least two great phenomena separating us from the original deeds of Jesus, in the very act of bringing us in contact with them: the Christian Scriptures, and the tradition of faith." (200)

Biblical criticism has not demonstrated that the New

Testament is an inaccurate record of events and sayings in Jesus' life, but it has demonstrated that the text was not intended to be an accurate historical record. It has shown that the early Christian communities do not provide us with an exact picture of the words and deeds of Jesus but interpreted them with creative fidelity. Sobrino accepts that the gospel narratives about Jesus have been theologized, and are not meant to describe "Jesus' concrete words and actions" with exactitude.⁽²⁰¹⁾

The earliest witnesses did, however, have an historical interest in that they reflected on Jesus' life, death and resurrection:

"Reflection on the divine affiliation of Christ did not arise from an abstract, essentialistic consideration of the divinity, nor from the direct attribution of divinity to Christ, but from Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. In virtue of this historical interest, believing reflection related Jesus' filiation, as a believed reality, to an event of his life and lot."⁽²⁰²⁾

They wanted to relate Jesus' divine sonship with his life and salvific ministry, and with the salvation of human beings.⁽²⁰³⁾ This is what led them to assert the divinity of Christ.⁽²⁰⁴⁾

This approach of the earliest witnesses provides two lessons:⁽²⁰⁵⁾ First, it teaches that the figure of

Jesus must be historicized if it is to be theologized. Second, it shows that this figure must be theologized if it is to be historicized. This mutual relationship of theology and history is central to Latin American Christology:

"This mutual relationship, consisting in theologizing by historicizing and historicizing by theologizing, is what Latin American christology seeks to incorporate, in its particular enterprises, in order to be faithful to its object, Christ, who has been handed down not just in some random way but through the gospel of Jesus and in Jesus as gospel." ⁽²⁰⁶⁾

Jesus is not to be sought through an analysis of the honorary titles of the New Testament because these titles represent an "already developed" Christology.
⁽²⁰⁷⁾

Further, the New Testament presents several different Christologies and it is difficult to unify them.⁽²⁰⁸⁾ Consequently one is pressed to the conclusion that it is the "concrete figure of Jesus" that unites the different christologies of the New Testament:

"we are forced to admit that it is the concrete figure of Jesus himself, not some later, theological effort of conceptualization, that unifies the various Christologies of the New Testament." ⁽²⁰⁹⁾

There is a distinction being drawn here between the

real Jesus and the different presentations of him that the New Testament provides. The latter find their common origin in the real or "concrete figure of Jesus", this person who walked the streets of Nazareth. Liberation Christology's main concern is to point to his practice and preaching so that his historicity and person are discernable.⁽²¹⁰⁾

C Boff advocates the same kind of creative fidelity, so that meaning is found for the present historical context "through and beyond the letter of the text of the past"⁽²¹¹⁾ What one seeks is an "identity of senses" on the "level of the *relationship*" between the context and message of the past and the context and message today.⁽²¹²⁾ While it is permissible to look for texts which appear to relate closely to the situation at hand, the correspondence ends at this point.⁽²¹³⁾ The key element:

"is not this or that particular text of scripture, in correspondence with such and such a precise situation. Still less is it a number of texts to be produced with a view to this or that particular behaviour, or this or that particular meaning. The key element here is the global, and at the same time particular, "spirit." This "spirit" may, of course, lead to the selection of a particular passage from scripture - but without invoking a correspondence of terms, or a fortiori, a relationship of application."⁽²¹⁴⁾

The reading of scripture is concerned not merely with present practical application and specific problems,

but goes beyond these to the appropriation of an hermeneutical skill.⁽²¹⁵⁾ Scripture offers indications, "a manner, a style, a spirit", on the basis of which one makes one's own judgement on what is the "mind of Christ" or "according to the Spirit" in the present situation.⁽²¹⁶⁾ This is akin to what Bonino calls the "directions" of the biblical text. In this way interpretation produces meaning⁽²¹⁷⁾, and scripture shows us how the primitive christian communities produced meaning,⁽²¹⁸⁾ and helps us to discern what Christ and the Spirit are saying now.⁽²¹⁹⁾

Liberation theology is therefore in line with the early Christian community when it uses the text in a creative way. This, according to Leonardo Boff, is the way in which the texts are meant to be used.⁽²²⁰⁾ The "correspondence of relationships" approach is truly a biblical approach and not a cover for distortion and manipulation of Scripture. It recognizes the Bible for what it is. The New Testament arose out of the Jesus event, and it was the result of a re-reading of the Old Testament by the New Testament writers. Together these testaments represent one kerygma - the biblical interpretation of the Christ event. This kerygma forms a new pole in the hermeneutical circle and the modern reader forms a complementary pole.⁽²²¹⁾ A circular dialectic exists

between event and word and between kerygma and situation, between the biblical word as liberation and the process of liberation.⁽²²²⁾

As Leonardo Boff explains, revelation is present in history today and our job is to interpret the signs of this presence:⁽²²³⁾

"God is the living, self-revealing God, who positively wills the salvation of humanity. Faith is the acceptance of the divine advent and parousia in history. In history, God comes to meet us through signals, the signs of the times, which we are meant to detect and interpret as God's revelation."⁽²²⁴⁾

The Bible provides access to God's Word and is the human word which points to the self-revelation of God.⁽²²⁵⁾ Life is the focus of this revelation, and life is what is to be interpreted:

"The task of faith does not reside primarily and basically in interpreting the scriptures, but in interpreting life, in which revelation is given. This is what the scriptures themselves did. When we read the scriptures we are reading human life as the sacred authors saw it through the lens of faith."⁽²²⁶⁾

As Boff points out, hermeneutics is not merely the understanding of ancient texts. It means comprehending life and relating it to the gospel message as expressed in them through such themes as the kingdom

of God, justice, peace, and reconciliation. In effect this means that Jesus is known today both through the study of texts and through the christian community whose faith created the gospels and communicates through them.⁽²²⁷⁾ Historically this means living out the gospel in the world.⁽²²⁸⁾

Biblical truth is always "time-and place-bound" in that it speaks of God's acting through specific events in the past present and future. The Bible makes

"...no attempt to infer God's action from some previously ascertainable project or idea. Rather, his character is to be known in his acts (which, to be sure, are not without their 'word', but a word verified in the act.)" (229)

The truth of God's word is revealed in acts in history. The texts of the New Testament are therefore "bearers of a present word".⁽²³⁰⁾

Christ continues through resurrection to act in power here and now:

"In other words, the resurrection of Jesus is itself (and not merely means or causes) our resurrection, our justification, the defeat of the powers, the power of his death, the general resurrection, the active presence of Christ". (231)

Whether a reading of events such as the resurrection

is arbitrary or not "cannot be a purely subjective or situational judgement."⁽²³²⁾ The events and the kerygma are present in the reading

"in the full weight of their objective historicity as well as in the full efficacy of their dynamism. For this reason, theological hermeneutics cannot forgo the effort to gain access to the text by means of the critical (historical, literary, tradition-historical, linguistic) instruments which the sciences of interpretation have created."⁽²³³⁾

In unravelling the "reservoir of meaning" of the text Liberation theology follows the Ricoeurian notion of distantiation.⁽²³⁴⁾ The meaning that lies "in front" of the text is added to the meaning established through traditional exegesis which investigates what lies "behind it" (author, traditions, earlier literary forms). The event described in the text thus accumulates meaning.⁽²³⁵⁾

A hermeneutical reading takes place when the reading supersedes the first contextual meaning (of the author and his first readers). When new questions are put to the text a surplus-of-meaning is disclosed.⁽²³⁶⁾ Interpretation is not a repetition of the meaning of the original event but the exploration of the reservoir-of-meaning behind the event.⁽²³⁷⁾ Interpretation implies the accumulation of meaning. The Bible forms the basis for a faith reading of the

paradigmatic events of salvation history.⁽²³⁸⁾ What is decisive in the reading of events is the praxis that generates the reading.⁽²³⁹⁾ The reading that results is relevant and appropriate to people's experience of God in their history, and it is effective insofar as it leads to obedient participation on the part of the reader.

The truth of the Word of God for Bonino is bound up with its real effectiveness in carrying out God's plan, with its demand of obedient participation:

"Whatever corrections may be needed, there is scarcely any doubt that God's Word is not understood in the Old Testament as a conceptual communication but as a creative event, a history-making pronouncement. Its truth does not consist in some correspondence to an idea but in its efficacy in carrying out God's promise or fulfilling his judgement. Correspondingly, what is required of Israel is not an ethical inference but an obedient participation - whether in action or in suffering - in God's active righteousness and mercy. Faith is always a concrete obedience which relies on God's promise and is vindicated in the act of obedience".⁽²⁴⁰⁾

"Present obedience" is the only legitimate reading of the biblical text.⁽²⁴¹⁾ Exegesis is therefore a moment in a complex process that impinges on the hearer's or reader's present. Word ceases to be simply text to be interpreted and becomes interpretative code through which scripture and the reading community communicate.⁽²⁴²⁾ Scripture involves an appeal, an

invitation. It seeks to persuade acceptance and openness. What is required is the personal response which makes the meaning of the text real as it unfolds in experience. Interpretation is therefore innovative, personal and more or less arbitrary.⁽²⁴³⁾

The Bible therefore is an open text that remains open to the world and history.⁽²⁴⁴⁾ Its ultimate reference is to the present, to the readers current history. As C Boff points out it is the reader who occupies the centre of attention of the text.⁽²⁴⁵⁾ Sense or meaning relate to present sense and meaning, present experience:

"Thus, although in a first moment, a basic one, to be sure, sense or meaning is obtained under sign, word under writing, spirit under letter - now, in another moment, sense is obtained in the present, word in time, spirit in history. But all of this comes through the meaning of scripture. The hermeneutic circle is not broken."
(²⁴⁶)

What this implies is that it is the reader who is addressed by the text as the reader addresses it and discovers in it and through it a relevant word for the present.

Another important element in this liberation hermeneutic is that it assumes that the poor are the key to the gospel today. The texts in the Bible are

addressed to both the poor and the wealthy, to the oppressed and the oppressors. But the Bible is clear on God's preference for the oppressed and the marginalized. Its message for them is a message of hope. For the oppressors it is a message of judgement and an invitation to conversion.⁽²⁴⁷⁾ For Croatto the gospel has an obvious bias to the poor and the poor have the right to re-read the Bible:

"Inasmuch as the generality of human experience is that of suffering, wretchedness, sin, and oppression, it is not difficult to recognize that the most adequate "ownership" of the Bible, the most adequate "pertinency" for rereading the kerygma of the Bible, is with the poor. That kerygma belongs to them "preferentially" first and foremost."
(²⁴⁸)

Therefore the kerygma of the Bible is most appropriate for hearing and understanding by the deprived of the world.⁽²⁴⁹⁾

Sobrino suggests that this approach does justice to the gospel because it allows it to "speak" and presents adequately the sociopolitical consequences of Jesus' life.⁽²⁵⁰⁾ As Croatto puts it:

"...to 'read' in the gospels, or in the Bible, as one long single text, a message of liberation and justice for oppressed peoples, is not to force its meaning, but merely to harmonize it with its deeper and more totalizing semantic axis. Such a reading is an altogether legitimate entry into the text - via an unravelling of its reservoir-of-meaning. It is but saying the unsaid in what was

said in another age. It is a closing, appropriating, conflictive reading. Of course there is nothing else it could be. From the perspective of the oppressed, this is the only kerygmatic, valid meaning." ⁽²⁵¹⁾

This reading of the Bible from the "grass roots" has two disadvantages. First, the Bible contains a bit of everything and one can use whatever one prefers.⁽²⁵²⁾ Second, the Bible is a book put together by a comfortable middle class, generally alienated from the people.⁽²⁵³⁾ However, both these difficulties can be overcome if the Bible is read as a single text, and read in the light of the originating kerygma, i.e., liberation. As Croatto puts it:

"It is a hermeneutical task and a function, in this particular case, of an understanding of the Bible as (semiotically) one great text, whose theme is God's salvific project, and whose key is the concept of liberation."
⁽²⁵⁴⁾

The advantage of a liberating reading is that the Bible in its origin began with the Israelites as a people within a liberation process. The Israelite conception of Yahweh was indissolubly joined to their experience of deliverance from Egypt.⁽²⁵⁵⁾ From that moment on it is the liberation experience that becomes the "referent" in the historico-salvific project of Israel. The concept of the God of the Bible is a re-reading of the Exodus experience.⁽²⁵⁶⁾ This central

message of the Old Testament is then projected into the New in the salvific message of Jesus addressed preferentially to the poor - in his options for the poor, in his rejection and death.⁽²⁵⁷⁾

The Bible is a book read from the standpoint of the oppressed or of liberation because its traditions are underscored by experiences of suffering and oppression, liberation and grace, experiences through which the biblical community came to see God as a God of liberation.⁽²⁵⁸⁾ The traditions of Israel continue with this theme because the people went through many experiences of oppression-and-liberation during their history.⁽²⁵⁹⁾ The biblical traditions originated in this kind of experience and express a profound hope of salvation.⁽²⁶⁰⁾

3.3.2 JESUS CHRIST LIBERATOR

It is on the basis of such an approach to the biblical tradition that Liberation theology arrives at its Christology. The most prominent title that liberation theology gives to Jesus is "Liberator".⁽²⁶¹⁾ It asserts that Jesus Christ is "the Liberator", and supports this assertion by way of a "political hermeneutic of the Gospel".⁽²⁶²⁾ The theme "liberation" provides the interpretative grid for such a hermeneutic. The Bible is interpreted in the light

of liberation and corresponding biblical texts are the focus of such an interpretation. Hence the Biblical hermeneutic that presents Jesus not only as "Christ", "Messiah", "Son of God" or any other name that the New Testament gives to him, but primarily as "the Liberator". Using the Old Testament as a paradigm, liberation theologians argue that the Father of Jesus is a liberator God. Jesus is said to follow in this divine tradition, and the picture of Jesus that emerges from the New Testament is one of divine Liberator.

There are difficulties with the way in which liberation theologians use biblical texts to support their position, and these will be dealt with in the final chapter. In this chapter we confine ourselves to a clear presentation of the liberation argument.

Liberation theologians argue that the liberation of the oppressed comprises the essence of the gospel message:

"The gospels sketch the liberating and prophetic deeds of Jesus in capital letters: his death as suffering servant and persecuted prophet, his resurrection as the triumph of life and of divine justice over both sin and the powers that annihilate life and justice. The Christ event expresses - as a new hermeneutic key - the central salvific message of the Old Testament, in which the centre of gravity is the liberation of the poor and the oppressed." (263)

This central and salvific message is already present in the event of the Exodus. Croatto describes the Exodus narrative as

"a characteristic, provocative, creative, inexhaustible kerygmatic 'locus'. It is an exemplary passage, more specifically relevant to a theology of liberation than to a theology of freedom. And that is why it is explored more in Latin America than in a European theological context."⁽²⁶⁴⁾

He suggests that the Exodus is the key event that models the faith of Israel, and this faith together with the formation of its religious traditions is understood from the perspective of the Exodus.⁽²⁶⁵⁾ The Exodus experience deepened and expanded Israel's understanding of salvation-liberation so that salvation is clearly related to the political and social spheres, and God is presented as one whose saving work is related to historical action:

"This has consequences for a theology of history: God is understood as saviour because he acts in human history, and not, in the first place, in meta-history."⁽²⁶⁶⁾

For Israel salvation is also liberation and God is liberator.⁽²⁶⁷⁾ Liberation is therefore central to the biblical kerygma.⁽²⁶⁸⁾

The Exodus was a decisive event in which Israel

grasped the liberating sense of God in its vocation, namely freedom.⁽²⁶⁹⁾ Hence the fundamental consciousness of freedom at the level of covenant, people and person:

"this experience is elevated to the category of a message for all humankind. It is the enunciation of the exemplary event, the announcement of a vocation, the denunciation of all that is not. Such is the value of the kerygma of freedom." ⁽²⁷⁰⁾

The message of the Exodus represents this freedom as a people's essential vocation which is a challenge to freedom today. From the time of the Exodus God is a God who intervenes to liberate:

"In the view of the Bible, Yahweh is the God who breaks into human history to liberate the oppressed." ⁽²⁷¹⁾

Yahweh intervenes for the sake of justice and does so as creator, which is why his power to intervene is universal. The biblical authors used the theme of creation to emphasize Yahweh's intervention to rescue his people from oppression and injustice⁽²⁷²⁾:

"Not only are the two themes not juxtaposed, it is not even enough to say that it is a question of emphasis, as if the characterization of Yahweh as creator were 'also' there, although less accentuated. Yahweh is presented as creator to give importance to his intervention on behalf of justice." (See Isaiah 43:1-2; 51:7-14 (vv. 9b-10); 42:5-7; 44:24-28). ⁽²⁷³⁾

Yahweh's purpose for intervention is justice:

"To recall that the God who intervenes in this way is the creator of all things and all peoples gives both an enormous force to his intervention on behalf of justice and also a universal scope. But the intention of saving from injustice and oppression is the determinant of the entire description which Yahweh makes of himself." (274)

The salvation of the oppressed is achieved in the face of injustice as Yahweh reveals his justice through his mighty act⁽²⁷⁵⁾:

"He who reveals himself by intervening in our history is always Yahweh as saviour of the oppressed and punisher of the oppressors." (276)

For Gutierrez the Exodus provides the biblical link between creation and salvation. Creation, says Gutierrez, is part of the salvific process and biblical faith portrays a God who reveals himself in historical events, a God who saves in history.⁽²⁷⁷⁾ Creation is seen as the first salvific act⁽²⁷⁸⁾:

"The creation of the world initiates history, the human struggle, and the salvific adventure of Yahweh." (279)

Yahweh is both creator and Saviour.⁽²⁸⁰⁾

The act of creation is linked to the freedom from slavery in Egypt (11 Isaiah 51:9-10).⁽²⁸¹⁾ Creation

and liberation are therefore one salvific act.⁽²⁸²⁾ Yahweh's historical actions on behalf of his people are creative and politically liberative.⁽²⁸³⁾ "The God who frees Israel is the creator of the world".⁽²⁸⁴⁾ Creation is therefore regarded as a historical-salvific fact through which Yahweh brings total liberation to his people.⁽²⁸⁵⁾ As Fierro puts it:

"To be created by God is equivalent to being free. Indeed the very possibility of appreciating life and the world as creation depends on the concrete experience of liberation. People begin to see their own history as an exodus before they begin to see the universe as the creative work of God. Divine revelation, including the fact that the world is God's creation, begins with the freedom inaugurated in the Exodus."
(²⁸⁶)

Creation is not seen as a stage prior to the work of salvation. It is part of the salvific process, in God's self-communication.⁽²⁸⁷⁾ The religious experience of Israel is seen primarily as history which is the continuation of God's creative activity. This is why the Psalms praise Yahweh as Creator and Saviour (Psalm 136). The God who transformed chaos into cosmos is the one who acts in salvation history.

This is why the Exodus is established as a key to Israel's and our interpretation of divine activity:

"The Exodus became an inexhaustible 'reservoir-of-meaning. For this reason its 'donation-of-meaning' is unlimited,

whence its unique hermeneutical possibilities for Latin American theology." (288)

"According to a hermeneutical line of thinking it is perfectly possible that we might understand ourselves from the perspective of the biblical Exodus and, above all, that we might understand the Exodus from the vantage point of our situation as peoples in economic, political, social, or cultural 'bondage'." (289)

The work of Christ is also to be viewed from this perspective of creation-salvation-liberation: (290)

"In Christ he chose us before the world was founded, to be dedicated, to be without blemish in his sight, to be full of love, and he destined us - such was his will and pleasure- to be accepted as his sons through Jesus Christ (Eph.1:3-5)". (291)

This emphasizes the divinity of Jesus. God continuing his creative work in the world and saving the world as God in Jesus.

For Gutierrez the work of Christ fulfils this movement towards complete fulfilment. Christ's redemptive work is presented in the context of creation (John 1). In Christ all have been created and all have been saved (Col. 1:15-20). (292) This work of Christ is an act of recreation (cf. Col 1:15-20); 1 Cor 8:6, Heb 1:2; Eph 1:1-22). (293) It is the new creation (Gal 6:15-22); 2 Cor 5:17). (294) It is through salvation in Christ that creation finds its full meaning (cf. Rom 8). (295)

These creative and salvific aspects are therefore essential to Christology:

"the work of Christ is presented simultaneously as a liberation from sin and from all its consequences: despoliation, injustice, hatred. This liberation fulfils in an unexpected way the promises of the prophets and creates a new chosen people, which this time includes all humanity. Creation and salvation therefore have, in the first place, a Christological sense: all things have been created in Christ, all things have been saved in him." (cf. Col 1:15-20) (²⁹⁶)

The work of Christ, then, is a recapitulation of God's work in creation and salvation, (²⁹⁷) and a continuation of God's work of liberation.

New Testament texts are cited in support of this view. Luke 4:16ff, for example, is interpreted to mean that Jesus' mission was to liberate people both spiritually and materially. Sobrino sees Luke 4:16-44 as an introduction to Jesus' public ministry. (²⁹⁸) He points out that this passage contains a number of key elements - the prophetic anointing of Jesus (v 18a), his mission as an evangelizer (vv 18 & 43), the good news of the kingdom as the content of his mission (v 43), the urgent need for carrying it out (v 43), and its fulfilment in the present (v 21). (²⁹⁹)

The central point of the scene is Luke 4:18, which speaks of Jesus' mission and the announcement of good

news to the poor.⁽³⁰⁰⁾ The content of this news is the Kingdom of God (vv 18 & 43)⁽³⁰¹⁾ The parallelism with Isaiah 61:1ff suggests not only proclamation but also fulfilment of the message proclaimed.⁽³⁰²⁾ And it is good news "insofar as it achieves the liberation of the oppressed."⁽³⁰³⁾ The "poor and the oppressed" as Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6 suggest are those who suffer under any kind of yoke.⁽³⁰⁴⁾ The liberation implied is a total liberation, including liberation from material poverty.⁽³⁰⁵⁾ By choosing the phrase "set free those who have been crushed" Luke shows clearly that he does not intend a spiritualizing interpretation, but rather emphasizes the material aspect; and by stressing the year of God's favour he presents salvation in terms of the jubilee year in which slaves are liberated.⁽³⁰⁶⁾

The parallels in Luke 7:22-23 and Matthew 11:4-6 give a similar indication as to who the poor are and what God's coming means for them - they find new life.⁽³⁰⁷⁾ The novel element in Jesus' proclamation is this new life that is offered:

"According to Jeremias, therein lies the innovation of Jesus' announcement of the good news, in which the poor return to life. Therefore whatever else the fullness of life may include, 'the material liberation from any type of oppression, resulting from injustice, is associated with the biblical message as an essential religious value'."⁽³⁰⁸⁾

Croatto highlights the same themes in his comment on the "programmatic scenario of Luke 4:16-30."⁽³⁰⁹⁾ Another perspective draws parallels between Jesus and Moses. L Boff speaks of Jesus as the new Moses and the definitive liberator.⁽³¹⁰⁾ He suggests that according to Matthew's gospel Jesus is the fulfilment of Old Testament messianic prophecy (eg. Isaiah 60:6; Psalm 71:10), the "eschatological Messiah."⁽³¹¹⁾ The events surrounding Jesus' birth are a fulfilment of the prophecy concerning the Messiah "which announced the church's faith in Jesus as the eschatological Messiah".⁽³¹²⁾ In addition he sees distinct parallels between Jesus and Moses which suggest that Jesus is the new Moses, the new liberator⁽³¹³⁾:

"As in a prologue, Matthew 1-2 presents in post-paschal perspective the great themes of the gospel: This Jesus of Nazareth is the one true Messiah, son of Abraham, descendent of the royal messianic house of David, the new Moses, who now, at the apex of history and its final moment will take the people of the Exodus from Egypt to a definitive homeland."⁽³¹⁴⁾

Croatto sees in the Gospels a liberator Christ who from the moment of his baptism to his death works for the cause of human liberation.⁽³¹⁵⁾ He too points to the New Testament interpretation of Jesus as the messianic fulfilment of the Old Testament hope:

"in other words Jesus from the moment of his baptism, bears the mark of the 'suffering Servant' - who is also the

liberator of the oppressed in the 'intentioning' oracles of Deutero-Isaiah. And Jesus expresses this vocation in his actions and utterances (cf. Matthew 12:14-27), And Jesus does so with a total commitment that culminates in his trial for 'subversion'." (316)

Jesus begins his work of liberation with the poor and acts in solidarity with them, a solidarity made possible by his own victimization.⁽³¹⁷⁾ In doing this he affirms their value as human beings:

"The oppressed thus begin their rise from the obscurity of their 'being less' to their 'being more', of their being the 'New Person'". (318)

Through liberation he clears the path of tradition and structures so that the oppressed and oppressor are liberated:

"On this level- in the encounter of one human being with another - the oppressed and the oppressors are alike liberated. The oppressed affirm their deepest authenticity so that the 'shadow' of the oppressors disappears. The oppressors, finding themselves without their opposite pole, remain in their own alienation - from which they can be freed if they accept the profound conversion offered them by God through his emissary." (319)

The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4) illustrates this work of liberation. Jesus the Messiah liberates the Samaritan woman, frees her into new possibilities and affirms her as a human

being, with the result that she displays a new dignity.⁽³²⁰⁾ This Christ addresses the total person, and his actions have implications for the liberation of others. As Croatto puts it:

"this Christ is not only the Christ of eschatology or the Christ of a purely spiritual or mystical understanding of liberation. Christians committed to real human beings continue to ponder the political, socio-economic, and cultural implications of the religious message of Jesus." ⁽³²¹⁾

The Gospel teaching on the kingdom of God confirms this picture of Jesus and his work. Sobrino argues that the "Kingdom of God" theme provides the key to the Jesus of history, and it provides access to him.⁽³²²⁾ Jesus is known and understood in relation to the Kingdom, and the meaning of this Kingdom is revealed only through him.⁽³²³⁾ It is central to Jesus' preaching and relates directly to the problems of history.⁽³²⁴⁾ Jesus did not make himself the main focus of his preaching. He preached and described the kingdom of God.⁽³²⁵⁾ Segundo points to the fact that Jesus' initial announcement according to Mark, is "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent (have a change of outlook), and believe in the gospel (good news)" (Mark 1:15; Matt 4:17).⁽³²⁶⁾ Thus, according to Sobrino, Jesus presents the kingdom of God as grace because it represents God's initiative and because he tells them that the kingdom is

near⁽³²⁷⁾ :

"His message is that God's reign is at hand and already dawning, though it has not yet reached its culmination. It is not merely an extension of human potentialities; it breaks in as grace. Neither is it merely a transformation of the inner person. It is also a restructuring of the visible, tangible relationships, existing between human beings. It is authentic liberation at every level of human existence."⁽³²⁸⁾

By preaching the kingdom of God Jesus proclaims the reign of God that people are waiting for. He adopts the Old Testament view that God acts in history and that his action is linked to his presence.⁽³²⁹⁾ And he shows that the reign of God involves a total renewal of reality achieved through reconciliation and liberation.⁽³³⁰⁾ According to Sobrino:

"Jesus proclaims that the arrival of the kingdom is salvation and that the kingdom has the decisive connotation of liberation. But this salvation and liberation is not expressed solely in words (sermons and parables); it is also expressed in deeds."⁽³³¹⁾

His activities are be viewed primarily in terms of the liberative effect of the Kingdom of God.⁽³³²⁾ This is what God's presence and reign imply:

"the notion of the kingdom of God stresses that God does not make himself known directly as he is; instead he reveals himself in some situation. 'God exists' means that God 'acts' or 'reigns'. The 'reign' of God is part of his very reality"⁽³³³⁾

The practice of Jesus is oriented towards the Kingdom; a practice which is primarily a response to the will of the God of the Kingdom.⁽³³⁴⁾

It is a response of obedience and loyalty.⁽³³⁵⁾, and points to the nature of the Kingdom of God.⁽³³⁶⁾ Jesus' actions help to realize human possibilities.⁽³³⁷⁾ His message and ministry provide appropriate signs to show what he understood this Kingdom to be.⁽³³⁸⁾ His ministry reveals the power of the kingdom through signs of its nearness or presence, and these signs point to a coherence between the values of the coming Kingdom and the values being visibly sought by those who approach Jesus and ask him for miracles.⁽³³⁹⁾ The deeds of Jesus, as Sobrino argues, are signs of the coming of the kingdom - "the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matt 11:5).⁽³⁴⁰⁾

This "kingdom of heaven" according to Miranda, is to be established on earth:

"we cannot take seriously the absolute centrality of the resurrection of the body in the New Testament if the kingdom of justice is not established on earth."
(³⁴¹)

Jesus' understanding of faith relates to its "original and fundamental meaning which is to-have-hope-because-God-intervenes-in-history." (342)

For Bonino the Kingdom of God asserts the continuity and discontinuity between history and the Kingdom. (343) It does not deny history but transforms it:

"The Kingdom is not the denial of history but the elimination of its corruptibility, its frustrations, weakness, ambiguity - more deeply, its sin - in order to bring to full realization the true meaning of the communal life of man." (344)

The Kingdom comes through suffering, conflict and judgement as

"the Kingdom redeems, transforms, and perfects the 'corporality' of history and the dynamics of love that has operated in it." (345)

Thus

"The Kingdom is not merely adumbrated, reflected, foreshadowed. or analogically hinted at in the individual and collective realizations of love in history, but actually present, operative, authentically - however imperfectly and partially - realized." (346)

This is what Jesus implies when he says "Your faith has saved you" (Matthew 9:22; Mark 10:52; Luke 7:50; Luke 17:19; Luke 18:42). (347) And to believe that

Jesus is the "Messiah" (John 20:31; 1 John 5:1 and 1 John 2:22:) is to believe in an historical event, in the arrival of the kingdom:

"in John especially 'to believe in ...' and 'to believe that...' are constantly used interchangeably in the same sense... 'to believe in ...' is thus to be regarded as an abbreviation which in the language of the mission became formal. 'to believe that Jesus is the Messiah' has a historical meaning which should be clear from reading the Old Testament and John 1:41. It does not mean believing in a non-temporal attribute, as philosophy or dogmatics might understand it, but believing in a historical event. To believe that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, is the Messiah is to believe that with him the messianic kingdom has arrived. It is to believe that in our age the kingdom of God has arrived, an event which fulfils all hopes."⁽³⁴⁸⁾

The theological relevance of Jesus' relationship to the kingdom of God is that Jesus demonstrates that the liberation of the kingdom of God involves the transformation of the present and its openness to God.⁽³⁴⁹⁾ The message of Jesus is aimed at changing structures.⁽³⁵⁰⁾ It demands and effects the complete renewal of this world in a deeply relevant way. As Boff puts it:

"Jesus affected human beings at their very roots, activating their hope-principle and making their dream of the kingdom, which is not an entirely different world but this world completely new and renewed".⁽³⁵¹⁾

In specific historical terms it represents the kind of

liberation that the people long for:

"the Kingdom expresses man's utopian longing for liberation from everything that alienates him, factors such as anguish, pain, hunger, injustice and death, and not only man but all creation." (352)

This is especially true for the marginalized and oppressed people.⁽³⁵³⁾ Segundo points out that the kingdom of God is not addressed to everyone.⁽³⁵⁴⁾ This selectivity, he argues, is not due to a conscious decision by Jesus Christ but to the very essence of the kingdom.⁽³⁵⁵⁾ He says:

"The kingdom is destined for certain groups. It is theirs. It belongs to them. Only for them will it be a cause for joy." (356)

He suggests that according to Jesus the dividing line runs between the rich and the poor. He points to Luke's gospel to support this. The Beatitudes, for example are addressed exclusively to the poor, and the kingdom of God is presented as bad news for those who stand in opposition to the poor (Luke 6:24-25).⁽³⁵⁷⁾

The kingdom comes to change the situation of the poor. According to the Beatitudes the poor possess the kingdom of God. As Segundo puts it:

"the kingdom is theirs because of the

inhuman nature of their situation as poor people. The kingdom is coming because God is 'humane', because God cannot tolerate that situation and is coming to make sure that the divine will be done on earth. Poverty must cease to wreak destructive havoc on humanity."⁽³⁵⁸⁾

The kingdom will ensure that the poor will cease to be poor because Jesus gave a privileged place to the poor in his message and action.⁽³⁵⁹⁾ The kingdom of God brings about a radical inversion - those who weep will laugh, those who are hungry will have their fill.⁽³⁶⁰⁾ The advantage of the rich will end with the arrival of the kingdom.⁽³⁶¹⁾

"God is coming with the kingdom: to restructure a society that impoverishes, marginalizes, and oppresses the vast majority of human beings, turning them into subhumans. God is coming, the power that God truly is, to conquer the strong one who holds the human being in its power, in order to restore to the human being its humanity" (Mark 3:27; Luke 11:22).⁽³⁶²⁾

The Kingdom is exemplified in the poor, and the poor have a special place in the Kingdom.

Liberation perspectives on the death and resurrection of Jesus emphasize the same themes. Jesus' death and resurrection are said to form the climax of Jesus' history, and this is the perspective that conditions Liberation Christology's understanding of New Testament faith and its christological titles. The

resurrection is central:

"If the starting point of Christology is the historical Jesus, its culmination is reached in the resurrected Jesus according to the New Testament." (363)

The resurrection marks a complete turning point. It revealed the truth imparted in the life and words of Jesus and it radicalized the faith of the disciples.⁽³⁶⁴⁾ It affirms that God raised Jesus from the dead⁽³⁶⁵⁾, it affirms the authenticity of Jesus⁽³⁶⁶⁾, and it clarifies the meaning of human life.⁽³⁶⁷⁾ It reassured the disciples that God had not abandoned Jesus on the cross.⁽³⁶⁸⁾ It shows that Jesus is to be understood in relation to the real lives of people and history, that he is the Lord of life, the restorer of all things, the cosmic Christ in whom everything has its origin.⁽³⁶⁹⁾ In Boff's words:

"The resurrected Christ fills all reality, thus realizing to a maximum degree his being-in-others and his being-for-others." (370)

However, the truth and power of the resurrection is revealed when it is understood in relation to the death of Christ, to why and how he died.⁽³⁷¹⁾

The one who preached the Kingdom and exposed and denounced the mighty, is the one who was persecuted, condemned to death, and executed.⁽³⁷²⁾ It is this

Jesus that was raised from the dead by God.⁽³⁷³⁾ This means that the resurrection is the divine response to unjust and criminal behaviour, to murder.⁽³⁷⁴⁾ It marks the triumph of justice over injustice and the triumph of the victim over the victimizer, the instrument of death.⁽³⁷⁵⁾ The resurrection also challenges people to deal with the death and life of others.⁽³⁷⁶⁾ It reveals that death is not only inevitable, but that people can and will kill others.⁽³⁷⁷⁾ The resurrection calls for courageous action to love and to give life to others who are dying.⁽³⁷⁸⁾ Faith in the resurrection provides the basis for this courage,⁽³⁷⁹⁾ the courage to grasp and establish a new history:

"To put it in modern terms, it means that for us today the resurrection of Jesus is an event that establishes a new history. If we are to grasp it as such, we must have the attitude that we are going to establish a new history. The mediating link between past history and future history is forged through a historical mission that propels history forward".⁽³⁸⁰⁾

As such the resurrection is "the definitive promise of God", something that opens up an eschatological future.⁽³⁸¹⁾

The resurrection is primarily hope for the crucified.⁽³⁸²⁾ Because of Jesus' resurrection they have the courage to hope for their resurrection and are able to

live boldly.⁽³⁸³⁾ One needs to share the crucifixion in order to have this hope:

"From a qualitative viewpoint, Jesus' resurrection is transformed into a universal symbol of hope to the extent that all men and women share in some form of crucifixion - in other words, to the extent that every human being's death has the quality of crucifixion. This is Christian death of antonomasia, and thus the type of death from which one may have the Christian hope of resurrection. One must share the crucifixion then, albeit analogously, in order to have Christian hope."⁽³⁸⁴⁾

The cross is also a symbol of God's nearness to people.⁽³⁸⁵⁾

"Jesus' cross says, in credible fashion, that God loves human beings, that God pronounces a word of love and salvation, and that God personally utters and bestows the divinity itself as love and as salvation. Jesus' cross says that God has passed the test of love, and now we may believe in God's power as well."⁽³⁸⁶⁾

The victory of the resurrection declares the victory of life and its liberation from all that seeks to bind it.⁽³⁸⁷⁾ As an eschatological reality it reveals God's will for humanity and his world.⁽³⁸⁸⁾ It points to full freedom in Christ, the goal of the process of liberation.⁽³⁸⁹⁾ It imparts meaning to those who have died in the liberation struggle.⁽³⁹⁰⁾ It affirms that Jesus struggles alongside the oppressed for their liberation, growth, and for right relationships.⁽³⁹¹⁾ Jesus is the suffering Christ, God identifying with

the oppressed.⁽³⁹²⁾ It is through such solidarity that Christ presents liberation as the rejection of worldly authorities, thus disclosing a praxis of solidarity and transformation. History is thus fulfilled and transformed by him.

The truth of Christology, as Sobrino insists, is discovered in transformation.⁽³⁹³⁾ Historical salvation is fully realized in the resurrection, and its truth unfolds in history. To follow Christ is to be faithful to God's message and to history.⁽³⁹⁴⁾ The resurrection is therefore a real experience today even as we await its fulfilment in the future.⁽³⁹⁵⁾

3.4 CHRISTOLOGY AND DISCIPLESHIP

A proper Christology would take account of Christ's presence today - primacy being given to Christ's presence among the poor.⁽³⁹⁶⁾ The theologian's foremost placement is therefore the world of the poor and the Church of the poor. It is this context that refers him/her to the historical Jesus in Christology.⁽³⁹⁷⁾ As Sobrino puts it:

"this realization of faith has two characteristic traits: the practice of liberation and the presence of Christ in the poor. Both traits refer the theologizing subject more spontaneously to the historical Jesus, the former to the discipleship of Jesus, as demanded by Jesus himself, the latter to Jesus' incarnation in poverty and the world of

the poor. Both traits taken together specify the theologian's ecclesial locus, ineluctably, as the church of the poor." ⁽³⁹⁸⁾

The risen Jesus is present through those who suffer today and his Lordship is exercised through their service. Christ lives "in actu" in their quest for liberation. As Sobrino writes:

"From the midst of history's crucified - without any compact or compromise with their crosses - Jesus' resurrection must be proclaimed. In those crucified, Jesus is present today. In service to them, the lordship of Jesus becomes present today. In the stubborn refusal to strike a pact with their crosses, and in the stubborn, persistent quest for liberation from these crosses, unshakable hope becomes present in actu, becomes present historically." ⁽³⁹⁹⁾

Christ is present when his death and resurrection are proclaimed in the world. As Sobrino says:

"It is of the utmost importance, however, that christology take account of the various types of presence of Christ within and without the church community. Kerygmatic theology, for example, has seen this point clearly, and has drawn consequences for christology. Christ is present in the kerygma: he becomes present when his death and resurrection are proclaimed in the world. This presence is important for the christology of the Christ of faith." ⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾

Real experience of the Risen Jesus today is the heart of any authentic Christology, and active faith in this Jesus constitutes such a Christology.

Christology begins with a full surrender of self to Jesus and the Kingdom in an act of faith - in a free decision to follow Jesus. The faith of Jesus provides the paradigm for Christian faith.⁽⁴⁰¹⁾ Jesus demands a radical conversion to discipleship,⁽⁴⁰²⁾ which is the essence of a proper response to Jesus.⁽⁴⁰³⁾ Boff stresses this personal and experiential aspect, and speaks of Christology as proclamation and a call to engagement:

"What then is Christology? Not a doctrine concerning the divine nature of Christ, but an announcement, a call of faith inviting me to believe, to take up the cross of Christ, and thus justified, to participate in the resurrection. Christology is the Word of God that affects me today, now. To believe in Christ as the Gospels preach him is to experience and achieve redemption."
(⁴⁰⁴)

Christ is known and accepted in faith, and access to him depends on faithfulness to the content of Christology.⁽⁴⁰⁵⁾ As Sobrino puts it:

"The christology of liberation not only proposes content about Christ, to be known and believingly accepted, but also - and this emphasis is part of its historical novelty - the manner of knowing Christ, knowing him with a knowledge that, in virtue of the very nature of its object, can only be faith in Christ. It shows access to Christ in actu, and it does this as christology."
(⁴⁰⁶)

This is a dynamic and transformative process:

"To believe in Christ as an existential act and way of life is to confront the totality of my personal, social, ecclesial and cultural life with the reality of Jesus. Faith is realized in the encounter of allowing life and its problems to be interrogated and questioned by Christ and his message.

...The root structures of humanity are made tangible by his life and words, his relationship with the Absolute awakens the memory of what we all should be."
(⁴⁰⁷)

Christology is a responsive encounter with a living, powerful, and transforming Jesus. According to Boff

"To worship and proclaim Jesus Christ as the Liberator is to ponder and live out our christological faith within a socio-historical context marked by domination and oppression." (⁴⁰⁸)

And, as Sobrino points out, to believe in Jesus is to proclaim the Kingdom, to work for liberation; both aspects are essential to discipleship:

"If persons and communities follow Jesus and proclaim the kingdom of God to the poor; if they strive for liberation from every kind of slavery; if they seek, for all human beings, especially for that immense majority of men and women who are crucified persons, a life in conformity with the dignity of daughters and sons of God; if they have the courage and forthrightness to speak the truth, however this may translate into the denunciation and unmasking of sin, and steadfastness in the conflicts and persecution occasioned by this forthrightness; if, in this discipleship of Jesus, they effectuate their own conversion from being oppressors to being men and women of service; if they have the spirit of Jesus, with the bowels of mercy and the pure heart to see the truth of things, and refuse to darken their hearts by imprisoning the truth of things in injustice; if in

doing justice they seek peace and in making peace they seek to base it on justice; and if they do all this in the following and discipleship of Jesus because he did all this himself - then they believe in Jesus Christ."(⁴⁰⁹)

Faith in the divine transcendence of Christ is authenticated in discipleship, and it is in discipleship that Christ's divinity is revealed, (⁴¹⁰)

"Following Jesus is the praxic form of accepting the transcendence of God; and following Jesus is the praxic form of accepting the transcendence of Jesus."
(⁴¹¹)

And the hermeneutical task is verified in that process in which discipleship "unleashes an ever 'greater' and 'better' history." (⁴¹²) Discernment and openness to the Spirit are essential to this participation in history-making:

"As Christians we exercise our discernment within the channel of following Jesus, with particular values, criteria and verification. Within this channel, we listen to the requirements of the Spirit given to us to enable us to go on making history, following Jesus, and initiating the kingdom of God in particular situations." (⁴¹³)

The kingdom of God is a reality which is to be served and actualized. (⁴¹⁴) As Gutierrez puts it:

"To place oneself in the perspective of the Kingdom means to participate in the struggle for liberation of those oppressed by others." (⁴¹⁵)

To follow Jesus is to understand Jesus in the service of the kingdom,⁽⁴¹⁶⁾ and one gains access to Jesus through similar service.⁽⁴¹⁷⁾ As Sobrino writes:

"Jesus' intrinsic relationship to the kingdom means that our contact with him will not come primarily through cultic acclamation or adoration but through following Jesus in the service of God's kingdom." ⁽⁴¹⁸⁾

For the kingdom embodies both divine grace and human responsibility.⁽⁴¹⁹⁾ It is the work of both God and people and its realization depends on human participation.⁽⁴²⁰⁾ Following Jesus means loving in the way that God loved through the cross.⁽⁴²¹⁾ As Sobrino puts it:

"Following the praxis of Jesus gives expression to the concrete obligation to fight for love and justice among human beings. These two attitudes or dimensions are not chosen arbitrarily by Jesus. They are the concrete means that tie in with the kind of God that Jesus reveals. Because his God is the God who opens up a meaningful future for people living an oppressed life, one must have hope. Because his God exists only insofar as he 'reigns', thereby liberating people and creating human fellowship, access to God is only possible in a liberative praxis based on the following of Jesus." ⁽⁴²²⁾

This participation is based on love, because love ensures that human life is modelled on Jesus, and so helps to contribute to his creation of final reality.⁽⁴²³⁾ Conversely loveless actions are condemned to the world of unreality, and God will not

do what humans are supposed to do themselves.⁽⁴²⁴⁾
Human action is meaningless without the creative
action of human freedom. As Segundo puts it:

"the values to which Jesus of Nazareth bore concrete testimony in his message and life can be realized only if the 'I' of each person has the power to accomplish a project that is both personal and definitive; and if it is indeed a free project, it must be that of self-giving love."⁽⁴²⁵⁾

When we see the divine initiative as the action of God within history, opening history toward the promise, we are forced to see it as growth, realization and creation.⁽⁴²⁶⁾

God judges the totality of human achievements, judging human situations of conflict in the light of his announced purpose.⁽⁴²⁷⁾ Participation in his Kingdom implies a judgement of present historical conditions, a choice between historical alternatives, a judgement made on the basis of the perceived direction of God's redemptive will, conveyed through the biblical expressions of justice, peace, and redemption.⁽⁴²⁸⁾ As Bonino says:

"New human possibilities lead us to enlarge our understanding of the biblical witness - indeed, in evangelical terms, the Spirit discloses Jesus Christ to us as we engage in the concrete witness to his redeeming love. But also the love which belongs to God's Kingdom suggests further horizons for human life which act as magnetic poles

*or horizons of hope for kindling man's
analytical and ideological imagination."
(⁴²⁹)*

The eschatological dimension of faith makes it possible for Christians to build a temporary, though imperfect, order here and now. Faith in the resurrection witnesses to people's responsible stewardship of creation and their participation in love in the project of liberation.⁽⁴³⁰⁾ Thus men and women fulfil themselves by carrying on the work of creation through their own labours as they operate within the framework of God's salvific work from the very beginning.⁽⁴³¹⁾ Genesis asserts, to subdue the earth is a salvific act. To engage in salvific work in the world is to transform and save it. The humanizing factor transforms nature and the salvific work tends to build a society that is more just and more worthy of humankind.⁽⁴³²⁾ In other words, those who truly experience and believe in the Risen Lord adopt responsible attitudes towards God's creation and share in Christ's project of liberation.

Reflection on Christ is thus achieved through participation in liberation ⁽⁴³³⁾, which in turn provides the point of departure for a privileged knowledge of Christ:

*"In this participation will be heard
nuances of the Word of God which are*

imperceptible in other existential situations and without which there can be no authentic and fruitful faithfulness to the Lord".⁽⁴³⁴⁾

The theme of Jesus Christ Liberator has as its starting point the brutal reality of oppression and domination in Latin America and it arose out of a concrete demand of faith for Christians committed to liberation.⁽⁴³⁵⁾ Boff says that:

"The result is an image of Christ the Liberator quite different from that of official dogma, that of popular piety centred around the suffering and downtrodden Christ of the passion, and also the image of Christ as the glorious king of heaven." ⁽⁴³⁶⁾

For Boff this type of Christology makes the link between Jesus Christ's salvation and acts of liberation in history.⁽⁴³⁷⁾ It goes beyond an inward looking and individualistic Christian message and points to its engagement with politics. This type of Christology can be accompanied by critical exegesis, a reinterpretation of christological dogmas and an elaboration of the liberative dimensions of the Christian faith. It seeks to support the efforts for the political and economic liberation of the oppressed.⁽⁴³⁸⁾ This indeed is a Christology of liberation, firmly grounded in Christ who is the origin and the climax of the process of liberation:

"All the dynamism of the cosmos and of human history, the movement towards the creation of a more just and fraternal world, the overcoming of social inequalities among men, the efforts, so urgently needed on our continent, to liberate man from all that depersonalizes him- physical and moral misery, ignorance and hunger - as well as the awareness of human dignity, all these originate, are transformed, and reach their perfection in the saving work of Christ".⁽⁴³⁹⁾

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1978; As Sobrino has indicated, Latin American theologians have not worked out a systematic Christology, except for Boff's "Jesus Christ Liberator." Although there are a number of other works following the christological theme, they are in the main either prolegomena or the beginnings of a systematic christology. (J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*, London, SCM, 1978, p.33.)
2. See for example JM Bonino, (ed), *Faces of Jesus: Latin American Christologies*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1984.
3. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*, op.cit., p.33.
4. *ibid.*, p.17.
5. See for example G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1973. pp.153ff; JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1975, pp.53ff and pp.63ff.
6. See L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., pp.264ff; JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit, pp.70f.
7. JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit., p.70-71. Liberation theology works from this basic framework of a unitive understanding of history. Bonino suggests that the originality of Latin American liberation theology is its integration of three levels - socio-political liberation (political struggle), humanization as a historical process of man's self-realization (human maturity) and deliverance from sin (reconciliation). *ibid.*, p.70.
8. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.153. Christ's power, says Assmann is directed toward human beings in history. He does not "exercise his power apart from human history, operating in some isolated history of his own; his power takes sides in and through human beings". (H Assmann, "The Power of

Christ in History: Conflicting Christologies and Discernment" in R Gibellini, (ed), *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, London, SCM, 1975, p.146.) The experience of people is the context out of which theology arises and in which it is done. Faith and history are held together in a theology that leads to liberation. Consequently a distinction between the history of salvation and profane history is no longer necessary. To maintain such a distinction is to fall into an unacceptable dualism. Which is why Bonino suggests that "...we must constantly stress the deep unity between God's saving purpose fulfilled in Jesus Christ and human aspirations between the history of salvation and human history... excluding all dichotomies." (JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit., p.54). Any dualism, for example, between faith and praxis or between theological and ideological issues, is rejected: "Socio-political struggle, human maturity, reconciliation with God, do not belong to different realms but to a single saving reality. God's grace and man's task are therefore also united.(ibid., p.70).

9. G Gutierrez, "Notes for a Theology of Liberation", in Paul E Sigmund, (ed), *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution?* New York, Oxford University Press, 1990, p.209-210. See also G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.15-139. According to Gutierrez this view is supported by the biblical portrayal of the history of salvation, particularly the themes of creation, salvation and the eschatological promises.
10. JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit., pp.86ff. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., pp.11ff. As Gutierrez puts it:
"Knowledge is not the conformity of the mind to the given, but an immersion in the process of transformation and construction of a new world". (G Gutierrez, "Terrorism, Liberation and Solidarity" in *The Witness*, New York, April 1977, p.5). According to Bonino, there is no biblical basis for a separation of theory and practice: "It seems clear enough that the classical conception can claim no biblical basis for its conceptual understanding of truth or for its distinction between a theoretical knowledge of truth and a practical application of it. Correct knowledge is contingent on right doing." (JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit., p.90). Sociological insights lead to the same conclusion: "...The sociology of knowledge makes abundantly clear that we think always out of a definite context of relations and action, out of a given praxis". (ibid., p.90). In Gutierrez's thought praxis refers to liberative action to overcome oppression. The language of faith must

ultimately be translated into the language of praxis. (G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., pp.6-15; G Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1983, pp.36-74). In liberation theology's language of faith, the term "faith" becomes synonymous with the term "praxis". Praxis not only reveals what faith is in general speech about faith but is also relative to particular faith. Praxis also tends to be understood as identical to faith. Thus liberation theology arises after and on the basis of praxis and is spoken of as reflection on praxis, in a manner in which traditional theology speaks of itself as reflection on faith.

11. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.49.
12. JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit., pp.89-90. "...The Johannine epistles work out the same theme relating the knowledge of God to the love of the brother. God is unknown unless man participates in his concrete life through love. There is here no minimizing of the historical revelation in Jesus Christ - quite the contrary, this is a critical test for the author. But this revelation is not an abstract theoretical knowledge but a concrete existence: the existence in love". (ibid., p.90)
13. ibid., p.89.
14. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.353.
15. As Boff explains, it is in discipleship that the truth of Jesus is clarified, and it is in the real transformation of a sinful world that it is verified "Because the historical Jesus sheds clear light on the chief elements of christological faith: i.e., following his life and his cause in one's own life. It is in this following that the truth of Jesus surfaces; and it is truth insofar as it enables people to transform this sinful world into the kingdom of God while also being able to vindicate itself before the demands of human reason insofar as reason is open to the infinite. Jesus does not present himself as the explanation of reality. He presents himself as an urgent demand for the transformation of that reality". (L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., p.279; See also J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., pp.348-349).
16. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.49.
17. ibid, p.204.
18. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., pp.xxiii-xxiv.

19. idem.
20. ibid., pp.xxiii.
21. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.15.
22. It is, as Bonino describes it, a theology "after the fact" because it reflects on facts and experiences to which Christians have already responded: "*Latin American theology of liberation is beginning to emerge (as all theology?) after the fact, as the reflection about facts and experiences which have already evoked a response from Christians...It is a total, synthetic act, many times going far beyond what one can at the moment justify theologically. Then as one is called to explain, to understand the full meaning or to invite other Christians to follow that same path, a theology is slowly born.*" (JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit., p.61). Theology is an ongoing task that goes together with a constant check of action and theory, theory and action. As such it contributes to an ongoing praxis, and "does not stop with reflecting on the world, but rather tries to be part of the process by which the world is transformed." (G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.15). Its conviction is that the starting point of theology is involvement in and transformation of the lives of the oppressed. (G Gutierrez-Merino, "Liberation Movements in Theology", *Concilium*, Vol. 10, Part 1, 1974, pp.142-144). Authentic Christian reflection takes place from this locus.
23. G Gutierrez, "The Hope of Liberation", in GH Anderson and TF Stransky, (eds), *Mission Trends* No.3, Third World Theologies Series, Grand Rapids, Wb Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976, p.67.
24. idem.
25. JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit., p.72.
26. idem.
27. G Gutierrez, "Liberation Theology and Proclamation" in C Geffre (ed), *Concilium*, No.6. Vol.10, Part 11, 1974, p.57ff.
28. idem.
29. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.11
30. JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit., p.72.

31. *ibid.*, p.71.
32. *ibid.*, p.35. Segundo has argued that Marxist thought cannot be ignored in the Latin American context although he recognizes that there are some problems with applying the label Marxist to any body of thought: "After Marx, our way of conceiving and posing the problems of society will never be the same again. Whether everything Marx said is accepted or not, and in whatever way one may conceive his 'essential' thinking, there can be no doubt that present day social thought will be 'Marxist' to some extent: that is, profoundly indebted to Marx. In that sense Latin American theology is certainly Marxist".(JL Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1976, p.35).
33. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.36.
34. *ibid.*, p.84.
35. JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit., p.16.
36. *ibid.*, p.26-27.
37. *ibid.*, p.31.
38. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., pp.36-37; See also JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit., p.21.
39. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.346.
40. *idem.*
41. *idem.*
42. *ibid.*, pp.346-347.
43. As Sobrino puts it: "Theology in general and Christology in particular have a maieutic task to perform. They must help us to draw out those viewpoints that enable us to do a better job of explaining how the faith is to be lived in real life. They must also help us to frame those questions, at least on the theoretical level, that will enable us better to comprehend Christ as the limit-reality that provides the total meaning of life and history and that will also help us to interpret our historical experience as a Christian experience."(*ibid.*, p.347.)
44. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1987, p.10.
45. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., pp.347-351.

46. *ibid.*, p.347.
47. *ibid.*, pp.347-348.
48. *ibid.*, p.348.
49. *idem.*
50. *ibid.*, p.349.
51. *idem.*
52. *idem.*
53. *idem.*
54. *idem.*
55. *idem.*
56. *ibid.*, p.350.
57. *ibid.*, pp.349-350.
58. *ibid.*, p.350.
59. *idem.*
60. *idem.*
61. *idem.*
62. *ibid.*, p.351.
63. *idem.*
64. *idem.*
65. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., p.13.
66. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.37.
67. Faith in Christ, as Gutierrez explains, is linked with social praxis: "Social praxis is gradually becoming more of the arena itself in which the Christian works out - along with others- both his destiny as man and his life of faith in the Lord of history." (G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.49).
68. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.351.
69. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., p.41.
70. *ibid.*, p.43.

71. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., pp.11-12.
72. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.13.
73. ibid., p.xxi. This means the figure of Jesus is a key element. Liberation theologians went back to the figure of Jesus because of the need for historical praxis (Christian practice) to be consistent with the Christian faith, because of the support that faith lends to praxis, and because of the difficulties with the historical situation and the situation in the Church. (J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.10).
74. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., pp.181-182; J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.351-352.
75. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., pp.2-3.
76. ibid., p.351.
77. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., p.182.
78. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.53.
79. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., p.227.
80. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., pp.3-4. See for example Jon Sobrino:
 "...I shall attempt to answer Jesus' question once more. I shall state the answer and attempt to show why it is the truth. The answer will be, as in the passage in Mark, that Jesus is the Christ. Most especially, I shall attempt to show that the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God- is none other than Jesus.
 To this purpose, I shall gather the fundamental data of the New Testament and the magisterium of the universal church, the data afforded by the reality of faith in Christ as found in the Christians of Latin America, theological reflection on this reality, and the pronouncements of the Latin American magisterium concerning Jesus Christ". (idem)
81. ibid., pp.16-17.
82. ibid., p.60.
83. ibid., p.61.
84. ibid., pp.56-57.
85. There are a number of reasons why traditional dogma is important (See J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*,

Op.cit., pp.311-312). First, dogma emerges from within Christian communities and is therefore significant for these communities. Second, it provides for a degree of uniformity in the profession of faith and is used as a pastoral tool. Third, the church needs to formulate its faith in this way. As Sobrino points out, liberation Christology accepts the divinity of Christ asserted in the New Testament and the creeds: "The christology of liberation, for its part, accepts these statements of the New Testament and the early councils on the divinity of Christ, even though it has not considered it its specific task to undertake an in-depth analysis of these statements".(J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.23). Further, "liberation christology accepts the conciliar christological formulations with loyalty and fidelity. Unlike some other theologies, it calls into question neither the content that the church has developed concerning Christ nor its authority to develop such content." (ibid., p.18).

86. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.19.
87. idem.
88. idem.
89. idem.
90. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.311.
91. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.18. There are, however, certain criteria for this process of interpretation - the proper hierarchization of dogma, and the historical analysis of dogma. (J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.319). Hierarchization posits that there are certain dogmas which are fundamental and central to the faith (eg. reality of God, Christ, Spirit, creation, redemption and so on), and others that are peripheral (eg. mariology, ecclesiology and ethical formulations), with their truth and meaning associated with the primary ones. Hierarchization relates life expressed in, for example, creation, redemption, and grace to the reality of God and human beings.(ibid., p.320). This helps to bring dogma into relation with what is most fundamental.(idem). In this way dogma is brought into the "hermeneutical circle of salvation history" and salvation in history.(idem). Dogmatic formulations are historically analyzed, so that one is able to distinguish the difference between what is said and how it is said. (idem). This includes determining their historical, social, and political context, so that the

original intention behind dogma and the definitive truth that it communicates is ascertained.

92. J. Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.322.

93. idem. "The point which I have just made in formal abstract terms can be illustrated in more concrete terms. Consider how language about God is used in Scripture. In Scripture we find two kinds of statements about God. Following the conventional terminology of Pannenberg and Schlink, I shall call them historical statements and doxological statements. The liberation of the Hebrews from Egypt can be taken as a historical statement about God. In such a statement we find, first of all, a historical event that is verifiable in principle. The Hebrews, who had lived as slaves in Egypt, went out of the land and settled down in Palestine. Historically speaking, we can say that they were liberated. This merely historical statement becomes a historical statement about God when the whole historical process of liberation is attributed to God's intervention.

In this kind of historical statement about God, we do not talk specifically about God in himself but about God in relation to some historical event. This is the structure of the historical creeds of the Old Testament. It is a structure that does not relate God with some abstract adjective describing his essence but rather with some action. Such statements say: God is the one who led us out of Egypt, who brought us to the promised land, etc.

Besides these historical statements we find others that claim to say something about God in himself. Their structure is quite different. In them God is described by some adjective. The Canticle of Moses and many of the Psalms might serve as our example here. After the Exodus Moses says: "God is my saviour; God is glorious in his wondrous deeds". The Psalms repeatedly tell us that Yahweh is just, merciful, and so forth. We apply the term "doxological statements" to such affirmations, which seek to describe the intrinsic reality of God. In historical statements we talk about God in relationship to some historical event; in doxological affirmations we claim to be talking about the very essence of God.

We can say much the same thing about the language of Christology. In it we find creeds that are structured as historical statements, and we also find creeds that are structured as doxological statements. The latter would include hymns, some aspects of the liturgy, and dogmas. Dogma is a doxological statement in which we seek to formulate the mysterious reality of God himself." (ibid., pp.322-323)

94. ibid., p.322-323.

95. ibid., p.324.

96. ibid., pp.324-325.

97. ibid., p.325.

98. *ibid.*, pp.327-328.
99. J Sobrino *Jesus in Latin America*, *op.cit.*, p.23.
100. *idem.*
101. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, *op.cit.*, p.329.
102. *ibid.*, pp.329ff.
103. *ibid.*, p.329.
104. *ibid.*, p.328.
105. *ibid.*, p.329.
106. *idem.*
107. *idem.*
108. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, *op.cit.*, p.9.
109. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, *op.cit.*, pp.330-331.
110. *ibid.*, p.331.
111. *idem.*
112. *idem.*
113. *ibid.*, pp.331-332.
114. *ibid.*, p.332.
115. *idem.*
116. *ibid.*, p.334.
117. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, *op.cit.*, p.19.
118. *ibid.*, pp.23-24; K Rahner and KH Weger, *Our Christian Faith: Answers for the Future*, New York, Crossroads, 1981, pp.93-94.
119. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, *op.cit.*, pp. 23-24.
120. As Sobrino points out, both the Jesus of the Gospels and the Jesus of experience are essential elements in liberation Christology: "*The first way...is by a speculative development of the virtualities, the implications, of the historical Jesus, issuing in a reformulation of his divine transcendency based on his personal history. The second and more novel way is by a*

praxic development of the impact of Jesus. This second way explains the divine transcendency of Christ from a point of departure in the act of faith unleashed by the person of Jesus in his historical reality. Both ways seem to be correct in themselves as approaches to Christ's divinity and historically akin to actual positions of the christology of liberation."(*ibid.*, p.24). The meaning of christological formulations is to be found through reflection based on insights into the historical Jesus. As Sobrino puts it:

"... systematic christology no longer begins methodologically with the christological dogmas, although it accepts them, and they furnish its reflections upon Christ with their radicalness and limits. The dogmatic formulas, whether in the strict sense of conciliar formulas or in the broad sense of biblical formulas expressing the reality of the Christ of faith, are not the point of departure of the new systematic christologies, but their point of arrival. The methodological return to the history of Jesus shows that only through recourse to this history can the doxological content of the formulations about Christ be invested with meaning." (*ibid.*, pp.56-57).

121. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., pp.189ff; J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., pp. 26-30.
122. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., 26-27.
123. *ibid.*, p.27.
124. *idem.*
125. *ibid.*, p.30.
126. *idem.*
127. *ibid.*, p.31.
128. *idem.*
129. *ibid.*, p.17.
130. *ibid.*, p.45.
131. *idem.*
132. *ibid.*, p.13.
133. *ibid.*, p.57. *"Hermeneutical interest has shifted from the understanding of the Christ of faith and his import for the present to the understanding of the historical Jesus, including a historical understanding of his resurrection. From a point of departure in the historical Jesus, "praxis" has yielded up the element needed to span the historical distance; hence we hear today of praxic, liberative, and even revolutionary hermeneutics. Whatever be the concrete achievements of these various hermeneutics, they all point to the discipleship of Jesus as the way to the attainment*

of and understanding of Jesus as the Christ; and at all events they are demanded by Jesus, the content of Christology".(idem). Liberation Christology therefore proposes a revised christological hermeneutics with its point of departure in the "historical Jesus". (ibid., pp. 64ff). He is "the hermeneutical principle that enables us to draw closer to the totality of Christ both in terms of knowledge and in terms of real-life praxis. It is there that we will find the unity of Christology and soteriology." (J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.9).

134. JP Miranda, *Being and the Messiah: The Message of St John*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1973, pp.53 & 56. Miranda writes: "we are dealing with the historical Jesus and not the Jesus of some heavenly world nor the Christ of the ecclesiastical Eucharist...History is made of the outcry of all the oppressed".(ibid).
135. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.352. It is the struggle to discover what makes his word immediately relevant: "To approach the man Jesus of Nazareth, in whom God was made flesh, to penetrate not only in his teaching, but also in his life, what it is that gives his word an immediate, concrete context is a task which more and more needs to be undertaken." (G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.226).
136. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.55f.
137. ibid., pp.55,59.
138. ibid., p.59. And he is the objective starting point: "Looking for an objective starting point means looking for that aspect of the total and totalizing reality of Christ that will better enable us to find access to the total Christ. Here I propose the historical Jesus as our starting point. By that I mean the person, proclamation, activity, attitudes, and death by crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth insofar as all of this can be gathered from the New Testament texts- with due respect for all the precaution imposed by critical exegesis." (J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., pp. 351-352).
139. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.65.
140. ibid., p.55. As Sobrino states: "The theologians of liberation and the Christian people they represent accept, in the reality of their faith and in theological reflection upon that faith, the totality of Jesus Christ. However, they do not see this totality as a cumulative one, consisting in the sum of the (historical) Jesus and the Christ (of faith), but as a totality constituted by two moments that complement each other *natura sua*. Doubtless Latin American theology has accorded a methodological primacy to the moment of the historical Jesus within the totality of Jesus Christ, the better to approach this

totality. Thereby it thinks to have found a better point of departure of the articulation of the totality of christological faith (where the reality and relevancy of its object are concerned), and the best route of access today (hermeneutically) to that object." (idem).

141. This approach has arisen naturally out of the experience of faith and the struggle for liberation, for this is the only perspective from which Christ may be understood in a relevant way by the people of Latin America: "In Latin America liberation theology has focused spontaneously on the historical Jesus for guidance and orientation. Since it arose out of the concrete experience and praxis of faith within a lived commitment to liberation, it soon realized that the universality of Christ amid those circumstances could only be grasped from the standpoint of the concrete Christ of history." (J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.10). This spontaneity is explained by the similarity between Jesus' experience of suffering and the experience of the Latin American people. (ibid., pp.12ff; L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., p.279).
142. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., pp.145-187; L Boff, Statement by Leonardo Boff in S Torres and J Eagleson, (eds), *Theology in the Americas*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1976, pp.294-298; J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., pp.1-16.; J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., 55f.
143. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.10.
144. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.55f.
145. ibid., pp.55-59.
146. ibid., p.56. Sobrino believes that this methodological return to the historical Jesus shows that "only through recourse to this history can the doxological content about Christ be invested with meaning." (ibid., pp. 56-57). And it is a way of avoiding abstract universalization of Christ. (ibid., p.57).
147. ibid., p.57.
148. idem.
149. idem.
150. idem. According to Sobrino there are a number of reasons for this approach. First, the total Christ which is the limit reality can be

understood only in the light of Jesus' path toward fulfilment as the Christ. (J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.352). Second, Jesus' own approach demonstrates that access to him comes through historical experience. i.e. through the praxis of faith. (idem). Third, faith which focuses on the "risen, fulfilled Christ" at the expense of the historical Jesus leads to "things going wrong" in the world. (idem).

151. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.58.

152. idem.

153. idem.

154. idem.

155. idem.

156. *ibid.*, p.59.

157. idem.

158. idem.

159. idem.

160. *ibid.*, p.70. Attention is given to the PRACTICE of Jesus. (*ibid.*, p.66). "Beginning with his practice does not mean logically deducing, inventing, or arbitrarily reconstructing his other elements. In order to discover those other elements, just as with his practice, one will have to seek out their basis in the gospel narratives. But all of those elements will be differently explained and organized depending on whether or not one prioritizes Jesus' practice." (*ibid.*, p.68). This is done both to understand the past and to provide a way forward in the present. (*ibid.*, p.66). Personal access to Jesus as he is present is sought through the Jesus of the gospels through the discovery of his practice and a recreation of it. (*ibid.*, p.68). It is in this recreation that faith in Christ becomes authentic. As Sobrino explains: "....Through that presentation of the historical Jesus and of what is historical in Jesus, Latin American christology seeks personal access to Jesus. It does so not primarily by presenting pieces of knowledge about him, so that human beings may decide what to do and how to relate to the Jesus thus known, but by presenting his practice in order to re-create it and thus have access to him." (idem).

161. *ibid.*, p.67.

162. *ibid.*, p.66

163. "Within this common practice, the text of the past will be 'understood' indeed; but this community in practice will not be at the service of the mere comprehension of the past. It will be at the service of the renewal of reality in the present. In this wise the current obsession with 'understanding' is deabsolutized in favour of a much more primary urgency: that of action, of doing. What must be, safeguarded in speaking of the historical Jesus is, before all else, the continuation of his practice." (idem).
164. *ibid.*, p.31.
165. *ibid.*, p.66.
166. *idem.*
167. *idem.*
168. *idem.*
169. JS Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics: Towards a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1987, p.75.
170. *idem.*
171. L & C Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, London, Search Press, 1987. p.32.
172. *idem.* In a theology of liberation all hermeneutics begin from the Christian commitment to eliminate poverty and oppression. In this situation exegesis of the Word of God is done from within the facts of human experience. Jose Miguez Bonino speaks therefore of their relying on two hermeneutical mediations: "One is the reading of the direction of the biblical text, particularly of the witness of the basic, germinal events of the faith. They seem, in fact to point, in their integrity and coherence, to certain directions, which such concepts as liberation, righteousness, shalom, the poor, love, help us to define. The scope of these mediating concepts must always be searched in the historical elucidation, the progressive historicization, and the mutual complementation of the biblical text....

....The other mediation..... is the determination of the historical conditions and possibilities of our present situation, as discovered through rational analysis. The correlation of the historical and conceptual mediations can offer us, not certainly a foolproof key to Christian obedience, but a significant framework for it." (JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, *op.cit.*, pp.103-104).
173. J M Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, *op.cit.*, pp. 103-104.

174. C Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1987, pp.132-136. As Boff puts it: "...strictly speaking, the word of God is not to be found in the letter of scripture. Nor is it in the spirit of the hearing or reading community. It is precisely between these two, in their mutual, dynamic relationship, in a back-and-forth that is never perfectly objectifiable."(ibid., p.136). Boff suggests that in the determination of the regula fidei, the meaning context within which scripture has its value is explicitly named: "The norm of faith is scripture read in the church". This inserts biblical faith in church tradition. This means that the sense can be apprehended only in relationship with the living spirit of the living community. "Scripture is the norma norman's of faith". But it is also in some manner the "norma normata". This is clear from its historico-literary genesis as well as its "canonization" by the authority of the church.(ibid., pp.135-136).
175. J S Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, op.cit., p.64.
176. ibid., p.65.
177. ibid., pp.68-69.
178. ibid., p.70.
179. H Assmann, *A Practical Theology of Liberation*, London, Search Press, 1975, p.104. Assmann rejects the classical hermeneutical procedure which begins exclusively from the biblical data and follows things with a contemporary application of it. This method does not take into account the praxis of liberation. It is a hermeneutical procedure without a hermeneutical key, without a revolutionary theory which comes in the language of liberation. (idem)
180. G Gutierrez, "Liberation Theology and Proclamation," Introduction to H Assmann, *A Practical Theology of Liberation*, , op.cit., pp.17-20.
181. J L Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1976, Ch.1.
182. ibid., p.13.
183. ibid., pp.94-95.
184. ibid., p.8-9.
185. ibid., p.9.

186. Couch argues that it is not we who initiate the hermeneutical task for it is already present in the Bible since it describes reality as it was experienced by the Old and New Testament communities and Jesus himself. Christianity is the continual interpretation of these facts and fundamental events recorded and interpreted in the Bible. She points out that our ideas and perceptions can never be free from prejudice, and are in fact themselves suspect because they are the product of our backgrounds. Hermeneutical suspicion is useful and could lead to a "hermeneutic of hope" - hope that a clear knowledge of historical praxis can lead to a more accurate reading of scripture. In turn this hermeneutic of hope leads to a "hermeneutic of engagement" or commitment. This helps one avoid reading into the text only our own conditioning so that the text is free to speak for itself. A hermeneutic of engagement leads to a commitment to overcome oppression, not by our own authority but by entering into God's purpose. In other words, a dialectical relationship exists between reality as it is described by the social sciences and reflection on the scriptures. A back and forth movement occurs from the reading of reality to the reading of scripture. (BM Couch, "Statement by Beatriz Melano Couch", in S Torres and J Eagleson, (eds), *Theology in the Americas*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1976, p.306).
187. C Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, op.cit., p.143. He is of the view that such an approach subjects the gospel more readily to manipulation, tends to mystify the political, and holds the inherent danger of improvisation or positivism.(idem).
188. idem.
189. idem.
190. idem.
191. ibid., p.144.
192. idem. But this approach has its problems. For example, Jesus' response to the politics of his day seems ambiguous.(idem). If Jesus can be shown to have been a Zealot then Christians may be involved in a revolutionary process, and if he was a pacifist then such involvement is not justified. (idem). Thus we have a model based on parallelism or correspondence of terms.(idem). The problem is that this approach does not really take full account of the historical dimension, rather it is directed towards political results.

(ibid., pp. 144-5). Boff suggests that this approach raises a number of questions. For example, does it give due consideration to the special character of Jesus' historical destiny, the historical conditions that have influenced him, the extent to which Jesus' own consciousness was politicized, and is there such a similarity between his political context and the present context (Latin America), and does it not view Jesus in a mythical and ahistorical way. (ibid., p. 145). Further, it seems to assume that Jesus provides a model to be copied in every respect. (ibid., p. 146). Should it be that if Jesus was a revolutionary all Christians may be revolutionaries too, and that if he was pacifist all Christians should abstain from violence? (idem). If Jesus was not at all interested in politics, should Christians also be uninvolved?

193. ibid., p. 146.
194. idem. His uneasiness with this is clear: "*Will it be necessary to prescribe a precise relationship between such and such a pericope from the gospels and such and such a political fact of our history, or again a particular event and such and such a political text? Will such a one-for-one correspondence be the sine qua non of the functioning of the proportionality?*" (idem).
195. ibid., pp. 146ff.
196. ibid., pp. 146-7.
197. ibid., pp. 147-8.
198. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p. 74.
199. ibid., p. 75.
200. C Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, op.cit., p. 147.
201. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p. 73. After the resurrection theological reflection gave rise to the formulation that "Jesus is the Son of God". (J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p. 264). This reflection on the person of Jesus took two forms. On the one hand it used honorific titles to refer to Jesus. On the other hand it sought to demythologize Jesus' life and to explore the implication of Jesus' person for its own time. This became the main focus of early Christology. (ibid., p. 266).
202. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p. 20.
203. ibid., p. 21.

204. *ibid.*, pp.22-23.
205. *ibid.*, p.77.
206. *idem.*
207. "The titles and events under examination already embody a later process of theologizing the Jesus event. Christologically they come after Jesus himself, introducing us to an already developed Christology".(J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.5). Honorific titles were formulated through movement from the universal to the particular.(*ibid.*,p.270). Their experiences of the Risen Christ influenced the way the early Christian community understood Jesus. At the same time there was movement from the particular to the universal. (*idem*). Knowledge of Jesus helped to explain the uniqueness of Christ. In this dual movement the proclaimer became the proclaimed, "Jesus became Christ" (God) , and was understood in relationship to God. (*ibid.*, p.270-271).
208. *ibid.*, p.5.
209. *ibid.*, pp.5-6.
210. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.74.
211. C Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, op.cit., p. 148.
212. *ibid.*, p.149.
213. *ibid.*, p.152.
214. *ibid.*, p.149.
215. *ibid.*, p.152.
216. *ibid.*, p.149. In this approach scripture offers "something like orientations, models, types, directives, principles, inspirations, so that we are able to make our own judgement on what is the "mind of Christ" or "according to the Spirit" in our own situations. What they offer is not "what" but "how", "a manner, a style, a spirit." (*idem*).
217. *ibid.*, p. 150.
218. *ibid.*, p. 152.
219. *idem.* In this approach the real practice of the community has priority over theory.(*ibid.*, p.150). In other words it is important to know what the Spirit says now than to know what it

said in the past.(ibid., p.151). And yet this can only be done by recourse to scripture. (idem). The Spirit comes from the direction of Christian practice and not principally from theological research.(idem). Salvation operates in history.(idem) The priority of practice is a practical priority.(idem). Revelation is an immediate experience because the risen Christ is present, and because the gospel is eternal word. (idem). Theologians must therefore work in close relationship with their own local community, and live its concrete life, and fashion its theory. (ibid., pp.151-2).

220. The gospels are not historical records, but announcement and preaching where the facts and sayings of the Scriptures and the midrash commentaries are subservient to the truth of faith the evangelists wanted to proclaim.(L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., pp.174-175). At the time of the New Testament the haggadah Midrash was widely used as a literary form.(ibid., pp.174-175). This form, according to Boff:

"takes a scriptural fact or saying and fashions it and embellishes it with the intention of underlining some truth of faith and proclaiming it in an unequivocal form."(ibid., p.175).

This is what happened with the infancy story. So the real facts are expressed in theological form. The message is hidden in this form and we need to unravel and proclaim it. For Boff the message is that: *"...this fragile child was not a 'nobody', an unimportant person, but God himself in human condition; that God so loved matter that he assumed it, and so loved human beings that he became one of us in order to liberate us; that God became human in order to divinise us."* (idem).

The fundamental message of the infancy account is that:

"With Jesus the evolutionary psycho-social process attained zenith, decisive for the remainder of the march to God, because in Jesus the end has already occurred and the goal has already been achieved within time."(idem).

"He is in the midst of us, Emmanuel, God-with us; 'today a liberator has been born to you, he is Christ the Lord'". (ibid., p.175-176).

To attempt to safeguard the historicity of the infancy accounts is to lose the message inspired by Luke and Matthew. Myth, analogy and symbols form the core of religious language and we need to use figurative language when dealing with the Absolute.(ibid., p.176). Such language provides for the reality the Bible seeks to reveal: *"Myths and stories, when understood and accepted as such by*

reason, do not alienate us, nor ensnare us in magic, nor sentimentalize us; rather they make us plunge into the depths of a reality where we begin to perceive the meaning of innocence and reconciliation, to perceive the divine and human transparency in the most banal things as well as the meaning of life. All this can be perceived in the birth of the divine child." (ibid., p.177).

221. JS Croatto, *Exodus: A Hermeneutics of Freedom*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1981, p.2.
222. ibid., p.3.
223. L Boff, "Images of Christ in Brazilian Liberal Christianity", in JM Bonino, (ed), *Faces of Jesus: Latin American Christologies*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1984, pp. 11-13. "Classic theology affirms an archaeological concept of a revelation occurring in the past and closing with the death of the last apostle, liberal theology emphasizes the ongoing character of the fact of revelation. Thus as the whole history is the history at once of salvation and perdition, so also it is the revelation at once of God and of the human being." (Ibid.pp.11-12)
224. ibid., p.12.
225. idem.
226. idem.
227. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., pp. 39-40.
228. ibid., p.40.
229. JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit., p.93.
230. ibid., p.101.
231. idem.
232. idem.
233. ibid., pp.101-102.
234. JS Croatto, *Exodus: Hermeneutics of Freedom*, op.cit., pp. 1-2. The frame of reference of the text is the "world of text", since the original authors are not present and the readers are not the people to whom the words were originally addressed. This "distantiation" between the author of the text and its interpreter leaves the text open to a new appropriation of its meaning from the point of view of the interpreter. The "world of text" is for us in front of the text" (openness) and not "behind it" (author). (ibid.,

pp. 1-3.

235. *ibid.*, p.3.

236. *idem.* This means that one is interested in more than seeking simply to bridge the gap between the biblical past and the present believer so as to strike a mutual relationship with the past. (JS Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics in the Theology of Liberation*, in V Fabella and S Torres, (eds), *Irruption of the Third World : Challenge to Theology*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1983, pp.140-141). Hermeneutics as defined in liberation theology is not synonymous with "interpretation". To define it as merely "interpretation" does not convey the specific content of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics as defined in the Bultmannian sense or in the sense of the "new hermeneutics" given by Fuchs or Ebeling who seek continuity between the past history and present of the believer in a common horizon of understanding in which the past and the believer strike a mutual relationship in spite of the distance between the two is regarded as insufficient for the purpose. In the reading of the Bible liberation theology approaches it in the sense of preunderstanding and this includes "speech-event" and "word-event" as it attempts to do justice to the "objective conditions of the Bible as language". But this in itself is also insufficient. (*ibid.*, p. 142) A biblical text has its point of departure in a praxis, a meaningful event or a world view. This experiential point is called an "event". This "event" may be an occurrence in the experience of the people such as a state of oppression, a process of liberation or a salvific event. (*ibid.*, p.150).

237. Thus the event becomes "word" insofar as its meaning is interpreted and expressed. In the case of the Bible before it was "God's word" it was God's event. The salvific event is thus interpreted in a way that illuminates the presence of God in a real way. "It is an exploration of its significate as message". In this way it places emphasis on language by gathering the event-meaning into the text-meaning and the text offers possibilities for new interpretations. (JS Croatto, "Biblical Hermeneutics in the Theology of Liberation", in V Fabella and S Torres, (eds), *Irruption of the Third World*, *op.cit.*, pp. 150-152).

238. It is both paradigmatic and normative and as such it does not exclude a rereading in the light of new events. (*ibid.*, pp. 162-163). Since God is

revealed not only through the transmitted word but also in the event itself. (idem) Therefore an event can produce meaning and this meaning can be manifest in other events aligned with the first. The first event is seen as "originary" and is understood as the "founding" event. But is seen as a "founding" event only at a distance - in the light of its projections in new events. There is a delay of conferral of meaning. Taken into a "word" as a significant event the event manifests a "meaning surplus" which was not visible at the time of the physical event. (JS Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, op.cit., p.37). The redaction of the biblical accounts have the hermeneutic advantage of great distance from the events, and the distance has enriched them with meaning. Once again the hermeneutic role of distantiating is seen as not being restricted to texts but that which takes place in respect to understanding historical events. (ibid., pp.37-38). An "originary event" broadens its meaning in readings from a distance as it incorporates new events. For example, the crossing of the Jordan is "retrojected" to the crossing of the sea in the exodus. The exodus overflows its signification onto the occupation of the promised land. The symbol of the crossing of the waters unites the events of the originary liberation and present occupation of the land. This new hermeneutical circularity takes place in the first word that springs up in the event regardless of whether it is present in a chronicle, epic, poem or hymn. (ibid., p.38) In the Bible the "memory" of the event of deliverance from Egypt is re-presented in every age. But it is not a repetition of the meaning of the originary exodus. Its a scanning of its "reservoir of meaning." The events that influences the formation of a people are not exhausted in the first narration. They "enlarge" in meaning as they project into the life of that people. "But in order to express this "meaning surplus" the "word" of the event "redimensions" and reworks the event." which is the expression of meaning as God's design and activity. (idem). Croatto argues that if the exodus occurred as it is related to have occurred we would have a documentary and not an interpretation - a happening without theological significance. The Hebrews lived the liberation experience as a "design" in continuous cause of realization. (ibid., pp.38-39). "It felt the need to 'refer' to this event, to 'go back' to it, in order to recover its hope when it fell into the clutches of an oppressor, or in order to deepen its faith - in- gratitude when it celebrated new liberative situations." (ibid., p.39).

"The original exodus reveals a deeper dimension of signification when the Israelites recall it as a liberative undertaking in new situations of oppression or captivity. The inexhaustibility of its inspiration and meaning is apparent in the readings that the Hebrew people, and later the Christian community, and today the theology of liberation, make of it."(idem). In the same way people today look to their own foundational events (deeds of liberation) as inspiration and meaning for their socio-historical praxis when there is a consciousness for the release from domination.(idem).

239. JS Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, op.cit., p.40.
240. JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, op.cit., p.89.
241. *ibid.*, p.102. Critical study of the text provides access to the original and originating event of the faith, and this in turn provides the basis for their claim and makes their message relevant today: "we must insist that the penetration of the original historicity of the biblical events is basic for its present demand and efficacy."(idem).
242. C Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, op.cit.,p.137; See also Rene Marle, *Introduction to Hermeneutics*, New York, Herder and Herder, 1972, p.72, "Now word is no longer world to be seen but eyes to see, no longer landscape but gaze, no longer thing but light".(C Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, op.cit., p.137). The theory that takes account of this reading is called "theology". If we are dealing with politics then we are in the presence of the theology of the political.(*ibid.*,p.138.)
243. C Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, op.cit., p.138.
244. *ibid.*, p.137.
The written text is the channel of a meaning through a succession of historical movements. This is the case with Christian scriptures. The Bible does not enjoy such an important place in the eyes of believers in its status as a literary text. It does so by the meaning it simultaneously conceals and reveals. It invests in faith because faith has already been invested in it. And the circle returns.(idem)
245. *ibid.*, p.137.
246. *idem.*
247. JS Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, op.cit., p.63.
248. *idem.*

249. *ibid.*, p.64. This understanding and rereading of the Bible on the part of the poor is regarded as "totalizing reading of the Bible through its axes of meaning" which it offers in its condition as single text, or extended account.(idem). It is because the Bible is the book of the poor that it can be reread in an adequate and relevant way by the poor. (JS Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics in the Theology of Liberation*, in V Fabella and S Torres, (eds), *Irruption of the Third World*, op.cit., p.156-157). It is their book and its message concerns them in a special way, something they discover in their reading of it.(idem). The poor are the people who seek a relevant word since the Bible has a relevant word for them because it is concerned about them (*ibid.*, pp.156-157).
250. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.172. n.70.
251. JS Croatto, "Biblical Hermeneutics in the Theology of Liberation", in V Fabella and S Torres, (eds), *Irruption of the Third World*, op.cit., pp.159.
252. JS Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, op.cit., p.51.
253. *idem.* This is visible in the Old Testament where the ideology of the south - of Judah and Jerusalem, where the governing classes resided is set in high relief. This situation has been prolonged through the ages in the process of teaching and theological transmission.(idem).
254. JS Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics in the Theology of Liberation*, in V Fabella and S Torres, (eds), *Irruption of the Third World*. op.cit., p.155.
255. In that context the saviour is identified with the liberator God. When the Israelites saw the power of God over Pharaoh they believed in God and in his servant Moses. (Exod. 14:30-31) This believing arose out of the experience of liberation. (JS Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, op.cit., p.52.)
256. *idem.* The Jewish institutions, festivals, the prophetic critique of the breaches of the covenant, the heralding of a new order, the messianic hope and Jesus' proclamation recall and retrieve the memory of the liberative content of the exodus.(idem).

257. *ibid.*, p.53 This relates to the passage from Luke 4:16-30 where Jesus rereads as "fulfilled" in himself the text from Isaiah 61:1-2 on the proclamation of the good news to the poor, delivery of captives, sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed (Luke 4:18). The account closes with another reference to the "good news" to the poor and the final words "...Because this is why I was sent" (vs 43) states clearly Jesus' option for the poor. (*idem*). The whole of the Christian kerygma can be interpreted along different lines by the New Testament accounts precisely in virtue of its reservoir of meaning as event and text that culminates in the gospels. (*idem*). The various approaches are expressions of the power of hope for liberation settled firmly in the consciousness of the people of the Bible: *"Even with its contextual transfer, the liberation message permeates the pages of the New Testament. And the theology of the exodus - sometimes, to be sure, at a distance - echoes once again."* (*idem*)
258. *ibid.*, p.60.
259. *idem*.
260. *ibid.*, p.62.
261. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, *op.cit.*, pp.76,165; L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, *op.cit.*, p.264-268; G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*, p.175.
262. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*, p.13.
263. JS Croatto, "Biblical Hermeneutics in the Theology of Liberation", in V Fabella and S Torres, (eds), *Irruption of the Third World*, *op.cit.*, p.167.
264. JS Croato, *Exodus: Hermeneutics of Freedom*, *op.cit.*, p.12.
265. *ibid.*, p.12-13. This decisive event in the creation of Israel is represented in creational language. (11 Isaiah 44:21-24; 51:9-11.)
266. *ibid.*, p.27. As Fierro has pointed out that liberation theologians stress this historical aspect of the Exodus event: *"They forcefully underline its historical reality, its value as a model for Christian praxis, and its importance for the possibility of talking about God in terms of a liberation theology. Thus they formulate an Exodus theology in the strict sense of that term. The departure from Egypt is much more than a mere image designed to enrich theological representations;*

it becomes the primeval and fundamental happening of the history of the divine revelation itself. The Exodus comes to constitute the prototype of divine revelation, the privileged moment in which God once manifested himself and now continues to do the same. At the same time the Exodus of history did not signify a withdrawal from socially assigned roles. It was a liberative revolution in the strict sense, a socially subversive act comparable to slave rebellions or other struggles of oppressed peoples against imperialism. The significance of the act for theologians lies in the fact that it was carried out under the inspiration of faith and interpreted as the portentous result of a divine revelation; even more importantly, it brought into existence a nation of people, the Israelites, who thereby began to serve as the bearer of God's promises." (A Fierro, *The Militant Gospel*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1977, pp.141-142).

267. The Exodus account displays a faith in God who acted to liberate his people. (JS Croato, *Exodus*, op.cit., p.27).
268. JP Miranda, *Marx and The Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1974, p.81. This can be seen in Hosea and Isaiah (Hosea 13:14; Isaiah 45:21). The message of Deutero-Isaiah concerns Yahweh's response to the cry of the oppressed (Isaiah 40:27; cf Psalm 140:13). (ibid., pp.81-83).
269. JS Croato, *Exodus: Hermeneutics of Freedom*, op.cit., p.28.
270. ibid., p.29.
271. JP Miranda, *Marx and The Bible*, op.cit., p.77.
272. idem.
273. ibid., pp.77-78.
274. ibid., p.78. According to Miranda God's concern and the content of his response was for justice for the oppressed: "He was the only one whose revelatory intervention in human history had consisted in an immense act of justice." (ibid., p.84). The biblical view of divine intervention is the realization of justice: "For the Bible, not just any good and praiseworthy event, but rather the realization of justice is the intervention of Yahweh. The God of the Bible has a plan; he has resolved to change our world into a world of justice. In history, within history, there is an eschaton, an ultimatum, toward which all the partial realizations of justice are directed." (ibid., p.87). According to Miranda Hosea saw Yahweh as Saviour, an assertion based on the liberation from Egypt. Deutero-Isaiah sees Yahweh's justice in the freeing of the people from subjugation in Babylon, an act which identifies Yahweh with the poor and

oppressed. (ibid., pp.85-87). For Jeremiah to know Yahweh is to know justice since Yahweh is the one who achieves compassion, right and justice in the earth (Jer. 9:23).(ibid., p.87). The message of Deutero-Isaiah refers to the liberation of Israel by Cyrus and looks toward the realization of justice for the whole world (See Isaiah 42:1,6; 45:20-22; 49:6; 51:4-8; 54:2-3; 55:5).(ibid., pp.87-88). According to Miranda Moses' ability to "see" the oppression of his fellows in Egypt represents God's awareness of his people's plight: "This is the same 'seeing' which in the fundamental revelation of the Bible (Exodus 3:7-9) is the reason for the intervention of Yahweh in human history: "I have seen the affliction....Yes, I have seen the oppression."(ibid., p.97). The theme of justice unites the accounts about Moses. Because of his eagerness for justice Moses fled Egypt, and he met Jethro. The purpose of Yahweh was to prepare Moses for his task. (ibid., p.98).

275. ibid., pp.80-81.
276. ibid., p.81.
277. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p. 153-154.
278. ibid., p.154.
279. idem.
280. With Von Rad, Miranda points out that Genesis is proleptically related to the Exodus. (JP Miranda, *Marx and The Bible*, op.cit., p.78). God changed his name at that moment. (Exod 6:3): "Say this to the sons of Israel 'I am Yahweh and therefore I will free you of the burdens which the Egyptians lay on you. I will release you from slavery to them, and with raised arm and my great justices I will deliver you. I will adopt you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am Yahweh your God, he who has freed you from the Egyptians burdens'" (Exod 6:6-7).(ibid., p.79).
281. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.155.
282. idem.
283. idem.
284. idem.
285. ibid., p.157.
286. A Fierro, *The Militant Gospel*, op.cit., p. 142-143.

287. G Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, London, SCM, 1983. p.32.
288. JS Croato, *Exodus: Hermeneutics of Freedom*, op.cit., p.13.
289. ibid., p.15.
290. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.154.
291. idem.
292. G Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, op.cit., p.32.
293. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.158.
294. idem.
295. idem.
296. idem.
297. ibid., pp.153-154.
298. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.106. He says that the significance of this passage in Luke is indicated by the fact that Luke places this passage at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, changing the sequence of Mark (where it follows later, 8:22-9:9), and by its contents.(idem).
299. ibid., pp.106-7.
300. ibid., p. 107.
301. idem.
302. idem.
303. idem.
304. idem.
305. idem.
306. idem. He omits from Isaiah 61 the phrase "to bind up the broken-hearted" , and uses instead "set free those who have been crushed" from Isaiah 58:6; he also omits "a day of the vengeance of our God" from Isa 61:2 and ends with the proclamation of the year of God's favour. (idem).

307. Sobrino points out that the categories of people mentioned - blind, lame, lepers and the like - understood within the worldview of that time are those that were as good as dead.(idem).
308. idem.
309. JS Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, op.cit., p. 53.
310. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., p.171.
311. ibid., p.172.
312. ibid., pp.171-172.
313. The last liberator (Jesus) is like the first (Moses). Matthew's gospel shows the parallel between the infancy of Jesus and that of Moses and presents Jesus as the new Moses(ibid., p.173). "In New Testament times people believed that the Messiah-Liberator of the last days would also be a new Moses, performing signs and miracles just like Moses. They would even say that the last liberator (the Messiah) is like unto the first (Moses)"(idem). The Jewish Midrash also points to the parallels between the birth of Jesus and the birth of Moses.(idem). Pharaoh is notified by the magi of the birth of the liberator (Moses); Herod is informed by the magi of the birth of the final liberator (Jesus); Pharaoh and the people of Egypt are terrified; Herod and the people of Jerusalem are perturbed (Matthew 2:3). Both Pharaoh and Herod decide to kill innocent children. Both Moses and Jesus escape the slaughter. Moses' father learns in a dream that his son (Moses) is to be a future saviour. Joseph learns in a dream that Jesus will be saviour (Matthew 1:21). After the death of Pharaoh Moses goes back to Egypt (Exodus 4:19-23). Joseph is told to take Jesus and return to Israel (Matthew 2:2; 19-21). Joseph returns with Mary and Jesus. (idem). The destiny of Jesus (the last liberator) repeats the destiny of Moses (the first liberator).(ibid., pp.173-174).
314. ibid., p.174.
315. JS Croatto, *Exodus: Hermeneutics of Freedom*, op.cit., p.48. Jesus is anointed at his baptism and his given the vocation of the Servant (Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-13; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12).(idem). According to Jewish expectations the Messiah was the genuine liberator of the people. Peter recognized him in the person of Jesus. (Mt 8:29) The figure of the triumphant Son of Man (cf Mark 14:62; Dan 7:13) would be manifested in the end

- through the sign of the cross. (ibid., p.49).
316. ibid., p.49.
317. ibid., p.51.
318. idem.
319. ibid., p.52.
320. ibid., p.54-55. Jesus accepts her as a person, regardless of her sin. The conversation develops and the woman manifests herself in her deepest being. Jesus pinpoints her sin without condemning her. She discovers in Jesus the Christ. She says " I know that the Messiah is coming." (John 4:25ff). She then spreads the news so that others may believe.(ibid., pp. 54-55)
321. ibid., p.62.
322. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., 41-48, 60 ; J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., pp.81ff.
323. It is the kingdom of God that provides the historical datum relevant to Jesus' life and gives meaning to his work. Thus the historical Jesus is known only through the notion of the kingdom of God and the meaning of the latter is revealed only through Jesus of Nazareth. (J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.41). Thus the figure of Jesus may be grasped when viewed in relation to the kingdom.(ibid., p.48).
324. ibid., p.60.
325. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., p.63. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.41.
326. JL Segundo, *Jesus of Nazareth Yesterday and Today*, Vol 11, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1985, p.105.
327. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.46.
328. ibid., p.44.
329. idem.
330. ibid., p.45. The arrival of the kingdom results in the transformation of an oppressive situation and shows God's work is one of liberation.(ibid.,

p.47). "The freedom that Jesus preaches and effects in practice cannot help but take the form of liberation".(idem).

- 331. *ibid.*, p.46.
- 332. *ibid.*, p.50.
- 333. *ibid.*, p.45.
- 334. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, *op.cit.*, p.13.
- 335. *idem.*
- 336. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, *op.cit.*, pp.46-47.
- 337. *ibid.*, p.47.
- 338. *ibid.*, pp.47-48. Jesus pointed to the kingdom through the signs that he gave, and situations of oppression help one to understand these signs: "Both his miracles and his forgiveness of sins are primarily signs of the arrival of the kingdom of God. They are signs of liberation, and only in that context can they help to shed light on the person of Jesus."(*ibid.*, p.48).
- 339. JL Segundo, *Jesus of Nazareth Yesterday and Today*, Vol 11, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*, *op.cit.*, p.144.
- 340. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, *op.cit.*, p.47.
- 341. JP Miranda, *Marx and The Bible*, *op.cit.*, p.104-105.
- 342. *ibid.*, p.206.
- 343. JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, *op.cit.*, p.141.
- 344. *ibid.*, p.142.
- 345. *idem.*
- 346. *idem.*
- 347. JP Miranda, *Marx and The Bible*, *op.cit.*, pp.206-207.
- 348. *ibid.*, pp.207-208.
- 349. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, *op.cit.*, p.75.

350. JL Segundo, *Jesus of Nazareth Yesterday and Today*, Vol 11, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*, op.cit., p.40.
351. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., p.79.
352. L Boff, "Salvation in Jesus Christ and the Process of Liberation", in *Concilium*, No. 6, Vol 10, Part 11, 1974, p.80.
353. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., pp.47-48.
354. JL Segundo, *Jesus of Nazareth Yesterday and Today*, Vol 11, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*, op.cit., p.90.
355. idem.
356. idem.
357. ibid., p.91.
358. ibid., p.107.
359. idem.
360. ibid., p.114.
361. idem.
362. ibid., p.140.
363. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.259.
364. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., pp.150.
365. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.259.
366. idem.
367. idem.
368. ibid., p.269.
369. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., pp.150;154.
370. ibid., p.199.
371. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., pp.148ff.
372. ibid., p.149.

373. idem.
374. idem.
375. idem.
376. ibid., p.150.
377. idem.
378. idem.
379. ibid., pp.150-151.
380. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, op.cit., p.254.
381. ibid., pp.252-253.
382. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p. 151.
383. idem.
384. ibid., p.152.
385. ibid., p.153.
386. idem.
387. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., p.290.
388. idem.
389. ibid., p.291.
390. idem.
391. idem.
392. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., pp.14-15
393. J Alfaro, "Foreword" in J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p.xii.
394. Raul Vidales, "Methodological Issues in Liberation Theology", in R Gibellini, (ed), *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, London, SCM, 1975, p.57.
395. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, op.cit., pp.290-291.
396. J.Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., pp.60-61.

397. *ibid.*, p.61.
398. *idem.*
399. *ibid.*, p.158.
400. *ibid.*, p.61.
401. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*,
op.cit., pp. 79-108.
402. *ibid.*, p.60.
403. *ibid.*, pp. 86-92.
404. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, *op.cit.*, pp.9-10.
405. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, *op.cit.*, p.16.
406. *idem.*
407. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, *op.cit.*, p.229.
408. *ibid.*, p.264.
409. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, *op.cit.*, p.53.
410. J Alfaro, "Foreword" in J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, *op.cit.*, p.xii.
411. J.Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, *op.cit.*, p.28.
412. *idem.*
413. *ibid.*, p.139.
414. *ibid.*, p.71.
415. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*,
p.203.
416. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*,
op.cit., p.50.
417. *idem.*
418. *idem.*
419. *ibid.*, p.59.
420. JL Segundo, *Jesus of Nazareth Yesterday and Today*, Vol 111, *The Humanist Christology of Paul*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1986, pp.123-124.
421. J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*,
op.cit., p.227.

422. *ibid.*, p.59.
423. JL Segundo, *Jesus of Nazareth Yesterday and Today*, Vol 111, *The Humanist Christology of Paul*, *op.cit.*, p.124.
424. *ibid.*, p.124-125.
425. *ibid.*, p.133.
426. JM Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age*, *op.cit.*, p.142.
427. *ibid.*, p.150.
428. *ibid.*, pp.150-151 "*The Christian faith provides today both a stimulus and a challenge for revolutionary action when it encourages us to look and work for historical realizations in the direction of the Kingdom in terms of justice, solidarity, the real possibility for men to assume responsibility, access of all men to the creation which God has given to man, freedom to create a human community through work and love, space to worship and play.*" (*ibid.*, p.152).
429. *ibid.*, p.151.
430. *ibid.*, p.152.
431. G Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, *op.cit.*, p.32.
432. *idem.*
433. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*, p.49.
434. *idem.*
435. L Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, *op. cit.*, pp 266-268.
436. *ibid.*, p.270.
437. *ibid.*, p.271.
438. *idem.*
439. G Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*, p.178.

CHAPTER FOUR

BLACK CHRISTOLOGY

Black Theology, like Latin American liberation theology, arose out of a situation of struggle for liberation from political oppression.⁽¹⁾ In this respect it too is a theology of engagement and displays the basic characteristics of a "liberation theology". The history and content of South African Black Theology is well documented elsewhere.⁽²⁾ Here the attempt is made to outline what one may consider to be Black Theology's basic approach to Christology with a view to addressing some of the questions raised at the beginning of this thesis. Since its approach to Christology is strongly influenced by its approach to theology as a whole it is necessary to begin with a review of those aspects of Black Theology that have a fundamental influence on Black Christology.

4.1. PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

First, the ontological and epistemological approaches of this theology are similar to those of Latin American liberation theology. Both theologies assume ontological unity of history and an epistemological approach that asserts the integration of theory and praxis. Black Theology stresses the historical nature

of divine activity. This God who acts in Jesus, acts in history and not outside history, and it is through such action that God is known:

"In fact, there is no revelation of God without history. The two are inseparable".⁽³⁾

And this divine activity is liberating activity that affects the whole of history:

"this liberating activity of God is the context within which the question about his acts in history and his will is to be asked and understood. The reality of God's acts in the world can only be understood on the grounds of his revelation, on the grounds of the testimony about Him in the Old and New Testaments. Where his liberating deeds are manifested, is not only within the bosom of the Church but in universal history."⁽⁴⁾

The net result is the renewal of history:

"this divine action is not static, but dynamic. It does not annul human history and responsibility but rather enhances it, giving it a new dimension and a new meaning."⁽⁵⁾

Black theologians find support for this view in the biblical approach to life, and they believe that there is congruence between this and the African world view. Boesak for example argues this position very strongly. He says that Black Theology

"seeks to take seriously the biblical emphasis on the wholeness of life which has always had its counterpart in the African heritage, trying to transform the departmentalized theology blacks have inherited from the Western world into a biblical, holistic theology. It is part of the black struggle toward liberation from religious, economic, psychological and cultural dependency."
(⁶)

This is why black people reject any attempt to force a separation between salvation and the struggle for black liberation, and resist the temptation to compartmentalize human life.(⁷)

Black theologians insist that the biblical message should be interpreted in a way that earths it in reality. Like Latin American theologians they wish to guard against excessive spiritualization.(⁸) This is why they emphasize the historical nature of salvation:

"the...emphasis on the social reality of salvation in Black theology of liberation should be understood as a necessary corrective to an undue overemphasis on the spiritual nature of human life at the expense of its physical dimension."(⁹)

This integration of history and faith precludes the separation of the "spiritual" and "material" reality, the separation of faith and life, gospel and historical struggles for liberation.(¹⁰) It is this perspective of reality that provides the philosophical framework for Black Theology.

A corresponding epistemology posits an integral relation between faith and praxis, truth and action, and knowledge and transformation. Faith is the encounter with God in history:

"Faith is the divine human encounter in the historical situation of oppression, wherein the enslaved community recognizes that its deliverance from bondage is the Divine himself at work in history".⁽¹¹⁾

This approach provides the basis for a liberative epistemology, so that the crosses of the oppressed become the way to liberation, and their own situation serves as the entry point to reflection on the cross of Christ, which is both the goal and starting point of the way to liberation.⁽¹²⁾ And faith is manifested in action:

"Theology which is reflection upon action transforming the world, is also faith active in the world. We understand faith not just as a confession, but as an act of trust in and commitment to God and to humanity. Faith is, in the words of Hugo Assmann, the action of love within history."⁽¹³⁾

Truth about God and life is not a purely intellectual datum but integrally related to experience:⁽¹⁴⁾

"There is no truth for and about black people that does not emerge out of the context of their experience. Truth in this sense is black truth, a truth disclosed in the history and culture of black people".⁽¹⁵⁾

It is a practical question and is associated with action.⁽¹⁶⁾ To know the truth is to act in a liberated and liberative way:

"If we cannot recognize the truth, then it cannot liberate us from untruth. To know the truth is to appropriate it, for it is not mainly reflection and theory. Truth is divine action entering into our lives and creating the human action of liberation. Truth enables us to dance and live to the rhythm of freedom in our lives as we struggle to be who we are."
(¹⁷)

One may not, in this view, speak of "faith" without "praxis" and "truth" or "knowledge" without "action" and "transformation".

This leads to a christological methodology that "presupposes an engagement in a praxis of liberation".⁽¹⁸⁾ As Mofokeng argues:

"...you cannot theologically reflect on the cross of Jesus if and when you are not carrying the cross, i.e. when suffering and dying in which you are also a victim are the issues at that particular time." (¹⁹)

The following of Jesus is a prerequisite for understanding him.⁽²⁰⁾ On the other hand divine involvement through Jesus in the struggle for liberation renders the christological question significant and meaningful:

"It is in the context of the history which God shares with us in the struggle for liberation that the Christological question acquires significance. The movement of God's liberating activity is revealed in Jesus Christ".⁽²¹⁾

The result is the reformulation of Christology on the basis of a praxis which provides the framework for reflection and determines its direction:

"This means that Black Theology unfolds along with the unfolding praxis of liberation and makes a selection of themes that occupy its task of reflection within the frame-work of this praxis of liberation."⁽²²⁾

It is this concern with praxis that leads black theologians to engage in social analysis of the black situation. Here the category of "blackness" plays a crucial role. In this, black christology differs markedly from Latin American liberation christology. The latter has only recently addressed the question of racial oppression.

"Blackness" is a notion promoted by the Black Consciousness Movement which first espoused the philosophy of black consciousness in South Africa. Black Consciousness is essentially "the awareness of black people that their humanity is constituted in their blackness".⁽²³⁾ It served to strengthen black self-view and provide a strong ideological dimension to the black struggle for liberation from white

oppression. Basic to this consciousness is black self-definition, affirmation and assertion, the rejection of white value systems and the strengthening of black ones, and the awareness and realization of power in self and in black solidarity.⁽²⁴⁾

People who are "conscious" realize that the strongest weapon that the oppressor can have is the mind of the oppressed.⁽²⁵⁾ Black people are thus encouraged to rid themselves of a subservient mentality, to affirm themselves, and to realize they have power.⁽²⁶⁾ It is therefore an attitude of mind, a consciousness.⁽²⁷⁾ It is the search for humanity, for true identity, self awareness and self esteem, the rejection of a dehumanizing, oppressive view of blacks that is based on white stereo-types and morals.⁽²⁸⁾ Blacks begin to see themselves as fully human, less dependent, feel free to be themselves, and consequently are able to refuse to submit to oppression.⁽²⁹⁾

This process involves the discovery, affirmation and assertion of one's own self-worth, life, values, and solidarity,⁽³⁰⁾ and black history, culture and experience as distinct from white history, culture and experience, with the result that black life becomes meaningful,⁽³¹⁾ and appropriate, significant and substantial.⁽³²⁾ This gives black people a sense of pride in their blackness and makes them determined to

rise and attain true self-hood, to struggle in solidarity in order to achieve real freedom.⁽³³⁾ This "courage to be black", to be oneself in the face of oppression, and the ability to challenge the ideological power of the oppressor in the strength of solidarity, is Black Power.⁽³⁴⁾ Hence the connection between Black Consciousness and black power - it is consciousness that leads people to act with decisiveness and determination in the face of rejection.

Black Theology, influenced by the philosophy of Black Consciousness, adopted the notion of "blackness" in its reflection, and therefore in its Christology. Boesak, for example accepts that for black people "authentic humanity means black humanity".⁽³⁵⁾ Black Theology is concerned to ask and answer the question How can one be black and be Christian? What has faith in Jesus Christ to do with the struggle for liberation?

"Blackness" stands as an ontological symbol because it represents "being", a disposition of oppression and of authentic humanity, and in this sense it cannot be restricted to just skin colour:

"The focus on blackness does not mean that only blacks suffer as victims in a racist society, but that blackness is an ontological symbol and a visible reality

which best describes what oppression means in America." (36)

And it

"...stands for all victims of oppression who realize that the survival of their humanity is bound up with liberation from whiteness." (37)

Here "whiteness" stands for all that is oppressive and sinful, for "nonbeing" as opposed to "being" (blackness).

At the same time "blackness" serves as a particularly revealing symbol precisely in and through its reference to black skin colour because through that particular reference oppression is seen to be the *historically specific* experience of particular human beings. One is by this reminded of the real history of oppression - of colonisation, enslavement, economic exploitation, cultural oppression/appropriation and likewise of the *real history of the oppressors*. The black skinned person stands dramatically for the whole history of people's oppression of others, and the white skinned person a symbol for the history of oppressors. In this sense blackness becomes a universal symbol of a state of being, hence the term "ontological".

The notion of "blackness" has affected profoundly the way in which black theologians have understood the

South African "situation". Attempts at social analysis by the black community have produced differing views, and blacks have been ideologically divided between those who argue that "race" should be the determining category of analysis and those who see class as the determining category. L Sebidi provides a good review of these positions.⁽³⁸⁾

The Race-Analysts place emphasis on racial ideology and treat it as the "unmistakable criterion of differential incorporation into the South African social system".⁽³⁹⁾ "Race" serves as the point of departure.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Thus skin colour and not class or economics is used to define the conflict in South Africa. For these the response to national oppression is some form of nationalism in which blacks are pitted against whites, and blacks should be wary of white collaboration.⁽⁴¹⁾ This is the position that organizations like the Pan African Congress and AZAPO espouse.

The Class-Analysts regard as superficial this racial diagnosis of the South African situation.⁽⁴²⁾ They see the South African experience as part of the international capitalist exploitation that oppresses workers regardless of colour. They argue that the basic conflict is not between black and white but between labour and capital.⁽⁴³⁾ For them the black

nationalist liberation movements are bourgeois movements because they include every black person regardless of class or position as a capitalist.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Many in the South African Communist Party would tend to adopt such a position.

L Sebidi is critical of both these approaches.⁽⁴⁵⁾ The Class-Analyst's approach is incorrect in downplaying "the determinative role of belief systems as mere reflections of the base", while the Race-Analyst's approach is wrong in downplaying the "role of economic motivations in South Africa's social formations".⁽⁴⁶⁾ Sebidi offers a combination of these two approaches as a fitting social analysis, suggesting that this is what Black Theology commends:

"Racial capitalism is the name of the game. This is the sin that Black Theology wants to uncover and eradicate in God's own name. The term "black" must perforce remain prefixed to 'theology' because for the last hundred years 'blackness' in this country has been a symbol of economic, class exploitation."⁽⁴⁷⁾

This move toward a "mixed" analysis is a recent development in Black Theology. The use of Marxist analysis, for example, by B Tlhagale,⁽⁴⁸⁾ I Mosala,⁽⁴⁹⁾ and T Mofokeng,⁽⁵⁰⁾ has introduced this element into black theological methodology.

Mofokeng suggests that Black Theology attempts a three

dimensional analysis using a Marxist social analysis:

(⁵¹)

1. It analyses the material situation and disposition of the Christian community engaged in struggle.
2. It analyses the praxis of Jesus and the material situation in Palestine during the time of Jesus.
3. It seeks to establish whether Jesus the Black Messiah and the black community are at the same level of engagement and radicality in the struggle.

This approach, it is argued, helps to ascertain whether Jesus is with the black oppressed in their struggle and what adjustments the latter need to make to be alongside Jesus in his struggle for liberation. (⁵²)

Whatever one's own position on this, it is clear that the new situation in South Africa demands a review of categories and methods of analysis. We will say more of this in the final chapter. For the moment it is sufficient to note the different analyses offered by black theologians.

4.2. THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Second, Black Theology seeks to be a Christian Theology, subscribing to two central features of traditional Christology. i.e., Black Theology, like Latin American Liberation Theology, is both Christo-centric and Trinitarian. It is Christo-centric because it sees the incarnate Jesus as the ground and source of theological reflection. Boesak has suggested that Black theology is a "christological" theology in that Jesus is at its centre.⁽⁵³⁾ As Mofokeng puts it:

"In the Christological reflection that has been and is still being done, Jesus Christ, God-man, is the basis, source and stimulator of thought and speech about God and man as subjects of the event of creation-liberation."⁽⁵⁴⁾

Jesus is therefore the point of departure for Black Theology:

"Jesus Christ, therefore in his humanity, and divinity, is the point of departure for a black theologian's analysis of the meaning of liberation. There is no liberation independent of Jesus' past, present, and future coming."⁽⁵⁵⁾

And to talk about Jesus is to talk about God:

"Thinking and speaking about Jesus of Nazareth is also and primarily thinking and speaking about God who emptied Him/Herself of all glory became the lowest of human beings, the Oppressed."

(⁵⁶)

This means that Jesus as God incarnate is an integral part of the trinitarian nature of God.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Christ's liberation is a reality that offers and guarantees total liberation:

"... Black Theology...focuses on the dependency of the oppressed and their liberation from dependency in all its dimensions- psychological, cultural, political, economical and theological. It expresses the belief that because Christ's liberation has come, the total liberation of man can no longer be denied."⁽⁵⁸⁾

And, as Mofokeng points out, it is a guarantee of total liberation because it is a trinitarian event:

"By grounding Christology in the Trinitarian life of God in this way the liberation of man through that of the oppressed is deeply and firmly grounded in this trinitarian life of God. The liberation of the oppressed and the creation of a new world and a new man are not left to chance."⁽⁵⁹⁾

In other words Black Theology's point of departure in Jesus is at one and the same time a trinitarian point of departure, because the reality of Jesus cannot be separated from the reality of God and the Holy Spirit. Because God acts in Jesus the liberation of the oppressed ceases to be arbitrary. Divine involvement in the process of liberation saves it from arbitrariness and failure because God does not fail.

4.3 APPROACH TO CHRISTOLOGY

Black Christological reflection assumes this philosophical and theological framework. Black Christology emphasizes the existential rather than the doctrinal meaning of Jesus.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Jesus is not reduced to a theological concept but is regarded as one who is present in the struggle for liberation. Black Theology seeks a new definition of Christology for the black situation and a new christological methodology.⁽⁶¹⁾ This methodology has a different starting point in the black experience and a different interlocutor in the black community.⁽⁶²⁾ The result is an experience-based christology.

The black community raises christological questions as it struggles against all obstacles to liberation.⁽⁶³⁾ As Mofokeng points out, this reflection necessarily includes black history, black culture and land:

"The character of the black interlocutor in Black Theology necessitates the inclusion of Black History, Black Culture and land in christological reflection as elements that inform the self-understanding of the black community, continuously and rapidly transforms its quest as well as enlighten its reading of scripture."
(⁶⁴)

Black culture is, of course, an important element. However, it has not played a significant role in Black

christology. Where it has played any role at all it has focused on indigenous African culture. Tutu and Boesak have made contributions to the general debate on African theology,⁽⁶⁵⁾ and have pointed out its link with Black theology. Tutu has said, for example,

"I myself believe I am an exponent of Black Theology coming as I do from South Africa. I also believe I am an exponent of African theology coming as I do from Africa. I contend that Black Theology is like the inner and smaller circle in a series of concentric circles...I and others from South Africa do Black Theology, which is for us, at this point, African theology."⁽⁶⁶⁾

However, he also points out the difference between Black Theology and African theology:

"there must be differences because the two theologies arise in a sense from different contexts...There is not the same kind of oppression (in other parts of Africa) which is the result of white racism except in Southern Africa...consequently Black Theology is much concerned to make sense theologically out of the black experience whose main ingredient is the suffering in the light of God's revelation of Himself in the man, Jesus Christ. It is concerned with the significance of black existence, with black liberation, with a meaning of reconciliation, with humanization, with forgiveness."⁽⁶⁷⁾

This represents the position of Black theology quite well. Black theology has concentrated on the socio-political dimension and not reflected seriously on African culture. Consequently Black Christology has not taken it seriously enough either, so that its

christological focus has for all practical purposes ignored African cultural aspects. Since this chapter is concerned with Black Christology it would be inappropriate to focus on African theology.

At the same time Mofokeng's concern with "black" culture expresses the need to take the cultural context seriously, and this is a very valid point. There is a fundamental problem with identifying "Black" with ethnic "African", which is what black theologians have tended to do. Black culture surely includes the culture of Coloureds and Indians as well. The cultural aspect of christology will be dealt with in the last chapter. At this point the concern is to recognize that christology is the result of the black community raising its own questions from within its own experience.

In responding to the christological inquiry - Who do you say that I am? Mofokeng begins with the assumption that Jesus is working for liberation in the situation of black suffering, and that it is into this situation of struggle that the christological question is posed by Jesus.⁽⁶⁸⁾

The christological question refers to this liberating Jesus as the one who works for the liberation of oppressed blacks. It involves the question of Jesus'

identity as he engages the situation of oppression in order to bring about a new black humanity. A response to this question also provides an answer to the anthropological question: Who does Jesus Christ say that we are and how shall we become ourselves, our liberated selves?⁽⁶⁹⁾ For Christology also concerns black identity and humanity as people encounter Christ in the process of liberation, and so embark on the road to their own liberation.⁽⁷⁰⁾ The issue of the identity of Jesus and of black identity represents the goal of authentic discipleship and true humanity, and reflection on these conscientize people into a new way of life:

"is also a liberative question that is posed in the midst of a conflictuous way of faith, that marks the trail of their discipleship and search for true humanity; and lastly a question that also blazes a new trail that leads to qualitatively higher and radical forms of discipleship and search of true humanity."⁽⁷¹⁾

The question of identity is associated with "blackness" which gives black people a sense of identity and self respect, and a sense of solidarity in struggle. And

"...Black Consciousness means that being black becomes a decisive factor in black people's expression of their belief in Jesus Christ as Lord".⁽⁷²⁾

Hence a black christology.

Cone has argued that Christ enables black people to discover their blackness:

"Through Jesus Christ Black people are able to perceive the nature of black being and destroy the forces of nonbeing". (73)

In this way the universal understanding of God in Christ and of authentic humanity in Christ is related to the black situation. In this sense the search for God and for authentic humanity is to be found in the quest for "blackness". As Cone puts it:

"The search for black identity is the search for God, because God's identity is revealed in the black struggle for freedom." (74)

Black theologians suggest that the Incarnation has significance for blacks because Jesus is black. Their association with him is dependent on his being with blacks in their oppressed condition. The definition of Jesus as black is therefore crucial for this Christology:

"The definition of Jesus as black is crucial for christology if we truly believe in his continued presence today. Taking our clue from the historical Jesus who is pictured in the New Testament as the Oppressed One, what else, except blackness, could adequately tell us the meaning of his presence today? (75)

For Cone, as for other black theologians, the gospels portray a Jesus who might legitimately be described as the Black Messiah.

According to Cone the blackness of Jesus is decisive for a proper interpretation of the New Testament witness:

"Any statement about Jesus today that fails to consider blackness as a decisive factor about his person is a denial of the New Testament message. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus reveal that he is the man for others, disclosing to them what is necessary for their liberation from oppression. If this is true, then Jesus Christ must be black so that blacks can know that their liberation is his liberation."⁽⁷⁶⁾

Blackness clarifies the meaning of his presence today⁽⁷⁷⁾, and identifies Jesus with oppressed blacks⁽⁷⁸⁾, something a "white" (or Eurocentric) Jesus cannot do:

"To understand the acts of Jesus in our history, one must begin to understand his acts while He was on earth. And it is because of this basic truth that Black Theology cannot accept the white Jesus".⁽⁷⁹⁾

Black Theology, then, speaks of the Black Christ because its understanding of the historical Jesus leads it to assert that Christ is black. There are a number of reasons why Christ is said to be "black".

First, "He is black because he was a Jew". His

Jewishness is important because it is related dialectically to his present blackness.⁽⁸⁰⁾ Jesus is the poor Jew who belonged to the oppressed people of his day, and took sides with the poor. For Boesak Jesus' own experience of oppression and the similarity between Jesus' own life and the life of blacks today shows that Jesus is the Black Messiah:

"He is the Oppressed One whose life reflects so much of the life of the oppressed people.

...He lived on earth very much the same way blacks are forced to live. He has made their life his own. He has identified himself with them. He is the Black Messiah."⁽⁸¹⁾

Jesus in this view is the Black Messiah not because he had a dark skin, but because he knew what it is to be oppressed and therefore understands what it means to be black in a white dominated society today. His race is significant only in so far as it placed him among an oppressed people and gave him a taste of what such oppression meant. And his own personal experience of oppression and suffering makes him better able to identify with oppressed people generally. Hence the identification between Jesus and blacks today, i.e., identification through shared experience. It seems that neither Cone nor Boesak wishes to draw a distinction between race and class.

Second, his blackness is seen in the light of the

cross and resurrection.

"the blackness of Jesus brings out the soteriological meaning of his Jewishness for our contemporary situation when Jesus' person is understood in the context of the cross and resurrection".
(⁸²)

The resurrection symbolizes God's identity today with the poor, and this includes all who fight for the liberation of humanity.⁽⁸³⁾ As Cone puts it:

"It is in the light of the cross and resurrection of Jesus in relation to his Jewishness that Black Theology asserts that 'Jesus is black.'" (⁸⁴)

Cone admits that blackness as a christological title may not be appropriate in every context or for all time, for such is the nature of christological titles:

"I realize that 'blackness' as a christological title may not be appropriate in the distant future or in every human context in our present. This was no less true of the New Testament titles, such as 'Son of God' and 'Son of David', and of various descriptions of Jesus throughout the Christian tradition." (⁸⁵)

But the appropriateness of such titles to specific contexts is determined by the extent to which they speak relevantly to those contexts:

"But the validity of any christological title in any period of history is not decided by its universality but by this:

whether in the particularity of its time it points to God's universal will to liberate particular oppressed people from inhumanity".⁽⁸⁶⁾

This is why the notion of Jesus as the Black Messiah is regarded as appropriate in the black context. It enables black people to view his presence as continuous with his past and present, "through his present blackness".⁽⁸⁷⁾

Third, Christ's blackness is "literal" as well as "symbolic". It is literal in the sense that Christ is in real solidarity with the black experience:

"Christs blackness is both literal and symbolic. His blackness is literal in the sense that he truly becomes One with the oppressed blacks, taking their suffering as his suffering and revealing that he is found in the history of our struggle".⁽⁸⁸⁾

The black Christ helps black people to stand up against white oppression, by virtue of the fact that he takes on their suffering and re-establishes proper relations:

"If Christ is truly the Suffering Servant of God who takes upon himself the suffering of his people, thereby reestablishing the covenant of God, then he must be black."⁽⁸⁹⁾

What makes the concept of the "Black Messiah" crucial for this Christology is that it presents Jesus in a

way that black people can identify with him today:

"The importance of the concept of the Black Messiah is that it expresses the concreteness of Christ's continued presence today. Jesus came and lived in this world as the Oppressed One who took upon Himself all the suffering and humiliation of all oppressed peoples".
(⁹⁰)

Christ's blackness is symbolic and helps to clarify who Christ is in their situation:

"The Black Jesus is also an important theological symbol for an analysis of Christ's person today." (⁹¹)

The historical Jesus symbolizes both oppression and liberation.⁽⁹²⁾ "Black" represents these two dimensions and so captures very well the experience of the black people and the work of Christ:

"the concept of black, which includes both what the world means by oppression and what the gospel means by liberation, is the only concept that has any real significance today. If Christ is not black, then who is he?" (⁹³)

And Jesus offers the possibility of liberation through blackness:

"the theological significance of Jesus is found in the possibility of human liberation through blackness. Jesus is the black Christ!" (⁹⁴)

For Cone to say that Christ is black is to affirm that black people are God's people, and that he has come to liberate them.⁽⁹⁵⁾ It means, says Cone, that God takes colour seriously (in that he takes black people and their plight seriously), he takes their blackness upon himself and imparts to it the spirit of divine blackness.⁽⁹⁶⁾ The Incarnation discloses God's will and reveals what it is to be truly human.⁽⁹⁷⁾ Blackness and divinity are therefore dialectically united in a single reality.⁽⁹⁸⁾ The blackness of Christ points to the presence of God among the oppressed:

"The 'blackness of Christ', therefore, is not simply a statement about skin colour, but rather, the transcendent affirmation that God has not ever, no not ever, left the oppressed alone in struggle." (99)

"...Christ is black, therefore, not because of some cultural or psychological need of black people, but because and only because Christ really enters into our world where the poor, the despised, and the blacks are, disclosing that he is with them, enduring their humiliation and pain and transforming oppressed slaves into liberated servants." (100)

Fourth, Christ's blackness points to black liberation.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ His presence in the community today is manifested in the forces of liberation⁽¹⁰²⁾, for, as Cone suggests, he represents the rejection of oppressive values and is the focus of radical change:

"The definition of Christ as black means that he represents the complete opposite of the values of white culture. He is the centre of the black Copernican revolution."(¹⁰³)

Fifth, the blackness of Jesus implies that the black struggle is also the realization of God's kingdom:

"The appearance of Jesus as the black Christ also means that the black revolution is God's kingdom becoming a reality".(¹⁰⁴)

God achieves the historical liberation here and now. "The kingdom of God is a black happening" in which blacks discover their personhood and experience liberation:(¹⁰⁵)

"The event of the kingdom today is the liberation struggle in the black community. It is where persons are suffering and dying for want of human dignity. It is thus incumbent on all to see the event for what it is - God's kingdom."(¹⁰⁶)

"The new day is the presence of the black Christ as expressed in the liberation of the black community."(¹⁰⁷)

Sixth, the black Christ is God incarnate(¹⁰⁸), God becoming oppressed humanity and revealing that to be fully human is to be of God.(¹⁰⁹) The black Christ helps black people to understand what incarnation is. It shows that blackness is not something to be devalued, but something that reveals true humanity and

divinity.

"By becoming a black person, God discloses that blackness is not what the world says it is. Blackness is a manifestation of the being of God in that it reveals that neither divinity nor humanity reside in white definitions but in liberation from captivity."
(¹¹⁰)

In responding to the charge that the Black Christ concept distorts the New Testament for political purposes Cone argues that this title is a legitimate title because it represents well the person of Jesus, holding in balance the historical Jesus, the Risen Christ, and the Lord who comes:

"The phrase 'Black Christ' refers to more than the subjective states and political expediency of black people at a given point in history. Rather, this title is derived primarily from Jesus' past identity, his present activity, and his future coming as each is dialectically related to the others."
(¹¹¹)

As such the title is not merely a subjective phenomenon, but is based on Black Theology's interpretation of the sources of Christology:

"Jesus' blackness is not simply the psychological disposition of black people but arises from a faithful examination of Christology's sources (Scripture, tradition and social existence) as these sources illuminate Jesus' past, present, and future".
(¹¹²)

It then becomes acceptable to speak of the Christ-event as "a black-event."⁽¹¹³⁾

"The blackness of Christ clarifies the definition of him as the Incarnate One...By becoming a black person, God discloses that blackness is not what the world says it is."⁽¹¹⁴⁾

Thus, christological reflection takes place in the context of the praxis of black liberation as a response to Jesus Christ who is present in that context.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ The situation/praxis constitutes one pole for reflection and the historical Jesus constitutes the other.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ These two are held in dialectical tension.

To be epistemologically consistent one needs to examine the praxis of Jesus in order to understand anything about him. Hence the concentration on the historical nature of the incarnation and therefore on the Jesus of the Gospels, i.e., the "historical" Jesus.⁽¹¹⁷⁾ The term "historical Jesus" as it is used by black theologians presents its own difficulties, and this will be dealt with later. Here it is noted that they use the term to refer, as indeed do Latin American liberation theologians, to the actual person Jesus.

This concentration on the historical Jesus is an

attempt to place Christology firmly on a historical foundation. As Cone points out:

"Focusing on the historical Jesus means that black theology recognizes history as an indispensable foundation of christology." (118)

This historical Jesus is regarded as the key to Christology today. Cone expresses the sentiments of black theologians generally when he says that the historical Jesus is the only access to the knowledge of the Jesus present today:

"We want to know who Jesus was because we believe that that is the only way to assess who he is. If we have no historical information about the character and behaviour of that particular Galilean in the first century, then it is impossible to determine the mode of his existence now." (119)

If there is no historical information about Jesus then it is difficult, if not impossible, to talk about his existence in any meaningful way.⁽¹²⁰⁾ For one cannot as Boesak explains understand Jesus without knowledge of his earthly ministry in first century Palestine.

"This means that Black Theology is not prepared to separate the reality of the historical Jesus from the reality of his presence in the world today. The historical confession of the Christian Church that Jesus Christ was "very God and very Man" could only have been based on the testimony of the apostles to the reality of the historical Jesus." (121)

The Jesus who is experienced today is related to the Jesus of Nazareth and in this way both are affirmed:

"Christologically, therefore, who Jesus is today is found by relating Jesus' past with his present activity. Black people affirm them both simultaneously and thus dialectically. On the one hand, through faith black people transcended spatial and temporal existence and affirmed Jesus' past as described in the historicity of his life and death on the cross".⁽¹²²⁾

This is why the role of Scripture and tradition is crucial for Christology. As Cone explains:

"The dialectic of Scripture and tradition in relation to our contemporary social context forces us to affirm that there is no knowledge of Jesus Christ today that contradicts who he was yesterday, i.e., his historical appearance in first century Palestine. Jesus' past is the clue to his present activity... The historical Jesus is indispensable for a knowledge of the Risen Christ."⁽¹²³⁾

This approach provides the key to the meaning of Christ today, rooting it on a proper foundation, and so acts as a safeguard against arbitrariness:

"If we do not take the historical Jesus seriously as the key to locating the meaning of Christ's presence today, there is no way to avoid the charge of subjectivism, the identification of Christ today with momentary political persuasion".⁽¹²⁴⁾

Further, it affirms the true humanity of Jesus. Christology begins with the affirmation of Jesus' true

humanity in history. This point provides the clue to who Jesus is today.⁽¹²⁵⁾ As Cone asserts:

"'Jesus is who he was' affirms not only the importance of Scripture as the basis of Christology. It also stresses the biblical emphasis on Jesus' humanity in history as the starting point of christological analysis. For without the historical Jesus, theology is left with a docetic Christ who is said to be human but is actually nothing but an idea-principle in a theological system. We cannot have a human Christ unless we have a historical Christ, that is, unless we know his history".⁽¹²⁶⁾

To disregard the historical Jesus is to abandon Christ's humanity for the sake of emphasizing his divinity:

"If the historical Jesus is unimportant, then the true humanity of Christ is relegated to the periphery of christological analysis. At best Christ's humanity is merely verbalized for the purpose of focusing on his divinity".⁽¹²⁷⁾

That is, it is the historical Jesus that reflects the humanity of Christ, and without this human dimension being given an important place the humanity of Christ is compromised.

To separate Jesus' earthly ministry from that of the Christ of Christian experience and faith is to make the Christian gospel a creation of the early Christians:

"Without some continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ, the Christian gospel becomes nothing but the subjective reflections of the early Christian community."
(¹²⁸)

It is for these reasons an error to separate the historical Jesus from the Christ of faith. Christology must be grounded in the concrete history of Jesus of Nazareth. (¹²⁹) According to Cone:

"Christ's meaning for us today is found in an encounter with the historical Jesus as the Crucified and Risen Lord who is present with us in the struggle for freedom. Indeed, it is Jesus' soteriological value as revealed in his past, experienced in our present, and promised in God's future that makes us know that it is worthwhile, indeed necessary, to enquire about his person. It is because the people have encountered the power of his presence in their social existence that they are motivated to ask, 'What manner of man is this?'" (¹³⁰)

Thus the history of Jesus and the incarnation operates as a paradigm for liberation. (¹³¹)

In order for black people to know that their liberation is indeed the work of Christ they need to know that the "Christ" of experience is in fact the real Jesus:

"And a proper theological analysis of Jesus' historical identification with the helpless is indispensable for our interpretation of the gospel today. Unless the contemporary oppressed know that the kerygmatic Christ is the real Jesus, to the extent that he was

completely identified with the oppressed of his earthly ministry, they cannot know that their liberation is a continuation of his work." (132)

The question that this raises is: How, then, does one know that the kerygmatic Christ, or the Christ of experience, is in fact the real Jesus? This presupposes that the real Jesus can be known. Who is this Jesus? In the attempt to grapple with these and other related questions Black theologians turn to the two sources which have in the past provided the basis for christological reflection, i.e., the Bible and the Christian Tradition. However, the manner in which these are approached is determined by the particular theological hermeneutic that is employed in the process of reflection.

4.3.1. BIBLE AND CHRISTIAN TRADITION

In its approach to the Bible and Tradition black Christology considers the appropriateness of the norms for christological reflection. The question that guides and provokes reflection is "Who do you say that I am ?" (133)

Black theologians argue that traditional approaches to Christology have failed to speak relevantly to the black situation. As Boesak puts it:

"Thus, all of life is defined within the limits of black situational possibilities. To this situation, with its pain and frustrations, its joys and secret hopes of redemption, traditional Christian theology has not even begun to address itself. Black Theology, by taking this situation seriously, seeks to realize the true humanity of black people." (¹³⁴)

Black Theology seeks to discover the meaning of Christ in his nature and person and relationship to God. It turns to the

"tradition of black Christology for a perspective on Jesus Christ that will enable us to address the right questions to the 'classical' tradition and also locate the Christ of Scripture in our contemporary situation". (¹³⁵)

Black people both in North America and South Africa have their own original traditions which in the course of history combined with their Christian heritage to produce a peculiar Christian tradition, one which eventually led to the development of black liberation christology. It is this resulting tradition to which black theology turns for its own perspectives on Jesus Christ. (¹³⁶)

For Black Theology ecclesiastical tradition represents the Church's affirmation of faith at different times in history. (¹³⁷) By looking at the meaning of Jesus in different traditions Black Theology obtains clues to the understanding of Jesus today. (¹³⁸) Tradition

forces Black Theology out of its subjectivity to its present by opening up the story of Jesus to other stories in the past.⁽¹³⁹⁾ As Cone puts it:

"While tradition is not the gospel, it is the bearer of an interpretation of the gospel at a particular point in time. By studying the tradition, we not only gain insight into a particular past time but also into our own time as the past and present meet dialectically. For only through this dialectical encounter with the tradition are we given the freedom to move beyond it".⁽¹⁴⁰⁾

However, Black Theology adopts a critical approach to tradition. While tradition

"is essential for any theological evaluation of Christianity, black theology is not uncritical of it, particularly the history of Western Christianity since the fourth century."⁽¹⁴¹⁾

As Cone puts it:

"tradition requires that we ask, What has my experience of Christ today to do with the Christ of Nestorius of Constantinople and Cyril of Alexandria?"⁽¹⁴²⁾

In Black Theology black tradition provides the necessary checks against the inordinate influence of the 'classical' tradition and also provides a fresh perspective for the interpretation of Scripture in the light of Christ.⁽¹⁴³⁾ It breaks down the false distinction between the sacred and the secular and

allows blacks to explore the meaning of Christ in their life experiences.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

For Mofokeng this approach places black Christology alongside the early Christian community:

"We are therefore, continuing the old and proven ecclesial tradition of the first century christian communities when we as a black christian community try to be true to the present black experience, and reflect theologically on its questions and challenges".⁽¹⁴⁵⁾

For Cone ecclesiastical tradition does not provide an exclusive interpretation of Scripture. In accepting the importance of Scripture as the witness to Jesus Christ Black Theology does not ignore the tradition of Western Christianity.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ A study of that tradition must be done "in the light of the Word disclosed in Scripture as interpreted by black people".⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ The full meaning of Scripture is not limited to the interpretation provided in that tradition:

"As the meaning of Jesus Christ is not to be identified with the words of Scripture, so the meaning of Scripture as the witness to the Word is not defined exclusively by Cyprian, Anselm, and Thomas. As theologians we must interpret the latter in the light of the former".⁽¹⁴⁸⁾

Scripture remains the fundamental witness to Jesus Christ, though scripture is not itself this Christ.

However, the christological process involves necessarily a conversation with the bible and classical ecclesiastical tradition because both play a valuable role in theological reflection. For Cone:

"Tradition is important because it is the bridge that connects Scripture to our contemporary situation. While tradition does not carry the same weight of authority as Scripture, our understanding of the meaning of Jesus Christ in the latter is mediated through the former".⁽¹⁴⁹⁾

The hermeneutical relation between experience, Scripture and Tradition is, according to Cone, a dialectical one:

"the dialectic between the social situation of the believer and Scripture and the traditions of the Church is the place to begin the investigation of the question, Who is Jesus Christ for us today? Social context, Scripture and tradition operate together to enable the people of God to move actively and reflectively with Christ in the struggle of freedom".⁽¹⁵⁰⁾

Some who are not black theologians would also argue for such a dialectical relation between these three elements. What is distinctive in the approach of Black Theology is the status and role that is given to each of these elements, and the nature of the dialectic itself in practice.

Mofokeng's adopts a similar approach to Cone.

Christology holds together the integration of praxis and the operationalization of christological dogma. (151) Classical Christology he says purports to begin with the Scriptures. Its conclusions arise from a theological interpretation of the works and words of Jesus. It starts from what the Bible says and moves towards its application to human experience. Mofokeng argues that Black Theology reverses this classical approach, so that Black Christology begins with "application" or engagement, that is, praxis precedes reflection. (152) It reads history from the perspective of present experience so that the historical facts are interpreted theologically, as the textual facts speak to the people today on a historical level.

In this way Black Christology aims to overcome the inadequacy of biblical and traditional christologies and to discover a new and historically relevant reading of Jesus for blacks:

"Christology becomes authentic and operative by 'historize (zing) the figure of Jesus in an authentic and truly operative way'". (153)

Cone's Christology, for example, is based on the biblical picture of Jesus and his past and present involvement in the struggle of the oppressed. (154)

Engagement in this struggle creates a new

hermeneutical situation, and this produces a methodology based on a black biblical hermeneutic. Its primary aim is not to interpret texts and experience but to engage in the transformation of society. It seeks to express God's Word as a criticism of society and proposes alternatives to the situation of oppression.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ Black theologians approach the Bible with critical questions and presuppositions. As Goba points out:

"We approach the Bible in a Bultmannian sense with the pre-understanding which has been coloured with our experience of oppression. That is, our interpretation is determined by our existential understanding or an act of self-understanding based on the questions we ask".⁽¹⁵⁶⁾

This assumes a commitment to investigate Christian faith in the light of the biblical message⁽¹⁵⁷⁾, and to explore a relevant and practical understanding of this message:

"Black theological reflection as biblical praxis is the expression of a faith grounded in the scriptures, committed to the liberating message of Jesus Christ, a call to active involvement against the forces of dehumanization and death, an invitation for the black Christian community within the context of oppression to a new practical understanding of the meaning of the biblical message as liberating praxis".⁽¹⁵⁸⁾

In engaging in such a hermeneutic black theologians have adopted different approaches. Cone argues that

Black Theology seeks to create a theological norm in harmony with the black condition and biblical revelation:⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ He says:

"Blacks have heard enough about God. What they want to know is what God has to say about the black condition. Or, more importantly, what is God doing about it? What is the relevance of God in the struggle against the forces of evil which seek to destroy black being?"
(¹⁶⁰)

The norm of Black Theology holds together two aspects of a single reality: "the liberation of blacks and the revelation of Jesus Christ".⁽¹⁶¹⁾ Cone makes the black experience the ultimate test of truth.⁽¹⁶²⁾

For Cone the Christ who is present is the Word of God (a problematic notion - see later). Scriptural hermeneutic represents one pole of the Word of God while black experience provides the other pole.⁽¹⁶³⁾

"The Jesus of the black experience is the Jesus of Scripture. The dialectic relationship of the black experience and Scripture is the point of departure of Black Theology's Christology".⁽¹⁶⁴⁾

The hermeneutical principle that guides Black Theology's exegesis of Scripture is the "revelation of God in Christ as the Liberator"; and to deny that he is Liberator is, say black theologians, to be heretical.⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ To profess Jesus as Lord is to speak

primarily of present experience⁽¹⁶⁶⁾, the experience of Christ who is the Jesus of Scripture.⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ To this extent who Jesus was is important for faith.⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ The New Testament Jesus provides the basis for a proper and relevant understanding of Jesus.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ As Cone says:

"The Gospels are not biographies of Jesus; they are gospel - that is, good news about what God has done in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This must be the focus of christological thinking".⁽¹⁷⁰⁾

Scripture is an indispensable source of theology:

"For black people the transcendent reality is none other than Jesus Christ, of whom Scripture speaks. The Bible is the witness to God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ. Thus the black experience requires that Scripture be a source of Black Theology".⁽¹⁷¹⁾

It is the only source that can legitimately provide a definition of God and Jesus.⁽¹⁷²⁾ And this, because Scripture is the only connection we have with the historical Jesus who lived in the past and revealed God.

The biblical witness serves as a guide for checking the appropriateness of contemporary interpretations of God's revelation by making certain that such interpretations are consistent with that witness. As

Mofokeng puts it:

"Being true christians they cannot but return to scripture which is the source of their existence as a christian community and of their knowledge with thanks to Jesus their Messiah but also with questions in search of what he has to say to them. They approach Scripture in search of what and how to think and articulate what is happening to them and their world".⁽¹⁷³⁾

For Goba the "Word of God" helps in the discernment of what is acceptable and what is not:

"The Word of God contained in Scripture forces us to tell the truth and is itself the truth which seeks to unveil all the deceptions of our sinful society. The Word as part of the liberating praxis denounces our negative social values, false pretensions and above all what the ideology of Apartheid represents".⁽¹⁷⁴⁾

In this way Scripture is said to play a normative role.

The Bible is not, however, the literal Word of God:

"The authority of the Bible for Christology, therefore, does not lie in its objective status as the literal Word of God. Rather, it is found in its power to point to the One whom the people have met in the historical struggle of freedom. Through the reading of Scripture, the people not only hear other stories about Jesus that enable them to move beyond the privateness of their own story; but through faith because of divine grace, they are taken from the present to the past and then thrust back into their contemporary history with divine power to transform the sociopolitical context."⁽¹⁷⁵⁾

Mofokeng like Cone does not equate the "Bible" with the "Word of God". The "Word of God" serves two functions - it is normative and inspirational:

"The Word of God functions in this case to criticize and dynamize the praxis of liberation. During the process of this reflection the process of liberation also throws light on the Scriptures making the Word of God perceptible. There is, in other words, a fruitful dialectical movement or interplay between the text (Scripture) and the context which is the liberation project. We have a double grounded hermeneutic of praxis." (176)

The hermeneutical process is one

"in which the light of the specific praxis of committed blacks falls on the Bible, on the one side, making it comprehensible. On the other side the transforming light of Scripture falls on liberation praxis criticising it when and where criticism is due, affirming it where credit is due to it, making it qualitatively better as well as driving it forward." (177)

This reciprocal meaningfulness between Scripture and praxis is what is required.⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ Experience can provide illumination because it is one in which the risen Jesus is present, the same Jesus that Scripture talks about:

"the praxis of liberation is not totally devoid of effective light because of the presence of Jesus Christ in the struggle of his 'little ones'." (179)

One ought not therefore to speak of "experience" and the "Word of God" as if these are mutually exclusive. "Experience" could include experience of the living Christ who is the "Word of God".

Some South African black theologians have misunderstood the approach of Cone and Mofokeng to mean that experience is above "Revelation" or the "Word of God". Mgojo for example asserts that the biblical revelation is the authentic norm over against Cone's method of interpretation of the Bible because that method gives primacy to the black experience. Mgojo says:

"The first and most important source of knowledge is the biblical revelation. Since theology is the study of God and his relationship to the world and man, it must be founded on the study, analysis, and interpretation of the Scriptures. To know anything about God we are dependent on what He has revealed, a record of which we have in Scripture. As the written Word of God, the Bible is not opposed to Christ, the Living Word. It is only through the written word that we learn of the Living Word." ⁽¹⁸⁰⁾

and,

"...Essentially what Cone has done is to absolutize the black experience as the principal source of the knowledge of God and the ultimate authority in religion". ⁽¹⁸¹⁾

It is true that Cone regards the black experience of oppression as "binding":

"Black Theology knows no authority more binding than the experience of oppression itself." (182)

Nonetheless Cone has argued strongly that it is the "Word of God" (Jesus) that is normative. For, as pointed out earlier, he has argued for the primacy of God's Word revealed in Jesus, and for Scripture as the basis for a definition of God and Jesus.

Boesak too has misunderstood Cone and offers what he considers to be a different approach. He says that theology:

"is a critical reflection in the light of the Word of God which means that all action and all reflection is finally judged by the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ". (183)

Boesak insists that the Word of God is the ultimate authority and principle source of theology. He says:

"The black situation is the situation within which reflection and action takes place, but it is the Word of God which illuminates the reflection and guides the action". (184)

While Cone emphasizes black experience as a source of theology Boesak argues that this in itself does not

"have revelational value on a par with Scripture...The black experience provides the framework for blacks to understand the revelation of God in

Jesus Christ." (¹⁸⁵)

"Thus, theology becomes a liberating activity with an openness to the world and to the future, a prophetic word, but also a prophetic manifestation of the Word". (¹⁸⁶)

Boesak accepts the fact that black theological interpretation is guided by the black situation but emphasizes that "it is the Word (sic) of God which illuminates the reflection and guides the action". (¹⁸⁷) In other words, liberation for Boesak is rooted in the Word of God, but the starting point is still the condition of oppression and the desire for liberation.

For him the black experience "provides the framework within which blacks understand the revelation of Jesus Christ". (¹⁸⁸) Jesus Christ remains the centre of Christology. (¹⁸⁹) While Boesak might claim that the "Word of God" is primary his approach gives the same status to black experience that he suggests Cone's approach gives. Hence Boesak's own assertion that Jesus is the Black Messiah. He does, however, use the term "Word of God" to refer to Jesus and to Scripture, which makes his position somewhat ambiguous.

Goba too tends to use the terms "Bible" and "Word of God" interchangeably:

"We approach the Bible as black Christians out of a situation characterized by the harsh brutality of oppression. We approach the Word of God broken, hungry, poor, shattered by the sheer circumstances surrounding our lives. Because of this we discover in the Bible not simply a new commitment of faith but rather the power to fight against those dehumanizing circumstances. What we discover in the Word of God is a message which challenges us to act and denounce those forces which dehumanize and seek to destroy our uniqueness as the people of God".⁽¹⁹⁰⁾

Mosala believes that Black Theology's notion of the Bible as the "Word of God" paradoxically implies that there is such a thing as "a non ideological appropriation of Scripture".⁽¹⁹¹⁾ He asserts that the Bible as the "Word of God" must be seen as an ideological ploy.⁽¹⁹²⁾ The notion is used to convert ruling class interests in the Bible into a faith that transcends the various and real divisions in society, and to posit a similar faith today. In other words black theology accepts the whole bible, including those texts that have been edited to reflect ruling class interests, thus pretending that these texts do not inherently reflect real social divisions, and presents this as the Word of God, as something which is to be accepted and believed.

He adds that black theologians have criticised white people's view of God and Jesus as being apolitical, above ideology and yet they present Scripture as if it is the absolute, nonideological Word of God which is

made ideological through application to the situation of oppression.⁽¹⁹³⁾ In other words the Word of God cannot (by definition) be criticised or contradicted, it cannot be assessed on the basis of black experience although black experience can be judged by it, it is only to be obeyed.⁽¹⁹⁴⁾

They argue that God's bias to the oppressed is a biblical truth. But, says Mosala this is only one of the biblical truths.⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ The Bible also represents the class antagonisms and divisions present in Israelite society.⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ The biblical traditions present, for example, the struggles of the oppressed Israelites against the domination of the Israelite monarchy which was itself buttressed by Davidic-Zionist ideology (cf 2 Sam.7).⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ Mosala enquires if there is not an hermeneutical affinity between today's oppressed blacks and those exploited Israelites.⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ And could not the same be said in relation to the destitute class of Jesus' followers?⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ Mosala's main criticism is therefore that the Word of God as black theologians conceive it entails in practice a selective presentation of Scripture,⁽²⁰⁰⁾ and their attempt to use the whole of the bible to support their case ignores the insights of biblical scholarship which shows that the bible is more complex and itself ideologically fashioned.⁽²⁰¹⁾

This is why Mosala suggests that the use of the notion that the Bible is the Word of God is an ideological ploy through which ruling class interests apparent in the biblical traditions are presented as transcendent faith, faith that supersedes the various and obvious divisions in society.⁽²⁰²⁾ The bible then becomes ahistorical and interclassist.⁽²⁰³⁾ Such an approach presupposes that truth is not historical, political, cultural, or economic.⁽²⁰⁴⁾ What makes it historical and particular, in this view, is its application to specific circumstances, when in fact it is by its very nature the product of history, culture, politics, and economics.⁽²⁰⁵⁾

It is the black theologian's notion of the Word of God as historically transcendent that sees them resort to a mere contextualization approach to biblical interpretation.⁽²⁰⁶⁾ According to Mosala, they fail to recognize that the biblical texts are problematic, do not reveal the complexity of origin and history of these texts which demonstrate that they are sites of ideological struggles.⁽²⁰⁷⁾ The notion of the bible as the Word of God gives the bible such an ideological aura that it becomes possible to see the bible in this ahistorical manner, and possible to conclude that liberation exists everywhere in the bible, when in fact the formation of the traditions show ruling-class control and co-optation of the liberation traditions

of the ancient Israelites.⁽²⁰⁸⁾

Consequently, Mosala suggests a new exegetical starting point that is based on a materialist epistemology, that is to say, one based on the presupposition that truth is to be linked to history.⁽²⁰⁹⁾ If one is to take sides, one takes sides in the struggle that is encoded in the biblical text which represents different positions and groups in the societies behind the text.⁽²¹⁰⁾ Oppressive texts should not be lumped together with liberative ones as if the inner conflicts reflected by the alleged (by scholars) origins and history of these texts could be ignored.⁽²¹¹⁾

Mosala is quite correct to point out the complexity of the biblical traditions, and to argue that it is possible that some traditions or part thereof have been influenced by upper class interests. He is also correct to reject the presentation of the Word of God as if it is a non-ideological entity, absolute and unquestionable, for the bible is an obviously human product, quite apart from the fact that literary redactions affected the final form of its traditions.

However, it is inaccurate to suggest that all black theologians mean the same thing when they speak of the "Word of God." It is, for example, not correct to

equate Cone's use of the term "Word of God" with that of Boesak. Cone certainly does not see the Bible as the "Word of God". The distinction made between the person of Jesus and the bible is a crucial one. Nevertheless, Mosala is right to point out that the biblical witness is a complex one, and that one needs to pay attention to the context in which the biblical traditions arose if one is to interpret them in a helpful way today.

Mosala proposes a materialistic biblical hermeneutic, one rooted in the working class culture, history and ideology of the oppressed.⁽²¹²⁾ The Bible is to be read through the eyes of black experience:

"The particularity of the black struggle in its different forms and phases must provide the epistemological lenses with which the Bible can be read. Only such a position seems to us to represent a theoretical break with dominant biblical hermeneutics. Anything else is a tinkering with what in fact must be destroyed".⁽²¹³⁾

Hence the materialistic approach takes priority:

"The priority of this method of exposing the fundamental social relations is held because both in the case of the Bible and black theology there are communities and networks of relations that must be brought to the fore. Only such an exposure of the underlying material relations can throw light on the problems of which the biblical texts are a solution and enable black theology to become the kind of critical discourse that is capable of contributing meaningfully to the black liberation

struggle".⁽²¹⁴⁾

By materialist reading, Mosala refers to a reading of the text which exposes the underlying material relationships represented in the text itself, one that gets to the bottom of real events, relationships, and structures.⁽²¹⁵⁾ Mosala includes in this the analysis of cultural, racial and gender relationships.⁽²¹⁶⁾ The insights of the various historical and sociological methods are relevant to such an analysis, although these perspectives have to be tested against black experience.⁽²¹⁷⁾ A similar analysis of the black situation is to go hand in hand with this approach. Only with such a materialistic reading will black theology contribute meaningfully to the liberation struggle:

"Only such an exposure of the underlying material relationships can throw light on the problems of which the biblical texts are a solution and can enable black theology to become the kind of critical discourse that is capable of contributing meaningfully to the black liberation struggle."⁽²¹⁸⁾

This is all very well. But the key question that arises is: how does one differentiate between traditions that have been fashioned by the so called "ruling class" and those that have not? With the Pentateuchal traditions, for example, scholars generally agree that four major sources (JEDP)

underlie these traditions, and it is believed that the Deuteronomist is at points critical of the monarchy and yet supportive of the Davidic monarchy. Does one dismiss these out of hand because they have both been influenced by ruling-class interests? The point is that in their final form the Old Testament traditions have been fashioned by people who had influence and could afford to write or at least knew people who had influence and resources. Does one then discount the whole Old Testament? If one were to select parts of it, how is one to tell that a particular part, even though it may seem anti-oppressive, is not the product of such people of influence and power? The very complexity of history and origins, something on which scholarly opinion is divided, makes it very difficult to do what Mosala is suggesting. Even if it were possible to do what he is suggesting, one is left with a selection of texts which represent what one wants to read in the texts anyway. How does this help to give the bible a special place in the hermeneutical process? In other words, why use the bible at all?

Mosala's approach is consistent with other black theologians insofar as it attempts to get behind the biblical text to the heart of the Gospel. The nature of the biblical material needs to be considered when one approaches the Bible. The Bible needs to be approached carefully. The concepts and questions with

which one approaches it must come from the black experience, the struggle.

For Black Theology "liberation" and "blackness" are the fundamental categories that guide their interpretation of the Bible. Mosothoane suggests that "liberation" represents "Black Theology's hermeneutical key" which is used by the black community to unlock the meaning of scripture in the black situation.⁽²¹⁹⁾ Black theology approaches scripture to discover God's purpose for the situation of oppression.⁽²²⁰⁾ In addition to "liberation", the category of "blackness" or "oppressed" serves as another hermeneutical key. These categories arise out of the experience in which black Christians find themselves, and this is what makes them relevant for biblical reflection. The primary question with which black theologians approach the Bible is: What is the biblical message as it relates to "liberation" and "blackness"? Christologically, the question becomes "Who is Jesus Christ in our experience of blackness and our struggle for liberation and what does he call us to do?" The basic answer is that the Christ of Black Theology is "Liberator" and "Black Messiah", and he calls us to follow him in his work of liberation.

4.3.2. JESUS CHRIST LIBERATOR.

The notion "Black Messiah" has been discussed already. Here attention is given to the presentation of Christ as liberator, the fundamental assertion on which the idea of Jesus as the Black Messiah is based.

According to Boesak the message of liberation is central to the Bible. He argues that the Exodus event is as central to the Old Testament as the resurrection is to the New Testament, and both events present the same reality.⁽²²¹⁾ Some may wish to take issue with this view. However, this will be given more attention in the final chapter. What matters at this stage is that one has a fair representation of the views of black theologians on their approach to the Exodus. They see the Exodus as central to the Old Testament witness.

The Exodus represents transformation:

"The Exodus was a liberation movement in which the people of Israel were moving with God - away from meaninglessness and alienation, away from uncertainty and misery, from pain and humiliation toward service of the living God."⁽²²²⁾

For Israel the Exodus was a real happening, a political and material act of God.⁽²²³⁾

In the Exodus Yahweh reveals himself as the one who

identifies with and liberates his people.⁽²²⁴⁾ God is thus "Liberator":

"He is the Liberator of the oppressed and the One who uprightly defends the poorest, who saves the children of those in need and crushes the oppressors. (Psalm. 72)".⁽²²⁵⁾

At the heart of this liberation event is Yahweh's love for his people, and his love is a liberating love:

"Loving his people means that Yahweh takes the side of his people against the oppressor, the Pharaoh."⁽²²⁶⁾

This experience of Israel made them realize that Yahweh was the only God, a God of justice and liberation:

"And the all-surpassing characteristics of Yahweh are his acts in history as the God of justice and liberation for the sake of those who are weak and oppressed."⁽²²⁷⁾

Thus God's righteousness and his love are manifest in his deeds of liberation. Yahweh's liberation

"is a movement through history wherein Yahweh has proved himself to be the Liberator. He demands justice not only from the Pharaoh who oppresses Israel, but also from the rich and powerful within Israel who will not give justice to the poor."⁽²²⁸⁾

God's love is related to his righteousness and justice which he made concrete in his relations with human beings and their relations with one another.⁽²²⁹⁾

The Exodus had to do with forging relationships with the God with whom they were bound in a covenant relationship.⁽²³⁰⁾

"the Exodus had to do with their whole lives - political, social, economic, personal, corporate - they were liberated people whose entire lives must reveal his comprehensive liberation that they had experienced. And they had been liberated from bondage for the purpose of being God's people."⁽²³¹⁾

The Exodus experience, therefore, embraced the spiritual and material, the secular and the sacred. God is the Lord of the universe and of all life.⁽²³²⁾ Salvation and liberation are inseparable. According to Cone this interpretation of salvation as liberation from bondage is consistent with the biblical view.⁽²³³⁾

This theme of liberation is said to run through the Old Testament, and forms the content of life and faith.⁽²³⁴⁾ The Exodus event is reiterated in the Psalms and functions as a legitimization of the proclamation of social justice by the prophets.⁽²³⁵⁾

And Israel viewed its history, past and future,

through the lenses of the Exodus:

"From then on they extrapolated their experience backwards to embrace the beginning times of creation and showed that their choice had been long planned for in the story of the patriarchs, especially in the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3)." (236)

To be delivered from exile would be understood as a second greater Exodus (Isaiah 52:2-6):

"The liberation of Israel out of Egypt is held before the people as their hope in difficult situations, becomes the basis of the proclamation of the 'new Exodus' in the ministry of the exilic prophets. Even if it is true that the Exodus is not mentioned explicitly, the liberation of the people in that particular situation is described in terms clearly reminiscent of the Exodus." (237)

God's creative activity too is understood in terms of his saving work in the Exodus. Mofokeng sees a dialectical relation between them:

"in the black theological perspective creation and liberation are inseparably united. The creation event is understood to be itself an event of liberation and conversely the event of liberation is itself an event of creation " . (238)

The Exodus marks the beginning of Israel's history in that God through this event created a liberated and liberating people⁽²³⁹⁾:

"they are liberated to become co-agents with God the Liberator, to become a community of liberators. This means that this event of liberation is also the starting point of the history of liberation and of liberative subjectivity."(²⁴⁰)

They were created to be co-agents or co-creators with God.⁽²⁴¹⁾ The Exodus represents God's intervention for the sake of human creative engagement in liberation,⁽²⁴²⁾ and participation in the renewal of society, people, and history:

"this history is liberated from oblivion and becomes a liberative history that subverts the ideologized history of the oppressor in order to create a new society, a new people and a new history."(²⁴³)

As such it is both an event of creation and an event of liberation.

"The Exodus event is therefore an event of creation and the event of creation is an event of liberation".(²⁴⁴)

This interpretation of creation-salvation as liberation forms the paradigm for interpreting the New Testament picture of Jesus. Jesus is said to continue the creative and salvific work of God through his own life:

"Just as in the Old Testament, the message of liberation forms the cantus firmus of the proclamation of the New

Testament. Jesus did not alienate himself from the prophetic proclamation of liberation. In the New Testament, everything centres around the fact that the Messiah, the Promised One, has come." (²⁴⁵)

As Mofokeng points out there is a continuity between the history of Jesus and the Old Testament:

"This history of liberation-creation converges in the history of Jesus of Nazareth. It does not only converge. It finds its continuation and fulfilment in and by him. In Jesus of Nazareth God is incarnate to fulfil this history of liberation - creation of his people. On the other hand the same man Jesus 'places himself in the prophetic tradition, offering himself as the fulfilment of the messianic prophecies' in order to realize the movement of the people toward the process of self-creation and self-realization." (²⁴⁶)

Whether and to what extent Jesus might be seen as the fulfilment of the Old Testament messianic prophecies, let alone whether he saw himself as such, is debatable. Nevertheless, the main point being made by both Boesak and Mofokeng is that Jesus continues the liberating work of the God of the Old Testament. The history of Jesus represents God's continuing programme of liberation:

"The entire history of Jesus that embraces all he did and said, what happened to him and how he reacted to what happened to him is not only anthropological history but a theological history at the same time. It is a history of God incarnate. There is also a continuity in the dimension of the programme of liberation in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, in

that of Jesus to be precise." ⁽²⁴⁷⁾

As such it places Jesus' activity in the framework of Exodus history.

"It puts Jesus and his work in the Exodus history of God and these people and of these people with God. He is the continuation of the Exodus history of Israel, the God-chosen son." ⁽²⁴⁸⁾

However, Jesus' history is also discontinuous with Israel's history. Jesus' coming is meant to make up for Israel's failure to live up to its calling and mission, which is why Jesus belongs to the tradition of the prophets. By bringing justice to the poor the Son of God makes up for Israel's failure to live up to the covenant promises: ⁽²⁴⁹⁾

"Since Israel has failed to be the son of God...that is, the son who does justice for the poor, the widow and the orphan internally and thus in the world, God has become man, Jesus of Nazareth, to do so and effect the salvation of the world as a fulfilment of the covenant promises through suffering and dying." ⁽²⁵⁰⁾

The Jewishness of Jesus helps to make this connection.

For Cone the historical Jesus emphasizes the social context of Christology and demonstrates the importance of Jesus' racial identity. ⁽²⁵¹⁾ Jesus' Jewishness is indispensable for Christology. ⁽²⁵²⁾ Jewishness points

to historical particularity. God became a particular human being in Jesus, so particular that he took on a specific nationality and culture, and shared in the historical traditions of the community into which he was born. Jesus' humanity is a definite humanity.

It implies that the humanity of Jesus is important for faith and it links God's work of salvation in Jesus with the Exodus-Sinai event. Jesus came to fulfil God's will to liberate the oppressed.⁽²⁵³⁾ As Cone states:

"His Jewishness establishes the concreteness of his existence in history, without which Christology inevitably moves in the direction of docetism".⁽²⁵⁴⁾

And as Mofokeng puts it:

"...the Son of God is born in Bethlehem of Juda (sic) as the Jew Jesus. That Jesus is a Jew also establishes a relationship between the Old and New Testaments."⁽²⁵⁵⁾

For Mofokeng the fact that Jesus was born a Jew in Bethlehem provides a basis for a historical Christology that views the life, work and fate of Jesus of Nazareth in the context of socio-political and economic events of Palestine.⁽²⁵⁶⁾ The fact that Jesus had a specific ethnic identity, and his life was tied up with the social, political and economic factors in a specific society and moment in history,

provides an historical rootedness for christology. The incarnation thus affirms a historical starting point for a Christology of the Oppressed.⁽²⁵⁷⁾

The New Testament witnesses to Jesus' presence with the oppressed in the struggle for freedom:

"the historical kernel is the manifestation of Jesus as the Oppressed One whose earthly existence was bound up with the oppressed of the land."⁽²⁵⁸⁾

This does not mean that there are not other emphases.

As Cone puts it:

"Rather it is to say that whatever is said about Jesus' conduct (Fuchs), about the manifestation of the expectant eschatological future in the deeds and words of Jesus (Bornkamm), or about his resurrection as the 'ultimate confirmation of Jesus' claim to authority' (Pannenberg), it must serve to illuminate Jesus' sole reason for existence: to bind the wounds of the afflicted and to liberate those who are in prison."⁽²⁵⁹⁾

This is why blacks can lay claim to the same humanity that was liberated in the death and resurrection of Christ:

"Because Jesus lived, we now know that servitude is inhuman, and that Christ has set us free to live as liberated sons and daughters of God. Unless Jesus was truly like us, then we have no reason to believe that our true humanity is disclosed in his person. Without Jesus' humanity constituted in real history, we have no basis to contend that his coming bestows upon us the

courage and the wisdom to struggle
against injustice and oppression".
(²⁶⁰)

Jesus proclaims the message of liberation and offers himself as the fulfilment of the messianic prophecies.⁽²⁶¹⁾ This is clear from his service in the synagogue at Nazareth described in Luke 4, a crucial text in the liberation argument.⁽²⁶²⁾ The difficulties with the liberation interpretation of this text will be dealt with in the final chapter. What is pertinent at this point is the liberation argument.

Boesak says that Western commentators have generally interpreted the message in Luke 4 as the proclamation of the good news with a purely spiritual meaning, with the terms poor, captives, blind, oppressed interpreted in an "inward, spiritual sense".⁽²⁶³⁾ He rejects such a spiritualization of Jesus' message.⁽²⁶⁴⁾ Boesak argues that Jesus had no reason to suggest that what he was saying was to be understood purely in a spiritual sense.⁽²⁶⁵⁾ Spiritualization leads to a distortion of the gospel message and helps to sanction unjust and oppressive structures.⁽²⁶⁶⁾ It forces Jesus into a Western mould and identifies him with oppressors.⁽²⁶⁷⁾ He suggests that:

*"What is described in Luke 4:18-21 is a
fulfilment through liberating,*

historical events which in turn are new promises marking the road towards total fulfilment. We face here the problem of the 'now' and 'not yet' of the Kingdom of heaven. It is remarkable that the gospel does not itself explicitly distinguish between the kingdom now and the Kingdom later. There is a unity in presentation which is based on the Person to whom this Kingdom has been given. Keeping this unity in view is one of the fundamental presuppositions for the understanding of the gospel: In Jesus the fulfilment is there, and yet it is still to come". (268)

The ministry of Jesus is the fulfilment of God's time. Liberation has been given a new dimension. In him the universality of God's liberation comes to the fore for all people. Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom promises liberation, wholeness and justice for all.

It is the liberation-event that clarifies the meaning of this text.(269) According to Boesak the phrase "To proclaim liberty" is in the Old Testament related to the Year of Jubilee, an event undergirded by the Exodus, and therefore represents a redemption that has a socio-political dimension.(270) It is this liberating deed that creates the occasion for reconciliation, "for the return of true community and authentic humanity".(271) And

"It is this message, tirelessly proclaimed by the prophets, which Jesus Christ takes on as a point of departure for his ministry. It is the gospel of the poor. Jesus' ministry is the fulfilment of God's time. The Kingdom of God has come near. The movement of liberation, begun in the Old Testament, has been given a new dimension. Jesus' proclamation cannot be understood

properly unless seen against the background of the Thora (sic) and the Prophets. In Jesus the universality of God's liberation comes to the fore, not only for Israel, but for all mankind (Titus 2:11). Jesus the Messiah is the fulfilment of the promise of Yahweh to Abraham that in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." (272)

When Jesus speaks about the "poor" he is referring to the real "poor" and not simply to spiritual poverty. In Jesus comes the totality of God's liberation, and the socio-political liberation of the poor becomes the demand of justice: (273)

"This is what Black Theology calls the 'wholeness of life' and 'total liberation'. This is the scope within which the gospel should be understood, proclaimed and lived." (274)

Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom and his personal history testify to this gospel of liberation. For Mofokeng the history of Jesus is a history of the realization of the Kingdom of God:

"The programme of this history is the realization of the kingdom of God. This programme is filled out materially with acts of love and justice in all dimensions of human existence. They are economic, political, social and religious activities in word and deed. In all these activities there is a confrontation of Jesus, by means of the activities that are a realization of the kingdom of God, and the oppressive, exploitative and marginalized status quo. His crucifixion and death are part of this confrontation in solidarity with the underdog." (275)

According to Cone Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom is an announcement of God's decision about oppressed humankind.⁽²⁷⁶⁾ "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" implies that God's rule has come and oppression has ended.⁽²⁷⁷⁾ "Repent and believe the gospel" is a call to recognize the significance of this hour and to accept the new age that it brings by participating in it as Jesus reveals the kingdom in his words and work. The kingdom is Jesus, and his words and work define his relationship to both God and human beings.⁽²⁷⁸⁾

The kingdom, according to the New Testament is a historical event.⁽²⁷⁹⁾ It happens when people are confronted with the reality of God's historical liberation from oppression,⁽²⁸⁰⁾ and challenges them to seek a life of quality, readjusts priorities, and affirms human value:

"The kingdom is not an attainment of material security, nor is it mystical communion with the divine. It has to do with the quality of one's existence in which a person realizes that persons are more important than property. When blacks behave as if the values of this world have no significance, it means that they perceive the irruption of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is a black happening."⁽²⁸¹⁾

On this basis it is argued that the kingdom today is found in the black struggle for liberation, the quest for human dignity. The Kingdom confronts the reality

of oppression as Jesus sets humanity free:

"Not everyone recognizes the person from Nazareth as the Incarnate One who came to liberate the human race. Who could possibly imagine that the Holy One of Israel would condescend to the level of a carpenter? Only those with eyes of faith could see that in that person God was confronting the reality of the human condition. There is no other sign save the words and deeds of Jesus himself."
(²⁸²)

To repent and receive the Kingdom is to affirm what it stands for and to reject anything that contradicts it:

"Jesus' teaching about the kingdom is the most radical, revolutionary aspect of his message. It involves the totality of a person's existence in the world and what it means in an oppressive society. To repent is to affirm the reality of the kingdom by refusing to live on the basis of any definition except according to the kingdom. Nothing else matters! The kingdom, then, is the rule of God breaking in like a ray of light, usurping the powers that enslave human lives."(²⁸³)

It is to work with Christ, to work for the realization of justice here and now:

"To participate in God's salvation is to cooperate with the black Christ as he liberates his people from bondage. Salvation, then, primarily has to do with earthly reality and the justice inflicted on those who are helpless and poor. To see the salvation of God is to see this people rise up against its oppressors, demanding that justice becomes a reality now, not tomorrow."
(²⁸⁴)

To experience salvation is to experience historical

liberation, for salvation implies the liberation of the kingdom.

The kingdom of God was for the poor who had no security in the world.⁽²⁸⁵⁾ The entire history of Jesus manifests his solidarity with the oppressed and socially marginalized against the rich, powerful and righteous. As Boesak explains:

"He belonged to the poor, downtrodden people, oppressed and destitute of rights in their own country, and subjugated to countless daily humiliations under foreign rulers. He lived and worked among the poor and from among these came his disciples. He was one of them, one with them, feeling more at home with the 'have-nots' than with the 'haves'. He made no secret of the fact that He had come especially for this kind of people - the poor, the captives, the have-nots, the downtrodden".⁽²⁸⁶⁾

For Mofokeng, Jesus' birth symbolically identifies him with the oppressed:

"The Son of God who becomes man is born in very humble circumstances similar to those in which black migrant workers have to live and are 'born' to the struggle of liberation."⁽²⁸⁷⁾

While the historical value of the birth narratives may be doubted they still have value at the mythological level. They reflect what the early Christian community thought about Jesus and how they saw his existence as one of solidarity with the poor.⁽²⁸⁸⁾ For them Jesus

is a unique person with special concern for the lonely and the downtrodden. They not only point to Jesus' messiahship but try to show the significance of his messiahship. Jesus is the humiliated and abused one. Jesus' association with tax collectors and sinners reveals something of the nature of God and therefore shows that ministry to the marginalised was part of the reason for his birth.⁽²⁸⁹⁾

Jesus' baptism reveals the same kind of solidarity and implies that the kingdom of God is for the poor:

"By being baptized, Jesus defines his existence as one with sinners and thus conveys the meaning of the coming kingdom. The kingdom is for the poor, not the rich; and it comes as an expression of God's love, not judgement. In baptism Jesus embraces the condition of sinners, affirming their existence as his own."⁽²⁹⁰⁾

The temptation story continues this theme. The tempter sought to divert Jesus from his ministry to the poor. Jesus' refusal to obey the tempter

"may be interpreted as his refusal to identify himself with any of the available modes of oppressive or self-glorifying power. His being in the world is as one of the humiliated, suffering poor."⁽²⁹¹⁾

The work of Jesus displays the same solidarity and struggle for the liberation of the poor.⁽²⁹²⁾ Jesus makes contact with the poor in a situation that is

desperately in need of liberation, and he works actively for their liberation, and so demonstrates his partiality to the poor:

"This is the way of Jesus' partiality that made the situation of and service for the poor privileged locale for a view and work for universality." ⁽²⁹³⁾

Jesus' approach corresponds to the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament, a tradition that developed in the context of division, confrontation and conflict between the powerful and the weak.⁽²⁹⁴⁾ He chooses the side of the poor and the afflicted and enters the world of the poor.⁽²⁹⁵⁾ It is the poor who have no shelter, are oppressed and discriminated against.
⁽²⁹⁶⁾

"It is the poor who constantly and passionately cry for justice and the coming of the Liberator Jesus Christ and await him with eager, longing and burning impatience. It is these poor with whom Jesus of Nazareth in his entrance into the world is baptized."
⁽²⁹⁷⁾

It is through the poor that Jesus gains a "knowledge in praxis".⁽²⁹⁸⁾

Jesus gave sight to the blind, empowered the weak and raised the lame (Mark 2:1-12)⁽²⁹⁹⁾, and so subverted the system of oppression by humanizing the dehumanized:

"In other words, his work of redistributing, humanizing power, without which those he humanized would not have been fully human, and his resocializing of the marginalized and outcasts was subversive to the institutions and structures that can only survive because of the weakness, blindness and poverty of the poor."
(³⁰⁰)

In the liberation argument the term "oppressed" includes not only those who are poor, but also those who are marginalised and outcast. In his life of solidarity with the poor Jesus was confronted by the classes of power. The history of Jesus is a dialectical one, suffering and death are an integral part of the conflict.⁽³⁰¹⁾ He subverted the purity law system that provided the ideological superstructure in Palestine.

"Jesus himself made his own prophetic offensive of denunciations against the Pharisees and the scribes from within the context of justice and humanity for the poor, the outcasts and the weak as true service to God. His God was a God of the oppressed." (³⁰²)

Those who wanted to preserve this superstructure confronted Jesus and planned to kill him.⁽³⁰³⁾

But Jesus was triumphant over them because he was activated by the power of the Spirit:

"The Spirit of God that had originally activated him (Luke 3:21; Matthew 3:16) and created and opened his praxis (Luke 4:14) strengthened and pulled him through every one of these crises (Luke

4:1,14). He did not overcome these crises outside the context of his praxis. He experienced them in it, grappled with them in it and overcame in it."⁽³⁰⁴⁾

Thus, the biblical portrayal of the death and resurrection of Jesus confirms that these events mark the consummation of his ministry to the poor. However the manner in which these events are interpreted is influenced by the context in which they are interpreted.

Mofokeng suggests four issues that underlie christological reflection in the South African context.⁽³⁰⁵⁾ First, the domestication of suffering and death.⁽³⁰⁶⁾ The suffering and death of Jesus serve to give religious sanction to institutionalized suffering and death. Since Jesus is the prototype of those who suffer, blacks learn to be tolerant as they believe that they suffer like him.⁽³⁰⁷⁾

Second, a paralysis of reflection on the cross.⁽³⁰⁸⁾ In black churches Good Friday celebrations occupy a position of prominence. People regularly commemorate the passion of Jesus in terms of its significance for their own experience of suffering which may be identified with the humiliation and death of Jesus:

"On the other side, Jesus is being tortured, abused and humiliated in their presence and in their time. In fact it

is their own painful life story that they are reliving and narrating. Jesus of Nazareth is tortured, abused and humiliated and crucified in them. They are hanging on the cross as innocent victims of white evil forces. Jesus' cry of abandonment is their own daily cry. They experience abandonment by their own God who, they believe, is righteous and good,...there is an identification, even though unconscious, between Jesus and themselves." (³⁰⁹)

Jesus suffers in his struggle to help the poor and to liberate them. (³¹⁰) He suffers with the blacks as

"They suffer 'innocently', without having actively provoked anybody. They suffer simply because they are black people." (³¹¹)

It is because suffering is so much a part of black experience that Good Friday becomes for them an important focus of theological reflection, because "they possess the experiential categories to perceive the Nazarene's suffering and death." (³¹²) Indeed black Christians are somewhat preoccupied by Christ's suffering as they try to understand the meaning and purpose of his suffering for their own experience:

"The black suffering Christians rightly strain themselves and spend a lot of time trying to reflect on the suffering of Jesus of Nazareth in the light of their own suffering with the intention or aim of understanding afresh the suffering and death of this man and drawing consequences for their own lives and situation of suffering under and at the hands of white racist oppression, exploitation and denial of black humanity." (³¹³)

It is not surprising therefore, that the resurrection is not given the same attention. Although it is an important datum of the Christian faith, the resurrection falls outside their life experience and is consequently not celebrated with the same enthusiasm as Good Friday is. The resurrection

"remains a vague and illusive scriptural information and article of the apostolic faith. The 'following' of Jesus and his history by the mind ends in paralysis at the cross at Golgotha. This makes the following of the resurrected Jesus Christ in our situation today a serious and perennial problem. How can these black Christians, who are victims of oppression and exploitation, reflect on the history of Jesus of Nazareth, especially his resurrection in such a way that they are moved to seek life in a struggle against forces that deny and destroy life?"⁽³¹⁴⁾

Third, death as the political weapon of the oppressor.⁽³¹⁵⁾ Some believe that God is punishing black people through his oppressive representatives; God is annexed by the oppressor:

"The effect of this annexation of God by the oppressors and exploiters is a paralysis of the growth and development of a rebellious consciousness among many Christians. Their opposition, whenever it emerges comes up against the ultimate punishment of death."⁽³¹⁶⁾

Fourth, anxieties of the history of following - anxieties that are due to the distance between the cross and the resurrection.⁽³¹⁷⁾ Following Jesus brings with it the challenges and pressures or

anxieties that result from ridicule, opposition, harassment, and life-threatening responses from those who are offended by such discipleship. The experience of many Christians who stood up for Kingdom values in the face of Apartheid forces is a clear example of the anxieties of following. To live as a Christian in the face of oppression is to know the anxieties of discipleship.⁽³¹⁸⁾ True disciples constantly face the possibility of death as they engage in liberation.⁽³¹⁹⁾ They have no guarantee that everyone who engages in the struggle for liberation will enjoy victory over oppression.⁽³²⁰⁾

It is in this context of the negative aspects of suffering and death that a relevant theology of the cross becomes essential, a theology that addresses adequately the problems of human suffering, oppression and liberation. Mofokeng attempts to provide such a Christology by viewing the cross as the starting point of the way to liberation.⁽³²¹⁾ For him reflection on the cross leads to suffering and endurance, awakening and insurrection.⁽³²²⁾ Pain and suffering can lead to loyalty to God who enables the oppressed to survive their oppression. Black suffering can be a way to liberation.

This approach, according to Mofokeng entails a double located hermeneutic⁽³²³⁾:

"The meaning of the cross emerges in the reciprocal activity of the two horizons - Jesus Christ on the one hand and his own people in the world on the other hand; the cross of Jesus of Nazareth on the one hand and the crosses of the engaged oppressed black people on the other hand." (324)

It is in this reciprocal activity that the suffering of black people represents crosses of discipleship. It is in the encounter with oppression that blacks discover who Jesus was.⁽³²⁵⁾ The cross of Jesus represents the ultimate test of God's love and also the vindication of that love:

"The cross is the concentration point or climax of the test of the tenacity of God's love for suffering and perishing humankind. The Father's 'abandoning' (total giving) of the Son and the Son's obedience underwent this test and endured it." (326)

The cross therefore represents God's triumph over evil and the fulfilment of the purpose of liberation. On the surface the cross seems to be a contradiction of this claim because there is no visible sign of victory on the cross; Jesus was abandoned by God and died.⁽³²⁷⁾ It is only when the cross is viewed retrospectively in the light of the resurrection that it presents itself as victory:

"It is in the power of the retrospective light of the resurrection of the crucified Jesus that this victory becomes visible. The resurrection was the vindication of the tenacity of God's love. It is from the event of the third

day that reflection on the cross as an instrument of God's love can be done credibly. This event transforms perception of the cross. The cross was meant to be 'an instrument of violence, vengeance and death', and still is. Now, it becomes an ultimate 'vehicle of divine love and restoration to new life'." (328)

"the cross and resurrection is a living paradigmatic event for the liberation effort of the oppressed." (329)

The fact that the events of Good Friday are given more attention in the black community does not mean that their appreciation of the resurrection is diminished. Indeed, it is the reality of triumph represented in the cross that black people are able to find strength and hope in struggle. The power of God is present throughout.

The real power of love is expressed in true discipleship, and it is in this that the suffering of the oppressed is ultimately the path to victory: (330)

"It is God's condescension in love to the creature that has fallen into conflict and suffering, the creature that has fallen in sin. God condescends with the aim of freeing man, his creature, from the hopeless situation in which he is, to a situation wherein he can be free to respond in love to God his creator and Saviour." (331)

"The depth of God's condescension is reached when the Son is crucified and suffers the pain and humiliation of the cross. In his suffering and humiliation, the Son takes the pen-ultimate step in the actualization of his obedience to God the Father. And this step is the pen-ultimate event in God's

condescension to save mankind." ⁽³³²⁾

Jesus died because he was committed to justice and the empowerment of the poor in the face of suffering, both institutionalized and structural.⁽³³³⁾ As Mofokeng says:

"There is an identification between Jesus' suffering and their suffering. You could even go on to say there is also an identification, even though unconscious, between Jesus and themselves.

...He suffers in the struggle against the suffering of the weak and the poor and for the liberation of the entire humankind." ⁽³³⁴⁾

Jesus "solidarizes (sic) with suffering humankind to the deepest point".⁽³³⁵⁾ He does this by locating himself in the situation of the poor and taking seriously their need for liberation:

"He compassionately undertakes actions of liberative service to them, empowering and actually raising them up to be human subjects by acting as the human subject among them". ⁽³³⁶⁾

In this way he enables the oppressed to struggle for their freedom even in the face of death:

"In the death of the Son of God, as an ultimate action of suffering love the hopeless and "the dead" are created to risk and to face death in the struggle for assertion of their divine right for true humanity, instead of accepting the security of a slave existence." ⁽³³⁷⁾

The history of the cross therefore symbolizes the creation and empowerment of the poor to become active subjects of their own history, thus making the victims of injustice instruments of liberation:

"The victims of human injustice are freed from a negative view of themselves by the Son of God's identification and solidarity, which he does by taking their being and condition upon himself. By doing that he makes their being and condition the instrument for liberation of mankind." (338)

And it does this because it enables them to recognize that suffering and injustice need not destroy a peoples spirit and that the power to overcome oppression is available in that Jesus who lives now.

If black people were, for example, to see themselves as racists define them then their blackness represents all that is negative. Because they suffer their confidence is low and they feel rejected and unloved. If on the other hand they discovered that Jesus identifies with them, that is God identifies with them, then they feel affirmed, and are encouraged to see themselves in a positive light - see themselves as having much worth. Further, if the suffering they experience can be seen as a path to liberation then they will have hope, indeed they do because the passion and resurrection of Jesus demonstrates that their suffering can be truly the way to liberation.

Jesus' identification with them vests them with full humanity and worth, and his victory over suffering provides them with courage and hope. Suffering is no longer a sign of defeat.

Viewed thus, the suffering and death of Christ has a positive rather than a negative impact, and becomes the way of freedom and humanity:

"By his death he has removed the power of death over and fear of death in them and as such freed the way toward true humanity for the oppressed and also freed the oppressed for the way towards true humanity." (339)

The suffering and death of Jesus becomes the symbol of hope and liberation:

"God not only shares our suffering in the death of Jesus, but becomes the source of hope and liberation. In other words, there is no suffering which is not part of divine reality. This notion of God which is fully developed in the crucified God is all embracing". (340)

Suffering then is no longer meaningless, but is part of God's own war against injustice.

The continuing presence of the Risen Christ among the oppressed gives them power to overcome suffering and death and to live as people created in the image of God; thus the history of Jesus continues in the

struggle for liberation today: ⁽³⁴¹⁾

"In other words, the history of Jesus goes on in the struggle of the oppressed who rise to affirm themselves. He is present there among them even though submerged. The event of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth sustains the struggling community of the oppressed during their protracted hanging on the cross." ⁽³⁴²⁾

He is "submerged" in the sense that his presence and activity is not ostensibly his presence and activity. He is there underneath the events of history. He is there even when the oppressed feel they are being abandoned. His power is operative, and it is also their power.

The message of the resurrection provides the assurance of divine solidarity, affirms humanity, and transforms reality:

"...It also constitutes the basis of their hope that the truth will triumph over the lie, that liberation will be a reality. The message of Jesus Christ's resurrection to them is that the God who raised Jesus is at work in their period of hanging on the cross, affirming black humanity and raising a new humanity and a new world in which human life will be possible for all." ⁽³⁴³⁾

It could be argued that the freedom made real in resurrection is a freedom in the "next life" and not freedom here and now. For some the resurrection of Jesus is a symbolic rather than historical event, and

their interpretation of it will differ from that which is offered by those who believe the resurrection is a historical event. Black theologians accept the truth of resurrection and recognize the reality of the power that the Risen Christ makes available here and now, and the freedom that he makes possible in history, a freedom which moves to fuller freedom in a future that no one can define in precise historical terms.

The true blackness of black people is derived from their commitment to Christ and their dependence on God, and their restoration, life and praxis are defined in terms of the death and resurrection of Jesus:

"He, as the living Lord of history and time by virtue of being raised by the Father to live eternally and reign eternally in the world, is the first and the last word of black people's life and praxis. He lived and still lives among the oppressed, did perform and still performs deeds of solidarity with the poor, preached the kingdom of God and was crucified and accepted the cross and death as the final act of fighting for the dehumanized."⁽³⁴⁴⁾

Jesus Christ is the eternal event of liberation, total liberation amongst the oppressed as he lives and works in solidarity with them and sets them free to be human.⁽³⁴⁵⁾ He

"raises a community that lives and suffers with him, struggling against the powers of contradiction to the

liberation of man and for the emergence of a new world with justice for the dispossessed and fraternity among men. He raises this community with the story of his life in which he goes 'from Jordan to Golgotha', in which he identifies with the oppressed and the poor today and solidarizes with them in their situation of crucifixion in the world." (³⁴⁶)

In the words of Cone:

"The finality of Jesus lies in the totality of his existence in complete freedom as the Oppressed One who reveals through his death and resurrection that God is present in all dimensions of human liberation. His death is the revelation of the freedom of God, taking upon himself the totality of human oppression; his resurrection is the disclosure that God is not defeated by oppression but transforms it into the possibility of freedom." (³⁴⁷)

To recognize and accept this, and to give oneself over to this, is to know the Risen Christ and to follow him:

"To say no to oppression and yes to liberation is to encounter the existential significance of the Resurrected One. He is the Liberator par excellence whose very presence makes persons sell all that they have and follow him." (³⁴⁸)

In life and in death, indeed in new life, Christ is the Liberator for all.

It is on the basis of such an interpretation of the biblical portrayal of Jesus that black Christology

offers a Jesus who is both saviour and liberator. Salvation and historical liberation are aspects of a single process:

"Christ's salvation is liberation; there is no liberation without Christ. Both meanings are inherent in the statement that Jesus Christ is the ground of human liberation. Any statement that divorces salvation from liberation or makes human freedom independent of divine freedom must be rejected. From this starting point we proceed to examine the content of human liberation itself: as relation to God, as relation to self and community, as the practice of freedom in history and hope." (349)

For christians, there is indeed no liberation without Christ, not the kind of liberation defined in terms of Incarnation, in terms of the salvation offered through Christ.

This affirmation is applied to the political situation where it overcomes racism and oppression and provides the dynamic for the black peoples struggle. It is for this reason that Black Theology emphasizes that salvation already achieved and promised in Christ is a pre-condition for historical liberation which engages human efforts to transform conditions of alienation, to create a just, human society.⁽³⁵⁰⁾ This is why Maimela cautions against a "spiritualized" interpretation of the atonement, and links liberation in Christ to socio-historical transformation:

"to reduce the entire work of Christ on the cross to forgiveness of sins and guilt is to overlook the liberating and transformative power of Christ's work in socio-political conditions, a power which is at work to free men and women from the tyranny of racism, class, sex, poverty and ignorance".⁽³⁵¹⁾

"In other words, the atoning work of Christ ushers in a totally new state of existence in which all forms of human deprivation, degradation and misery are abolished".⁽³⁵²⁾

Maimela believes that the redeeming work of Christ holds out the divine promise and possibility for personal and social renewal,

"in the sense that God in Christ intends redirecting, reinvigorating and regenerating the perverted and alienated human existence by lifting it up to himself in order to liberate humanity from sin, thereby actualizing a complete fellowship of God and humanity, and of people among themselves".⁽³⁵³⁾

Maimela asserts that there is no tangible liberation for humanity until their whole situation is saved, transformed, liberated.⁽³⁵⁴⁾ In other words,

"the fundamental message of liberation is that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were aimed at the total liberation (salvation) of humanity from all kinds of humiliations both spiritual and physical, and that this liberation is a dynamic historical process in which man is given the promise, the possibility and power to overcome all the perverted human conditions on this side of the grave."⁽³⁵⁵⁾

The struggle of the poor is given a universal

significance through God's work of universal salvation and renewal. The liberation struggle is ultimately intended to free both the oppressed and the oppressors, to free all people.⁽³⁵⁶⁾ As Kameeta points out, Jesus Christ is the Liberator of the whole of humanity without distinction of race or colour.⁽³⁵⁷⁾

4.4. CHRISTOLOGY AND DISCIPLESHIP

However, while liberation is guaranteed in Jesus, the oppressed have their part to play. Jesus Christ the Liberator summons black people to action. As Mofokeng puts it:

"The committed oppressed people realize more and more that the most appropriate way of continuing the liberation tradition is by radicalizing their input qualitatively in response to the changed and continually changing and increasing challenges of the contemporary situation".⁽³⁵⁸⁾

Faith in the Risen Lord brings initiative and responsibility for the cause of history as Cone says:

"To believe in the resurrection transforms faith from a deliverance from the world into an initiative that changes the world and makes those who believe into worldly, personal, social and political witnesses to God's righteousness and freedom in the midst of a repressive society and an unredeemed world. In this, faith comes to historical self-consciousness and the recognition of its eschatological task within history."⁽³⁵⁹⁾

It is in this participation that theology itself is vitalized:

"the theological enterprise becomes alive and practical as the black community participates in God's activity of liberation through Jesus Christ".
(³⁶⁰)

Both the creative and salvific dimensions of God's intention in Jesus are part of a continuing historical process, a process that includes creative political action.⁽³⁶¹⁾ It is, as Maimela says, in the socio-political and cultural context in which people find themselves that God meets and works with them for their salvation and liberation:

"It is my contention that God is actively involved in both salvational and creative activities neither of which is complete. God meets and involves us nowhere but in the socio-political and cultural situations in which we humans find ourselves." (³⁶²)

The divine event in Jesus Christ places us in a new sociopolitical context wherein we become creators of a new future, as we engage in transformation. ⁽³⁶³⁾ The dehumanization of black people is so deep that a new black human being has to emerge. God creates the black human being as acting subject to become a self-creating and self-liberating subject. Thus the entire liberation process is a process in which God continually creates, activates and radicalizes the

humanity of the poor.⁽³⁶⁴⁾

Discipleship is essential to the christological process. The past praxis of Jesus demonstrates that the praxis of the black community is the locus of his continuing praxis as he creates and empowers this community to be a liberative one:

"Jesus who had become the Christ for past generations and still becomes the liberator for present generations by fighting his way from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, by fighting his way from the manger to the grave, is the event of creation of the black suffering community as a comprehensive subject. He is the event that has embedded itself so deeply and so long in the black community from the beginning of black existence, and right through the painful history of black people that we have to admit that there is a liberative current that runs through our history, our culture, our economic praxis and our religion. And because it runs through them it continuously makes them liberative and draws them into the liberation struggle that is becoming more and more radical in intensity and goals."⁽³⁶⁵⁾

For Mofokeng the following of the practice of Jesus is the way to humanization, as the history of black humanity is changed through its engagement in the struggle and its increasing self-consciousness.⁽³⁶⁶⁾ Black people affirm their new humanity actively by striving for justice for the poor. Black people also

"pray passionately to God in Jesus Christ asking God to give them the Spirit of wisdom and power to follow Jesus of Nazareth steadfastly."⁽³⁶⁷⁾

The Christ who is present among the oppressed provides them with discernment and power through the Holy Spirit:

"As he is active among those oppressed in the world today they too read his praxis with eyes that are opened by his spirit and undertake a translation of his Messianic praxis because of the infusion of the dynamic power of this Spirit of Jesus Christ." (368)

Black Christians are called to seek a new understanding of what Jesus is doing today so that they might respond effectively to the challenge:

"The situation in South Africa today makes it imperative for black Christians to search for a new understanding of what Jesus the Messiah is doing in our country today in order for them to respond appropriately to his call." (369)

A new theology/Christology is to be found in an active response and openness to the present Christ and his Spirit:

"when those people who are truly converted to the liberating praxis of Jesus the Messiah, acting as a community and as individuals who, infused with the power of the Holy Spirit of the Messiah and guided by him, attempt to imitate him or translate his liberative praxis into their saving praxis to affect the lives of their fellowmen and transform the world around them making it a worthy reflection of the coming of the Kingdom of God." (370)

4.5. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LATIN AMERICAN AND BLACK CHRISTOLOGY.

The above review reveals that both the christologies under review adopt a similar approach to christology. Yet, there are some important differences.

First, the context of Black christology is the black community whereas for Latin American liberation christology the context is the oppressed community in which colour is not regarded as an important factor. The main thrust of the former still operates with a race paradigm even where it has acknowledged a class paradigm and therefore is less influenced by a Marxist social analysis. This also helps to explain why Black christology can speak of Jesus as the "Black Messiah", and of the importance of "black" history and culture. Hence also the appeal to the "African worldview" in support of its view of reality.

Second, Black theology is the product of christians reflecting mainly outside ecclesiastical structures whereas Latin American liberation theology was given initial impetus by bishops conferences. This probably explains why Black christology does not accord to ecclesiastical tradition the normative status that Latin American liberation christology does. It does not accept that tradition sets the limits for reflection. Whether this difference in emphasis is due also to the fact that their origins lie in

different denominational settings - one Protestant and the other Catholic - is difficult to establish.

Third, the difference in the status given to ecclesiastical tradition results in a hermeneutical circle in which Scripture has more force than that tradition.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Ever since the arrival of the first Europeans in South Africa black people have been subjected to an inferior status within South African society and have had to suffer much deprivation in the social, political and economic spheres. With the emergence of Apartheid in 1948 the situation got much worse and the struggle by blacks for freedom and equality intensified. Various protest movements arose to galvanize people into action against Apartheid. One such movement was the Black Consciousness Movement which emerged in the late 1960's. By the 70's this movement gained effective momentum, and was to push the black struggle rapidly forward. It was out of the cradle of this movement that the quest for a relevant theology of struggle began. The result was Black Theology.
2. DN Hopkins, *Black Theology USA and South Africa*, Maryknoll Orbis, 1989; S Jacob. "A Critical Study of the Main Themes in Latin American Liberation Theology and South African Black Theology with Special Reference to Major Contributors and the Significance of These Theologies for a Relevant Theology for South Africa," unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1989; IJ Mosala and B Tlhagale, (eds), *The Unquestionable Right To Be Free: Essays in Black Theology*, Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers, 1986; A Boesak, *Farewell To Innocence: A Social-Ethical Study of Black Theology and Black Power*, Johannesburg, Raven Press, 1976; *Black Theology Revisited*, Conference Report, Institute of Contextual Theology, Johannesburg, 1983; TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers: Toward a Black Christology*, Kampen, JH Kok, 1983; S Maimela, *Proclaim Freedom To My People*, Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers, 1987.
3. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1986, p.46.
4. A Boesak, *Farewell To Innocence: A Social-Ethical Study of Black Theology and Black Power*, Johannesburg, Raven Press, 1976, p.74.

5. idem.
6. ibid., p.17.
7. ibid., p.111; "Blacks detest the way Western theology has departmentalized life and forced upon the African mind their dualistic pattern of thinking- an element completely foreign to biblical mentality and African traditional thought. Therefore, Black Theology proclaims the totality of God's liberation and in the total liberation seeks the realisation of the wholeness of life. This wholeness embraces the total existence of man in the present, it embraces the total meaning of black being with regard to his past, his present and his future."(idem) God's salvific activity affects every area of human life:
 "There is not a single aspect of the life of Israel that is not confronted with the demand for liberation. This is what Black Theology calls 'the wholeness of life' and 'total liberation'."(ibid., p.26). This point is reiterated by Maimela: "Indeed, if God is acknowledged to be the Creator of all human life and thus the Lord over this created life in all its aspects, then the conclusion cannot be avoided that the arena of human relationships - in all its socio-political, economic and judicial arrangements - is the sphere in which God is actively involved through the creative and redemptive acts of love." (S Maimela, *Proclaim Freedom To My People*, Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers, 1987, pp.1-2). Maimela goes on to state that: "...Salvation thus has to do also with liberation from those things that keep human beings in slavery and oppression, thereby denying them joy and wholeness as individuals and community. Put differently, salvation is no longer understood as an escape from this miserable world but as a divine power and possibility of transforming the social structures, of restoring creation and of seeking to overcome suffering. It is only as salvation is understood to be bound up with the institutions and structures that bind men and women of flesh and blood that it could become good news for the oppressed, the hungry, the alienated, the sorrowful and the outcasts."(S Maimela, "Current Themes and Emphasis in Black Theology, in (eds), IJ Mosala and B Tlhagale, *The Unquestionable Right to be Free: Essays in Black Theology*, Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers, 1986, p. 108).
8. "The tendency to spiritualize the biblical message is still dominant. We are in full agreement with Gutierrez when he warns that this excessive spiritualization is something we should profoundly distrust. It stems from a Western, dualistic pattern of thought foreign to biblical mentality. 'This is', he says, 'a discarnate spirituality, scornful to all earthly realities'."(A Boesak, *Farewell To Innocence*, op.cit., p.23.)
9. S Maimela, "Current Themes and Emphasis in Black Theology, in (eds), IJ Mosala and B Tlhagale, *The Unquestionable Right to be Free: Essays in Black*

Theology, Op.cit, p.108. As Maimela points out: "the gospel has a social meaning and ... human restoration through the Christ-event is not separable from the renewal of political, economic and social institutions. It is out of this conviction that black theologians have had to reject traditional theology's emphasis on spiritualization of the gospel - as if the gift of salvation which Christ offers has no interest in the material conditions of the poor and the oppressed, and as if salvation is not concerned with the whole person in his/her physical and spiritual dimensions".(ibid.,p.107)

10. Maimela states that this means that the question of human existence and the question of God imply each other just as political issues and theological concerns imply one another. Divine transformation includes the social, economic, political, cultural, and judicial situations. (S Maimela, *Proclaim Freedom To My People*, Skotaville Publishers, Johannesburg, 1987, pp.2-3).
11. JH Cone, "Black Theology and African Theology", in (eds), JH Cone and GS Wilmore, *Black Theology: A Documentary History 1966-1979*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1979, p.467.
12. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers: Toward a Black Christology*, Kampen, JH Kok, 1983, pp.259-260.
13. A Boesak, *Farewell To Innocence*, op.cit., p.16; As Boesak says: "We may say, thus, that theology is critical reflection on historical praxis, in other words, it is the active involvement of the Church in the world. At the same time theology is faith manifested- the action of love within history."(idem) It follows then that all theological reflection necessarily involves critical reflection on praxis. Black Theology holds that continual reflection is an act of faith, and as such it attempts to state the nature of the context and the experience of oppression on the basis of the Christian faith. The context of theological reflection thus emerges out of the experience of the oppressed blacks in South Africa.(B Goba, *An Agenda for Black Theology: Hermeneutics for Social Change*, Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers, 1988, pp.40-41).
14. "In this context, truth is not an intellectual datum that is entrusted to academic guilds. Truth cannot be separated from the peoples struggles and the hopes and dreams that arise from that struggle. Truth is that transcendent reality, disclosed in the peoples historical struggle for liberation, which enables them to know that their fight for freedom is not futile. The affirmation of truth means that the freedom hoped for will be realized".(JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, New York, The Seabury Press, 1975,

p.17).

15. idem.

16. "praxis is that directed activity toward freedom wherein people recognize that truth is not primarily a question of theory, but it is a practical question. In practice people must prove the truth by destroying the existing relations of untruth." (JH Cone, "Christian Faith and Political Praxis", in B Mahan and LD Richesin, (eds), *The Challenge of Liberation Theology: A First World Response*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1981, p.59).

17. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.30.

18. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.37.

19. ibid., p.38.

20. ibid., p.110-111.

21. B Goba, *An Agenda for Black Theology: Hermeneutics for Social Change*, op.cit., p.38.

22. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.20. Faith and praxis come together in a black theology of liberation, as theological reflection itself fulfils its role in the liberation process: "Black Theological reflection is a critical reflection on the praxis of the Christian faith, one which participates in the ongoing process of liberation within the black community." (B Goba, "Doing Theology in South Africa: A Black Christian Perspective", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Vol.31.1980, p.23); In Boesak's words, "theology comes to mean man's critical reflection on himself, on his own basic principles, a clear and critical attitude regarding economic and socio-cultural issues in the life and reflection of the Christian community. Theology is critical reflection on society and the life of the Church is 'worked out in the light of the word (of God) accepted in faith and inspired by a practical purpose - and therefore indissolubly linked to historical praxis". (A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, op.cit., pp.15-16). According to Boesak this praxis is the praxis of the black situation: "Theology is passionately involved - it begins with the experience of the actual struggles, suffering and joys of particular communities. For black people, this means that theology must engage itself in the black experience, an experience shared by, and articulated in the community". (ibid., p.16). Praxis relates to changing the context of black experience and changing the world as part of God's action. Mgojo says "...black theological reflection begins in issues and questions that emerge from the black experience and tries to find answers which are consistent with that experience." (EKM Mgojo,

"Prolegomenon to a Study of Black Theology", in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Vol. 21, 1977, p.31). Black Theology is therefore the result of reflection from engagement. Indeed as Mofokeng points out, it presupposes engagement in the praxis of liberation: "Methodologically...reflection presupposes an engagement in a praxis of liberation. You may not and cannot, for your reflection to be fruitful and credible, reflect on a practice in which you are not actively involved. Involvement is a prerequisite for authentic theologization." (TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.37).

23. A Boesak, *Black Theology, Black Power*, Oxford, AR Mowbray & Co Ltd, 1978. p.1.
24. N Pityana, "What is Black Consciousness?" in M Motlhabi, (ed), *Essays on Black Theology*, Black Theology Project, Johannesburg, UCM, 1972.pp.39-40.
25. S Biko, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for True Humanity" in M Motlhabi, (ed), *Essays on Black Theology*, Black Theology Project, Johannesburg, UCM, 1972. p.21.
26. A Boesak, *Black Theology, Black Power*, op.cit., p.6.
27. S Biko, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for True Humanity" , op.cit., p.21.
28. N Pityana, "What is Black Consciousness?", op.cit., pp.39-40.
29. S Biko, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for True Humanity", op.cit., pp.21-22.
30. N Pityana, "What is Black Consciousness?", op.cit., p.40.
31. A Boesak, *Black Theology, Black Power*, op.cit., p.1.
32. N Pityana, "What is Black Consciousness?", op.cit., p.37.
33. S Biko, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for True Humanity", op.cit., p.21.
34. A Boesak, *Black Theology, Black Power*, op.cit., pp.51-64.
35. *ibid.*, p.27.

36. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.7.
37. idem.
38. L Sebidi, "The Dynamics of the Black Struggle and its implications for Black Theology", in I J Mosala and B Tlhagale, (eds), *The Unquestionable Right to be Free: Essays in Black Theology*, Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers, 1986. pp. 2-35.
39. ibid., p.15.
40. idem.
41. idem.
42. ibid., p.19.
43. idem.
44. idem.
45. ibid., p.31.
46. idem.
47. ibid., p.35.
48. B Tlhagale, "Towards a Black Theology of Liberation," in C Villa-Vicencio and JW De Gruchy, (eds) *Resistance and Hope: South African Essays in Honour of Beyers Naude*, Cape Town, David Philip , 1985.p.126f.
49. IJ Mosala, "The Use of the Bible in Black Theology", in IJ Mosala and B Tlhagale, (eds), *The Unquestionable Right To Be Free: Essays in Black Theology*, Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers, 1986, p.176f.
50. TA Mofokeng, "The Evolution of the Black Struggle and the Role of Black Theology," in (eds) I J Mosala and B Tlhagale, *The Unquestionable Right To Be Free: Essays in Black Theology*, Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers, 1986.p.125.
51. idem.
52. ibid., p.127.
53. A Boesak, *Black Theology, Black Power*, op.cit., p.13.

54. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op. cit., p.200.
55. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.138.
56. TA Mofokeng, "The Cross in the Search for True Humanity: Theological Challenges Facing South Africa", *Journal of Black Theology for Southern Africa*, Vol 3, No.2. Nov 1989, p.46.
57. "This means that Christology has to be rooted in the trinitarian life of God. The Father and the Son live eternally in a relationship of love through the Holy Spirit... At a particular time in the history of the world, the Father sovereignly decided to give His love to his creature, man, thus hurrying to the aid of his suffering creature. To do this the Father sent his Son to become to man who is in conflict with God his creator. This is what incarnation (God becomes man) of God means." (TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.242).
58. A Boesak, *Farewell To Innocence*, op.cit., p.113.
59. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.243.
60. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., pp.34-35.
61. TA Mofokeng, "A Black Christology: A New Beginning" In *Journal of Black Theology for South Africa*, May (1987), pp.1-7.
62. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., pp. 227-228 ; T A Mofokeng, "A Black Christology: A New Beginning", op.cit., p.7.
63. TA Mofokeng, "A Black Christology: A New Beginning", op.cit., p.7.
64. idem. As Goba puts it: "It is a theology that is grounded in our cultural as well as political experience of oppression. Its basic orientation challenges the oppressive worldview of the oppressor. It also reflects a theological consciousness whose goal is to bring about a situation of humanization and liberation." (B Goba, *An Agenda for Black Theology*, op.cit., p.95).
65. D Tutu, "Black Theology/African Theology - Soul Mates or Antagonists?", in JH Cone & GS Wilmore, (eds), *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*, op.cit., pp. 483-491; A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, op. cit.
66. D Tutu, "Black Theology/African Theology: Soul Mates or Antagonists?", op.cit., p. 490.

67. *ibid.*, p.489.
68. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, *op.cit.*, p.227.
69. *ibid.*, p.228.
70. *idem.*
71. *idem.*
72. A Boesak, *Black Theology, Black Power*, *op.cit.*, p.26.
73. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*, p.52.
74. *ibid.*, p.14.
75. *ibid.*, p.120.
76. *idem.*
77. *ibid.*, p.119.
78. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, *op.cit.*, pp.136-137.
79. A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, *op.cit.*, p.37.
80. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, *op.cit.*, p.134.
81. A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, *op.cit.*, p.39.
82. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, *op.cit.*, p.134.
83. *ibid.*, p.135.
84. *idem.*
85. *idem.*
86. *idem.*
87. *ibid.*, p.136.
88. *idem.*
89. JH Cone. *A Black Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*, p.122.
90. A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, *op. cit.*, p.38.
91. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*, p.120.

92. *ibid.*, p.113.
93. *ibid.*, p.122.
94. *ibid.*, p.121.
95. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.136.
96. *idem.*
97. *idem.*
98. *ibid.*, p.35.
99. *ibid.*, p.137.
100. *ibid.*, p.136.
101. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.121.
102. *idem.*
103. *idem.*
104. *ibid.*, p.124
105. *idem.*
106. *ibid.*, p.125.
107. *ibid.*, p.128.
108. *ibid.*, p.121.
109. *idem.*
110. *idem.*
111. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.133.
112. *idem.*
113. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p. 5.
114. *ibid.*, p.121.
115. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.241.
116. *ibid.*, pp.67-68.
117. *ibid.*, p.241f.

118. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p. 119.
119. *ibid.*, p.112.
120. *ibid.*, pp.112-113.
121. A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, op. cit., p.37.
122. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.124-125.
123. *ibid.*, p.115.
124. *ibid.*, p.116.
125. *ibid.*, p.117.
126. *ibid.*, pp.118-119.
127. *ibid.*, p.117.
128. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., pp. 112-113.
129. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.116.
130. *ibid.*, p.121.
131. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.34.
132. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p. 113.
133. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.227.
134. A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, op.cit., p.27.
135. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.114.
136. *idem.*
137. *ibid.*, p.113.
138. *idem.*
139. *idem.*
140. *ibid.*, pp.82-83.
141. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.33. In approaching tradition Black theology seeks to evaluate a given interpreter of Scripture in the light of "the particularity of

history". Black Theology does not criticize the early Church fathers for not addressing the critical questions of contemporary experience but it does evaluate their interpretation with the question, "What has the Gospel of Jesus, as witnessed in Scripture, to do with the humiliated and the abused?" If they failed to address that question then it is the task of Black Theology to make clear how their approach to Scripture differs from the gospel. (JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.32).

142. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.113. As Goba puts it: "Black theological reflection is no longer simply called to interpret historic documents which reflect the Western Christian tradition but to get down to the serious business of liberation." (B Goba, *An Agenda for Black Theology*, op.cit., p.4).
143. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.114.
144. *ibid.*, pp.114-115.
145. TA Mofokeng, "A Black Christology: A New Beginning," op.cit., p.3.
146. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.31.
147. *idem.*
148. *ibid.*, pp.31-32.
149. *ibid.*, p.113.
150. *ibid.*, p.115.
151. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.111.
152. TA Mofokeng, "A Black Christology : A New Beginning," op.cit., p.5.
153. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.217.
154. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.129
155. B Goba, *An Agenda for Black Theology*, op.cit, p.8.
156. *ibid.*, p.7.
157. *ibid.*, p.6.
158. *ibid.*, pp.6-7.

159. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.36.
160. idem.
161. ibid., p.38.
162. JH Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, New York, The Seabury Press, 1969, p.120.
163. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.113.
164. idem.
165. ibid., p.82. "The hermeneutical principle for an exegesis of the Scriptures is the revelation of God in Christ as the Liberator of the oppressed from social oppression and to political struggle, wherein the poor recognize that their fight against poverty and injustice is not only consistent with the gospel but is the gospel of Jesus Christ." (ibid., pp.81-82).
166. ibid., p.126. "The phrase 'Jesus Christ our Lord' designates, not primarily an historical individual but a present reality actually experienced within the common life". (idem).
167. ibid., p.112. "The Jesus of black experience is the Christ of Scripture, the One who was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, taught in Galilee, and died and was resurrected in Jerusalem." (idem).
168. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p. 119.
169. ibid., p.114f.
170. ibid., p.118.
171. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.31.
172. idem. p.31.
173. TA Mofokeng. "A Black Christology: A New Beginning," op.cit., p.2.
174. B Goba, *An Agenda for Black Theology*, op.cit., p.8.
175. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.112.
176. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.21.
177. T A Mofokeng. "The Evolution of the Black Struggle and the Role of Black Theology", op.cit., p.123.

178. idem.
179. idem.
180. EKM Mgojo, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Black Theology", in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, December 1977, No.21, p.29.
181. ibid., p.30.
182. JH Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, op.cit., p.120.
183. A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, op.cit., p.16.
184. idem.
185. idem.
186. ibid., p.17.
187. ibid., p.16.
188. idem.
189. ibid., p.17.
190. B Goba, *An Agenda for Black Theology*, op.cit., p.9.
191. IJ Mosala, "The Use of the Bible in Black Theology", op.cit., p. 177.
192. ibid., p.179.
193. IJ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*, Grand Rapids, Wb. Eerdmans, 1989, p. 16.
194. ibid., pp.16-17.
195. ibid., p.16.
196. idem.
197. ibid., p.17.
198. idem.
199. idem.
200. idem.
201. ibid., pp.17-18.
202. ibid., p.18.

203. idem.
204. ibid., p.19.
205. ibid., pp.19-20.
206. ibid., p.20.
207. idem.
208. idem.
209. ibid., p.21.
210. ibid., p.27.
211. ibid., p.30.
212. IJ Mosala, *"Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa"*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1987, Abstract, p.ii, pp.101-102.
213. IJ Mosala, "The Use of the Bible in Black Theology," op.cit., p.185.
214. IJ Mosala, *"Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa"*, op.cit., Introduction, p.xii.
215. IJ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*, Grand Rapids, Wb Eerdmans, 1989, p.5.
216. idem.
217. idem.
218. idem.
219. EK Mosothoane, "The Use of Scripture in Black Theology," in W S Vorster, (ed), *Scripture and the Use of Scripture*, Pretoria, Unisa, 1979, p.32f.
220. ibid., pp.32-35.
221. A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, op.cit., p.20.
222. idem.
223. As Tutu says: *"And the Exodus was not spiritualized and etherealized out of existence. For the Israelites it was a tangible action, datable, happening in human history which could be vouched for by those who had witnessed and experienced it. It was a thoroughly political act by which*

God was first made known to the Israelites. Nothing could be more political than helping a group of slaves to escape from their bondage." (DM Tutu, *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches*, Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers, 1983, p.74). Thus the experience of the Exodus for the Israelites "was not just a spiritual or mystical experience. It was highly materialistic and had to do with being protected from an enemy in pursuit, being fed when hungry, being provided with water to quench their thirst." (idem)

224. "As Liberator Yahweh has revealed Himself to Moses and Israel, and by this name He wants to be evoked for all generations to come (Exod 3:15). The name by which God reveals Himself is YHWH - the One who is active, who is and is present, who shall free his people." (A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, op.cit., p.20).
225. *ibid.*, p.21.
226. *idem.* cf Dt. 7:7-8.
227. *idem.*
228. *ibid.*, p.22.
229. *ibid.*, p.21.
230. DM Tutu, *Hope and Suffering*, op.cit., p.74.
231. *idem.*
232. *idem.*
233. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., pp. 127-128. "In the Old Testament salvation is expressed by a word which has the root meaning of 'to be wide' or 'spacious', 'to develop without hindrance' and thus ultimately 'to have victory in battle'." (1 Sam 14:45) .(*ibid.*, p. 128). To be saved meant that one's enemies have been conquered, and the Saviour is the one who has the power to gain victory. He who needs salvation is one who has been threatened or oppressed, and his salvation consists in deliverance from danger and tyranny or rescue from imminent peril. (1 Sam 4:3, 7:8, 9:16) To save another is to communicate to him one's prevailing strength (Job 26:2), to give him the power to maintain the necessary strength. God is Saviour par excellence in Israel. Beginning with the Exodus God's righteousness is to those who are weak and helpless. (*idem*).
234. In the Old Testament the Exodus is the object of confession of Israel. The "Song of the Sea" (Exod 15:1-21) is one of the oldest documents in the history of Israel. In Genesis 15:14 the theme of

liberation is already present and it is evident throughout the Old Testament in the preaching of redemption by the prophets. In Second Isaiah history and creation testify to God's liberating power. And in Daniel it says that Yahweh is "Lord our God, who by your mighty hand brought us out of Egypt." (Dan 9:15). (A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, op.cit., p .20).

235. *ibid.*, p.21.
236. D M Tutu, *Hope and Suffering*, op.cit., p.74.
237. A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, op.cit., pp.20-21.
238. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.200. According to Tutu the Scriptures witness to the unity of the whole creation which was God's intention from the beginning. The church is the agent of concern for the world and human beings and the whole creation. He says: "...The Scriptures declare that unity; the unity of the entire creation was God's intention from the very beginning of creation." (DM Tutu, *The Divine Intention*, Presentation to the Eloff Commission of Inquiry, Johannesburg, SACC, 1982, pp.7-8). For Tutu the Exodus God is the Lord of history and a creator God who brought everything into existence. He says: "he had clearly demonstrated that he was indubitably the Lord of history, so the Exodus God must also be the creator God who brought everything into existence at the beginning out of nothing (*ex nihilo*)."(DM Tutu, *Hope and Suffering*, op.cit., p.73).
239. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.24.
240. *idem.*
241. *idem.*
242. *idem.*
243. *ibid.*, p.25.
244. *ibid.*, p.24.
245. A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, op.cit., p.22.
246. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.30.
247. *ibid.*, p.31.

248. *ibid.*, p.243.
249. *ibid.*, p.244.
250. *idem.*
251. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, *op.cit.*, p.119.
252. *idem.*
253. *idem.*
254. *idem.*
255. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, *op.cit.*, p.243.
256. *ibid.*, p.244.
257. *idem.* The reality of Christ is related to the whole of life and the truth about Christ is linked to transformation and political liberation. "...the theology of liberation contends that Yahweh, Creator and Sustainer of the world, is the same God who, in bringing Israel out of slavery, created for Himself a new people. His acts in history are repeatedly described as acts of re-creation, a recreation which finds its consummation in Jesus the Messiah." (A Boesak, *Farewell To Innocence*, *op.cit.*, p.71). In the New Testament salvation is release from slavery (Gal 5:1, 11 Cor 3:17). Salvation is a present and future reality.
258. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*, p.113.
259. *idem.*
260. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, *op.cit.*, p.120.
261. A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, *op.cit.*, p.22.
262. *idem.*
263. These terms represent "categories" which designate the victims of inward repression and other spiritual ills. The cure offered by Jesus is the "secret of salvation" in a spiritual sense. Conzelmann has said that this passage (Luke 4:18-21) is a "typical piece of Lucan theology" and therefore not of theological significance. Boesak cites G N Stanton's statement that "serious criticism can be levelled against the viewpoint of Conzelmann". Boesak contends that the explanation of Conzelmann denies the meaning of the message of Jesus. This

shows that Western theology has not taken seriously the situation of blackness and of oppression. (ibid., pp.22-23).

264. ibid., pp.23-24.

265. ibid., p.24. According to Boesak, a close examination of the text shows that Jesus is the Anointed One who has been sent and is present. This underlines the character of his coming and his presence. The poor Jesus spoke about must be understood as the materially poor, that is, those who die of hunger, the illiterate and the exploited who are denied the right to personhood. The word prisoner is to be understood as "captives of war", "captives who live in exile". Blind denotes those in captivity blinded by their captors or by long imprisonment. (idem)

266. idem.

267. idem.

268. ibid., p.23.

269. ibid., p.24.

270. idem. When Jesus says "To proclaim liberty" it occurs in the Old Testament in connection with the Year of Jubilee. Both the Jubilee and the Sabbatical Year were undergirded by the Exodus (Lev 25:55). The prophets refer to the Jubilee in their proclamation. In this way the Jubilee returns in their preaching (Isaiah 61:1; Isaiah 58; Isaiah 52:7 and Psalm 107:20). As Stanton states, these passages: "are not random choices, but seen to have been woven together to provide a scriptural summary of the nature and significance of the ministry of Jesus".(idem). In Israel the benefits of the Holy Year are meant for all. They represent a redemption event that cut into the socio-political order. (ibid., p.25). For Maimela too the message of the Exodus and the Lucan story in which Jesus proclaims freedom to those in bondage leads not only to liberation from sin but from oppressive political and economic deprivation. (S Maimela, "Current Themes and Emphases in Black Theology", op.cit., p.106).

271. A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, op.cit., p.25.

272. idem. Thus when Jesus speaks about the poor he does not merely speak about "sinners" in a transcendent-ethical ideal of being nor does he indicate simple moral imperfection. He speaks of them in the Old Testament sense. When he speaks

of "the poor in spirit" or the poor he speaks about the same people.(idem).

273. *ibid.*, p.26.

274. *idem.* Tutu sees this message of liberation has a significant New Testament theme reflected in Luke 4:17-21 as well as other New Testament texts. (DM Tutu, *Hope and Suffering*, op.cit., pp.75-77). The theme of liberation looms large in the New Testament. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus is presented as the second Moses who as the first Moses gives a new law. (Mt.5-7) Jesus sums up his ministry in the words of Isaiah 61 which he used for his sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:17-21). Again the theme of liberation is as comprehensive as in the Old Testament. (*ibid.*, pp.75-76) "*It refers to the forgiveness of sins, to recovery of health, to the feeding of the hungry, people are set free from bondage to the world.*"(*ibid.*, p.76). Tutu says Christ has: "*set us free from all that has made us less than what God intended us to be, so that we could have a humanity measured by nothing less than the humanity of Christ himself- a compassionate, a caring person, concerned more for others than for himself- ready to demonstrate his love for his friends by laying down his life for his friends as his Lord and Master did.*"(*idem*). And he is drawn to the same conclusion as Boesak about the nature of Jesus' ministry reflected in passages like Luke 4:17-21.(*ibid.*, p.77). "*we have been set free and our liberation is total and comprehensive - it includes being set free from political, social and economic structures that are oppressive and unjust since these would enslave, us and make us less than what God intends us to be.*"(*idem*)

275. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.32.

276. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p. 116.

277. *idem.*

278. *idem.*

279. *ibid.*, p.124.

280. *idem.*

281. *idem.*

282. *ibid.*, pp.125-126.

283. *ibid.*, p.117.

284. *ibid.*, p.128.

285. *ibid.*, p.116.
286. A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, *op.cit.*, p.38.
287. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, *op.cit.*, p.243. Jesus was born in a stable and cradled in a manger, "because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). (JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*, p.114).
288. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*, pp. 114-115.
289. *idem.*
290. *ibid.*, p.115. Jesus' baptism also reveals his identification with the oppressed. According to the Synoptic Gospels John's baptism was for repentant sinners, an act which provided escape from God's messianic judgement. Jesus' baptism by John connects Jesus with his ministry and also separates him from John. By submitting to the baptism of John Jesus identifies with sinners and conveys the meaning of the coming kingdom. The kingdom is for the poor and is an expression of God's love. (*idem*).
291. *idem.*
292. *ibid.*, p.117.
293. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, *op.cit.*, p.246.
294. *idem.*
295. *ibid.*, p.245.
296. *idem.*
297. *idem.*
298. *idem.*
299. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers: Toward a Black Christology*, *op.cit.*, p.248.
300. *idem.* The gospel of Mark records the healing ministry of Jesus. (Mark 1:32-34). He healed the mentally deranged and made them full human subjects of society (Mark 1:23-27). The sick were healed (Mark 1:29-31) and lepers were healed and resocialized (Mark 1:40-42). The lame could walk (Matthew 9:1-8) The blind received their sight

(Matthew 9:29-31) The deaf and dumb could hear and talk (Matthew 9:32-34). He purified tax collectors and sinners (Luke 5:27-32) and rehabilitated them around a table of brotherhood (Mark 2:15-16). He came to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-2 (Luke 4:14-21; Matthew 4:23-25). (idem)

- 301. *ibid.*, p.33.
- 302. *ibid.*, p.249.
- 303. *idem.*
- 304. *ibid.*, p.251.
- 305. *ibid.*, pp.27-30.
- 306. *ibid.*, p.27.
- 307. *idem.*
- 308. *idem.*
- 309. *ibid.*, p.28.
- 310. *idem.*
- 311. *idem.*
- 312. *idem.*
- 313. *idem.*
- 314. *ibid.*, p.29.
- 315. *idem.*
- 316. *idem.*
- 317. *idem.*
- 318. *ibid.*, p.30.
- 319. *idem.*
- 320. *ibid.*, pp.29-30.
- 321. *ibid.*, pp.110-111.
- 322. *ibid.*, p.111.
- 323. *ibid.*, pp.259-260.
- 324. *ibid.*, p.260.

325. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op.cit., p.119
326. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.38.
327. *ibid.*, p.39.
328. *idem*
329. *idem.*
330. *ibid.*, pp.30-40. It is a source of solace to proclaim "that Jesus suffered and died on the cross as an expression of God's solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, taking their side, accompanying them in the search for their humanity, and assuring them that the crosses they bear at present will not be in vain but will be rewarded with victory - in the same manner that Jesus triumphed over evil by his resurrection from the dead". (S.Maimela, "The Cross and the Suffering of Human Divisions," in *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa*, Vol.6, No 1, May 1992, p.17).
331. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.242.
332. *ibid.*, p.257.
333. *ibid.*, p.260.
334. *ibid.*, p.28.
335. *ibid.*, p.261.
336. *ibid.*, pp.245-246.
337. *ibid.*, p.258.
338. *idem.*
339. *ibid.*, p.235.
340. B Goba, *An Agenda for Black Theology*, op.cit., p.39.
341. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.41.
342. *idem.*
343. *ibid.*, pp.41-42.
344. *ibid.*, p.235.
345. *idem.*

346. *ibid.*, p.263.
347. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*, p.118.
348. *ibid.*, pp.119-120.
349. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, *op.cit.*, p.141.
350. S Maimela, "Current Themes and Emphases in Black Theology", *op.cit.*, p.110.
351. S Maimela, *Proclaim Freedom To My People*, *op.cit.*, p.92.
352. *ibid.*, p.95.
353. S Maimela, "Current Themes and Emphases in Black Theology", *op.cit.*, p.109.
354. This occurs "until the totality of that situation - characterized by human brokenness, alienation and, therefore, lack of social justice, freedom, and personal wholeness - is saved, transformed, and liberated there can be no genuine and tangible salvation for humanity." (*idem*)
355. S Maimela, "The Atonement in the Context of Liberation Theology", *S A Outlook*, December 1981, pp.184-185.
356. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, *op.cit.*, p.235.
357. Z Kameeta, "Black Theology of Liberation" in *Lutheran World*, Vol 22, No.4, 1975, pp.277-278. He says: "the Lord speaks his liberating Word, the Black Theology of Liberation. ...This Word, born in poverty, confronts the status quo, liberates the oppressed, and works revolutionary changes. It is not philosophical or abstract, as claimed by those who maintain the status quo. It is the Word of Jesus the Liberator...Only the liberating Word of God can liberate and save people and structures. This liberation is a gift of God to humanity in bondage. Through the death and resurrection of his Son, God has healed the broken relationships between himself and mankind." (*idem*).
358. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, *op.cit.*, p.241.
359. JH Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, *op.cit.*, p.119.
360. B Goba, *An Agenda for Black Theology*, *op.cit.*, "Introduction".

361. S Maimela, *Proclaim Freedom To My People*, op.cit., p.20.
362. *ibid.*, p. 3. Black Theology summons blacks to engage in the process of creation by involvement in the present world. Maimela says: Black Theology "calls men and women to play their part and to be on the cutting edge of human liberation from all forms of social and spiritual oppression, thus becoming partners with the Creator in the refashioning of this unjust world into one in which they will at last find fulfilment." (S Maimela, "Current Themes and Emphases in Black Theology", op.cit., p.111). "In Jesus and his life and vocation which is to preach the kingdom of God, God expresses his love to humankind and makes it concrete in this hostile world of people." (TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.33).
363. JH Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, op.cit., p.109.
364. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op. cit., pp. 108-109.
365. TA Mofokeng, "The Evolution of the Black Struggle and the Role of Black Theology", op.cit., p.126. The God who creates the black community in Jesus Christ is the God of a community of equal people who participate in creating justice, socially, politically and economically. He is the Father who gives life to the Son. He is the God who elected the oppressed Hebrew slaves in Egypt because of their suffering (Exod 2:24-25) and led them out of bondage so that they became a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:4-6) before the nations. He created them into a people to live in justice and community and in solidarity with the weak (Exod 22:21-24; Isaiah 42:5-7). They thus became God's people through the wilderness and into the Promised Land. (TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.238). "He is the God who gives this communal life in love to man in history by sending his Son to the world to live his sonship, to save man by being in solidarity with suffering humankind, in our case, with suffering black people, to create an active black people who create and pass on a liberative current and tradition to its posterity in a situation of dispossession and oppression. He creates a black people who receive this communal life, live it and pass it on to others, thereby bringing them into this community and this participation in the Spirit of love. In this way the Trinitarian God makes a black existence a trinitarian event in a history that unfolds among the crosses of history, while making the life and death of Jesus Christ its point of departure, ground, source and critical event." (*ibid.*, pp.238-239).
366. TA Mofokeng, *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers*, op.cit., p.37.

367. *ibid.*, p.234.

368. TA Mofokeng, "A Black Christology : A New Beginning", *op.cit.*, p.6.

369. *ibid.*, p.1.

370. *ibid.*, p.2.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHRISTOLOGY FOR A NEW SITUATION

This thesis makes no pretence at offering a fully developed christology for the new situation, both because it is beyond the scope of this limited exercise to do so, and more importantly, because christology is the result of a living and dynamic process engaged in by the whole community in an ever changing historical context. What it does do, however, is to offer pointers towards the development of such a christology, and in doing so provides a few radical points of departure from the approach of the liberation christologies already reviewed.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the possibility of a christology relevant to the South African context. There is a need for such an exploration, as mentioned earlier, because the situation has changed sufficiently to warrant a review of the two christologies (Latin American Liberation and Black Christologies) that have been considered particularly relevant to the struggle for liberation, the struggle against Apartheid and for a better life for all South Africans, and therefore to consider the direction that christological reflection could take in

the new situation in order that it is appropriate and credible.

5.1. A NEW SITUATION.

It will be useful to begin this exploration with a brief consideration of some of the fundamental changes that have taken place in recent years so that one is clear about the nature of those changes and their significance for christology in a new situation. Without this it would be extremely difficult to explore how christology might be done and, if necessary, done differently from the way it has been done in the past.

South African society is a society in transition to democracy, a process that is both complex and fluid. It is difficult to predict what the future will bring. What is certain, however is that the political system of Apartheid no longer exists and that South Africa is moving into a phase of political democracy in which it is hoped that all South Africans, black and white, are to be accommodated in a non-racial, non-sexist and united South Africa, in the "new South Africa".

Much has been done in recent years to set the country on this road to democracy. The formal structures of Apartheid have been dismantled, the armed struggle as

it has been known has ended, the country has had its first non-racial and democratic election, the foundation for a new dispensation with a new constitution has been laid, the instruments for the necessary political transition have been established, and there are determined efforts both by government and people towards peace, justice, national reconciliation and reconstruction. Yet the country is still, to a large extent faced with the legacy of the old order which it will take some time to overcome.

First, racism is still very much alive. It would be naive to believe that racist attitudes which served to bolster the Apartheid system will suddenly disappear now that positive changes are taking place on the political front. Apartheid racist ideology is still a force to be reckoned with. Until there is a fundamental change in white attitudes black people will remain victims of white racism. On the other hand, the older order did not spawn only white racism but also black racism and inter ethnic prejudices.

Indeed, the present situation reflects, to some degree, an inverse racism in which White people and perhaps Coloureds and Indians find themselves victims. In the new situation these minorities too could be numbered among the "oppressed". The South African context is therefore no longer simply one in which the

primary theme is conflict between white and black, in which "white" is identified with oppressor and "black" with oppressed, black and white standing for skin colour. Racism is still a major concern for the majority of South Africans in this period of transition and may well be as important for many years to come.

Second, people are still dehumanized. Racism is the result of the perception that people of a different race or colour are not fully human. The Apartheid system affirmed the full humanity of white people and denied blacks this status. In the course of the liberation struggle black people tried to reaffirm their own humanity and to assert their own value and dignity as human beings. The new dispensation is expected to grant equal status to both blacks and whites, recognising that all South Africans are fully human. However, it is much more difficult to overcome the psychological barriers of Apartheid than it is to dismantle political structures and replace them with new ones. It will take a long time before black and white people come to accept each other as equals. Indeed in the new situation there are many blacks who would deny their own humanity as well as deny whites their humanity and there are many whites who would deny this status to blacks. Very real is the fear in the White, Coloured and Indian communities that the

future is one in which African people will take precedence over other race groups. One would expect that, given the Apartheid history of South Africa, there will be people of every race who will experience dehumanization, who find that true human value and dignity are not accorded to them. People have been, and many are still, seeking to be fully human. Questions of identity, dignity, and value remain crucial questions in the quest for a new and united community.

Third, there is still much social and economic oppression. While the new dispensation grants legitimate political power to blacks as well as whites, years of oppression have left the majority of black people socially deprived and economically marginalized. It will take many years to redress this imbalance. At the same time moves to redress the imbalance might have a negative impact on society as a whole. Recent enforcement of affirmative action in education and industry, for example, has in instances seen preference being given to Africans. The result is that other ethnic groups feel marginalized, and may withdraw from these areas. Should the programme of affirmative action be effected indiscriminately, and there is much debate on this, ethnic minorities will be justified in feeling oppressed. An African backlash may well lead to a situation in which other groups are

politically and economically oppressed. In any event, while South Africa is in transition, there will be social, political, and economic inequality and people of all groups will be numbered among the marginalized and the oppressed. The future will certainly show that both black and white people are engaged in the search for social, political, and economic freedom.

Fourth, in every situation people are faced with the reality of "sin", the desire or tendency to turn away from what faith requires and the gospel demands. To acknowledge the reality of sin is to accept that the causes of society's ills lie much deeper than the structural level. Every community is faced with the stark reality that however effective human socio-political and economic structures are there is still injustice and oppression. This suggests that the root cause of the ills of society, and, therefore, the solution to these ills lies at a much deeper level. Christians believe that if society is to be different people have to change, people have to draw closer to God and live in obedience to his will. There is need for people to experience a deep change within their lives and to live as God wants them to live. Repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation with God remain the central salvific needs in this new situation.

In addition, there are two new and positively different factors which need to be taken into account. First, South Africa is still a much divided society. There is need for people to reestablish relationships and to build new ones in a truly reconciled and reconciling community. There have already been moves in this direction. While the old order was marked by the separation and conflict of black and white there is now a definite commitment of the vast majority of South Africans towards peace, reconciliation and national unity. This is a major feature of the new situation. While there have been moves towards reconciliation before, there has not been such a widespread commitment to reconciliation or such determined efforts towards it as there is now. This theme will it seems move more and more to occupy the centre stage in South African society, and theology needs to respond to this in a creative way.

Second, a society once marred by political violence and destruction is moving gradually towards peace and reconstruction. Few within the South African situation still speak in terms of an armed struggle for liberation. The general liberation war as it has been known has ended. The armed forces of the black liberation movements have been integrated into South African state military forces. Black and white people now wield political power. Again, this fundamental

shift testifies to the break in the old black-white, oppressed-oppressor, paradigm.

The rebuilding of broken lives and communities will increasingly become the preoccupation of the South African community. One could also speak of construction, the commitment to the construction of a united non-racial democratic society, a new community, the construction of facilities and the organization of services to meet the inadequacies of the past and to lay the foundation for a more egalitarian and united community across race, sex, age etc.⁽¹⁾ Villa-Vicencio is particularly aware of this dimension of the theological task when he speaks of the need for a "theology of reconstruction", a theology that is "proposal oriented, seeking realistic solutions, sharing in the nation-building process".⁽²⁾ S Maluleke too is equally concerned about reconstruction, although he would rather speak of a theology of "liberation".⁽³⁾ The need for rebuilding or building a new community is acknowledged by both theologians.

The present and future with all its complexities and uncertainties are thus characterized by these basic issues: racism, humanization, political liberation, salvation from sin, reconciliation and reconstruction.

How then should one approach christological reflection

in this situation? It seems that any christology that seeks to be credible and relevant has to address these issues effectively, and if it is to be appropriate to what it regards as criteria for judging appropriateness, for example, criteria based on the bible and/or ecclesiastical tradition, it needs to take full account of those criteria. The following discussion explores how such christological reflection might be achieved in the new situation, and offers some pointers towards credible, relevant and appropriate reflection.

The crucial question with regard to the theologies of liberation is whether one could, in the new situation, still speak of a christology of liberation? It is a fundamental question because these theologies assume that there is a struggle for liberation and that those doing theology in situations of struggle can only do so authentically if they are already engaged in those struggles. Could one still regard "liberation" or "freedom" as a basic theme?

Here Ogden provides a useful way forward. He suggests that "freedom" is a contemporary human concern, or at least it is a concept and symbol through which people articulate their deepest concerns.⁽⁴⁾ Credibility for people today is tied up with their concerns with questions of belief and truth and with practical

issues of action and justice.⁽⁵⁾ This is true for the South African situation. The fact that blacks have achieved political freedom does not mean that they, or indeed other South Africans, have abandoned the quest for freedom.

Taken in its broadest sense the notion of authentic freedom includes much more than political liberation. One could argue that in the new situation real freedom embraces salvation from sin, (of racism etc), humanization, political liberation, reconciliation and reconstruction, and that these constitute some of the deepest concerns of people in South Africa today. While people often perceive freedom in the more immediate terms of secular/material freedom, freedom from want and oppression, and from ignorance and falsehood, they also conceive freedom in terms of ultimate concerns.⁽⁶⁾ and this remains their chief contemporary concern. "Freedom" or "liberation" would still capture well the urgent concerns of the present, and the immediate future South African community. Broadly speaking, then, one may still speak of liberation or freedom as the basic concern of South Africans today.

Any christology seeking to be relevant in this situation needs to speak in these terms:

"This means that it is in the very same terms of freedom that christology also must think and speak if it is to address the existential question implied by their concern." (7)

If one wishes to propose a christology of liberation one needs to demonstrate that such a christology is both appropriate and credible. But, first, it is necessary to outline the fundamental assumptions that govern the approach to christology that is adopted in this chapter.

5.2. PRESUPPOSITIONS

No one engaged in christology can justifiably claim to operate free of presuppositions. As pointed out earlier, one's presuppositions determine one's approach to Christology, and so it is vital that one is able, as one becomes aware of them, to articulate these as clearly as possible and consider their influence on the christological task.

Latin American liberation theologians and black theologians have attempted to argue for the legitimacy of a unitive worldview from biblical, sociological and theological perspectives. One ought to view such presuppositions critically. The Latin American approach is based on what is perceived to be the biblical worldview and the insights gained from the

sociology of knowledge. Perspectives from the sociology of knowledge may be treated with respect, for theology needs to be open to the insights of other disciplines. However, the biblical and theological rationale of liberation theologies on this point needs to be critically reviewed.

First, they argue that a unitive ontology may be considered more appropriate to "Christian" experience, on the ground that the biblical worldview shares this unitive perspective. Yet it is arguable whether one may speak of the biblical worldview as if there is a single or uniform biblical perspective. The nature of the biblical communities and the background of those responsible for the redaction of biblical traditions are so complex that it is difficult to support the argument for a uniform biblical perspective. The Old Testament and New Testament traditions indicate that they are couched in different worldviews, or at least their traditions have been influenced by a variety of thought forms. For example, while the earlier forms of the Old Testament traditions may be used to support a unitive approach, later traditions, eg. apocalyptic literature, show clear signs of influence by dualistic (probably Persian) thought forms.⁽⁸⁾ In addition both Jewish and Hellenistic thought forms influenced the development of the Gospel and Pauline traditions.⁽⁹⁾ To argue that there is a single worldview shaping

biblical traditions is to fly in the face of what is known about the nature and shape of biblical literature.

Further, is it really necessary for one to share the worldview of the biblical communities in order to be faithful to the message of the Bible? Even if it were uniform it would be reductionist to take it as the worldview for believers. Surely worldviews are dynamic, and worldviews of communities change as a result of experience and over time, as indeed did the perspectives of the various communities in which the biblical traditions were fashioned.

The biblical traditions were formed, transmitted, and edited by people who tried to come to terms with their experiences of God within the context of their own life situations, and their perspectives determined their perception and understanding of those experiences. Similarly people today will reflect on experience according to their own perception and understanding of the world. Of course, people do appropriate perceptions and interpretations that are not originally their own, but even these become their own, even if by adoption. It would be absurd to expect them to see through foreign eyes, that is if they are to see authentically. People today, like the biblical communities, begin where they are. They

perceive and understand as they do. They may see the world differently from those of biblical times because their experience of it differs and because they have come to know more about the universe and life. What is valid for people today is what they accept to be true on grounds of authoritative discovery and knowledge. If there is a difference between the so-called "biblical worldview" and present experience then it seems that contextual christologies would need to take full account of this. The argument from experience is paramount. This means that there is no given worldview, no given epistemology. In other words one may not argue on the basis of the perspectives of the biblical community that this or that worldview is the correct one. If this is so, there is then no legitimate way of supporting a preference for one or other worldview on the basis of a so-called "biblical" worldview. This does not mean, however, that the bible is not a unity. The bible is made up of two testaments which purport to speak of peoples' experiences of the same God. However, whatever the perspectives that draw these testaments together in their witness, unity is not to be sought at the cultural level, not, for example at the level of "worldview".

Black theologians take the liberation argument one step further. They emphasize the correspondence between the African and biblical worldviews in order

to justify their approach. Indeed, they identify the African worldview with the biblical worldview. While one might accept that there are points of correspondence between the African cultural worldview and biblical perspectives, especially Old Testament perspectives, it would be inappropriate to suggest that the African worldview is the same as the biblical worldview. Mention has already been made of the difficulty with asserting a uniform biblical worldview. One accepts that people who share the "African" worldview have every right to perceive and understand the world as they do, and to bring their perceptions and understanding to bear on their christological task. Nevertheless, there are difficulties associated with arguing for a uniform African worldview because worldviews are dynamic and it would be inaccurate to speak of an African worldview as if worldviews are static.⁽¹⁰⁾

Further, the identification of "blackness" with African cultural elements has its own difficulties for blacks who are not "African" in the ethnic sense. If one is to speak of "black" in an inclusive sense it would be incongruous to give precedence to the worldview of one section of the black/oppressed community. Indeed, in the new situation as it is in South Africa today, with the search for a common identity, it would be even less appropriate to do so.

A Christology for the new situation cannot be imprisoned within such a narrow framework if one wishes to establish a broad christological base. If it were confined in this way it would be both inappropriate and incredible for a sizeable section of the community.

A more reasonable liberation argument for a unitive worldview is one that seeks its support in the biblical kerygma. Here both Latin American liberation theology and Black Theology appear to be on firmer ground. Whereas the argument from the so-called "biblical worldview" is based on the worldview that shaped the biblical traditions, i.e, the worldview of the biblical communities and writers, the argument from the biblical kerygma focuses on what could be regarded as the core of the biblical or Gospel message itself. This involves a shift from a "Hebraic" or "Jewish" basis to a "kerygmatic" one. These theologians argue that the New Testament kerygma testifies to the unity of faith and history, and the integration of faith and praxis. Arguments based on the life and work of Jesus, particularly his proclamation of the kingdom of God, are cited in support of a unitive ontology and integrated epistemology. Such arguments are said to find support in the basic message of the Old Testament as well. Yet even at this point one cannot be certain as to the

nature of the redactions that have produced these traditions and to what extent they may be used to support a specific worldview. This will become clear later in the discussion on the problems associated with interpreting the biblical traditions.

A third aspect of the argument is based on the phenomenon of Incarnation. Here incarnation refers to God in Jesus and to the life and work of this Jesus as proclaimed in the New Testament. It is argued that the basic truth of the biblical proclamation is that God became human in Jesus of Nazareth and in doing so he identified with humanity. Incarnation implies God present in and through history, in and through the real material world. If one accepts that God is incarnate in Jesus, then one accepts the unity of the spiritual and material, faith and life, truth and action. Christology then relates an experience of Incarnation in Jesus with the real life of people, with their history, culture and socio-economic and political experience. The whole of life becomes the arena of God's activity. This is why it is important for christology to hold together salvation in Christ and the struggle for liberation.

This argument is a very strong one. The Incarnation is central to Christianity. The whole Christian belief structure depends on the truth of Incarnation.

To reject it is to reject the very basis of Christianity and to move on to a post-Christian interpretation of Scripture, and to treat Jesus as Protestant liberalism does, merely as a good example to follow. Then questions concerning the divinity of Jesus and the resurrection become obsolete. The argument from Incarnation is the basic assumption of those who profess faith in Jesus as Lord, and is the "given" for all authentic christology. The Incarnation asserts Jesus' divinity and humanity, an indispensable article of faith. Belief in the Incarnation is indispensable to Christianity because if God did not become incarnate in Jesus then Jesus was no more than a human being, and therefore could not be "Lord". Jesus is Lord precisely because he is God incarnate, because he is also divine. His divinity is what gives him the place he enjoys in the Christian community.

Yet the Incarnation is not simply an event in the past. The God who was present in Jesus then is present through him now. So Incarnation is also a present reality in the sense that God is present in history and among people today. He is present today as divine presence, as Spirit, discerned through faith and experienced in praxis. If a present experience of Jesus leads people to perceive the Incarnation differently from that of the biblical community then

their perspective is equally valid for them. However, it should not be surprising if as a result, the perspectives of some differ from the perspectives of others. People with differing perspectives can argue that their perception of the world and understanding of reality rests on an authentic experience of God here and now. There is no such thing therefore as "the Christian" worldview. (See later).

What this means is that one may no longer argue for a specific perspective on the world for all people. People discover their own perspectives and this is valid for them. Contextual theologies above all should acknowledge this. Whether people come to have a particular perspective through insights gained from different disciplines and/or from their own life experience, this would be valid for them. No one can stand outside reality, which is what is required if one were to provide an objective view of it. And without such an objective view it is impossible to demonstrate the objective validity of any worldview.

If ontological perspectives are to be defined by the experience, history, and culture of specific groups, then it is possible, indeed it is the case, that worldviews differ. For example in South Africa today the English-speaking white perspective is generally more akin to the prevailing Western perspective, i.e.

a more rationalistic approach to life, giving more value to reason than emotion, while the ethnic African perspective is different. If one were to argue an appropriate worldview from experience then it seems realistic to acknowledge that differing perspectives operate in different groups, groups not necessarily racially defined. Rather such groups would be identified by their peculiar perspectives. What these are will depend on each group and its peculiar context/perspective.

When one considers worldviews, then, one may no longer justifiably argue that the controlling ontology for christology in the South African situation should be derived from the "biblical worldview" or from the experience of one specific group. In other words it is important to ask which christology for which situation. It may well be that in the present situation different communities may take different approaches to christology or that individuals may significantly differ in this. In the first instance one needs to acknowledge, therefore, the possibility of a plurality of christologies or show how a single christology can address the situation of all South Africans.

Thus one is not rejecting the idea of a unitive ontology, but suggesting that there is no objective

basis on which to argue for its legitimacy; or indeed the legitimacy of any other worldview. There is no single ontology that could be said to be universally valid. The basic philosophical framework assumed by the writer is that of a unitive ontology and integrated epistemology. This writer finds himself bearing these assumptions because this is the perspective that his life and experience of God have impressed upon him. He perceives and understands the world in this way because he can do no other. The only theological justification offered for this approach is that the truth of Incarnation, as explained earlier, prompts one in this direction.

5.3. CHRISTOLOGICAL METHOD

How, then, does one approach christological reflection in order to ensure that it is relevant, credible and "Christian" (appropriate). In their quest for a historically relevant christology Latin American and black theologians have sought a relevant hermeneutic that would provide an authentic picture of the Christ of the gospels, yet one which speaks directly to their situation. The historical dimension of God's salvific activity is crucial for them, which is why their christology places emphasis on social reality and cannot be separated from it. Thus the christological question for Latin American liberation theology and

Black Theology is not primarily theoretical but practical.

They emphasize the dynamic nature of christology and commend a method that one may describe as critical reflection on praxis in the light of the Christ of the Gospels. In other words the two poles integral to the christological process are praxis and God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Christology like all theology is critical reflection on praxis. They argue that if christology is to be relevant and credible it has to address people's primary concerns and help them make sense of their own experience. This is quite right. If christology does not relate directly to peoples' circumstances and concerns it would become a purely theoretical exercise, irrelevant and not credible.

Methodologically, the basic approach of liberation christologies is useful for a christology in the new situation. Christological reflection is a dynamic process in which the Christian seeks to make sense of a real experience of Jesus in the present historical context, and to respond to this Jesus in a positive and creative way. It involves asking and answering the question: who is Jesus Christ in this situation? And linked to this question is another question: Who am I? These questions are asked and answered through a dialectical process in which a present experience of

Jesus, the biblical witness to this Jesus, and the insights of ecclesiastical tradition, interact to address the urgent concerns of the believer in a real situation. It is in asking and answering while in dialogue with the biblical witness and tradition that it discovers its appropriateness to previous insights. It is in asking and answering from praxis for praxis that christological reflection holds possibilities for relevance and credibility. This requires a clear understanding of the historical context in which the Christian is placed.

Thus, liberation theologians engage in thoroughgoing social analysis in order that such clarity may be achieved. In this they use the insights gained from the social sciences. It makes sense to dialogue with the social sciences which are best equipped to aid such analysis. This has led both Latin American liberation and Black theologies to adopt a socio-analytical perspective that presents the struggle as one between oppressor and oppressed.

Latin Americans have thus come to seek the help of a Marxist analysis of society, adopting the Marxist paradigm of inherent class conflict in their analysis of their own situation, the basic paradigm being the oppressed-oppressor or domination-liberation paradigm. Christologies of liberation have been influenced by

this fundamental perception of the struggle for liberation. It is for this reason that many have regarded both Latin American liberation christology and Black christology as adequate and relevant for situations like South Africa. This paradigm afforded a useful analysis of the South African situation in which the majority of people suffered much oppression under Apartheid. Black theologians adopted it, and have argued chiefly for the identification of "oppressed" with "black" and "oppressor" with "white." Such a simplistic distinction is no longer appropriate.

There has been an ongoing debate on whether the liberation struggle in South Africa could be termed a class struggle or a race struggle. Some have opted for a race analysis, others a class analysis, while others speak broadly of a race-class paradigm in which the oppressed class is identified with "black". However, in practice the oppression-liberation paradigm is the black-white paradigm. This is why, for example, arguments concerning worldview are predominantly ethnic in their orientation.

The adoption of such a paradigm of analysis led to a christological bias that leans towards the worldview and experience of oppressed people, and christological insights relating specifically to Christ as he is

experienced and known by them. From the point of view of credibility, therefore, black theologians have been reasonably successful in formulating a Christology which is meaningful and relevant to the black experience in South Africa because their Christology does address in a more pertinent way that experience.

Social analysis will continue to play a key role in christological reflection if the latter is to remain relevant and credible. Christology has to be critical and practical, it cannot afford to be naive or obscurantist. It needs to take account of various disciplines and their insights, and it needs to use the most helpful analytical tools in attempting to relate faith to practice. Christologies of liberation accept that every theology adopts some or other basic ideological framework. This does not have to be a Marxist framework, but must best explain the realities of life, be reasonable, and must be shown to work. In addition, there is no specifically Christian ideological framework or analytical tool. And, as will be explained later, even the Bible itself is ideologically conditioned. Hence the need to de-ideologize the text or at least to be aware of the ideological nuances of the text.

In a situation of transition like the South African one radical changes in society demand a review of

paradigms of analysis. It would be inappropriate in this new situation to resort to the old socio-political paradigms of analysis and reflection because these are no longer adequate. Whereas previously it was adequate to speak in terms of white-oppressor and black-oppressed, the situation is now far more complex and requires a different model of analysis and reflection. Perhaps one of the tasks of the socio-political sciences in this new situation is to offer more appropriate paradigms for analysis.

The position adopted here is that the new situation, although it does reflect a racial dimension and conflict, may be broadly characterized in terms of the oppressed-oppressor paradigm with no racial categories necessarily implied in these terms. One could speak of "haves" and "have-nots". This means that if one is to speak of a struggle for freedom in this situation in South Africa one may no longer see such a struggle simply as a conflict between black and white. In this respect a Christology that ties itself to blackness in a restrictive way does not take this new context seriously. One would expect therefore that if one is to speak of liberation in this new context, some other symbol will have to be found, a symbol that would take into account the fact that oppression is no longer simply *black* oppression. At the same time, one cannot pass over very real racial divisions, and the

peculiarly black dilemma of identity and value, of dispossession and marginalisation, in a society still very much the victim of its Apartheid past. There is a place for black consciousness, and for a christology that addresses the continuing black struggle, although one would have to give much more serious thought to this before offering a paradigm for racial analysis in this new situation.

Nevertheless, while the racial question is still relevant and needs to be addressed, the question of freedom for all race groups becomes the broader and more basic question. The social paradigm for christology then becomes one closer to the Latin American position than the black one. Christology is then critical reflection on praxis in the light of Jesus Christ rather than critical reflection on the black situation alone as black christology has thus far proposed. In other words, a relevant christology reflects on the situation of oppressed people irrespective of colour since the category "oppressed" now includes white as well as black people. Nevertheless, such reflection is done within the context of specific situations and takes full account of peoples struggles for liberation, recognising that at certain levels there may well be a plurality of struggles.

Both Latin American and Black christologies have, quite correctly, argued that present experience of Christ plays a primary role in the christological process. After all, what is the point of reflecting on the biblical Christ if this does not relate to present experience of God. If one does not experience God as present here and now then one would be reflecting only on a Jesus of the past, with no direct relation to a present experience of God. Present divine experience of some kind, therefore, forms the starting point for authentic christology. Christological reflection is about what God is doing here and now in Christ, and about human life in response to this encounter with God in Christ. The reason for christology is precisely the fact that one is trying to make sense of Jesus as a present reality. The crucial question is, how does one know that such an experience is in fact an experience of *Jesus*, the Christ to which the bible testifies, and how does one best relate to this Jesus, or live in his presence?

5.4. BIBLE AND CHRISTIAN TRADITION

One answer is that one's knowledge and understanding of Jesus has to be tested against the tradition of the church and the biblical picture of Jesus. Every Christology has to come to terms with the christologies of Christian tradition, christologies of

the past. Latin American Christology appears to be ambiguous on this score. On the one hand it seems to grant tradition an authoritative status, and accepts the validity of the classical statements about Christ. (11) It argues that tradition plays a limiting and corrective role in christological reflection, and at the same time it argues for the validity of novel statements about Christ. (12)

It argues that christological reflection begins with the historical Jesus and this helps to give meaning to dogmatic formulations. In this way it recreates the process that led to them, strives to grasp the original intention behind them, and reformulates dogmas, interpreting them in a contemporary and relevant way. The originating event in Jesus of Nazareth provides the proper basis and corrective to appropriate dogmatic formulations. Thus reflection entails a movement from the history of Jesus to the New Testament and from there to dogmatic formulations. However, dogma set the limits for christology and, therefore, help to prevent reductionism.

This is all very well: What happens when biblical perspectives militate against traditional ones? What happens when, for example, as a result of reflection on the bible one is led to reject the traditional doctrine of the Trinity , or of the virgin birth?

Further, how does one effectively ascertain the original intention behind dogma, and also accept that the truth of dogma cannot be fully grasped? How precisely tradition acts as a "limit" and prevents reductionism is not clear. To suggest that they are "limit" realities is to run counter to this theology as a whole. The fact that these theologians have not looked closely at traditional dogmatic formulations (13) means that such formulations do not in practice operate as "limit" realities. Further, the fact that praxis/discipleship is the determining factor suggests that tradition does not *per se* play a determinative role. Moreover, the only traditional truths taken as read by these theologians is the basic assertion of Christ's divinity and his participation in the Trinity, both of which are biblically based anyway. It seems that Latin American liberation theologians are somehow caught between evolving a truly authentic Christology and feeling the need to remain faithful to ecclesiastical tradition. In the long run it may not be possible to sustain both commitments simultaneously, given the possibility that their reflection might lead them into conflict with the church's position as it is outlined by the "Magisterium". Indeed, as is the case with the Canon of scripture, honest reflection could lead to the radical questioning of the old sources of authority.

On the other hand Black Theology regards tradition as important but it does not accept that tradition plays a normative or limiting role. Black theology, like Latin American liberation theology is critical of tradition. It accepts the importance of scripture as witness to Jesus Christ and commends the study of tradition in the light of scripture. It accepts that there is a dialectical relation between scripture, tradition, and experience, and believes that the full meaning of scripture is not limited to tradition. Tradition connects scripture with the present situation, and is therefore historically continuous with scripture. Tradition does not carry the same weight as scripture but together with scripture it mediates an understanding of the meaning of Jesus. Tradition provides clues for the understanding of Jesus today. Scripture is more authoritative than tradition. Black theology recognizes tradition as the bearer of the interpretation of the gospel, but tradition is not the gospel.

Both christologies are correct to regard tradition as one of the sources for christology. It provides useful data for contemporary reflection. The variety of traditions that constitute the tradition of the church had significance for those early Christian communities as they tried to understand and live their faith in the context in which they lived. Tradition

shows how the church of the past went about establishing its faith in Jesus Christ. The original affirmations of tradition served as the basis of faith in the past. It is important to know and understand their historical and social context if one is to use those insights in reflection in the present. If necessary those insights should be reinterpreted today on the basis of contemporary Christian experience, something both Latin American and Black christologies acknowledge. And this would need to be done from an experiential and critical point of view.

In this view, tradition is not to be accorded normative status because it is not the gospel. It represents past perspectives on the gospel. And there is no reason why present perspectives should be subordinate to past insights. It is the gospel that is primary, not tradition. Since ecclesiastical tradition itself is the result of reflection on the biblical witness in relation to experience, it cannot play a normative role. The position taken by Black christology is, therefore, more helpful than the one taken by Latin American liberation christology. Christian tradition must always be seen against the whole background of biblical belief in Christ. There is need for a constant reappraisal of the church's belief in Christ, and this can be achieved without abandoning the church's tradition or accepting

everything implied in that tradition. Nevertheless, tradition does not set the limits for christological reflection.

What this calls for is a reflective dialogue with previous and contemporary perspectives, for Christology is properly done in dialogue within a community (past and present) that professes faith in Christ. The community, not just the oppressed, is the context for dialogue and engages in dialogue. And this community includes christians from the past with whom we share faith. This is the locus of proper christological reflection. This provides a new point of departure for christology in the new situation.

Dialogue with the past helps Christians to reflect more effectively on the biblical tradition and on experience, providing valuable insights, and thus broadening and enriching present perspectives. Further, conversations with the past help to avoid an unhealthy individualism, and serve to preserve the universal dimension of faith. Such dialogue also helps to achieve a greater degree of consistency and coherence, something basic to any Christian theological task. On the other hand it is possible that some of those past insights may prove to be of little value or of no help.

At the same time christology has to come to terms with certain basic traditional insights, insights which have enjoyed a central place in the faith of the church. Latin American liberation theologians are correct for example to take seriously the doctrine of the Trinity, and to relate their understanding of Christ to God and the Holy Spirit. Christology has to come to terms with the traditional trinitarian notion of God. This does not mean that the traditional doctrine of the Trinity should necessarily be accepted as a valid explanation of divinity. The Bible is the basic document of the Christian faith, and traditional ecclesial doctrines represent the real experiences of Christians in the past, and these suggest that divinity has revealed itself in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Any reflection on Jesus, if it is to be at all adequate, ought to come to terms with the experiences that gave rise to this idea of the threefold nature of God, and it needs to do this in a way that is both credible and relevant, though the resulting formulations need not adopt wholesale old doctrines and may express different perceptions, different explanations of God. It may well be that credible and relevant formulations today will not subscribe to the trinitarian formula, although they might take into account the different ways in which God is experienced. One should not feel bound to a classical trinitarian framework. However, it is

premature, at this stage, to suggest that one should or should not remain within such a framework.

Whatever the response to the trinitarian notion, one thing is indispensable to christology, and that is the relation or identity of Jesus with God. If Jesus is not God the whole christological edifice collapses into a humanist interpretation of Jesus and effects a disjunction between Jesus and our experience of divinity.

If one cannot turn to tradition as the norm for christological reflection, should Scripture play such a normative role? For both Latin American and Black theologies Scripture plays a central role because it provides content for reflection on the present experience of Christ by virtue of its unique contribution to knowledge about the Jesus of the gospels. The Bible represents the primary witness to Jesus Christ. Apart from it there is no way of relating christological reflection to the biblical historical person - Jesus, no way of determining whether an interpretation of present experience is one that relates to Jesus, one that is "christian". To this extent christology cannot escape its relatedness to the biblical traditions, its relatedness to the record of what Ogden calls the authoritative and authorising testimony/event.⁽¹⁴⁾ Both christologies

are therefore correct to emphasize the link between the Bible and christological reflection.

Is it appropriate then to speak of the Bible as the "Word of God", as the given norm in christological reflection. Liberation theologians use the phrase "Word of God" interchangeably with the terms "Jesus" and "Bible". For example Boesak speaks about interpreting the Word of God in the light of black experience. The use of this term by liberation theologians is at best ambiguous and at worst misleading. It is ambiguous because in instances it is used to refer both to the person of Jesus and to the biblical record. It seems that one would be better placed to use it only in relation to the person of Jesus if Jesus himself is to be regarded as the final norm of christology. To speak of the Bible as the "Word of God" is misleading because it does not provide a realistic impression of the nature of the biblical traditions which are in fact human "words", and it provides the false impression that somehow one is able to open a treasure chest to reveal exactly what God communicated and communicates to human beings. The nature and complexity of the biblical traditions, as Mosala has pointed out, rules out such a simplistic view. And, again, as Mosala has indicated the Bible is ideologically conditioned. It bears the marks of the individuals and communities

involved in the formulation and transmission of the biblical traditions. The worldview to which they subscribed and their own perceptions and material circumstances, as indeed their motivations, would have influenced their understanding and presentation of those traditions. In this chapter the term "Word of God" is avoided so as to overcome the difficulties outlined.

Yet, liberation theologians are correct to focus on the person of Jesus in their quest for the norm of christology. Their need to take experience seriously does not imply that the situation *per se* is normative. It is the situation in which Jesus is experienced here and now that is emphasized. The truth about Jesus is revealed in the dialectical relation between Bible and praxis. It is in dialogue with personal experience and the biblical testimony that the real Jesus is identified and known. Either way for these theologians Jesus remains the norm. So "experience" here is not just any experience, and praxis is Christian praxis. As Cone has argued, the authority of the Bible does not lie in its objective status as the literal Word of God but in its power to point to the One who the people have met in their struggles. Latin American and black theologians focus on the person of Jesus as God's Word, suggesting that the Bible enables one to identify, know and understand

this Word, this person.

For this reason both Latin American and black theologians point to the historical Jesus as the norm for christology. What they mean by the term "historical Jesus" is not what New Testament scholarship calls the "historical Jesus". It does not refer to the so-called quest for this "historical Jesus", a history of Jesus from the gospel records, nor a search for biographical material. Latin American and black theologians use the term in a peculiar way. They use it to refer to the real person Jesus Christ, the one that walked the streets of Palestine many years ago and the one who is indeed alive and active now. Hence Sobrino's interchangeable use of the term "Jesus of Nazareth" and "historical Jesus".

Latin American theologians accept that the New Testament contains many christologies which cannot be reduced to a single conception. These represent the variety of contexts, traditions, and approaches that served to create the New Testament witness. Each of the Gospels, for example, provide a different perspective on Jesus. Yet, these perspectives relate to the one Jesus of Nazareth, the living person. This Jesus of Nazareth and the risen Jesus are one and the same person. It is this real Jesus that holds together the Gospel perspectives, and this is the

Jesus they seek. In other words, the resurrection, the possibility of experiencing the real Jesus today, provides a bridge between the historical Jesus and christological reflection.

This Jesus is not to be equated with the picture of Jesus that emerges out of the gospel kerygma and the tradition of the church, the so-called Christ of faith (see Bultmann). Primacy cannot be given to the "Christ" that is an interpretation and formulation of earlier Christians in the light of their own situations and times. Their Christ is a reflection of what they believed to be the real Jesus, and an interpretation of their own experience of him. Christians today are to approach the Bible in the light of their present experiences of Jesus and seek Jesus in a dialectical relation between the biblical witness and present experience. Earlier witnesses experienced Jesus and recorded their reflections in the Bible. Christians today need to go through the same process, and not simply accept the interpretations provided by the biblical authors.

Hence Cone's insistence that the "historical Jesus" and the "Christ of faith" are to be held in tension. The encounter with the Risen Lord today forces one to look beyond immediate experiences to other witnesses - Bible, tradition, social context. In the end the

Christ of present experience, and the Christ of faith are to be tested against what we can know about Jesus of Nazareth. Whether we can know anything for certain about this Jesus is a question that is dealt with below.

What is certain is that the gospels provide the only credible pointers to this Jesus. The gospel witness plays a vital role because it is the only recorded witness to the Jesus of history. In other words, behind the New Testament kerygma stands the real Jesus, and it is this Jesus that is alive and present now. However, the New Testament kerygma is an essential pointer to this Jesus of Nazareth. One can glean enough about him from the New Testament to enable christological reflection in the present. Historical critical tools help in this process. It is the picture of Jesus that emerges from these texts that serves as normative for christology, and this "Jesus" is referred to as the "historical" Jesus. Liberation and black theologies suggest that the hermeneutical task should focus on the practice of Jesus, and that the biblical texts should be interpreted in a way that clarifies the general direction of these texts. In other words what is said about Jesus ought to be consistent with the general thrust of the relevant texts, as far as this can be ascertained from a thorough examination of the text,

and in keeping with the general tenor of the Bible as a whole. Nevertheless, it needs to be recognized that the search for this Jesus of Nazareth in the biblical records presents the same difficulties that the original quest presented. Both Latin American and Black christologies argue that the Christ of the New Testament is the Christ that is the result of reflection by the early Christian communities. This means that the biblical traditions are the result of redaction of the original traditions. In order to get to the real Jesus one has to get behind these traditions to the core traditions. i.e., to the original traditions which emerged from the originating events - back to the actual life and teaching of Jesus. Biblical criticism has shown that this is by no means an easy task.

Historical inquiry into the gospels only leads to the earliest witnesses and the so-called "kerygma" but does not necessarily provide access to the real Jesus. The other question is: is it possible to isolate the "kerygma" and how does one establish the truth of it? RH Fuller has referred to the many variations in the New Testament "kerygma" and the problem that this poses for biblical theology, although he does think that a core kerygma might be established.⁽¹⁵⁾ And Bultmann has outlined the difficulty with distinguishing kerygmatic statements from theological

ones. (¹⁶)

Scholars have tried for a long time to get to the events behind these traditions and have not been very successful in getting to the "historical Jesus". On the one hand, the quest for the historical has turned out to be far more difficult than expected. Scholars no longer believe that a full authentic picture of Jesus can be established from the New Testament material. The gospels are not biographies, they were never intended to be. On the other hand the so-called "New Quest" (a less ambitious look at the historical Jesus which seeks continuity between Jesus of Nazareth and the Proclaimed Christ; for example E Kasemann, E Fuchs and JM Robinson) has represented the idea that it is possible to glean from the Bible a reasonable picture of Jesus, and that this is necessary if one is to speak today of Jesus with any degree of reasonableness. (¹⁷) Yet whichever approach one takes the difficulties in establishing a historically reliable picture of the life and teaching of Jesus are very real. One ought not therefore to be dogmatic about details of Jesus' history recorded in the Gospels, and look rather for a broad impression of the figure of Jesus.

Sobrino admits that such a quest (i.e., for an historically accurate picture of Jesus) is

historically impossible, which is why Latin American theologians are not concerned with systematically determining Jesus data with exactitude. Latin American Christology accepts these data "to the extent that they are correct" (elements on which there is broad agreement among scholars) but it does not make a Christology based on the historical Jesus depend on the *ipsissima facta* of Jesus. It is interested in his practice and preaching. But to speak of the practice and preaching of Jesus presents the same historical problem: How does one establish the practice and preaching of Jesus without overcoming the problem that the quest for the historical Jesus must overcome if the truth about Jesus is to be established? Surely it is equally difficult to determine the practice and preaching of Jesus. To suggest that a focus on the practice of Jesus overcomes the difficulties of interpretation elicited by the quest for the historical Jesus does not solve the problem. All it does is that it replaces the question "which Jesus?" with the question "which practice?" Besides, it is inconsistent to argue that Jesus is one Jesus and at the same time to separate the question of his identity from the question of his practice. Latin American liberation theologians themselves assert that the person of Christ is not to be separated from his work. The shift from the "person" of Jesus to his "practice" does not address adequately the historical

difficulties involved.

What this means is that whether one is speaking about historical details relating to Jesus' person or his practice/work, one ought not to rest one's arguments on *details*. For example, one ought not to give prime importance in interpretation to the order of events or individual details in the descriptions of Jesus' deeds as the Gospels present these. Nevertheless, what is significant in the liberation argument (both Latin American and Black theologies) at this point is that the link between Jesus of Nazareth and Christology is inextricable if one is to relate Christology to Jesus Christ. And further that one needs to go to the Bible to gain some impression of this Jesus.

Further, the Latin American situation has produced many interpretations of Jesus. Bonino has pointed out the difficulties with the different interpretations to which the Gospel material lends itself. Hence one can gain different impressions of this Jesus. Which is the true picture of Jesus? Can the authenticity of any picture be established without recourse to the earliest layers of tradition? It is only when this question is addressed that one can speak realistically about Jesus as the norm of Christology. The question still remains: what is the true picture of Jesus or how does one establish the truth of any presentation

and interpretation of Jesus? Therefore the question of the norm of appropriateness is still to be clarified.

Is there an acceptable alternative to the above approach? Ogden provides an interesting departure. He does not accept that Jesus is the "norm" for christology. He suggests that the normative witness of the Apostles (the twelve) serves as the criterion for appropriateness. He argues that the early church was correct to take apostolicity as the criterion of canonicity because Jesus is "infinitely more than any norm"⁽¹⁸⁾ Jesus is the primal source of all Christian norms made fully explicit, and as the primal source of authority he cannot himself be an authority.⁽¹⁹⁾ For Ogden the witness of the apostles was authorized by Jesus, and this is what makes their witness the originating authority and therefore the sole primary norm or canon.⁽²⁰⁾ It is this witness that makes Jesus available as the "primal authorizing source".⁽²¹⁾ He is therefore pressed to the conclusion that:

"...if the primary authority of the apostles may and must be described as deriving entirely from Jesus as its primal authorizing source, Jesus himself may and must be defined (in the only really significant meaning of "Jesus" for Christian faith and witness) as the explicit primal source whence the original and originating witness of the apostles derives its primary authority."
(²²)

Hence the need to relocate the canon or norm of

appropriateness. This leads Ogden to relocate the canon or norm of appropriateness in the witness of the apostles:

"Given the historical methods and results now available to us, the original and originating witness of the apostles, and hence the canon or norm of appropriateness, can and must be relocated - namely, from the writings of the New Testament as such, which are precisely not apostolic in the relevant sense, to the earliest stratum of Christian witness that we today can reconstruct, using the New Testament writings as our primary historical sources." (23)

Ogden is correct to argue that it is no longer sufficient to appeal simply to Scripture or to the New Testament to establish the appropriateness of christological formulations. As argued earlier, the nature of the Scripture makes that unfeasible. Ogden quite rightly suggests that the results of biblical criticism need to be taken into account in the understanding of the New Testament witness to Jesus. He is also correct to suggest that Jesus is the explicit primal source, i.e., the person, and to call for the norm of appropriateness to be relocated. However, his argument breaks down when he suggests that this norm should be relocated in the christology of witness of the apostles who derive their primary authority from Jesus himself, and that their witness is to be found in the earliest stratum of Christian witness that we today can reconstruct. There are two

fundamental weaknesses in this suggestion.

First, it does not recognize the very serious difficulty in reconstructing the earliest stratum of Christian witness. If this can be done, why then is there such a serious problem with locating the historical Jesus? The dating of the Gospels is controversial⁽²⁴⁾, and the authenticity of traditions is very difficult to establish and is much debated. ⁽²⁵⁾ Even if one were to establish the earliest stratum, how is one to establish the connection between this stratum and the apostles? To suggest that this earliest layer of tradition can be shown to be apostolic and therefore somehow authorized by Jesus is no less problematic than the position he himself criticizes, i.e., the assertion that in order to be appropriate christology has to have support in what Jesus himself actually said and did:⁽²⁶⁾

"...if one assumes it to be necessary theologically to establish that a christology has support in what Jesus himself said and did before it can be judged to be appropriate, one places oneself in an impossible position." ⁽²⁷⁾

"...because there can be no operational distinction... between Jesus as he actually was and Jesus as he was experienced and remembered by the earliest witness." ⁽²⁸⁾

The point is that for as long as the connection with what Jesus actually said and did is not established we

cannot speak of a "normative" witness. And no matter how far back one might trace the traditions one is still faced with *interpretations* of what Jesus said and did, and there is no legitimate reason why such interpretations are to be accorded any different a status from the interpretations of Paul or of Christians today.

Second, the fact that it is impossible to make the connection between tradition and "apostle" as it is to make the connection between the tradition and Jesus, presents the Ogden argument with insurmountable difficulty. And what might be arguably the earliest stratum need not necessarily be apostolic. In any event "early" does not necessarily mean authentic. In speaking of the "canon" and its relocation in the witness of the "apostles" Ogden is experiencing the same difficulty that liberation theologians experience in trying to hold together ecclesiastical tradition and the biblical witness. There are considerable difficulties, therefore, in establishing the authenticity of biblical traditions by using age as a criterion or by attempting to prove a direct historical link between them and Jesus or the Apostles.

At the same time the biblical traditions remain the only pointers to the Jesus to whom they testify, and

the Jesus that Christians today seek to know and understand. To this extent it is necessary to engage in a dialogue with the gospels, not primarily to recover detailed historical facts, or to argue for a link between the text and individuals from the past, but to have some pointers to what may lie behind the traditions about Jesus so that a link might be established between what Jesus is *purported* to have said and done and christological reflection. This, it seems, is the only viable way in which the historical link with the Jesus events might be maintained. And this link has to be maintained. As Isak Du Plessis points out:

"A continuing account must be kept of the connection between faith and the historical events around Jesus, because it must be kept in mind that each recreation of reality eventually refers to a specific historical reality - Jesus of Nazareth." (29)

If this connection is not maintained Christianity could easily become a timeless myth, and christology left with a mythical Lord.⁽³⁰⁾ In other words, historical-critical studies, including the attempt at historic reconstruction, all help to provide useful data for interpreting the biblical text, and so have their place in this attempt to establish the connection between christology and the biblical traditions.

At the same time, it has to be said that there is no definite method of getting to the so-called original and originating events, no way of knowing exactly what they were and precisely how they occurred. The freedom with which the different biblical redactors used the traditions available to them makes it very difficult to establish the authentic elements concerning Jesus. While biblical criticism can and does help to provide helpful background material, and useful insights into the history of tradition and the possible setting in life of these traditions, it can only provide the most probable interpretation - the most probable meaning for the shapers of the traditions and the communities to which particular texts were addressed. It does not provide the reader with an indisputable position or interpretation.

How does one then interpret the bible in the present? Latin American theologians argue that the way forward is to be found in the biblical text interpreted in the context of Christian praxis. This seems a valid approach in that it recognizes the role of the biblical witness as well as making for a relevant interpretation of that witness, so that the insights are both appropriate and credible.

It recognizes that the biblical testimony is not meant to be a historical record, and it accepts the place of

historical critical method in determining the meaning of texts. However, it goes beyond this to seek a relevant meaning for today, and it does this by positing the notion of the "accumulation of meaning". This approach, as indicated in chapter three follows the Ricoeurian idea of "distantiation", so that the interpretation adds to the meaning established by traditional exegesis. Event(s) described in the text thus accumulates meaning. The original meaning points to possibilities of meaning now, and so the text is not closed but open. One is not restricted to the meaning offered by previous interpretations. This openness does not suggest that one may read into the text a meaning contradictory to its basic meaning. Hence the need to establish this basic meaning. This is crucial because the text cannot be so open as to make it irrelevant, or so open that it makes no difference whether one is dealing with the bible or not. The method adopted by the biblical writers did result in the text accumulating meaning it may never have had in the first place but they had the advantage in the first and early second centuries of the parallel oral tradition and probably the knowledge of those who witnessed Jesus when he was still alive. They had a safety factor, a "control", that Christians today do not have because the latter are too far removed historically from the original events.

How does one then avoid the very real difficulty of attributing just any meaning to these texts? It is clear that one is not free to take a text which is obviously "spiritual" and interpret it "materialistically". For example, to take the Johannine text which speaks of mansions in heaven and to argue from this that there are rooms in a place called heaven seems incongruous. Meaning has to show some relation to the nature and message of the text, meaning that can be justifiably obtained from it. Biblical criticism plays a crucial role here. If this is ignored then it does not really matter how one interprets the bible. Indeed, the bible then simply operates as a springboard for one's own fantasies or wishful thoughts, and one might as well dispense with the bible altogether.

To speak of a *"believing reading based on historical reality"*, as Croatto does, does not solve the fundamental problem of how one is to establish the truth of christological formulations without coming to terms with what the Gospel texts really say or what the traditions support. At worst, one is faced here with the problem of subjective interpretations of the biblical witness and left without a basis for arguing that Jesus is normative. At best one is confronted with any and every Jesus.

It does not help to argue, as Croatto does, when he says that all hermeneutics are subjective. More helpful is Croatto's suggestion that the hermeneutics of a text is conditioned by the text itself since it indicates the limits of its own meaning.⁽³¹⁾ This is why it is important to situate the text in its proper context, to use historico-critical methods and to explore how it can produce meaning so that it becomes alive in the present.⁽³²⁾ Nevertheless, if there is an accumulation of meaning how does one establish meaning that is consistent with the formative event that gave rise to the text in the first place? How then does one relate insights to Jesus Christ?

Here the suggestion is that the biblical witness has a special place in christology because it is the only witness that gives historical meaning to the name "Jesus". As such christology cannot dispense with it. However, the status of the biblical witness is not different from that of the rest of the Christian tradition in that the reflection recorded in that witness is, as with the rest of Christian tradition, the result of a present experience of Jesus, i.e., experience of the Risen Christ. In this sense reflection today has the same status. Christians today engage in christology because they experience the Risen Christ. If this were not so then all they have is the so-called "historical Jesus", a Jesus of the

past.

Instead of going backwards through the tradition, it is suggested here that one moves from the present through the past to the present, but through tradition (including Scripture). One could move from a present religious experience or encounter with God in the present situation and then dialogue with tradition, going as far back as possible to the earliest stratum, with the help of biblical criticism. But this stratum does not provide a norm. Rather it can serve as a link to the person of Jesus. The truth of Jesus is verified in praxis. In other words christology is the result of dynamic reflection (with Boff and Sobrino).

Christological reflection becomes authentic when it is the result of reflection on a present experience of Jesus, or an experience that might be reasonably related to the Jesus of Scripture and the Christ of tradition. The present experience of Jesus is one pole of reflection while the Bible and tradition together form the other pole. The present experience of Jesus includes the context, present experience in all its dimensions. Jesus is not experienced in a vacuum. This means that one does not speak of Jesus *and* experience. Rather one speaks of Jesus in and through experience/context.

How does one know that any experience is an experience of Jesus? The writer is very much aware that the question of "religious" experience is a notoriously difficult one. One cannot prove the objective reality of God by rational-scientific means, and to this extent there are no criteria whereby it might be established that a particular "religious" experience is indeed an experience of God or Jesus rather than for example a projection of the unconscious mind.

On the other hand, there are people who claim to have had experiences which they would describe as experiences of God or Jesus or some other deity. Such experience would fall into the category which Rudolf Otto described as the "Holy".⁽³³⁾ Macquarrie refers to this type of experience when he speaks of "mystical awareness" or "esthetic sensibility", and of the dimension of the holy "which is experienced as addressing, judging, assisting, renewing, and so on".⁽³⁴⁾ This is the type of experience that one is referring to when one speaks of an experience of Jesus. However, to identify the experience as an experience of Jesus there has to be some relation between such experience of the "Holy" and the biblical testimony to Jesus. If this is so then an experience of Jesus would be described in the following terms: In the first instance it is an awareness of something that is "other" than self. Second, it is an experience

that cannot be fully described in ordinary terms, a feeling of being in the presence of the deeply moving and mysterious. Third, it is an uplifting experience, which makes one feel encouraged and hopeful even in the most difficult situations. Fourth, it is a responsive encounter at a very deep level. Fifth, it is an awareness that one finds reinforced in prayer, and worship, especially in the celebration of the sacrament. Sixth, the effect of such an experience on one's life is broadly consistent with the biblical testimony concerning Jesus. In other words one can only make sense of it all in terms of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Time, further christological reflection, and further experience confirms that experience as a christian experience. In the end the interpretation of this experience as a "christian" experience is a subjective judgement, but such judgements made in the light of the experience and witness of those who have gone before and of those who share in the community of faith. Yet, in the final analysis it is one's own judgement that matters.

The writer recounts one experience which might serve to illustrate this point.

"In 1981 I was arrested, imprisoned and held in solitary confinement by the South African state authorities for what they regarded as subversive political activity. On the evening of my forty fifth

day in prison I was reading my bible when I became profoundly aware of the presence of Jesus. I was then overcome with awe and ecstasy and felt a sense of release and freedom. My eyes filled with tears of joy as the great burden of hopelessness and despair was lifted from me. I felt that I could forgive those who had imprisoned me unjustly. I continued to read the bible, as peace and joy filled my heart. Then at midnight I heard the rattling of keys, and my cell doors flung open. My jailors had come to release me. And no charges were brought against me. After many years I remain convinced that it was Jesus who I felt so close to me that night. The only explanation that upon reflection makes good sense of that experience is the Christ-explanation".

It is not being suggested here that an experience of this kind, or any subsequent christian interpretation of it, proves the objective reality of Jesus or indeed that Jesus saves. Belief in the reality of Jesus is a matter of faith. Here the attempt is made to show how such belief might be given content that is relevant, coherent and of saving help. Within this context the reality of such experience is taken as fact, though the interpretation of such experience is a matter of subjective choice. The concern in this chapter is to show that such a subjective choice is reasonable, coherent, and relevant to the new situation.

The Bible is understood from this perspective of a personal though not private experience of Jesus. It will be necessary to use all the insights of biblical criticism. The biblical picture of Christ is as Ogden suggests a symbolic/mythological one, and there is need to demythologize the New Testament witness, and to make it credible.⁽³⁵⁾ An increased historical consciousness has resulted in a situation in which appeals to mere authority are no longer acceptable unless these are provisional and not absolute.⁽³⁶⁾ Equally modern scientific perspectives render obsolete the prescientific claims of traditional witness and theology.⁽³⁷⁾

Rather than speak of "authority" it might be better to speak about an authoritative tradition, "authoritative" implying that it has a special place in the life and witness of the Christian community. There is no need to look for norms in what is "early" or "apostolic" or indeed "canonical". The norm is better sought in something more dynamic eg. in a personal experience of Jesus and in dialogue with scripture and tradition. There would then be no set or fossilized norm.

This is another radical departure from both Latin American and Black approaches in that neither tradition nor Scripture plays a normative role. The

norm is to be discovered in the dynamic dialogue between the two poles. While the elements in the hermeneutical circle - Experience, Bible, Tradition - are the same, none of the three enjoy primacy. Primacy is given to a more dynamically located source of normativeness. This might appear identical to Segundo's hermeneutic circle, but it is not. Segundo does refer to praxis as the starting point and to the need for a fresh interpretation of Scripture. However, his circle emphasises the normative role of Scripture, and posits a fresh interpretation of Scripture as its goal.⁽³⁸⁾ The approach suggested here is concerned with more than a scriptural hermeneutic and places scripture alongside the other elements in a *theological* hermeneutic, with none of the poles serving in itself as normative. What serves as normative then is the substance of the formulations that result from reflection, for example, impressions, notions, beliefs about Jesus and life, and these themselves are subject to revision as reflection continues. Hence no fossilized norm.

The Bible does not have to be accorded the normative role often given to it. It is not itself revelation. It is the record of peoples' experience of a reflection upon Jesus, and it does provide valuable insights for reflection in the present. However, revelation is present now, the same revelation though

not in the same way. Experience of it and reflection on it provides for the present and the future what early Christians discovered for themselves. In this sense Christians today are indeed creators of their own tradition of witness, out of their own experience of God with us! The biblical picture then does not provide the way to establishing what is normative for christology. The most that can be claimed is that reflection is consistent with the biblical witness.

How then does one know when one has arrived at an interpretation that one can depend on. This becomes a matter of personal judgement. However, it is in the application to life of this interpretation that its value becomes obvious. In other words if it helps to change their lives and imparts well being, dignity, self-respect, and affirms them as people, gives them a sense of purpose and encouragement and hope, helps them to cope with life's challenges, and to respond effectively to their social, economic and political circumstances, helps them to feel liberated, then, and this is subjective, that interpretation is valid. The truth is verified in praxis. What is normative is what is experienced to be authoritative and therefore true. In this sense "norm" is relative and not absolute. What is absolute is the "presence" and "action" of Jesus himself. The fact that reflection is constantly rooted in the biblical witness reduces the

subjective and relative nature of the exercise so that it is not totally arbitrary. On the other hand it is naive to believe that one can arrive at an interpretation that is neither relative nor subjective. What operates normatively in this new approach is the present experience of divinity and not some past tradition whose authenticity it is impossible to establish through rational means.

Faith, then, plays a vital role in this process of reflection. What the New Testament says is to be accepted insofar as we believe it to be true if it is consistent with our experience. Therefore the New Testament must be interpreted today insofar as it touches the life experiences of people so that it is seen to be credible. This means that the New Testament witness must also be interpreted politically. It must be relevant to the political experience of black South Africans and be credible to their worldview and experience. Therefore each generation needs to work out its own norms and not be tied to norms of another century or situation. The real Jesus is the one who is believed and experienced in the South African context of struggle for freedom.

Interpretation is in the end as the interpreter would interpret, taking into account those facts and factors he/she believes relevant to the hermeneutical process.

It is difficult to say whether an interpretation is correct or not, or at least one is not in a position to show this from the text, except to point out similarities, differences or inconsistencies. If the nature of the text itself is taken into account, one begins to understand why it is difficult if not impossible to trace the original traditions let alone reconstruct the original events behind that tradition. In other words biblical critical tools are no guarantee of the truth or meaning of a biblical text. It is self-flattery to suggest that the original or essential meaning can be found by use of biblical exegetical tools. One is really at sea, and the only pointers available are the dim lights of the lighthouse in the distance, and this sometimes is not enough to keep one off the rocks!

To summarize, the way forward is a relative rather than an absolute one. This way is to first, accept that without the Bible christology has no grounds for calling itself christology i.e., something related to the Jesus of the Bible. Second, to accept that it is difficult to establish through biblical criticism an authentic picture of Jesus. The tools of biblical criticism do not and yet cannot provide the means for establishing the authenticity of texts and traditions i.e., they do not provide a way of establishing without doubt a picture of Jesus that is completely

reliable. To this extent Ogden is correct to suggest that "scripture alone" or "scripture and tradition" or "historical Jesus" are no longer tenable because one may no longer speak of a clear distinction between Scripture and tradition and because even the earliest layers of biblical tradition are themselves witness to Jesus, and not necessarily Jesus' own words and deeds.⁽³⁹⁾ Third, one needs also to acknowledge that biblical criticism helps to throw light on the traditions and helps to understand them in their context. It helps to show what interpretations are and are not consistent with the biblical witness in parts and as a whole. Fourth, with the tools of biblical criticism it is possible to arrive at different interpretations of a particular text, precisely because there is no way of knowing by this method what the "correct" interpretation is. Fifth, the end result of reflection on the biblical witness does not provide one with a norm but points rather to what corresponds to that witness.

5.5. A CHRISTOLOGY OF LIBERATION?

Having accepted that biblical criticism helps to provide some way forward in the way one deals with biblical texts, one needs to ask what these texts say about Jesus and how their message relates to experience of God today, the context in which racism,

humanization, political liberation, and reconciliation are key issues. In short, does Jesus mean freedom? One needs then to turn to the biblical witness and ask, can one speak of its basic message as one of "freedom"?

This question is asked from a situation of existential concern with "freedom" and seeks to establish a link between experience of God in this situation and the biblical witness to God and Jesus Christ. And the question is addressed to the biblical material in order to see how consistent one's own perspective and understanding is in relation to that witness. Biblical insights do not provide absolute answers. They can only show what is reasonable or appropriate to that witness. On the other hand where the bible is not vocal or in agreement with one's own experience of God, one cannot claim or demonstrate that it is appropriate in this way. In addition, the final measure of appropriateness and normativeness is a present experience of God, with claims verified in praxis. The future rather than the past provides the final answer to the question of norm of appropriateness in christology. Insofar as it is in keeping with the biblical tradition one can deem it to be biblically based. Insofar as it is in keeping with the biblical interpretations of Jesus it may be said to be christological in the traditional sense.

The argument of Latin American and Black theologians is that the basic message of the bible is liberation - total liberation. And they argue this using the Exodus as a paradigm for interpreting the Old Testament, and using the notions of Incarnation and the Kingdom of God to support their claims. Biblical criticism has shown that they are not incorrect to suggest that the Exodus conditions the Old Testament kerygma. Such leading Old Testament scholars as Martin Noth, Claus Westermann, B S Childs, Ronald Clements, and Alan Cole agree that the Old Testament traditions have been edited in such a way that the Exodus forms the interpretative paradigm. Noth has suggested that the "guidance out of Egypt" is a primary and common confession of old Israel, the kernel of the whole subsequent Pentateuchal tradition.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Westermann suggests that the first fourteen chapters of the Book of Exodus represents the "original promise determinative for the whole Bible"⁽⁴¹⁾ And Brevard S Childs reflecting on the Passover and Exodus emphasizes the political aspect of this event and its impact on the biblical tradition:

"God's redemption is not simply a political liberation from an Egyptian tyrant, but involves the struggle with sin and evil, and the transformation of life..."

In spite of its ambiguity, the political overtones of Israel's deliverance are part of the whole biblical message...Liberation was achieved when God overcame the powers of evil in a struggle and invited his people joyfully to share in the event."⁽⁴²⁾

Clements, Cole, and Rogerson are equally convinced of the political nature of the salvific act of the Exodus.⁽⁴³⁾

There is general agreement on the Old Testament message with regard to the weak and the poor. Following a discussion on the different possible interpretations of certain Old Testament texts related to social and moral questions Rogerson says:

"There are, however, matters on which a much greater measure of agreement can be found in the OT, The perversion of justice and the denial of rights to the weak and to the poor are condemned throughout the OT, The duty of the strong to support and to protect the weak is stressed. Above all, appeal is made to God's grace in redeeming his people as the ground for gracious treatment of others."⁽⁴⁴⁾

It is also agreed by biblical scholars that the promise-fulfilment paradigm provided the basis for the New Testament writers' interpretation of Jesus and his significance for them.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Further, if the unity of the Bible (in the sense of its testimony to the revelation of the one God) is to be accepted it would be difficult to fault these Latin American theologians on their basic interpretation of the Bible. If one were to accept that the God of the Old Testament is revealed in Jesus then Latin American theologians are correct to argue as they do. Broadly speaking God does act in history and he does intervene to help people in

need, and he did this in Jesus.

Yet as M Noth has suggested, it cannot be rightly argued that the whole of biblical "Israel" experienced the Exodus event.⁽⁴⁶⁾ At the same time, it is acknowledged that the Exodus traditions came to be owned by later generations, and so become paradigmatic for later Israel after settlement in Palestine.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Taking into account the fact that it was only after settlement that the biblical traditions of the Old Testament came to be written down and edited, it seems likely that the Exodus served as a paradigm in the resulting redactions.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Nevertheless, the question still remains whether Christians today should accept this paradigmatic role of the Exodus in the Old Testament traditions. Even if the Exodus can be shown to be paradigmatic for the Old Testament tradition all this shows is that the writers chose to make it so. Christians today need not be tied to this paradigm. God should not be tied down to acting in a particular way that he did in the past. What if the present requires a new way, something different from the Exodus? In any case the historical value of the Exodus narratives has been called into question, and this reduces the interpretative value of this tradition as history.⁽⁴⁹⁾ One ought perhaps to look not so much at the specific historical details as

at the general tenor or message imparted in the tradition- that God was with his people in their need, had compassion on them, and helped them. To go beyond this and to use the correspondence of terms approach is to ignore the historical difficulties associated with the basic Exodus narrative. C Boff's suggestion that one uses the correspondence of relationships approach is the most appropriate in this instance.

Old Testament traditions were formulated long after the events they report, and these traditions have gone through a process of transmission and redaction similar to that which the New Testament traditions have done. And there is need to use available methods of biblical criticism to get to the events behind these traditions in an effort to establish their message and relevance for today. This means that one is not necessarily tied to an interpretation that uses the correspondence of terms approach nor committed to the Exodus paradigm in a purely political format. The New Testament writers themselves used the Old Testament traditions to interpret the life and significance of Jesus, but they did not use the Exodus paradigm in its socio-political format. Indeed the theme of political oppression and liberation is marked by its absence as an obvious theme in the New Testament.

Liberation theology's use of New Testament texts present equal difficulties. Both Latin American liberation and Black christologies argue that the life and work of Jesus is presented as one of liberation, total liberation. While this may be so, their arguments do not have a very sound basis in biblical criticism. While it could be argued that Jesus is God involved in the whole of life, concerned to transform it into a life in which one is freed from oppression, from sin, and helped into a fellowship with God and neighbour, it is not clear that the argument for Jesus as political liberator is supported by the New Testament witness to the extent that liberation theologians like to believe. Even if one were to accept, in broad terms, that the salvation that Jesus is said to offer is a salvation of the world, and does affect the totality of people's lives, that he influenced peoples lives spiritually and materially, influenced the political system of his day, and had an impact on key political figures in the Jewish and Roman communities, one could still have difficulty with the way in which the liberation position treats New Testament texts.

For example, the arguments based on Luke 4 are tenuous. The one factor that is cited to bolster the political argument is the connection of Luke 4 to the Year of Jubilee which is said to connect the Isaianic

prophecy cited there to the Exodus event. But this is a result of a particular interpretation of that text. As studies in Luke's gospel show interpretations can differ, and there is nothing specific in the text to prove that this connection is the one Jesus made.⁽⁵⁰⁾ The interpretation of Luke 4 as we have it in liberation theologies is the one these theologians chose to give it.

Further, the argument that Jesus himself was literally poor is not really sustainable any more.⁽⁵¹⁾ One is in no doubt that the Bible shows Jesus with the poor and the outcast, actively helping them. It is also true that the biblical accounts show Jesus in conflict with the religious and political authorities of his day. However, what is not clear is that Jesus was "on the side" of the poor against the rich, on the side of the oppressed against the oppressor. And it would be difficult to argue from the Bible that Jesus was only for the materially poor. It is inappropriate to apply the rich/poor or oppressor/oppressed paradigm to the person and work of Jesus. It would also run counter to the general thrust of the gospels to suggest that Jesus did not come to liberate the rich or that he was not for the rich. Nevertheless, it could well have been that the poor and oppressed were more responsive to Jesus and that the rich and oppressors were on the whole not receptive to him. In this sense Jesus was

with the poor and not the rich. Also the poor today may be more discerning of his presence and more receptive to him than the rich. In this sense the poor might feel that he is close to them because they are close to him. This is why it could be said that Jesus is in solidarity with the poor. It is something descriptive rather than prescriptive, although black theologians have argued for prescription rather than description. They have found God with them in their struggle for liberation and they have tried to show that the biblical witness verifies their claim, and so they have faith in the core of what they believe that witness to be.

In addition, the references to such terms as "poor" and "blind" need not necessarily, though they might, imply a materialistic reading. If Luke 4 is understood in relation to the gospel tradition about Jesus, the most that could be argued is that Jesus did help the poor, he did give sight to blind people, he made the lame walk, etc. The miracles of Jesus as the gospels record them bear out this view. However, even the miracle stories are problematic, and it is difficult to tell how authentic they are.⁽⁵²⁾ Further, Jesus did not heal all those in need of it. Mark's gospel for instance suggests that Jesus "could not" do any mighty work in Nazareth, and he refused to help the Syrophoenician woman until she begged him for help.

This is not to suggest that Jesus' ministry was not one of healing/miracles but to demonstrate that a simplistic approach to the miracle stories fails to take account of the difficulties involved.

However much one accepts that Jesus did perform these miracles, there is a fundamental problem - that Jesus did not in fact liberate the politically oppressed of his day from the Roman yoke. To the contrary he submitted to his oppressors in order to achieve his supreme saving work. Further, the Johannine witness suggests that Jesus specifically rejected the temptation to be a political leader/king. And his rejection of a popular Jewish messianic conception of a political messiah in favour of one who would suffer, is more evidence for this lack of a political dimension. What all this means is not that Jesus should be thought of as apolitical or non-political. Rather, it shows that the gospel material should not be viewed superficially and treated merely as a existential historical record of the words and deeds of Jesus. Thus the political argument, and the opposing view, cannot be sustained on this score. What is suggested here therefore is that such arguments do not recognize that at best the gospel traditions are reflections of the early Christians or what they perceived Jesus to be and to have been.

Similarly the argument that Jesus is the "Black Messiah" does not find support in the New Testament material. A major point of difference between Latin American liberation Christology and Black Christology is the latter's assertion that Jesus is also the Black Messiah. The argument for the blackness of Jesus is based primarily on the assumption that Jesus is in solidarity with oppressed black people. It is suggested that "blackness" symbolizes oppression and liberation, and it applies to Jesus because he symbolizes this as well. One response to this is that Jesus was not in solidarity only with the oppressed people, and his identification with humanity is an identification with all humanity. Further, the critique offered earlier in relation to Jesus' bias to the poor is also relevant here. On the whole it seems that to speak of Christ as "black" is to force the biblical text to say what one wants to hear. While the concept of "blackness" has a positive contribution to make in the South African context in that it serves to unite and affirm black people in their struggle against racism, it seems that to use it to speak objectively of Christ is to distort the biblical picture of Jesus and to limit the Incarnation in a racially exclusive way. In this sense the attempt is reductionist. On the other hand, there is a case to be made for the central role that Jesus plays in affirming black identity and humanity. But this role

need not be tied to arguments which attempt to use the New Testament to argue that Christ is "black."

While the credibility of Liberation and Black christologies may be argued from their experienced relevance in their respective contexts, the appropriateness of these christologies presents major problems because their portrayal of Jesus does not take seriously enough the difficulties involved in a proper interpretation of the biblical material.

If one were to argue for a christology of liberation that is appropriate to the biblical traditions concerning Jesus it seems that one needs to ask if the notion of liberation or freedom is one that finds support in the biblical presentation of Jesus and his message. One would however need to begin with the New Testament witness to establish this and then turn to the Old Testament to see how its traditions might help to clarify the notion of freedom presented in that witness. This implies that paradigms for interpretation of the biblical witness to Jesus arise out of the New Testament witness to him. The Old Testament traditions cannot provide the paradigm(s) for christological interpretation.

Ogden is correct to suggest that "liberation" or "freedom" is a notion that is firmly established in

the New Testament witness to Jesus.⁽⁵³⁾ He notes that John and Paul confirm the possibility of such a christology.⁽⁵⁴⁾ He suggests that John and Paul formulated their christology in these terms to express the deepest concern of the people of their time and because they believed that it was appropriate to formulate their christology in such terms.⁽⁵⁵⁾

Ogden does, however, recognize the difficulties associated with using this as a basis for arguing a christology of liberation.⁽⁵⁶⁾ On the one hand the concept of "freedom" is not common in John which has only one explicit reference to it (John 8:31-36). On the other hand, while the concept plays a more significant role in Paul, it is only in Galatians that he speaks of Jesus as Liberator.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Yet, Ogden is quite right to assert that the concept of freedom in Christ is fundamental to Pauline theology, and this justifies the presentation of Paul's christology as a christology of liberation.⁽⁵⁸⁾

The question, however, is whether one might argue the possibility of a christology of liberation on the basis that it is fundamental to Paul's theology? Here Ogden dismisses the Pauline case because he does not see Paul as being "an original and originating witness to Jesus Christ"; Paul did not experience Jesus of Nazareth.⁽⁵⁹⁾ And he argues that it is no

longer sufficient to appeal to Scripture or to the New Testament witness to establish the appropriateness of christological formulations, since scripture is of a secondary nature.⁽⁶⁰⁾ What needs to be asked of Paul, and of Christians today, is "whether, given the situation in and for which they were formulated they are or are not appropriate to the normative witness of the apostles?".⁽⁶¹⁾

Mention has already been made of the difficulties inherent in Ogden's norm of apostolicity. This aside, one can accept that the traditions of scripture are secondary, and ask if what one proposes in the present context in South Africa makes sense in the light of the biblical traditions both early and late. In other words, one needs to ask if these traditions justify contemporary talk of Jesus and his message in terms of "Liberation" or "freedom".

5.5.1. JESUS CHRIST LIBERATOR:THE KINGDOM AND LOVE

It is essential in this to take account of scholarly consensus on the New Testament traditions. Liberation and Black theologies have argued that the Kingdom of God is central to the life and teaching of Jesus, and it represents the effective action of God in the world to change the actual situation of human suffering, and bring about a total renewal of reality, total

liberation. To this extent they are on firm exegetical ground because this view is shared by the majority of biblical scholars. There is a general consensus among scholars that the Kingdom of God theme is central to the Gospel presentation of Jesus' preaching and teaching, and that the notion of historical transformation is inherent in it.

R Schnackenburg for example has stated that:

"According to the testimony of the Gospels, Jesus' message and teaching included many elements, and these were intended, practically speaking, just as much for Jesus' contemporaries as for mankind in general, that is, for man as man. If we are seeking one central idea which is constantly repeated, and which contains within itself the whole of Jesus' message, we should, along with the majority of contemporary exegetes, choose the proclamation of the approach of the Kingdom of God. (Mk 1:15)." (62)

And Rudolph Bultmann saw it as a dominant theme in Jesus' message:

"The dominant concept of Jesus' message is the Reign of God. Jesus proclaims its immediately impending irruption, now already making itself felt." (63)

Jesus as eschatological prophet and teacher proclaimed the Kingdom of God, calling his hearers to repentance and faith in his word as the Word of God.⁽⁶⁴⁾ As Ogden indicates, while the form of expression was eschatological, Jesus' basic motif lay in

"his implicit christological claim by representing his own proclamation and summons as the decisive act of the God whose reign was even then breaking in."
(⁶⁵)

Norman Perrin has indicated that this combination of proclamation and challenge to a new response is precisely what is contained in the person and teaching of Jesus:

"The contemporaries of Jesus could and did look forward to a new and decisive (eschatological) epoch of Heilsgeschichte, and to a new response to this by means of which they would enter into the perfect relationship with God that this would make possible. It is precisely the claim of the teaching of Jesus that this is happening in his ministry; the Kingdom is now present as God manifests his kingly activity, and the new necessary response to this is constantly being illustrated in the ethical teaching that is the eschatological Torah. For this reason Jesus sets his own understanding of the will of God over against the Law of Moses (the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount) and ventures to declare the paradise - will of God now valid (Mark 10:6ff)." (⁶⁶)

Ogden is correct therefore to suggest that Jesus' implied christology taken in itself says that

"the ultimate reality by which their existence was finally determined was none other than the God whose gift and demand were already confronting them through Jesus himself with the definitive decision for or against their own authentic existence." (⁶⁷)

In addition Ogden argues that the God of Jesus is a God of boundless love.⁽⁶⁸⁾ This theme of love is the

basic motif of Jesus' proclamation:

"the basic motif expressed both by his proclamation of God's reign and his summons to repentance and faith and by his implicit claim for their decisive significance was the motif of God's prevenient love as the gift and demand of authentic existence in faith and returning love." (69)

It is expected of hearers that they accept this gift of God's love and love God and those whom God loves.
(70)

Victor Paul Furnish has highlighted this fundamental theme in Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God:

"The Rule of God is the rule of love. Love is the law of life in the Kingdom. To receive Jesus' preaching of God's Rule is to receive the proffer of forgiveness, and to accept the claim inherent in the promise is to allow God's love to qualify one's own life in radical and concrete ways." (71)

He summarises the consensus among scholars on this point:

"We have found reason to believe that the love command was central to Jesus' own message and mission. Whether or not the Great Commandment as such was his own formulation, the exhortations to love God and the neighbour which it vitally co-ordinates and urgently presents are in keeping with what even the most cautious scholars agree to be most characteristic of Jesus' teaching. The kingdom of God is the Rule of God's forgiving and commanding love; Jesus' call to repentance and discipleship is a call to obey God's will, to manifest the

reality and meaning of his kingship in one's life." ⁽⁷²⁾

The salvation that Jesus offered is appropriated through repentance, and it is precisely this that Jesus offered his hearers - the opportunity for repentance and the assurance of forgiveness.⁽⁷³⁾ And he symbolised God's loving reign, as the bearer of forgiveness, and as divine grace made manifest.⁽⁷⁴⁾ C Stuhlmacher summarizes this aspect of New Testament christology succinctly:

"To summarize, the pre-Pauline primitive missionary community already proclaimed and confessed Jesus as the Messiah whose mission and work, culminating in his vicarious death on the cross, was understood as the inauguration of "peace" between God and humanity that God had promised, the eternal communion with God; in the resurrection of the crucified one God acknowledged this work once and for all, made Jesus' atoning death the basis of the forgiveness of sins for those who believe, and in the appearance of the risen one to certain chosen (apostolic) witnesses put into operation the salvation-bringing kerygma about Jesus as the Christ of God." ⁽⁷⁵⁾

The early church's interpretation of Jesus was a response to what they believed Jesus himself claimed to be - the gift and demand of God's love made manifest.⁽⁷⁶⁾ It is not possible to establish without doubt that Jesus did make such a claim. However, as Ogden points out, what is relevant is that the earliest witnesses perceived him to make such a claim.⁽⁷⁷⁾ In this they testify to what he is doing in the

present: re-presenting his hearers with the gift and demand of God's love, thus offering them authentic existence in faith and reciprocal love.⁽⁷⁸⁾ To accept this is to accept that "Jesus means love."⁽⁷⁹⁾ And this implies that Jesus means "freedom"

"insofar as one is willing to recognize that to exist in faith in God's boundless love for us and in returning love for God and for all whom God loves is to exist in radical freedom - both from and for oneself and all of one's fellow creatures." (80)

Ogden is therefore correct to argue that the earliest traditions concerning Jesus provide enough support for a christology of liberation, liberation through faith in divine love.⁽⁸¹⁾ For

"the christology even of the Jesus-kerygma is at least an implicit christology of liberation. The Jesus to whom it bears witness is the one through whom the possibility of just such an existence of radical freedom is decisively re-presented." (82)

When Paul presents the cross as the liberating judgement of God he does so in term of his own context.⁽⁸³⁾ One needs today to look beyond the mythological and apocalyptic categories that he used, and to effectively demythologize his theology, so as to express his basic motif in contextual terms in the present.⁽⁸⁴⁾ Paul's basic claim, says Ogden, is that

"the ultimate reality finally determining all human existence is none other than the God who gave Christ up to die on the cross and, conversely, that 'Christ crucified' is nothing less than the power and wisdom of this God (Rom 3:25; 8:32; 1 Cor 1:23f)".⁽⁸⁵⁾

This Pauline motif is determined by the Jesus who means love and freedom, the reality of God's demand and love, the "decisive re-presentation of our own possibility to be truly free."⁽⁸⁶⁾

If Jesus means freedom, then Ogden is correct to argue that one may speak legitimately of Jesus as "the liberator" or "the liberator of God."⁽⁸⁷⁾ However this freedom is not simply to be identified with political struggles for liberation.⁽⁸⁸⁾ It is a freedom grounded in divine love, the freedom of love of God and neighbour.⁽⁸⁹⁾ And it is this intrinsic dimension of love of neighbour that implies ethical responsibility, and requires a positive response to genuine need in the community.⁽⁹⁰⁾ And so

"the properly moral implications of Christian freedom are always to seek justice, in the broad sense of so acting toward all others as to secure what is due to them - to meet any and all of their real human needs and thus to realize the whole of their human good."⁽⁹¹⁾

To this extent political responsibility is essential to Christian freedom. This is where the argument of liberation and black theologies becomes crucial.

Latin American and black christologies seek to emphasize the deeply political nature of Christian discipleship. They have argued that Christians need to be involved in political struggles for liberation because of the political dimensions of Jesus' life and ministry. While they have used the "historical Jesus" as the basis for their arguments, and have largely opted for the "correspondence of terms" approach in doing so, here the suggestion is that one cannot proceed along those lines without distorting the biblical traditions.

However, a case for political responsibility flows out of a much broader approach to the biblical material, and one that takes account of biblical criticism. It is not so much that the praxis of Jesus was a political one as it is that Jesus' person and work represent claims that imply political responsibility. ⁽⁹²⁾ It is for present day Christians to work out what specifically this responsibility means in their own time and context. Thus while it is incorrect to identify Christian freedom with so-called "secular" freedom, these two are inseparable. Freedom in Christ is concrete, and involves the struggle to liberate people from want and oppression.

It is for this reason that christological formulations that seek to imprison people ideologically need to be,

as Sobrino suggests, de-ideologized.⁽⁹³⁾ One ought to strive to eliminate unjust claims present in the biblical text and to expose the political interpretation that is implied in the biblical text. To this extent liberation theologians are correct to stress the need for the deideologization of christological formulations in addition to the demythologization of the biblical witness.⁽⁹⁴⁾ As Ogden puts it:

"To de-ideologize is to free the meaning of the Christology of witness from the economic, social, political and cultural world whose injustices it used to sanction."⁽⁹⁵⁾

This helps to ensure the practical impact of the freedom that Jesus re-presents because it allows for a christology grounded in his basic claim, which is the freedom of God; A christology that speaks to the present time and context in a concrete manner. This is what makes for credibility - adding to the aim of demythologization the political interpretation of the christology of witness.

The strength of the liberation approach is that it grapples with the details of biblical witness in relation to its political interpretation and so demands that the implications of Christian freedom become clear. It addresses the specific needs of the

situation and seeks a practical way of meeting those needs. It is with such an approach that one ought to explore a christology of liberation for the new situation in South Africa. To try and speak of Jesus as freedom and of love is to attempt to work out what this freedom and love entail in concrete terms and to spell out the moral responsibility in terms that make sense in the specific context of South Africa, and to challenge Christians to take such responsibility seriously and to act decisively.

At the same time it needs to be recognized that the fundamental solution to the South African conflict and the ground on which the future community is to be built is at the deeper level of human predicament in the face of "sin". There needs to be a change in the way people accept and respond to the challenge and demand of God in Christ, the challenge to repentance and the call to boundless love.

5.5.2. RECONCILIATION, REDEMPTION AND RECREATION

The themes of Creation and Salvation, taken together as they are by Latin American Liberation and Black christologies, offer a helpful way forward. However, contemporary interpretation of these themes is not to be restricted to a literal view of appropriate biblical texts, and it is not necessary to adopt the

Exodus as the only paradigm. It might be possible to link the Kingdom of God theme to other link themes in both the Old and New Testaments in order to formulate a christology of liberation.

The themes of reconciliation, redemption and re-creation are integral to the Kingdom of God concept which is central to both the Old and New Testaments. The notion of covenant draws these themes together. Barth, for example, speaks of the covenant fulfilled in Christ's reconciling work as being central to Christianity, while the doctrines of creation, last things, redemption and consummation, lie at the circumference of the heart of dogmatics.⁽⁹⁶⁾

"It would be possible and quite correct to describe the covenant fulfilled in the work of reconciliation as the heart of the subject-matter of Christian faith, of the origin of Christian love, of the content of Christian hope...Christian faith is faith in, Christian love is love through, and Christian hope is hope in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." (97)

The New Testament testifies to God's intention to unite people and creation to and in himself, God's covenant will be fulfilled in Christ's work of reconciliation. In the New Testament Jesus is presented as the one who draws people to himself and to God. This is true for example of the Gospel of St. John. The Pauline corpus presents Jesus' ministry as

one of reconciliation - the Corpus Christi. This picture of Jesus needs to come into its own in the South African context in which there is still much division, and yet genuine attempts to seek reconciliation. This aspect strengthened by the notion of divine love manifested in Jesus will provide an authentic Christian existence for those who seek it, and offer a deeply Christian approach to the very serious problems presently threatening the South African community. The theme of Jesus as Reconciler provides a necessary balance to the notion of Jesus as Liberator.

And this work of reconciliation is the fulfilment of God's will as creator and redeemer:

"We may express it most simply as follows. It is the will of God that the Yes which He as the Creator has spoken to His Creation should prevail; that all men and all creatures should be delivered from evil, i.e., from that which God the Creator has rejected, and preserved from its threat and power."
(⁹⁸)

The notion of Jesus as "Redeemer" is one that is in keeping with the general tenor of New Testament christology, and fits in well with the basic Kingdom of God theme. It emphasizes the call to repentance and the offer of forgiveness and the power available in Jesus to overcome all that keeps people from becoming what God intends them to be. It testifies to

God's love made freely available and provides the necessary basis for the building of a new community. As Barth puts it the will of God:

"...is directed against the nothingness affirmed in sin. It hastens to help being against non-being in order to destroy the power of the latter, , to free the creature by negating its negation, to avert its threat, to constitute a humanity and a world which have nothing to fear from those frontiers because the abyss of evil has lost its power to attract, and in which God alone is King in His kingdom, as is only meet". (99)

One of the essential features of the Jesus of the Gospels is that he is presented as the one who redeems. Jesus represents that power of God available to people that enables them to overcome what is without him impossible to overcome in the forces at work in people and in the world that destroys them from within - "sin". Jesus is presented as the Saviour who comes to do what no one else can, and does it successfully. Classical Christology has emphasised this aspect, and there needs to be a revival of it. There needs to be the admission that real freedom cannot be achieved by people alone and that in the end authentic freedom is one that rests on divine power and love breaking through and breaking down the barriers between people, freeing them for freedom. Emphasis needs to be placed on the joint effort of divine power and human power in the project of

freedom. Freedom and salvation from sin are thus inextricably linked.

Another aspect of the Jesus picture that is relevant is that of Jesus the "Restorer" - restorer of humanity and of society. The classical conceptions of Christ as the Re-Creator and Restorer of the created order will be able to provide useful insights for a theology of Reconstruction. Recreation too can be viewed in terms of reconciliation. Barth recognized this:

"'Reconciliation' is the restitution, the resumption of fellowship which once existed but was then threatened by dissolution. It is the maintaining, restoring and upholding of that fellowship in face of an element which disturbs and disrupts and breaks it. It is the realisation of the original purpose which underlay and controlled it in defiance and by the removal of this obstruction. The fellowship which originally existed between God and man, which was then disturbed and jeopardised, the purpose of which is now fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in the work of reconciliation, we describe as covenant." (100)

This recreation includes the rediscovery in Christ of what human beings are created to be. Jesus in himself symbolizes "true humanity". People seeking to know what true humanity is turn to Jesus to discover this. They discover their value, their dignity, their purpose and their hope. They discover that they are all affirmed and loved. It is in this Jesus that the dehumanized are able to seek true humanization.

Questions of identity and value, of human consciousness, are answered in this Jesus.

The Old Testament witness contributes to such a christology if viewed within a similar framework. The Old Testament presents freedom in a holistic sense. It seems that one may, even without using the Exodus as a paradigm, still speak of "freedom" in the Old Testament traditions. For the Old Testament understanding of salvation carries with it the comprehensive meaning of "freedom", with the Exodus event focusing on one aspect of that freedom. God sets people free in that he not only helps them to overcome oppression but also sets them free for fellowship with himself and with other people and enables them to live lives worthy of their place in God's economy of salvation by helping them to know what sin is, to turn away from it, and to find full humanity/identity in him. This notion of freedom draws together themes that run through the Old Testament traditions, themes that scholars have identified and presented as "salvation-history" and in terms of a theology of Covenant.

The Kingdom of God concept is central to this approach. The Old Testament conception of the future, for example, is centred on "*the consummation of God's sovereignty*". As W Eichrodt points out in his

discussion of the relation between the Old and New Testaments:

"In a search for the fulfilment of individual predictions we can all too easily lose sight of the fact that eschatological thought concentrates on the one great new thing which the future is to bring, namely, the consummation of Gods sovereignty, however this may be described in individual instances." ⁽¹⁰¹⁾

And the significance of this for the covenant relationship is that it means that redemption "is linked to time and history" and guarantees "the uniqueness and the 'real humanity' of the redemption."

⁽¹⁰²⁾ And the

"corresponding reality on the negative side is the elimination of sin as the decisive cause of separation between God and man, whether this is looked for as the result of a purification proceeding from God, or of the atoning work of the suffering Messiah." ⁽¹⁰³⁾

The creative dimension of God's activity is a basic characteristic of Old Testament hope which is expressed in the notion of "comprehensive re-shaping."

⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Subjection to divine sovereignty implies renewal of the whole created order. ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

According to Eichrodt, then, the notions of covenant relationship and the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament unite in this threefold dimension of the history of salvation - creation/renewal, redemption,

and reconciliation. Kingdom and covenant are useful concepts with which one might articulate the basic message of the Old Testament witness. Taken together with similar themes in the New Testament they help to articulate a relevant christology for the new situation in South Africa today. Something along these lines could represent more accurately the basic thrust of the Old Testament traditions. So while Croatto is correct to suggest that the kerygma of freedom is basic to the Old Testament, one would not necessarily use the Exodus as a paradigm, or as the only paradigm, to articulate what this freedom entails. One could, for example, explore themes related to the Exile-Restoration periods.

The practical implications of such a christology need to be worked out. However, there are some broad implications that might be mentioned here.

First, there is need for a clear recognition that the fundamental problem in South African society is one of alienation from God and from one another and that reconciliation is the divine purpose as revealed in Jesus. The acknowledgement and proclamation of Jesus as Reconciler in this situation means accepting that divine presence and activity is essentially reconciling activity, and that is to participation in this project that christians are called. In a community that knows deep divisions christians will

see Jesus' activity as a bringing together of people across the barriers that divide. Doing christology is engaging in this task. It means seeking categories of thinking and expression which do not pit one group against another. It means creating a healing consciousness. It means creating understanding, affirming all people as members of the one humanity, one body, helping people to face and to overcome racial, tribal, cultural and other barriers that divide and create conflict, and actively working for a united community in which all people feel accepted and loved. This in turn means that christians work to ensure that ecclesiastical and societal plans, programmes and projects are assessed in terms of their ability to overcome divisive tendencies and to achieve reconciliation. Above all to seek to do all this in the name and power of Christ and his Spirit

Second, reconciliation goes together with redemption. Christ as Redeemer points the way to redemption from all that keeps us from being reconciled with God and with one another. This perspective calls for the recognition that "sin", both personal and social, is the basic stumbling block to meaningful reconciliation. The christian message needs to create a deeper awareness of "sin" as a fundamental cause and call people to turn away from it. Through the message and witness of christians people can rediscover their

need and ability to forgive. When people recognize their wrong(s) and seek forgiveness then it is possible for people to be forgiven, to heal broken relationships, and to make a new beginning. But this assumes that people are willing to admit their wrongs and are genuinely prepared to change personal attitudes and behaviour, and to work for change so that the inadequacies of the past might be addressed in a real and practical way. Christians are called to lead by example, and the church is called to be a healed and healing community. This implies the need for a deep dynamic spirituality that must accompany the efforts toward solving the major problems facing the new community. Prayer, worship, and right living become the foundation for the new order. This dimension has not been given its rightful place in the struggle for liberation.

Third, restoration of individual and society depends on Christ's activity as Restorer. The search for a new vision for a new community ought for christians to begin with a vision of Christ and the implications of faith in him for the present and the future, for the way in which church and society need to be restructured and re-organized. Archbishop Desmond Tutu's "rainbow people of God" is one attempt at grasping the christian vision for the new situation. (106) The vision of a united community needs to be

accompanied by the desire to get rid of negative attitudes and structures which perpetuate old divisions or help to introduce new ones. Christians are called to help by proclamation and by example to contribute to the healing of the nation, to help formulate policies and establish structures that are based on the kingdom values of love and justice. They are called to challenge actively that which threatens the process of healing and rebuilding, and to work for the proper distribution and legitimate use of power and material resources and to accord human worth and dignity to all people.

This is what it means to believe in Jesus Christ Liberator, Reconciler, Restorer - in this new situation. Christological reflection then addresses the major issues facing South Africa, and would relate relevantly and credibly to the everyday lives of people in this country.

5.6. A RADICALLY DIFFERENT APPROACH TO CHRISTOLOGY:

The approach that is commended here differs markedly from that offered by Latin American liberation and Black theologians. It offers a fundamentally different understanding of the dialectic operating within the hermeneutical circle, a broader view of the nature of the community which forms the locus of

christological reflection and of the concept of freedom, thus addressing more effectively the new situation in South Africa.

First, although it accepts that experience, Bible, and Tradition are essential elements in this dialectic it moves beyond the search for a norm in either experience (to achieve credibility) on the one hand or the Bible and/or tradition (to achieve appropriateness or for authority) on the other and suggests that the norm for christology is to be found in the dynamic dialogue between experience and the historical Jesus. The historical Jesus is at the centre of christology, but this Jesus is surrounded by concentric layers of tradition (bible and ecclesiastical tradition), and one needs to get behind these various layers to discover him. One moves from the present through the past to the present in order to discover a relevant christology. This means that the community engaged in this dialogue is both the broader contemporary community as well as christians from the past. It is in this dynamic dialogue that both credibility and appropriateness is to be found.

Second, the biblical hermeneutic does not look to historical events recorded in the bible in order to establish paradigms for the present. It takes seriously the difficulties associated with such an

approach and offers an alternative which rests on what scholars would take as firmer ground when talking about Jesus, i.e., the Kingdom of God theme and the relation of this to Old Testament themes that might contribute to the formulation of a relevant christology for the new situation.

Third, experience is not merely the experience of the oppressed but the experience of the individual and the wider community. This entails a shift from a sectional and partisan perspective in the analysis of the situation to a more inclusive analytical framework. It recognizes the reality of racism, dehumanization, and socio-economic oppression, but views these in the light of the new situation that prevails in South Africa, one in which all sections of the community are possible victims. This approach addresses directly the first three aspects of the new situation described at the beginning of this chapter (see 5.1)

Fourth, the concept of freedom here is broader. It concerns not simply the freedom of a specific group from oppression but regards freedom as the goal of humanity as a whole. Further, freedom takes on a wider meaning in the South African situation than it did up to now - it includes salvation from sin, humanization, political liberation, reconciliation and

reconstruction, and all South Africans become the subjects of this quest for freedom. While liberation theologies have acknowledged that sin is the root cause of social ills they do not in practice address adequately this dimension. The marked emphasis on salvation from sin, reconciliation and reconstruction distinguishes the christological approach adopted here from those which have gone before, and helps it to address effectively the three other (than those in the second point above) aspects of the new situation mentioned earlier in section 5.1.

These are significant points of departure, and if taken seriously would lead to a radically different christology, one that is both credible and appropriate. The result is a christology that presents Jesus as Liberator in the broadest possible sense, and this perception is clarified in terms of his work as Redeemer, Reconciler, and Restorer/Recreator, so that the circumstances and needs of people in the new situation are more adequately addressed.

5.7. A NEW FUTURE: UNITY IN DIVERSITY

What has been attempted here is an exploration of the possibility of christology for the present South African situation, and a search for pointers towards

the formulation of such a christology, taking account of the insights of Latin American liberation and Black christologies. And it is suggested that one may still speak of a christology of liberation, and do it with much more regard for the insights afforded by biblical criticism, taking into account the broadly related themes of the Old and New Testaments, focusing on the biblical witness to Jesus. The reformulation of christology in the light of the role of Jesus as "Redeemer", "Reconciler", and "Restorer or Re-Creator" is one direction that might prove both appropriate and credible.

If there are people who share a common experience or concern and feel the need to reflect on their peculiar experiences and concerns in the situation, then they are free to explore within the broader christological framework a relevant christological emphasis. Here black theological insights would be relevant to the experience of "black" people, African theological insights would be relevant to the experience of "African" people, and so forth. The cultural diversity of the South African population has and will continue to produce a variety of christological emphases. And the cultural questions will need to be given an important place in the process.

Nevertheless, there can still be a unity in diversity.

What is proposed, then, is a broad christological base through which the issues of humanization, political liberation, salvation from sin, reconciliation and reconstruction, are addressed in a relevant, credible and appropriate way.

It is clear however that one cannot prescribe what the specific details of such a christology will be. The responses of Latin American liberation and black theologians are attempts to work out the concrete implications of a christology of liberation, but their responses address the old social and cultural order of South Africa. However these cannot be applied wholesale in the new situation. What needs to happen now is that Christians in the situation need to grapple with their own experience of God in their context and to come to terms with their specific moral responsibilities in this context. In each instance they will dialogue with tradition - both biblical and ecclesiastical - and formulate a christology which for them is appropriate, relevant and credible. This could be called a "post critical" christology in the South African context. And this may be described in the same terms that Avery Dulles uses to describe postcritical theology:

"Adhering to the Christian symbols, as interpreted in the tradition and in the faith and praxis of the Church today, the theologian seeks to retrieve the

wealth of meaning and wisdom contained in the multiple sources that were at the disposal of earlier theologians. Scripture and tradition are used not atomistically to provide logical premises for deductive arguments, but organically and imaginatively to provide symbols and clues so that the mind of the believer can be ever more fully attuned to the truth of revelation."⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

However, there will be little point in engaging in such a christology without faith, personal faith in Jesus. It is a faith-experience of Jesus that is the real starting point of christology and it is the way in which such faith is expressed in life that is the measure of what people really believe about Jesus. The formulation of an authentic christology for the new situation is not a theoretical exercise, but a living and dynamic process in which christological reflection is fed by a personal experience of Jesus in the present context, the biblical witness to Jesus, and ecclesiastical tradition. The measure of adequacy of christology is in the end the extent to which it helps the believer make sense of and come to terms with the Risen and present Jesus, and to respond to his offer and demand of "freedom".

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. C Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-Building and Human Rights*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1992. p. 7.
2. *ibid.*, p.278. In his book he grapples with the issues of reconstruction and attempts to give some pointers towards the formulation of such a theology. (C Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, *op.cit.*,)
3. S Maluleke, Do we need a Theology of Reconstruction? in *Challenge* No.25 Sept/Oct 1994, Johannesburg, Contextual Publications. pp. 20-21 & 28.
4. SM Ogden, *The Point of Christology*, London, SCM, 1982, pp.106-107.
5. *ibid.*, p.106.
6. *ibid.*, p.107.
7. *idem.*
8. See PR Ackroyd, *Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament*, London, SCM, 1987. pp. 6-7; DS Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, London, SCM, 1964. For the complexity of Old Testament wisdom traditions see G Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, London, SCM, 1972, esp. pp. 314-319.
9. AM Hunter, *The Gospel According to St. Paul*, London, SCM, 1966, pp. 9ff; JAT Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, London, SCM, 1976, pp. 346ff; RP Martin, *New Testament Foundations*, Vol I, Grand Rapids, Wm B Eerdmans, 1975, pp. 226ff; CK Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, London, SPCK, 1978, pp. 1f, 27-66; DEH Whiteley, *The Theology of St Paul*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1974, pp. 1ff; R Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol I, London, SCM, 1952.
10. Manas Buthelezi, "Toward Indigenous Theology in South Africa, in S Torres & V Fabella, (eds), *The Emergent Gospel*, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1978, pp. 56-75.

11. Liberation Christology as Sobrino has pointed out accepts the divinity of Christ asserted in the New Testament and the creeds. It accepts the conciliar formulations with loyalty and fidelity. It does not question its content or authority although it has not undertaken an in depth analysis of them (See J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1987, pp.3-60)
12. Latin American christology while acknowledging the importance of christological formulations of the New Testament and ecclesial councils methodologically it does not begin with them. It does not deal with dogmatic formulations in a dogmatic way. It believes that dogmatic formulations need to be reinterpreted in a way that is faithful to the message of the past in order to be pastorally useful. This leaves room for novel statements about Christ which in turn are accepted as part of the "ecclesiality of faith". (See *idem.*, and J Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, London, SCM, pp. 311-335).
13. J Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America*, op.cit., p. 23.
14. SM Ogden, *The Point of Christology*, London, SCM, 1982, pp. 97-105.
15. RH Fuller, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament*, London, Duckworth, 1971, pp. 195ff.
16. R Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol 2, London, SCM, 1955 (ET), pp. 237-241.
17. For a good summary of this position see Isak Du Plessis, *Nazareth or Egypt: Who was right?* Pretoria, JL Van Schaik, 1985. pp. 61-63.
18. SM Ogden, *The Point of Christology*, London, SCM, 1982, p.102.
19. *idem.*
20. *ibid.*, pp.102-103.
21. *ibid.*, p.103.
22. *idem.*
23. *ibid.*, pp.103-104. "Even as we can now vindicate the claim of the christology of witness to be credible only by taking full account of the quest for freedom in its practical as well as its theoretical aspect, so we can now establish the christology of witness as appropriate only by appealing to the witness of the apostles as something

distinct from the canon of the New Testament."(ibid., p.105)

24. See for example JAT Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, London, SCM, 1976.
25. See Isak Du Plessis, *op.cit*, pp. 67-77.
26. SM Ogden, *op.cit.*, p.111.
27. *idem.*
28. *idem.*
29. Isak Du Plessis, *op.cit.*, p.154.
30. *ibid.*, p.61.
31. JS Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics: Towards a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1987, p.80.
32. *idem.*
33. R Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, London, Penguin, 1959.
34. J Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, London, SCM, 1966. p. 5.
35. SM Ogden, *op.cit.*, pp.2-19.
36. *ibid.*, p.90.
37. *idem.*
38. JL Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1976, Ch.1, especially pp. 7-9, 25-34.
39. *ibid.*, pp.96-101.
40. M Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1972 p.49: "In the case of the guidance out of Egypt" we are dealing with a primary confession (*Urbekenntnis*) of Israel, one that is expressed rather strictly in hymnic form, and at the same time with the kernel of the whole subsequent Pentateuchal tradition. Although we know very little about the inner life of ancient Israel, we have here - unless we are completely mistaken - a common confession of old Israel."(*idem*)
41. "There is a pronounced upward movement in this first section of Exodus, proceeding from the bitter distress of the Israelites in Egypt and leading directly to their deliverance. Within this section occurs that which was announced at the outset (3:7-8). The original promise,

determinative for the whole Bible, is found here." (C Westermann, *Handbook to the Old Testament*, London, SPCK, 1969(ET), p. 57)

42. BS Childs, *Exodus*, London, SCM, 1974, p. 214
43. Ronald Clements is quite unequivocal about the political nature of God's act of salvation: "It is God's providential over-ruling of events to protect those who trust him, and to free them from the unjust oppression of a tyrannical foreign rule. It is therefore related to real events of this world, and to the moral and political conditions of life which prevail within it. The Exodus story thus becomes a central example of the way in which the Old Testament conceives of the relationship between God and man. The account is more than a story about Israel's origin, and becomes a witness to Israel's God and his will for men." (R Clements, *Exodus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972. p.74)
 Alan Cole in his commentary on the Book of Exodus stresses this picture of God as one who acts in salvation to rescue the oppressed and helpless. He writes: "Above all, He is the God who acts in salvation; 'I have come down to deliver them' is his word for Moses to bear the Israelites (Ex. 3:8). This introduces the biblical concept of salvation, an area where later biblical passages are largely indebted to the book of Exodus for language and imagery." (A Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, London, Inter-Varsity Press, 1974. p.27) "Salvation, whatever the word employed, is therefore seen as the characteristic activity of God; it is His very nature to rescue the oppressed and helpless." (ibid., p.28) J Rogerson, *Beginning Old Testament Study*, London, SPCK, 1983.
44. J Rogerson, *Beginning Old Testament Study*, London, SPCK, 1983, p.151.
45. RE Clements, "Prophecy and Fulfilment", in *Epworth Theological Review*, Vol 10, No. 3, September 1983, pp. 72-82.
46. M Noth, *The History of Israel*, London, Adam & Charles Black, 1960, pp. 110-138.
47. idem.
48. idem.
49. BS Childs, op.cit.; M Noth, op.cit.; EW Nicholson, *Exodus and Sinai in History and Tradition*, Atlanta, John Knox, 1973.
50. E Franklin, *Christ the Lord*, London, SPCK, 1975, pp. 142ff.; H Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke*, London, Faber & Faber, 1961 (ET); U Wilckens, "Interpreting Luke-Acts in a Period of

Existentialist Theology", in LE Keck & JL Martyn, (eds), *Studies in Luke-Acts*, London, SPCK, 1968, pp. 60-83.

51. A Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity: The Gospel of Liberation*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1976, p.27.
52. RH Fuller, op. cit., pp. 87ff.; JH Hayes, *Introduction to the Bible*, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1971, pp. 353ff.
53. SM Ogden, op.cit., pp.106-109.
54. ibid., pp.108-109.
55. ibid., pp.107-108.
56. ibid., pp.108ff.
57. ibid., p.108.
58. ibid., pp.108-109.
59. ibid., p.109.
60. idem.
61. idem.
62. R Schnackenburg, *New Testament Theology Today*, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1963, pp. 56-57.
63. R Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol I, London SCM, 1952, p. 4.
64. SM Ogden, op. cit., pp. 115-118; See also Lk 12:8; cf. Lk 4:16-30 ; Mt 5:21-48.
65. SM Ogden, op.cit., p. 118.
66. N Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, London, SCM, 1963, p. 206.
67. SM Ogden, op.cit., p. 118.
68. ibid., p.118.
69. ibid., p.119.
70. idem.
71. VP Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament*, London, SCM, 1972, p. 68.
72. ibid., pp.194-195.

73. SM Ogden, *op.cit.*, pp.119-120.
74. *ibid.*, p.120.
75. P Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation, Law and Righteousness*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1986, p.5.
76. SM Ogden, *op.cit.*, p.120.
77. *ibid.*, p. 121.
78. *ibid.*, p. 122.
79. *idem.*
80. *ibid.*, p.123.
81. *idem.*
82. *ibid.* pp.123-124.
83. *ibid.*, p.124.
84. *ibid.*, p.125.
85. *idem.*
86. *idem.*
87. *ibid.*, pp.127ff.
88. *ibid.*, pp. 150-151.
89. *ibid.*, pp. 157-158.
90. *ibid.*, p. 159.
91. *idem.*
92. See also *ibid.*, pp. 160-163.
93. See also *ibid.*, pp. 164-165.
94. See also *ibid.*, pp. 165-166.
95. *ibid.*, p.94.
96. K Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV:1, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1956, pp. 3-4.
97. *idem.*
98. K Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol III:2 , Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1960, p. 143.

99. idem.
100. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol IV:1, op. cit., p. 22.
101. W Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol I, London, SCM, 1961 (ET), p. 504.
102. ibid., pp.504-5.
103. ibid., p.506.
104. ibid., p.505.
105. idem.
106. D Tutu, Address given at Tromso, Norway. 5 December 1991.
107. A Dulles, SJ, *Models of Revelation*, Dublin, Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 1983, p. 283.

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