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# **The Hermeneutical Circle: An Exploration of Theological Methodology**

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A minor dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of  
the degree of Masters of Social Science in Religious Studies

Faculty of the Humanities

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## ***COMPULSORY DECLARATION***

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL IN HUMANITIES**

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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

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do hereby declare that I empower the University of Cape Town to produce for the purpose of research either the whole or any portion of the contents of my dissertation entitled *The Hermeneutic Circle: An Exploration of Theological Methodology* in any manner whatsoever.

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores theological methodology. The objective, within the methodological genre of the hermeneutical circle, is to see a method emerge that is fundamentally balanced; in other words, a theological method that is able to engage with immediate context, wider history, current theologies and classical theologies. Holland and Henriot's notion of the hermeneutical circle – the pastoral circle – emerges as just such an appropriate methodology. There are some minor additions to the pastoral circle that in no way detract from its fundamental methodology. In fact, I would argue, they enhance the given methodology of the pastoral circle.

The thesis is divided into parts. Part one considers theoretical notions around theological methodology and the hermeneutical circle. Part two examines and explores examples of the pastoral circle as a working methodology.

In part one, as a theological spectrum, the exploration of theological methodology will consider Barth, Bultmann and Tillich as representatives of classical theology and liberation, black (African and South African) and feminist theologies as depicting particular or indigenous theologies. So the endeavour begins with a wider examination of the hermeneutical circle within our suggested spectrum of classical and indigenous theologies.

This will lead onto a grappling with the particular methodologies per se that are part of our spectrum. This will not be a simple repetition of the tenets of each method, but rather a consideration within these methodologies of the turbulent relationships between history, philosophy and revelation. The understanding of this interaction between history and philosophy and how it impacts revelation, so often proves to be a vital starting point for a methodology. This grounding of theological methodologies indeed forms a touchstone in any endeavour to evaluate and formulate a methodology.

Then "methodologies of convergence" will be considered. These are attempts to create an overarching methodology that could bind together divergent theologies. Unfortunately such attempts prove futile in the light of methodological diversity. The

challenge to practical theology levelled by liberation theology – that all theology is orthopraxis - will then be explored. This leads on to a discussion on practical theology.

Part two begins with the slight amendment of the pastoral circle. As already stated, this does not detract from the methodology of the pastoral circle. The methodology is tested and some examples of the circle in action are explored. The topic for which I seek an appropriate methodology, "Becoming a person in South Africa: The Theology of the Self" is then considered. The context is South Africa; colonialism, apartheid, culture, poverty and the like shall thus be considered. The thesis concludes with the suitability of the methodology of the pastoral circle for the suggested topic "Becoming a person in South Africa: The Theology of the Self".

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## Part One: Theological methodology and the hermeneutical circle

### Introduction

This thesis explores theological methodology. Theological methodology is a vast subject, for every theological system ascribes to some type of method. As Tillich argues, ultimately no theological methodology is different from the system on which it is built. For system and method belong to each other and are to be judged together.<sup>1</sup> A theological system, Tillich contends, must satisfy two needs: the statement of truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation.<sup>2</sup>

Gutiérrez, by way of comparison, speaks of the two functions of classical theology: theology as wisdom and theology as rational knowledge. Early theology, the theology of wisdom, was essentially linked to the spiritual life. It was with the work of Thomas Aquinas that theology became an intellectual discipline, born of the meeting of faith and reason. Gutiérrez concludes that theology is of necessity both spirituality and rational knowledge. These are permanent and indispensable functions of theological thinking. However, both functions must be salvaged, at least partially, from the divisions and deformations they have suffered throughout history. All this must be governed by a reflective outlook.<sup>3</sup>

Gutiérrez sets the tone of this dissertation – in his attempt to “partially salvage” the past along with a “critical reflectiveness”. Tillich’s assertion that theological truth moves back and forth between two poles, the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation in which eternal truth must be received,<sup>4</sup> is severely undermined as ideologically naïve by indigenous or particular theologies. Methodology is particularised with indigenous theologies. There has developed a methodological impasse between classical and indigenous theologies. I will seek to discover some type of methodological model that could perhaps bridge this impasse.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Combined Volume* (Hertfordshire, Welwyn: James Nisbet & Company Limited, 1968) 8.

<sup>2</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (Britain, London; SCM Press Limited, 1974) 4-6.

<sup>4</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3.

This task is undertaken in a specific way, for the exploration has a precise goal. Within the methodological genre of the hermeneutical circle, we wish to see a method emerge that is fundamentally balanced: in other words a theological method that is able to engage with immediate context, wider history, current theologies and classical theologies. Holland and Henriot's pastoral circle emerges, with minor additions, as an appropriate methodology.

As a theological spectrum, our exploration of theological methodology will consider Barth, Bultmann and Tillich as representatives of 20<sup>th</sup> century classical theology and liberation, black (African and South African) and feminist theologies as depicting particular or indigenous (or contextual) theologies.

We begin our endeavour with a wider examination of the hermeneutical circle within the suggested spectrum of classical and indigenous theologies. This will lead us on to grappling with the particular methodologies per se that are part of this spectrum, not as a simple repetition of the tenets of each method, but rather to consider within these methodologies the turbulent relationships between history, philosophy and revelation. The understanding of this interaction between history and philosophy and how it impacts revelation is the grounding of theological methodologies, which so often proves to be the touchstone in any endeavour to evaluate and formulate a methodology.

We will then consider "methodologies of convergence" i.e. attempts to create overarching methodologies, which will lead on to a necessary discussion about practical theology. This leads then to part two: "The Pastoral Circle as Working Methodology". Actual examples of the pastoral circle in action will be considered. Finally, the actual topic for which I am seeking a methodology, "Becoming a Person in South Africa: The Theology of the Self" will be considered.

### **An Exploration of the Hermeneutical Circle**

The hermeneutical circle as a method of interpretation has taken on many forms. I will be using the hermeneutical circle in its broadest sense, that is, as a method of

interpretation that seeks to interpret reality in a circular, cyclical or spiral manner rather than in a linear manner.

### **A circular understanding of history**

A circular understanding of reality is not new. Aristotle remains faithful to the theory of cycles: that which is born and grows up will also fade and die, in a perpetual series of new beginnings. This is his solution to the basic question concerning persistence in change and the ceaseless return of the same.<sup>5</sup> The historical succession of cycles in Aristotle is replaced in Augustine by history constructed as a single cycle. This 'adjustment' was not unimportant given that it opened the way to a linear view of history.<sup>6</sup> Yet even though the dominant understanding of history and reality in western mindset is linear, this notion of the circle has persisted. The hermeneutical circle has also been a key philosophical tool. In fact the church lectionary expresses just such a circular understanding of reality.

### ***Heidegger***

For Heidegger, the hermeneutical circle has often been expressed as a vicious circle. This is because in the human sciences the subject and the object are mutually implicated. The subject itself enters into the knowledge of the object and in turn the former is determined, in its most subjective character, by the hold the subject has upon it even before the subject has come to know the object. Thus stated in the terminology of subject and object, the hermeneutical circle cannot but appear as a vicious circle. The way of avoiding this is through pre-understanding. This translates into fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception. Hence one can enter the circle informed and avoid the vicious circle.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Ricoeur***

Ricoeur seeks to give meaning to the hermeneutical circle: while guess and validation are in a sense circularly related as subjective and objective approaches to the text, there

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<sup>5</sup> Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (South Africa, Cape Town; University of Cape Town Press, 1999) 31.

<sup>6</sup> Rist, *The History of Development*, 34

<sup>7</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (England, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 57.

is nevertheless a procedure of validation or invalidation. While it is true that there is always more than one way of construing a text, it is not true that all interpretations are equal and may be assimilated to so-called rules of thumb. The text is a limited field of possible constructions. The logic of validation allows us to move between the two limits of dogmatism and scepticism. It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them, and to seek an agreement, even if the agreement remains beyond our reach.<sup>8</sup> The text is a mirror of life.

### **Tillich: the theological circle**

As a principle of interpretation the hermeneutical circle is widely used outside the realm of theology. Tillich as a systematic theologian uses the notion of the theological circle as a key criterion for the theological endeavour. Tillich enters the theological circle with the clear understanding that methodology is derived from content:

Every methodological reflection is abstracted from the cognitive work in which one actually engages. Methodological awareness always follows the application of a method; it never precedes it.<sup>9</sup>

### ***An a priori of experience***

Tillich contends that attempts to elaborate a theology as an empirical-inductive or a metaphysical-deductive "science" or as a combination of both, have given ample evidence that no such attempt can succeed. In every assumedly scientific theory there is a point where individual experience, tradition valuation, and personal commitment must decide the issue. This point, often hidden from the authors of such theologies, is obvious to those who look at them with other experiences and other commitments. If an inductive approach is used, we must ask in what direction the writer looks for his material. If the writer is looking in every direction, one must ask what characteristic of reality or experience is the empirical base. Whatever the answer, an *a priori* of experience and valuation is implied. The same is true of a deductive approach as developed by classical idealism. The ultimate principles in an idealist theology are rational expressions of an ultimate concern; like all metaphysical ultimates, they are

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *From text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II* (Illinois, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991) 159-160.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 34.

religious ultimates at the same time. A theology derived from them is determined by hidden theology implied in them.<sup>10</sup>

And if in the course of a scientific procedure this *a priori* is discovered, its discovery is possible only because it was present from the beginning. This is the circle from which no religious philosophy can escape. And it is by no means a vicious one. Every understanding of spiritual things is circular. The theologian enters the circle with a concrete commitment. He or she enters as a member of the Christian church to perform one of the essential functions of the church – her theological self-interpretation.<sup>11</sup>

### *The parameters of the theological circle*

But the circle within which the theologian works is narrower than that of the philosopher of religion. Tillich adds to the “mystical *a priori*” the criterion of the Christian message. While the philosopher of religion tries to remain general and abstract in his concepts, as the concept of religion indicates, the theologian is consciously and by intention specific and concrete. The difference, of course, is not absolute, for the experiential basis of every philosophy of religion is partly determined by the cultural condition to which it belongs.

The theologian, on the other hand, claims the universal validity of the Christian message in spite of its concrete and special character. The theologian does not justify this claim by abstracting from the concreteness of the message, but by stressing its unrepeatable uniqueness.

Further, Tillich contends that even the person who has entered the theological circle consciously and openly faces another serious problem. Being inside the circle, a person must make an existential decision; he or she must be in the situation of faith. But no one can make such a claim. Every theologian is committed and alienated, always in faith and in doubt, inside and outside the theological circle. Sometimes the one side prevails, sometimes the other; and the theologian is never certain which side prevails. Therefore one criterion alone can be applied: a person can be a theologian as long as he or she acknowledges that the content of the theological circle must be the ultimate concern.

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<sup>10</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 12.

Whether this is true does not depend on intellectual or moral or emotional state, nor does it depend upon the intensity and certitude of faith. Rather it depends on the theologian being ultimately concerned about the Christian message even if one is sometimes inclined to attack and reject it.<sup>12</sup>

Pietist theologians recognise that one cannot be a theologian without faith, decision, commitment and without being in the theological circle. But they have identified theological existence with an experience of regeneration. The orthodox theologians protested against this, saying that no one can be certain of regeneration and that theology deals with objective criteria that can be handled by thinkers outside the theological circle who meet the intellectual preconditions.

However, Tillich maintained that orthodox and pietist theologians are allied against the assumedly unbelieving critical theologians, while the heritage of orthodox objectivism has been taken over by the programme of empirical theology. In view of this age-old struggle it must be restated that the theologian belongs inside the theological circle, but that the criterion as to whether or not a theologian is in it, is the acceptance of the message as the ultimate concern. The doctrine of the theological circle has a methodological consequence: neither the introduction nor any other part of the theological system is the logical basis for the other parts. Every part is dependent on the other part.<sup>13</sup>

Tillich's careful, thorough crafting of the theological circle presents a circle that grapples with the nature and the essence of the theological endeavour. The circle is not used as a method of interpretation but rather as a means to decide what should be evaluated and interpreted. Tillich speaks of the theologian being ultimately concerned about the Christian message even if one is sometimes inclined to attack and reject it. Bultmann's circle however, takes us into the nitty-gritty of New Testament exegesis.

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<sup>12</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 14.

### **Bultmann: the hermeneutical circle**

It was Bultmann who first introduced the hermeneutical problem into New Testament studies as such. Bultmann contends that it is the re-reading of the Old Testament that gives the New Testament intelligibility. The Apostle Paul himself interprets his own existence in the light of the death and resurrection of Christ – with this new interpretation of death and resurrection already a new hermeneutical circle is present. For we ourselves are no longer those witnesses who have seen. We are the hearers who listen to the witnesses. Hence we believe only by listening and by interpreting a text which is itself already an interpretation. So hermeneutics is the very deciphering of life in the mirror of the text.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Demythologising***

This all led to Bultmann introducing a hermeneutical key known as “demythologising”, which is, in essence, the stripping away of a first century pre-scientific world view so that modern people will not be subjected to strange and confusing beliefs of a pre-scientific culture. The Christian kerygma was a product of the mythological world-view of the Hellenistic era. This kerygma presupposes a three-story universe in which some events may be explained by natural and historical causes of this world, while others seem to be the result of supernatural causes from heaven above or hell below. In our culture as a whole, the mythological way of thinking has been replaced by a scientific way of thinking and that is the only issue of concern. Bultmann contends, however, that faith, as a particular self-understanding, is no more bound to the mythological world-view of Hellenistic culture than it is bound to the scientific world-view of modern culture.<sup>15</sup>

Ricoeur argues that the question of demythologisation refers back to the hermeneutical circle. To understand, it is necessary to believe; to believe it is necessary to understand. This formulation, Ricoeur contends, is far too psychological. For behind believing there is the primacy of the object of faith over faith; and behind understanding there is the primary of exegesis and its method over the naïve reading of the text. This means that the genuine hermeneutical circle is not psychological but methodological. It is the circle

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (United States of America, Philadelphia; Fortress press, 1980) 49-57.

<sup>15</sup> John de Gruchy (General Editor), *The Making of Modern Theology 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Texts*, Roger A. Johnson, Rudolf Bultmann: *Interpreting Faith for the Modern Era* (Britain, London; Collins Liturgical Publications, 1987) 36.

constituted by the object that regulates faith and the method that regulates understanding. There is a circle because the exegete is not his own master. What the exegete wants to understand is what the text says; the task of understanding is therefore governed by what is at issue in the text itself. Christian hermeneutics is moved by the announcement which is at issue in the text.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Bultmann and Dilthey***

Bultmann contends that Dilthey deals with the subject matter of "life", the personal, historical life that has taken shape in the texts as "expressions of life that are enduringly fixed". It is the physical life that is to be objectively known by interpretation of expressions that are given and perceptible through the senses.<sup>17</sup> Bultmann rejects Dilthey's view that understanding the text means grasping in the text an expression of life. This would mean that the exegete must be able to understand the author of the text better than the author has understood himself. Bultmann says "no". It is not the life of the author that governs understanding, but the essence of the meaning that finds expression in the text.<sup>18</sup> Bultmann argues that interpretation does not come about simply because "the individuality of the interpreter and that of the author do not stand over against one another as two incomparable facts" but rather because, or insofar as, both have the same relation to the subject matter under discussion or in question.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Bultmann and Barth***

Here Bultmann agrees with Karl Barth who says in his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans that understanding is under the command of the object of faith. But what distinguishes Bultmann from Barth in this particular matter is that Bultmann has perfectly understood that this primacy of the object, this primacy of meaning over understanding, is performed only through the understanding, through the exegetical work itself. It is necessary therefore to enter the hermeneutical circle. Only in the understanding of the text do I in fact know the object. Faith in what the text is concerned with must be deciphered in the text that speaks of it, and in the confession of faith of the primitive church which is expressed in the text. This is why there is a circle. To understand the

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<sup>16</sup> Ricoeur, *Biblical Interpretation*, 58.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 141.

<sup>18</sup> Ricoeur, *Biblical Interpretation*, 59

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 142

text it is necessary to believe what the text announces to me. But what the text announces to me is given nowhere but in the text. This is why it is necessary to understand the text in order to believe.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Bultmann and Tillich***

For both Tillich and Bultmann, the theological circle is never approached neutrally. For Tillich the entrance into the circle needs to be consciously value laden and the circle functions as a boundary line or a flexible parameter – where consideration of the Ultimate Being is the crucial criteria. Bultmann persists in a more hermeneutical direction: the relation to the text and the interpreter are key to the hermeneutical circle. This speaks of the circle being fundamental to biblical and theological interpretation: the interrelation between subject and object, ancient text and modern interpretation, ancient world and modern and the like. To grapple with these issues in a circular fashion appears to be a normative practice.

### ***Bultmann on subjectivity and objectivity***

The problem still is how we adjudicate on subjectivity and objectivity. If we all enter the circle with sufficient pre-understanding, and if our method determines our content, are not our attempts to produce any originality rather limited? Bultmann asserts that in questioning the text one must allow oneself to be questioned by the text and to give heed to its claim. Historical phenomena do not exist at all without a historical subject who understands them. For facts of the past become historical phenomena only when they become meaningful for a subject who exists in history and participates in it. Every historical phenomenon is complex and many sided; it is open to many ways of asking questions – be they from the perspective of intellectual history, psychology, sociology and the like - provided that the questions arise out of the historical bond between the interpreter and the phenomenon.

Further Bultmann contends that real understanding is developed only by discussion and conflict of opinions; the simple fact that every interpreter is limited to his or her subjective capacity is in principle irrelevant. They become historical phenomena only when they speak, and this they do only for the subject who understands them. Knowledge acquired

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<sup>20</sup> Ricoeur, *Biblical Interpretation*, 59.

in a methodological way is "objective", which can only mean "appropriate to the object once it comes within a certain way of asking questions". To call the way of asking questions "subjective" is pointless.<sup>21</sup>

Bultmann goes on to condemn the demand that the interpreter has to silence his or her subjectivity or quench any individuality in order to achieve objective knowledge. Bultmann allies himself with Schleiermacher and Dilthey's hermeneutical theory which understands historical phenomena in the ultimate and highest sense, namely the interpretation that questions texts about the possibilities of human existence as one's own. Here the "most subjective" interpretation is the "most objective", because the only person who is able to hear the claim of the text is the person who is moved by the question of his or her own existence.<sup>22</sup>

### *A critique of Bultmann*

The charge we need to bring against Bultmann is that he is not subordinating epistemology to ontology – the very charge Ricoeur brings against Heidegger. Ricoeur contends that the *aporia* is not resolved but merely displaced elsewhere and thereby aggravated:

For it is no longer between two modalities of knowing within epistemology, but it is between ontology and epistemology taken as a whole. With Heidegger's philosophy, we are always engaged in going back to the foundations, but we are left incapable of beginning the movement of return which would lead from the fundamental ontology to the properly epistemological questions of the status of the human sciences. Now philosophy which breaks the dialogue with the sciences is no longer addressed to anything but itself.<sup>23</sup>

By subjugating "interpretation" to the question of his or her existence or the ground of our being-in-the-world, Bultmann thus subordinates ontology to epistemology. So Bultmann's assertion that the 'most subjective' interpretation is the 'most objective', because the only person who is able to hear the claim is the person who is moved by the

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<sup>21</sup> Johnson, quoting Bultmann in *Rudolf Bultmann*, 151-153.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson, quoting Bultmann in *Rudolf Bultmann*, 153.

<sup>23</sup> Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 59.

question of his or her existence",<sup>24</sup> now takes on a different hue. For with Heidegger's philosophy as a basis of Bultmann ontology, Ricoeur asserts that we are constantly returning to the foundations. Epistemology as such is a derivative from ontology – questions of exegesis, historical critique and the like are derivatives.<sup>25</sup>

Bloch also criticises Bultmann for having stripped the faith of any level of social weight.<sup>26</sup> Miguez Bonino also seeks to widen Bultmann's focus when he says that Christian hermeneutics is not just a question of an individual hermeneutic but also a hermeneutical community.<sup>27</sup> Miguez Bonino also talks about a "hermeneutical circulation" between the text in its historicity and our "own historical reading of it in obedience". This "hermeneutical circulation", so dubbed by Professor Casalis, is over against the famous "hermeneutical circle" of the Bultmannians.<sup>28</sup>

So Bultmann receives criticism from both a philosophical and a methodological perspective. Bultmann's subsumation of ontology onto an epistemological plane is bound to lead to unavoidable individualism. Bultmann's hermeneutical circle reached a pinnacle of philosophical sophistication in his adaptation of Dilthey and Heidegger. De Gruchy argues that a way beyond the philosophical abstractness of the hermeneutic debate, lies in the manner in which Juan Luis Segundo has restated Bultmann's hermeneutical circle. Segundo lifts Bultmann's notion of the circle out of philosophical inquiry and places it at the service of the transformative mission of the church in the world.<sup>29</sup>

### **Segundo's hermeneutical circle**

Juan Luis Segundo offers us a preliminary definition of the hermeneutic circle:

It is the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by the continuing changes in our present day reality, both individual and societal. And the

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<sup>24</sup> Johnson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 153.

<sup>25</sup> Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 59.

<sup>26</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 243 n59.

<sup>27</sup> Jose Miguez Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age* (Britain, London; SPCK, 1975) 154.

<sup>28</sup> Miguez Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, 102.

<sup>29</sup> John W. De Gruchy, *Theology and Ministry in Context and Crisis: A South Africa Perspective* (Britain, London; Collins Liturgical Publications, 1987) 144

circular nature of this interpretation stems from the fact that each new reality obliges us to interpret the word of God afresh, to change reality accordingly and so on.<sup>30</sup>

So Segundo identifies four decisive factors in the circle:

First there is a way of experiencing reality, which lead us to ideological suspicion. Second there is the application of our ideological suspicion to the whole ideological superstructure in general and to theology in particular. Thirdly there comes a new way of experiencing theological reality that leads us to exegetical suspicion, that is, to the suspicion that the prevailing interpretation of the Bible has not taken important pieces of data into account. Fourthly we have our new hermeneutic, that is the new way of interpreting the fountainhead of our faith (i.e. scripture) with the new element at our disposal.<sup>31</sup>

While Segundo seeks to root the "circle" in reality as opposed to philosophical abstractness, it is still a reality that is consciously interpreted. Tracey puts it aptly when he says:

We need to reflect on what it means to interpret. We find that in order to understand we must interpret. We may even find to understand we need to interpret the very process of understanding-as-interpretation. ... We need to reflect on what none of us can finally evade: the need to interpret in order to understand at all. ...Whether we know it or not, to be human is to be a skilled interpreter.<sup>32</sup>

Does Segundo radically ground things? His circle consists of a number of complex hermeneutical processes that all lead to ideological suspicion. The ability to relate "ideological suspicion" to the "superstructures" requires an extensive knowledge of the tools of the social sciences. While Segundo's circle engages a wider reality that encompasses both society and structures, it nevertheless requires a level of hermeneutical sophistication in order to operate. Interesting enough, the hub of the theological reflection is still rooted in interaction with the scriptures, the "fountain of our

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<sup>30</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, *Liberation of Theology* (United States of America: New York; Orbis Books, 1975) 8.

<sup>31</sup> Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 9.

<sup>32</sup> David Tracy, Interpretation, conversation and argument. *In Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (United States of America, Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1987) 7-9.

faith". Segundo's circle may have eliminated Bultmann's individualised philosophy, but its societal grounding is complex and sophisticated.

Yet there is need for this complexity for Segundo is introducing an ideological awareness that appears to be absent in classical theology, that the nature of theology can never just be - it is always implicated consciously or unconsciously in some ideological bias. In Latin America, then, a new type of theological and ideological reflection emerged, integral with concrete and social action.<sup>33</sup> Miguez Bonino identifies the relationship between ideology and oppression when he contends that the Spanish conquest and colonial Christianity meant that "obedience to the great King of Spain and submission to the King of heaven were demanded as a single act." A semi-feudal society that existed in Spain was perpetuated - large fertile pieces of land were given over to leading families to develop. As a result, much of the fertile land was in the hands of a minority of landowners. So even though popular Catholicism grew, nevertheless the colonial church was tied to a colonial structure and ordinary people were alienated.<sup>34</sup>

Segundo's theological circle enables a genuine interaction with context. Theology was removed from metaphysical and philosophical speculations and rooted in a real context – the context of the poor and oppressed. Classical theology was unmasked with other ideologies that were contributing to the oppression of the poor.

### **Gutiérrez's hermeneutical circle**

Gutiérrez's hermeneutical circle is surrounded by Christological notions – Jesus comes forward as the principle, the point of departure. Jesus Christ is himself the new covenant. In him God becomes the Father of all nations. Gutiérrez states that in the human word we read the word of God and in historical events we recognise the fulfilment of the promise. Yet the circle itself does not seem to be that outright Christocentric.

The basic circle of all hermeneutics as seen by Gutiérrez is:

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<sup>33</sup> Miguez Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, xxv.

<sup>34</sup> Miguez Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, 5-7.

...from the human being to God and from God to the human being, from history to faith and from faith to history, from the love of our brothers and sisters to the love of the Father and from the love of our Father to love of our brothers and sisters, from human justice to God's holiness and from God's holiness to human justice, from the poor person to God and from God to the poor person.<sup>35</sup>

This basic circle of all hermeneutics assumes a particular approach and background to the gospel. It assumes a solidarity with the poor, taking sides with the poor, unmasking misuse of the Bible, a subversion of history and the like.<sup>36</sup> So the general ethos of this basic hermeneutic circle is laced with presupposition and pre-understandings that are far-reaching and at times complex. While it may not utilise the language of ideological suspicion, this notion equally underpins this circle.

### **The rise of ideology**

Tillich and Bultmann may have attempted a foray into philosophy in order to muster up a contemporary relevance. Segundo and Gutiérrez are not interested in an individualistic contemporary relevance. They are interested in justice for the poor, a better world for the poor, a spirituality that takes the side of the poor. Whereas Tillich and Bultmann used philosophy, the liberationists use their allies, the social sciences. No territory is now neutral – neutrality is synonymous with forms of naiveté, the most pressing being political.

### **Joe Holland & Peter Henriot: the Pastoral Circle**

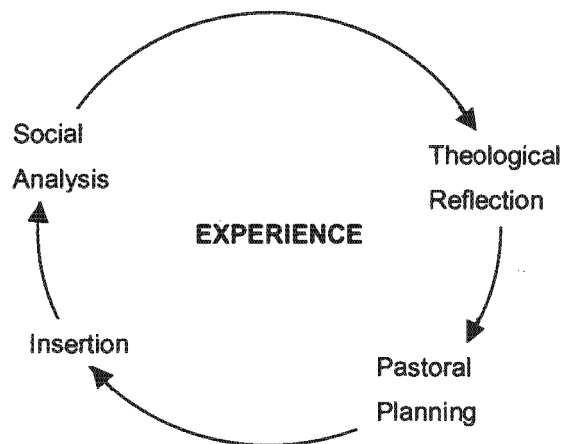
The next hermeneutical circle which we will consider is that of Joe Holland and Peter Henriot. They propose a social analysis that is genuinely pastoral which they term, therefore, the "pastoral (hermeneutic) circle". This circle represents a close relationship through four mediations of experience: (1) insertion, (2) social analysis, (3) theological reflection, and (4) pastoral planning. It is presented diagrammatically as follows:

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<sup>35</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Writings* (Britain, London; SCM Press Ltd, 1983) 15.

<sup>36</sup> Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, 18-21.

## THE PASTORAL CIRCLE<sup>37</sup>



As a basis to their pastoral circle model, Holland and Henriot lay out in no uncertain terms their particular biases. They are worth listing in full for this highlights their approach that rejects the notion of any position being value-free or claiming some type of objectivity.

The stated biases of Holland and Henriot are as follows:

- Belief that pastoral action necessarily includes action on behalf of justice.
- Rejection of sharp dichotomies between “sacred and secular”, “religious and political,” “this world and the world to come,” “development and evangelisation.”
- Acceptance of the integral link between the service of faith and the promotion of justice
- Option for the poor, with consequent entry into social reality “*desde los pobres*” – from the side of the poor.
- Commitment to social change through change of structures, in addition to personal and interpersonal and interpersonal conversion.
- Affirmation of the proper role for value discussion in public discourse, e.g., human questions in economic policy debates

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<sup>37</sup> Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S.J., *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (New York, Maryknoll; Orbis Books, 1983) 5.

- Concern that the current course of events – business as usual” – is leading the United States and the world towards imminent disaster.<sup>38</sup>

The Holland and Henriot pastoral-hermeneutical circle (the pastoral circle) is referred to as the “circle of praxis” for it reflects the ongoing relationship between reflection and action. The pastoral circle constitutes four phases:

1. Insertion
2. Social analysis
3. Theological reflection
4. Pastoral planning

### ***Insertion***

Insertion locates the geography of our pastoral responses in the lived experiences of individuals and communities. Where and with whom are we locating ourselves as we begin the process? Whose experience is being considered? Are there groups that are “left out” when experience is being discussed? Does the experience of the poor and the oppressed have a privileged role to play in the process?

### ***Social Analysis***

Social analysis identifies causes, probes consequences, delineates linkages, and identifies actors. It helps make sense of experiences by putting them into a broader picture and drawing the connections between them. Which analytical tradition is being followed? Are there presuppositions in these analyses that need to be tested? Is it possible to use a particular analysis without agreeing with its accompanying ideology?

### ***Theological Reflection***

Theological reflection is the effort to understand more broadly the analysed faith experience in the light of living faith, scripture, church social teaching, and the resources of tradition. The Word of God brought to bear upon the situation raises new questions, suggests new insights, and opens new responses. What methodological assumptions

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<sup>38</sup> Holland and Henriot, *Social Analysis*, 8.

underlie the theological reflection? In what relationship does the social analysis stand to the theology – e.g. complementary, subordinate, etc.? How closely linked is the theology to the existing social situation?

### ***Pastoral Planning***

Since the purpose of the pastoral circle is decision and planning, the fourth moment in the circle is crucial: pastoral planning. In the light of experiences analysed and reflected upon, what response is called for by individuals and by communities? How should the response be designed in order to be most effective not only in the short term but also in the long term? Who participates in the pastoral planning? What are the implications of the process used to determine appropriate responses? What is the relationship between groups who serve and those who are served?

A response action in a particular situation brings about a situation of new experiences. These experiences in turn call for a further mediation through insertion, analysis, reflection, and planning. Thus, the pastoral circle continues without final conclusion. It is, in fact, more of a "spiral" than a "circle". Each approach does not simply retrace old steps but breaks new ground.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Evaluating the pastoral circle***

Additional categories can be added to the basic four elements of the pastoral circle. Obviously, this needs to be within the spirit and ethos of the given circle. This adding of categories is certainly successfully done in the publication *In Word and Deed* by Cochrane et al, when the authors included some additional elements into Holland and Henriot's pastoral circle.<sup>40</sup> While clearly the task of *In Word and Deed* was to address a particular socio-political situation, additional categories served that purpose within the ethos of the pastoral circle.

The considerable difference between Holland and Henriot and, say Gutiérrez, is their particular contexts. The solidarity with the poor in Latin America is far more immediate

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<sup>39</sup> Holland and Henriot, *Social Analysis*, 8-10

<sup>40</sup> J.R. Cochrane, J.W. de Gruchy & R. Peterson, *In Word and Deed: Towards a Practical Theology for Social Transformation* (South Africa, Pietermaritzburg; Cluster Publications, 1991) 14.

than mobilising people within North America to do theology from the side of the poor and oppressed. Perhaps my objection more specifically to Holland and Henriot is that the circle, as it stands in the diagram per se, can be used without any ideological suspicion. This goes against the spirit of Segundo's hermeneutical circle. In both the hermeneutical circles of Segundo and Gutiérrez their agendas are evident. Holland and Henriot's pastoral circle seems more comprehensible and it is not as obvious in its ties to the poor. This is not to say that Holland and Henriot's circle is not a useful contribution to methodology. Words such as sensible, solid and comprehensive often underwrite an endeavour like that of Holland and Henriot and produce plausible and workable findings.

The consideration and evaluation of the hermeneutical circle in a wider context is a necessary starting point. However, before we can begin to explore my own particular approach when it comes to methodology, a general discussion on history and how it relates to revelation, is a vital foundation to our endeavour. The understanding of history straddles all our methodological concerns and is of crucial importance to our understanding of methodology. Methodology is formed in a historical environment. Our interaction with other methodologies will be limited to Barth, Bultmann and Tillich as exemplars of 20<sup>th</sup> century classical theology and particular and contextual theologies.

### **Methodology: The Impact of History and Philosophy on Revelation**

The understanding of the interaction between history and revelation so often proves to be a vital starting point for a methodology. The grounding of theological methodologies indeed forms a touchstone in any endeavour to evaluate and formulate a methodology. The understanding of the nature of revelation is not devoid of a historical context. Moreover the understanding of revelation is often the heart of a methodological approach. A methodological understanding of revelation can either be a springboard for appropriate action or can be the very cause of hesitation and inaction. While systematic theology has particular theories of revelation, our particular concern is how particular types of theology and theologians interact with revelation. Obviously some type of interaction with a theologian or a theology will be necessary in order to grasp these fundamentals.

## Barth and the revival of revelation

Barth sought theology to be self-sufficient; he refused to make room for the apologetic search for common ground. This is well-expressed by Douglas Hall:

Ever since the fading of its illusory splendour as a leading academic power during the Middle Ages, theology has taken too many pains to justify its own existence... Theology had first to renounce all apologetics or eternal guarantees of its position within the environment of other sciences, for it will always stand on the firmest of ground when it simply acts according to the law of its own being.<sup>41</sup>

This is seen in Barth's Preface to the Romans which was an event in twentieth century theology. Karl Adam, the Catholic theologian, said that "it fell like a bomb on the playground of the theologians". Barth revives the Reformation understanding of Scripture and treats it as the "Word of God". The preface to the first edition begins as follows:

Paul, as a child of his age, addressed his contemporaries. It is however, far more important that, as Prophet and Apostle of the Kingdom of God, he veritably speaks to all people of every age.... The historical-critical method of Biblical investigation has its rightful place.... But where I am driven to choose between it and the venerable doctrine of inspiration, I should without hesitation adopt the latter, which has a broader, deeper, more important justification.... Fortunately, I am not compelled to choose between the two. Nevertheless, my whole energy of interpreting has been expended in an endeavour to see through and beyond history into the spirit of the Bible, which is the Eternal Spirit.<sup>42</sup>

Barth in a famous phrase describes God as "Wholly Other", as totally different from human expectations and desires. Revelation is said to come "perpetually from above".<sup>43</sup> Further, Barth's emphasis on revelation has significant anthropological implications. In Christ we find ourselves in God - "Life only has meaning in relation to the true God".<sup>44</sup> Community is perceived radically differently based on the acknowledgement of us being mutual sinners. History is likewise understood from the perspective of revelation, in the

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<sup>41</sup> Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (United States of America. Minneapolis; Augsburg Fortress, 1989) 337.

<sup>42</sup> John de Gruchy, General editor, *The Making of Modern Theology: 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Theological Texts*, Clifford Green, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom* (Britain, London; Collins Liturgical Publications, 1989) 17.

<sup>43</sup> Green, quoting Karl Barth in *Karl Barth*, 17.

<sup>44</sup> Green, *Karl Barth*, 121

sense that the “meaning of every epoch of history is directly related to God”. Jesus Christ the reconciler on the cross and the grace of God is the bedrock of all this newness.<sup>45</sup>

Yet there were other significant factors at play during this period. Barth was originally within the “Liberal” camp until the outbreak of World War 1 saw ninety-three German intellectuals publish a manifesto in support of the Kaiser Wilhelm II’s war policy. The majority of Barth’s university professors, including Harnack and Hermann signed the declaration. For Barth this was the death knell of Liberal Theology.<sup>46</sup> Hall contends that Karl Barth’s kerygma was of necessity critically detached from Hitler’s Reich and that such kerygma is needed in parts of our world today.<sup>47</sup> However, Hall contends:

The error in this consistently kerygmatic theology – perhaps the most consistent kerygmatic theology in the history of Christian thought - lies, I think, in the fact that it mistook a particular historical moment for the condition of the whole human condition and devised its method accordingly.<sup>48</sup>

So already we have the factors of the historical understanding of revelation and a very real prevailing context, as Hall argues, affecting methodology. If his esteemed teachers had never supported German’s war policy, perhaps Barth’s understanding might have been different. Theological methodology as such is historically engaged. Revelation understood as “perpetually from above” had a particular historical context, it was part of a prevailing ethos. Also, how we interpret this prevailing reality, the tools we bring to bear upon our analysis, our ideological biases and our historical connections further complicate the whole endeavour.

### **Bultmann and the tool of demythologising**

A particular understanding of the nature of revelation is key to Bultmann’s New Testament exegesis. Bultmann argues that the New Testament is the Word of God only indirectly and not directly. This is merely to take seriously the fact that God’s word is a hidden word spoken to humanity, that the revelation present in Scripture is a veiled

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<sup>45</sup> Green, *Karl Barth*, 133

<sup>46</sup> Green, *Karl Barth*, 15.

<sup>47</sup> Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 366.

<sup>48</sup> Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 355.

revelation. We are confronted in Scripture then with a kind of speech which is primarily a speaking about God, and about humanity, for it is uttered in the human sphere. Since there is no direct encounter with God, but his revelation is hidden in the word, there can be no appeal to an inner light for exegesis, no "pneumatic" exegesis which counts on the *pneuma* as a possession previously bestowed on the exegete.

Exegesis, Bultmann thus contends, can proceed only from the interpretation of the word. Since exegetical work is work with concepts, and since the word of the text is never the subject matter itself, but its expression, this subject matter becomes available to the exegete only if he understands the word. The exegete must be thoroughly familiar with the entire history of the words of the text without imagining he has thereby grasped the meaning of the passage in the concrete here and now. Therefore all the philological historical work on the New Testament is valid, in fact obligatory, and has its special character because the New Testament is written in Greek. Genuine historical exegesis rests on the existential encounter with history; that encounter is not something that can be undertaken like anything else and as such finds its place within or behind methodical, philological, and historical interpretation.<sup>49</sup>

Of course, this particular thinking on revelation paves the way for Bultmann's fundamental New Testament analytical tool, namely demythologising. For Bultmann's understanding of revelation and history led to his notion of demythologising.

#### **Tillich and the method of correlation**

Tillich's grappling takes a very different direction. He seeks to ground his theological methodology in ontology. Tillich contends that his method of correlation replaces three inadequate methods of relating the contents of the Christian faith to humanity's spiritual existence. The first method can be called supranaturalistic in that it takes the Christian message to be a sum of revealed truths which have fallen into the human situation like strange bodies from a strange world. No mediation to the human situation is possible. We must become something other than human in order to receive divinity. In terms of the classical heresies, Tillich argues, one could say that the supranaturalistic method

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<sup>49</sup> Johnson, *Rudolf Bultmann*, 135-137.

has docetic-monophysitic traits, especially in the valuation of the Bible as a book of supranatural "oracles" in which human receptivity is completely overlooked.

The second method Tillich rejects can be called "naturalistic" or "humanistic". It derives the Christian message from humanity's natural state. It develops its answer out of human experience, unaware that human existence itself is the question. Much of liberal theology has in the last two centuries been "humanistic" in this sense. Theologically this meant that the contents of the Christian faith were explained as creations of our religious self-realisation in the progressive process of religious history. Everything was said by humanity, nothing was said to humanity.

The third method Tillich rejects can be called "dualistic" inasmuch as it builds a supernatural structure on a natural substructure. It realises that despite the infinite gap between God's spirit and our spirit, there must be a positive relation between them. It tries to express this relation by positing a body of theological truth which man can reach through his own efforts or through "natural revelation". The so-called arguments for the existence of God are the most important section of natural theology.<sup>50</sup>

Tillich proposes that the method of correlation overcomes these inadequacies. Systematic theology has always used the method of correlation; this method explains the contents of the Christian faith through existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence.<sup>51</sup> This method of correlation solves the historical and systematic riddle by resolving natural theology into the analysis of existence and by resolving supranatural theology into answers given to the questions implied in existence.<sup>52</sup>

Tillich speaks of the divine-human relationship as a correlation on its cognitive side. Symbolically speaking, God answers the questions of humanity and under the impact of God's answers, people ask further questions. This drives humanity to a point where question and answer are not separated. The point, however, is not a moment in time. It belongs to humanity's essential being, to the unity of our finitude with the infinity in which

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<sup>50</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 72-73.

<sup>51</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 68.

<sup>52</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 73.

we were created and from which we are separated. A symbol of both the essential unity and the essential separation of finite humanity, our infinity is our ability to ask about the infinite to which we belong; and the fact that we must ask about it indicates that we are separated from it.<sup>53</sup>

The issue here is the nature of Tillich's ontology. Hall argues that the roots of Tillich's ontology lie in Athens rather than Jerusalem; it is substantialistic. The biblical tradition, on the other hand, is through and through relational. The relational understanding of reality must be differentiated from Tillich's kind of ontology, in which the relatedness of Creator and creatures, and creatures and creatures is simply given – built into the scheme of things. In biblical faith, on the contrary, the creaturely capacity for relationship is not necessarily actualised. Its realisation presupposes an act of turning, of intention, of decision, on the part both of creator and creatures. That God has turned towards humanity is the primary declaration of faith throughout. That God's orientation towards humanity has found its response, representatively in the man Jesus' vicarious turning towards God, is the declaration of the New Testament.<sup>54</sup>

All of this, Hall contends, assumes a theory of being that is quite different from the *analogia entis* of scholasticism and the ontology of Tillich. The Biblical ontology is not about being as such but about being-with, and therefore it also presupposes the genuine prospect of not being-with, of being against and being-alone.<sup>55</sup> Hall touches on the fundamentals; if the method of correlation is flawed on the basis of its presumption regarding ontology, it then becomes fundamentally flawed. Ontology, Hall argues, is crucial to any discussion about God; the question about how one legitimates the use of ontology is vital. While Tillich in turn was working within a particular scholastic tradition, Hall's contention regarding ontology does highlight the question of historical or philosophical resources in any theological methodology. This demonstrates then the way in which an entire system can be undermined by the raising of an actual flaw in its methodological construction. No method will ever be comprehensive; the interaction of history and philosophy in elucidating revelation to discover a comprehensive systematic theology was soon to give way to indigenisness or particular theologies.

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<sup>53</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 69.

<sup>54</sup> Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 359.

<sup>55</sup> Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 359.

## **Liberation Theology and a Particular Understanding of History**

Gutiérrez contends that theology is a critical reflection on humanity per se. Only with this approach will theology be a serious discourse, aware of itself, in full possession of its conceptual elements. But theology as critical reflection does not refer exclusively to this epistemological aspect; it refers also to a clear and critical attitude regarding economic and socio-political issues in the life and reflection of the Christian community. 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.<sup>56</sup>

Further, reflection in the light of faith must constantly accompany the pastoral action of the church. By keeping historical events in their proper perspective theology helps to safeguard society from regarding as permanent that which is only temporary.<sup>57</sup>

Miguez Bonino contends that God is unknown unless humanity participates in his concrete life through love. This is not a minimising of the historical revelation in Jesus Christ – to the contrary this is a critical test. This revelation is not an abstract theoretical knowledge, but a concrete existence of love.<sup>58</sup>

The methodological approach of liberation theology then necessitates a particular understanding of history. There are not two histories; one sacred and one profane. The one history in which God acts is the history of men; it is the history we find in God.<sup>59</sup> There are not two histories “juxtaposed” or “closely linked”. Rather there is only one human destiny, Gutiérrez argues, irreversibly assumed by Christ, the Lord of History. His redemptive work embraces all the dimensions of existence and brings them to their true fullness. The history of salvation is the very heart of human history. There is only one history, a “Christo-finalised” history.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Miguez Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, 90.

<sup>59</sup> Miguez Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, 70.

<sup>60</sup> Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 153.

This understanding has significant theological implications. The idealism of the rich world believes it can start from abstract conceptions and objective sources. It deceives itself: it only succeeds in idealising the existing situation and projecting it afterward – thus the “theology of death of God” and the “theology of secularisation” project the conditions of the technological world. Liberation theology, in turn, begins with particular reality, a concrete situation.<sup>61</sup>

Liberation theology is fundamentally linked to the notion of ‘one history’, the idea of no division between a secular and a sacred history. Revelation, then, is not a dogmatic given but the reflection on the Word of God in a particular situation - the situation of the poor and the oppressed. Gutiérrez puts it succinctly when he says that the theological task of liberation theology is “a critical reflection on Christian praxis in light of the word of God.” For the doing of God's word is the main demand placed on believers.<sup>62</sup> There is thus a direct relationship between history and revelation; revelation springs to life in a real historic context. As Gutiérrez contends, the vast majority of Latin Americans live in poverty and are affected by it; theological work proper begins when we try to interpret this reality in the light of Christian revelation.<sup>63</sup>

Christ's work then in history in bringing about justice and betterment in this world cannot afford to have another history, another way in which God operates in a sacred history. God in Christ is subsumed in human history - the incarnation, the resurrection speaks of God's inextricable involvement in human history. While this, in terms of orthopraxy becomes the incentive to participate with others in the revolutions of the freedom of the poor, on a methodological level liberation theology is bound to a particular understanding of history – the one “Christo-finalised” concept of history.

### **Black Theology: a Theology of Liberation**

Cone outlines for us the emergence of black theology and liberation theology. Liberation, Cone tends, is at the heart of the gospel. The earliest reference to liberation as a definition of Christian theology was made by Black theologians, Latin American

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<sup>61</sup> Migue Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, 72.

<sup>62</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* Revised Edition (New York, Maryknoll; Orbis Books, 1988) xxix.

<sup>63</sup> Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation, revised edition*, xxv.

theologians and church persons. Both Black and Latin theologians began to use the term "liberation" almost simultaneously but independently of one another. Liberation became the emphasis of black theology from its beginning with the publication of Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power* (1968) and *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970). One year after the publication of the second book, the Spanish edition of Gustavo Gutiérrez's book, *A Theology of Liberation* (1971) was published. Other Black and Latin theologians followed with an emphasis on the same theme.<sup>64</sup>

A similar theme, Cone contends, is found among Asian and African theologies as well. Third world Theologians organised EATWOT as an expression of their common concern to reject the theologies of Europe and North America. The statements of EATWOT overwhelmingly rejected European theology and began to affirm liberation, that is the need to reread the Bible in the light of the struggles of the poor for freedom. They began to speak of the "hermeneutical privilege" of the poor, and of God's option for the poor. Rereading the Bible in the light of God's option for the poor led to an emphasis on the Exodus, the prophets, and Jesus Christ as the liberator of the poor and the downtrodden.<sup>65</sup> Cone argues emphatically that a theological perspective that does not remain committed to the liberation of the oppressed cannot be Christian. Equally he has argued that in the dialogue with Latin American theologians, we have come to realise the importance of Marxism as a tool for social analysis.<sup>66</sup>

Cone then makes an interesting comparison between Black, African and Liberation theology:

With Africans, we black theologians often appear very "political" in our view of theology, and Africans seem more "cultural" and spiritual." In our conversations with the Latins, black theologians seem very "cultural" and "spiritual," and the Latins tend to appear to reduce theology to politics.<sup>67</sup>

Yet attempts to capture the nature and essence of indigenous theologies are never definitive. Bruce & Jones, for instance, present a more "cultural" African-type rendering

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<sup>64</sup> James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology: a documentary history volume two: 1980-1992* (New York, Maryknell; Orbis Books, 1993) 391.

<sup>65</sup> Cone and Wilmore, *Black Theology*, 392.

<sup>66</sup> Cone and Wilmore, *Black Theology*, 396.

<sup>67</sup> Cone and Wilmore, *Black Theology*, 396.

of black theology. They contend that black theology endeavours to understand and transmit a faith that has nurtured black people's souls and that has been tested and tried by oppressive circumstances. Black theology is the backbone of cultural awakening. Black culture sees in the theological demonstration of God's love a source of pride in the re-creation of black humanity. Black theology is nourished by active, imaginative hearts and minds. Dogmatism of black theological insight would deplete its vital force. Prophetic thrust cuts to the core of social ills and exposes the sins that fester beneath the deceptive veneer of social progress.<sup>68</sup>

Interesting, though, Bruce & Jones contend that:

Metaphysics as much as politics supports the philosophic relevance. Black theology is not ashamed to admit that the faith that has motivated black believers to endure has heretofore had metaphysical valuation attributed to it without question.<sup>69</sup>

This does raise the issue in liberation and black theology that precisely what is articulated by the academy at a theoretical level may well be not quite so precise at a more grass-roots level. Many theologies which may form the cornerstone of a theological paradigm, for instance, the "one history" of liberationism, may still be undergirded on the ground by a popular Mariology that is bound to metaphysics and a life beyond. Yet Bruce & Jones do confirm that metaphorically, the totality of black experience is the testing board for the "ontologic validity" of black theology. Indeed, experience, in all its complexity and ambiguity, by and large serves as a starting point for these many "particular" theologies.

Once your methodology becomes inextricably bound to a particular context, i.e. liberation of the poor – specifically the Afro-American poor - all methodological concerns become the servant of specifics. Biblical hermeneutics, revelation and the notion of history are all marshalled to serve these "specifics". Yet equally the pursuit of an all-encompassing theological methodology that neglects "specifics" or "difference" tends to lack authenticity. Methodologically, one feels forced a little into an "either"/"or" situation.

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<sup>68</sup> Calvin E. Bruce and William R. Jones eds., *Black Theology II: Essays on the Formation and Outreach of Contemporary Black Theology* (New Jersey, Cranbury; Bucknell University Press, 1978) 14-16..

<sup>69</sup> Bruce and Jones, *Black Theology II*, 15.

## **Black theology and African theology**

With regards to African theology, Cone notes that some Africans have shied away from the term "liberation", because they say that the gospel is not political. It is not an ideology of the oppressed. Some have even said that the gospel is concerned about all, rich and poor alike. In lieu of liberation, Africans often prefer the terms "africanisation" and "indigenisation," because they locate the problem at the point of culture.<sup>70</sup> This has led theologians like Mbiti to declare:

Black theology cannot and will not become African Theology. Black Theology and African Theology emerge from quite different historical and contemporary situations ...Black Theology hardly knows the situation of Christians living in Africa, and therefore its direct relevance for Africa is non-existent or only accidental.<sup>71</sup>

Cone however, quotes Desmond Tutu in order to refute this charge. Tutu contends that black and Africa theologies are soul mates and not antagonists.<sup>72</sup>

## **A South African Black Theology**

Kretzschmar speaks of African Theology as that which emphasises the relationship between Christianity and African traditional religion and culture.<sup>73</sup> In particular, Kretzschmar identifies certain themes that emerge as part of a South African black theology. Firstly there is a desire to live out the gospel, as Africans rather than as Europeans. This is seen in the African Independent Churches, though not exclusively so. Secondly, there is a pronounced sense of black identity, where people can live out their Christian lives within the paradigm of their African identity. Thirdly, there is the powerful desire for liberation from exploitation and freedom to live, and act, as full partners in South African society and the church.<sup>74</sup> Black South African theology appears then, to combine the thrust of a cultural and political freedom. Also in South African theology there is not an outright rejection of the "poor in spirit" as Cone

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<sup>70</sup>Cone and Wilmore, *Black Theology*, 395.

<sup>71</sup> Louise Kretzschmar, *The Voice of Black Theology in South Africa* (South Africa, Braamfontein; Ravan Press, 1986) 18.

<sup>72</sup> Cone and Wilmore, *Black Theology*, 395.

<sup>73</sup> Kretzschmar, *Black Theology in South Africa*, 18.

<sup>74</sup> Kretzschmar, *Black Theology in South Africa*, 12.

articulates.<sup>75</sup> Here the “either”/“or” of indigenous (particular) or systematic (classical) theology is less stark.

### **Feminist Theology: “Experience” and “Hermeneutics”**

Gutiérrez himself endorses and encourages the growth in situational liberation theologies and especially gives tacit support to feminist theologies.

Russell, a Christian feminist, identifies a common problem of classism evident in black and feminist theologies, as both are largely middle class and academic in their focus. This leads Russell to caution:

Feminist theology that ignores the experience of economically and racially oppressed women can never move beyond middle class elitism to construct a sound theology that reflects the spectrum of experience of an entire group. Black theology that ignores the experience of black women can never move beyond chauvinistic elitism to construct a theology expressive of the many groups in its own consistency.<sup>76</sup>

Further, Russell identifies a key, unifying feature between black theology and other “indigenous theologies”: that of the exposure of what has been called “Christian theology” as in fact a white male theology that has dominated western Christian tradition through a form of cultural imperialism.<sup>77</sup>

Added to this was the androcentric and patriarchal nature of the Bible and church practices; thus “experience” became a key starting point for feminist theology. Early feminism focused its attention on the nature of the Bible, the veracity of androcentric texts and the historic traditions that may have been suppressed by patriarchy. Women’s experience, Ruether argues, as a basic source of content for theology is not to be seen as opposed to ‘objective’ sources of theology. For scripture and tradition themselves are codified human experiences. Human experience is the starting point and the ending point of the hermeneutical circle. Codified tradition is constantly renewed by the test of experience. Experience includes the experience of the divine and the experience of oneself, the community and the world, in an interacting dialectic. Feminist theology

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<sup>75</sup> Kretzschmar, *Black Theology in South Africa*, 81.

<sup>76</sup> Bruce and Jones, *Black Theology II*, 249.

<sup>77</sup> Bruce and Jones, *Black Theology II*, 257.

places women's experience at the centre and critically exposes classical theology as male.<sup>78</sup>

Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza in her articulation of feminist methodology notes a methodological oversight in Liberation Theology:

Since liberation theology seeks to enlist the Bible on the side of the oppressed, it is in danger of aligning itself too quickly with the methods and interests of the neo-orthodox doctrinal model, and is so doing fails to explore sufficiently the function of the Bible in the oppression of the poor and women.<sup>79</sup>

This comment by Fiorenza outlines her support of women's experience, but she arrives there in a more precise methodological fashion. To read the scriptures in a particular way, from say the option of the poor, does not simply overturn a long hermeneutical history of oppression. Fiorenza's methodological approach grapples with the very essence, the very nature of the scriptures and revelation. Fiorenza identifies four models of biblical interpretation and describes their particular approaches. These models serve as her methodological framework. In doing this Fiorenza sees herself working within a given methodological tradition. Historically, methodological models have been utilised to encounter the Bible. Fiorenza contends that Catholic theology has three basic academic models which have been recognised as influential in the interpretation of Scripture: Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Neoscholasticism. Augustinian and Thomist methods related revelation (both the scriptures and Christian writings from the past) to current philosophy. Neoscholasticism responded to the challenges of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>80</sup>

Protestantism, which came into existence after the Reformation, though structurally fragmented, still to some extent adheres to the rallying call of the Reformation cry: "sola scriptura."<sup>81</sup> The point is that the question of methodology as we approach the

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<sup>78</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (United States of America, Boston; Beacon Press, 1983) 12-13.

<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. (Britain, London; SCM Press Ltd, 1983) 15.

<sup>80</sup> Catherine M. LaCugna, *Freeing Theology, The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective* (United states of America, San Francisco; HarperSanFrancisco, 1993) 7.

<sup>81</sup> Mark C. Taylor, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, (The United States Of America, Chicago; The University of Chicago Press, 1998) 226.

scriptures is never neutral; we will be inevitably subscribing to implicit or explicit assumptions and interpretative strategies.

The first model Fiorenza puts forward, the *doctrinal model* approach, understands the Bible as divine revelation - it does not just communicate God's word, it is the Word of God. The second model, the *positivist historical exegesis* model, seeks to use exegesis and historiography to bring forth an understanding of scripture that is positivist, factual, objective and value-free. Thirdly, the *dialogical-hermeneutical* model of interpretation, takes seriously historical methods, while at the same time reflecting on the interaction between text and community, or text and interpreter. The fourth method, the *liberation theology* model challenges the so-called objectivity and value-free neutrality of academic theology. It recognises that all theologies, including feminist theology, whether conscious or not, are by definition always engaged for or against the oppressed. Intellectual neutrality is not possible in a world of exploitation and oppression.<sup>82</sup>

Other models are utilised by Christian feminists. Fiorenza considers Elizabeth Cady Stanton's new rendering of the Women's Bible (a scientific commentary on the biblical passages pertaining to women). Stanton, in her introduction to the Women's Bible, contends that the Bible is not a "neutral" book but a political weapon against women.<sup>83</sup> The Bible is not just interpreted from a male perspective as some feminists contend; rather it is man-made because it is written by men and is the expression of a patriarchal culture. Stanton thus embraces the third model of biblical interpretation, the hermeneutic-contextual model that stresses the interaction between text and situation. This model, however, has established the canon of Scripture as its basic touchstone of evaluation in the context of this interaction between text and community.<sup>84</sup>

Ruether, who represents the neo-orthodox model of feminist interpretation, seeks to transform the critical element in male culture. Ruether seeks to make a more radical interpretation of the revelatory paradigm in discarding institutions and patterns that contradict just and truthful life. Rather, "usable" interpretative patterns are taken from

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<sup>82</sup> Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 7.

<sup>83</sup> Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 7.

<sup>84</sup> Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 13-14.

the Scriptures and early community documents, over and against its later corruption. The Reformation followed this pattern of change.<sup>85</sup>

Ruether lays hold of the prophetic-liberation tradition of biblical faith to critique the Bible. This, she contends, is a generally accepted principle in biblical scholarship and it acts as a critique from within.<sup>86</sup> However Fiorenza contends that Ruether herself is forced to concede that this critical prophetic tradition did not explicitly apply itself to the women's question either in the history of Israel or in Christianity.<sup>87</sup> Ruether would certainly fit into Fiorenza's second model of biblical interpretation, the positivist historical exegesis in the sense that if the texts are freshly plummeted new liberating truths will emerge.

Further, Fiorenza asserts that the revelatory canon for theological reflection of the biblical androcentric traditions and their subsequent interpretations cannot be derived from the Bible itself. It can only be formulated in and through women's struggle for liberation from all patriarchal oppression. The personally and politically reflected experience of oppression and liberation must become the criterion of appropriateness for biblical interpretation and evaluation of biblical authority claims. Feminist theology therefore challenges biblical theological scholarship to develop a paradigm for biblical revelation that does not understand the New Testament as an archetype but as a prototype. Both denote original models, but an archetype constitutes a changeless form while a prototype is open to the possibility of its own transformation.<sup>88</sup> Finally Fiorenza argues that feminist Christian theology has as its primary task the keeping alive of the "memoria passionis" of Christian women as well reclaiming women's religious theoretical heritage.<sup>89</sup>

Certainly Fiorenza's challenge to liberation theology and its unqualified acceptance of the scriptures raises some interesting pointers. Liberation theology sought to recapture history from a western dualism; Christian feminism has gone a step further - it has sought to be critical of the very fabric that binds the scriptures. Whereas liberation

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<sup>85</sup> Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 17.

<sup>86</sup> Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 24.

<sup>87</sup> Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 17.

<sup>88</sup> Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 32-33.

<sup>89</sup> Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 36.

theology reinterpreted the scriptures in the light of the poor, Christian feminism has questioned all the scriptures in the light of androcentrism and patriarchy.

Later Christian feminism sought to grapple more with "difference". Kwok Pui-Lan, as part of the essays in honour of Letty M. Russell, deals with "Women, Nature and Eschatological Hope." When analysing the debate "women's affinity to nature" and "men's alliance to culture", Kwok Pui-Lan highlights an essential difference between works of earlier feminists and later works. Kwok Pui-Lan contends that Ortner, writing in the early 70's, overlooked the differences among women, glossed over the specificity of culture and provided no nuanced understanding of nature. Kwok Pui-Lan asserts that Ortner essentializes "women", "culture", and "nature" in a way that is similar to the works of earlier feminists.<sup>90</sup>

Also, Kwok Pui-Lan, contesting the western starting point of a generalised notion of "women", "nature" and "culture" asserts that we ought instead to begin with the concrete bodies of women who have experienced conquest, slavery and colonisation in the past and continue to be subjected to neo-colonialism, militarism and economic exploitation in the global market. Further, that the "coloured" body is simultaneously a site of attraction, repulsion and symbolic appropriation.<sup>91</sup>

Pen-Lui also picks up on a central critique of early feminism: their lack of "difference". Beverly Harrison, in her essay in honour of Letty Russell, takes up this precise point. Harrison acknowledges that perhaps difference was not uppermost in the minds of early feminists or that they may have spoken about the experience of women in the singular – nevertheless it must not be forgotten that they were explicitly and substantially post-modernist at a methodological level.<sup>92</sup> (Harrison, 1999: 157).

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<sup>90</sup> Kwok Pui-Lan, "Mending of Creation" in *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honour of Letty M. Russell*, eds. Margaret A. Farley and Serene Jones, United States of America, Louisville; John Knox Press, 1999) 146.

<sup>91</sup> Pui-Lui, *Mending of Creation*, 149.

<sup>92</sup> Harrison, Beverley W. "Feminist Theo(a)logies at the end of the Millennium" in *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honour of Letty M. Russell*, eds. Margaret A. Farley and Serene Jones (United States of America: Louisville; John Knox Press, 1999) 157.

So while liberation theology purported that God's emphatic identification with the poor for freedom and liberation is enshrined in the biblical witness, feminist theology has taken us to a point of appropriate critique. Perhaps this is what Paulo Freire meant by critical consciousness, for feminist theology entails a constant astuteness and evaluation of the primary source; there is never a time when critical faculties can rest.

The grounding of methodology in the history and philosophy of revelation has been traced consistently throughout the above evaluation. It is worth noting the following generalisations: in classical theology, philosophy and history were used to argue a position of revelation; in indigenous theologies, revelation is worked out in a particular historical context. Each theological epoch has its allies. Classical theology's reliance on philosophy has given way to the social sciences in indigenous theology. Indigenous theologies may not be the total answer to the dilemma of the generalisation and lack of difference of the classical theologies, but they do represent a further step in an evolving process.

### **Methodologies of Convergence**

We have considered some of the historical, philosophical and ideological notions that underpin some theological methodologies. We have reflected on Barth's restoration of the importance of revelation, Bultmann's method of demythologising and Tillich's method of correlation. We have looked at liberation theology bound to the liberation of the poor in history and black theology, liberating black people from oppressive structures. Also we have considered African theology bringing cultural validity as well as liberation from all forms of oppression and feminist theology seeking freedom for women from androcentrism and patriarchy.

Is it possible to construct a relevant methodology that takes into account some of the issues of classical theology as well as particular theologies? While it is possible to produce an eclectic piece of writing that is broad-based and comprehensive, how does one produce a methodology that can straddle paradigms?

Hall attempts to produce a thesis that is a little more comprehensive. The birth of Jesus, Hall contends, serves to express the fundamental tension in Christian theology which manifests itself in theological method: discontinuity and continuity, the old and the new, accord and discord, meeting and distance, immanence and transcendence, folly and wisdom. Content determines method; no method can be adequate which does not do justice to this tension. It is a lived tension.<sup>93</sup> The questions that this raises for theological method is how to devise a mode of reflection and communication which does justice both to the continuity and discontinuity dimensions within the gospel.<sup>94</sup>

Kerygmatic theology, then, epitomises this discontinuity thesis, and apologetic theology in turn speaks of continuity. Karl Barth and Paul Tillich represent these traditions respectively. While the continuity/discontinuity thesis is a plausible overarching methodology, Hall recognises today that such a comprehensive systematic theology is no longer possible. Our precursors were able to discuss the Christian faith without any intensive attention to the particularities under which the discussion is taking place. Tillich, to whom situation is significant, still reveals very little about his actual situation. Many within the Systematic tradition assumed "the Christian tradition" to be situated within a European/North American paradigm.<sup>95</sup>

Yet when we consider the particular theologies, the hermeneutical circle appears to be a vital tool of analysis. The Holland and Henriot pastoral circle, I believe, possesses the potential of acting as a bridge between classical and particular theologies. The circle has all the necessary ingredients or insights of particular theologies - social analysis is fundamental, analysis is circular - but excluded from the actual pastoral circle is any ideological partiality. In other words, this circle could be used quite adequately by anybody. There is nothing within the circle that indicates the stated belief of a bias towards the poor or a commitment to structural change. Thus there is nothing at present to prevent somebody from using the very same circle as a means to maintain the status quo.

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<sup>93</sup> Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 331.

<sup>94</sup> Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 335.

<sup>95</sup> Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 363.

So, as I have argued, a theological methodology brings with it numerous historical, philosophical and ideological presuppositions. Barth subjugated history to revelation, Bultmann collaborated with philosophical hermeneutics and Tillich appropriated a philosophical tradition. As examples of classical theology, their schemas were not removed from their contemporary intellectual environment. The emergence of particular theologies has sought not to build on classical theology, but rather to undermine it. Russell's charge that what has been called Christian theology is actually white male theology that has dominated western Christian tradition through a form of cultural imperialism,<sup>96</sup> captures this spirit. Such a sweeping statement, which is ultimately a methodological statement, is difficult to defend. On the other hand, Russell's charge is by no means unfounded; the writers of classical theology all too often did presume a type of universalism.

Yet critiques are not reserved for classical theology alone. As raised before, Fiorenza notes a valid methodological critique of liberation theology: it fails to explore sufficiently the function of the Bible in the oppression of the poor and women.<sup>97</sup> Liberation theology's attempts to reclaim a reading of the scriptures that gives preference to the poor flies in the face of how the Bible has been used historically prior to their rereading. The Bible was often used to justify the status quo and the oppression of the poor. A rereading of the Bible does not simply invalidate all the history that preceded the rereading. Feminist theology fundamentally undermines the Bible per se, as Stanton reminds us, the Bible "is man-made because it is written by men and is the expression of a patriarchal culture."<sup>98</sup>

Particular theologies have sought to rewrite theology, not in a comprehensive systematic form, but in a functional and relevant way that impacts real, oppressed, poor people. Orthodoxy has given over to orthopraxy. Particularity, however, is not a cure all against ideology presuppositions and biases; neither is orthopraxis for that matter. Rather we acknowledge that contained in all critiques are certain presuppositions and it is within those limitations that we engage critically with others.

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<sup>96</sup> Bruce and Jones, *Black Theology II*, 257.

<sup>97</sup> Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 15.

<sup>98</sup> Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 13.

Then how does one breach this chasm between classical and systematic theology? I return to my point that to some degree Holland and Henriot have managed this in formulating a circle that can still allow for classical theology to be part of the paradigm. I would want however to add to their fundamental circle. This is not to take away from the basic structure or to undermine their circular process of interpretation. For the pastoral circle already stands in the tradition of the "option for the poor" and "commitment to social change through the change of structures."<sup>99</sup> Rather is it to add to the circle so that process of interpretation and analysis can be more precise. This particular addition will facilitate an ideological and hermeneutical critique.

### **Practical theology**

We are now moving into the area of practical theology. How does practical theology fit into our scheme of things? For Tillich, in the organisation of theology, historical and systematic theology is crucial. Historical theology includes historical research and systematic theology includes philosophical discussion. Historical theology can be subdivided into the biblical disciplines, church history, and the history of religion and culture. Systematic theology, though more difficult to organise than historical theology, includes the question of natural theology, apologetics and dogmatics. The organisation of theological work is not complete without the inclusion of what is usually called "practical theology".

The given end of practical theology, Tillich contended, is the life of the church. The doctrine of the church is about its nature and its functions and this is a matter for systematic theology. Practical theology deals with the institutions through which the church is actualised and its functions are performed. It does not deal with them from a historical point of view, telling what has been and still is going on in the church, but it looks at them from a technical point of view, asking how to act most effectively.

Tillich then lists the useful resource material of the practical theologian:

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<sup>99</sup> Holland and Henriot, *Social Analysis*, 8.

1. our present knowledge of the general psychological and sociological structures of people and society
2. a practical and theoretical understanding of the psychological and sociological situation of special groups
3. a knowledge of the cultural achievements and problems within the realms of his special interest: education, arts, music, medicine, politics, economics, social work, public communication and so forth

In this way practical theology can become the bridge between the Christian message and the human situation, generally and specially.<sup>100</sup>

Clearly Tillich envisions practical theology as the ability to interpret and evaluate sources that are not deemed theology: sociological, psychological structures and the like.

Pieterse, writing some fifty years later, contends that present-day practical theologians are largely agreed that their discipline is an action science. The actions studied are performed by all believers in every sphere. They are performed by pastors, preachers, parishioners, by anyone who does so in the service of the gospel. These acts are communicated not just in language but also in deeds. They are intention acts aimed at intervening in a situation with a view to transforming it. This is done in accordance with the values of God's kingdom in the lives of individuals, in the church and the society.<sup>101</sup>

Pieterse's understanding of practical theology ventures a little further than that of Tillich. The focus of interaction between historical and systematic theology is broadened into the values of the kingdom in the lives of individuals, the church and society. If we have the hermeneutical circle as our fundamental method of theological exploration, indeed then practical theology takes on a more significant role. The academic reputation of inferiority needs to be banished, for this discipline is vital – in fact Tillich wishes to reassure his readers: "...practical theology has no less theological standing than theoretical theology."<sup>102</sup> Practical theology, in Pieterse's terms, becomes the sharp interacting edge of theology and society.

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<sup>100</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 32-38.

<sup>101</sup> HJC Pieterse, *Preaching in a Context of Poverty* (South Africa, Pretoria; UNISA Press, 2001)

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<sup>102</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 37.

The ethos of the Kairos document, a theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa in the 1980's, has certainly disturbed any cosy interaction between theology and society. To be truly prophetic, the document claims, our response would have to be, in the first place, solidly grounded in the Bible:

Our Kairos impels us to return to the Bible and to search the Word of God for a message that is relevant to what we are experiencing in South Africa today. This will be no mere academic exercise. Prophetic theology differs from academic theology because, whereas academic theology deals with all biblical themes in a systematic manner and formulates general Christian principles and doctrines, prophetic theology concentrates on those aspects of the Word of God that have an immediate bearing upon the critical situation in which we find ourselves. The theology of the prophets does not intend to be comprehensive and complete, it speaks to the particular circumstances of a particular time and place – the Kairos.<sup>103</sup>

The Kairos document moves us beyond Pieterse's "values of God's kingdom in the lives of individuals, in the church and the society" into an area of critical evaluation of the ideological implications of Christianity in the light of a critical situation. It does demarcate between academic theology and prophetic theology, the action arm of the theological endeavour. Miguez Bonino, from a liberationist perspective, contends that it is the idealism of the rich world that believes it can start from abstract conceptions and objective sources, rather than a specific context. They deceive themselves, Miguez Bonino chides; they succeed only in idealising the existing situation and projecting it afterward – thus the "theology of death of God" and the "theology of secularisation" project the conditions of the technological world. The only possible point of departure is the concrete situation. It is thus urgent to unmask the ideologies hidden in the theologies of the past and to assume the historical character of theological reflection. We do theology "beginning with concreteness," from "particular realities".

For this reason, Miguez Bonino contends that we begin from praxis. It is not merely that theology is at the service of action, rather that action is itself the truth. Truth is at the level of history, not in the realm of ideas. Reflection on praxis, on human significant

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<sup>103</sup> The Kairos Theologians, *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church. A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa* (South Africa, Braamfontein; Skotaville Publishers, 1987) 17.

action, can only be authentic when it is done from within, in the vicinity of the strategic and tactical plane of human action.<sup>104</sup>

Miguez Bonino, Gutiérrez and liberation theology per se unsettle all traditional theological methodology classifications. In fact they turn things on their head; the Christian revelation is brought to bear critically on a real historic situation concerning the poor. Revelation transpires in the context of action. This does tend to collapse the boundaries between academic theology and practical theology - the "technical application, "action science" or the "action prophetic". Christian revelation is inextricably bound to a particular historical context.

Within our pastoral circle, we certainly want to be sensitive to context, but liberation theology reminds us that mere context is not sufficient. De Gruchy speaks about a people's theology, a theology which arises out of the shared experiences and reflection of that segment of the People of God who live in situations of poverty, oppression and suffering. In South Africa, de Gruchy reminds us, the majority of the People of God are poor and happen to be black. A "theology from below", emerging from the poor, is often distinguished from a "theology from above", from those who are part of the dominant class structure. De Gruchy notes that this is a misunderstanding, for theology from above takes the incarnation as the point of departure, and a theology from below, the Jesus of history. This theology from "above" or "below" is a false antithesis, for both types of theologies can be operative in a people's theology.<sup>105</sup>

What is needed, de Gruchy argues,

...is a theology which arises out of a understanding of the Incarnate Word within the life of, fate and suffering of the one who identified fully with the poor and the oppressed, Jesus Christ.<sup>106</sup>

So what does all this mean for the methodology of the pastoral circle? Utilising the circle means, in principle, a commitment to liberation type methodology, where theology is done in a real historical context. This is theology, not a dimension of theology known as

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<sup>104</sup> Miguez Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, 72.

<sup>105</sup> De Gruchy, *Theology and Ministry*, 137.

<sup>106</sup> De Gruchy, *Theology and Ministry*, 139.

practical theology. As de Gruchy reminds us, theology in South Africa is about the church of the poor. He also offers us specific models for the minister in his role of leadership:

The model of the ordained minister as practical theologian transcends the historic division in which the priest is primarily the celebrant of the mass and the Reformed pastor, the preacher of the Word, though, of course, the priest also celebrates the word and the reformed pastor also celebrates the sacraments. These distinct emphases remain, but priest and pastor find their commonality in providing direction to the community of faith engaged in mission in the world.<sup>107</sup>

The ordained ministry exists to enable the community of faith to reflect theologically on its life and witness in the world in order that its members may better understand their faith, calling and tasks as Christian in the world.<sup>108</sup>

De Gruchy moves the local congregation away from self-preoccupation to service in the world. The indigenous theologies remind us of the importance of serving the poor, the marginalized, the neglected and the oppressed. The liberation of humanity now in all its forms becomes part of our mission to the world. It is with this understanding of practical theology, bound to context, to the poor, to liberation that I seek to further elucidate my rendering of the pastoral circle.

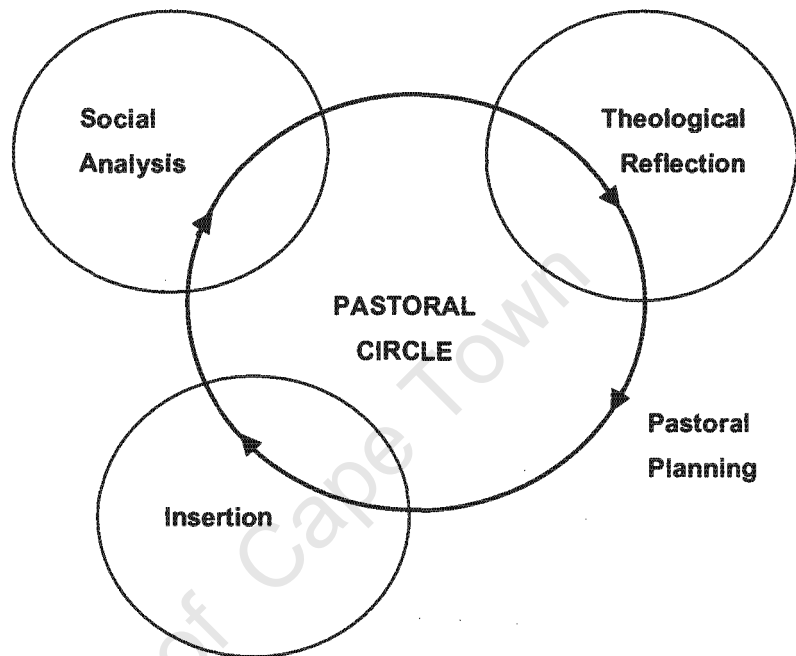
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<sup>107</sup> De Gruchy, *Theology and Ministry*, 25.

<sup>108</sup> De Gruchy, *Theology and Ministry*, 134.

**Part 2: The Pastoral Circle**<sup>109</sup>

**Revised Pastoral Circle: Diagram 1**

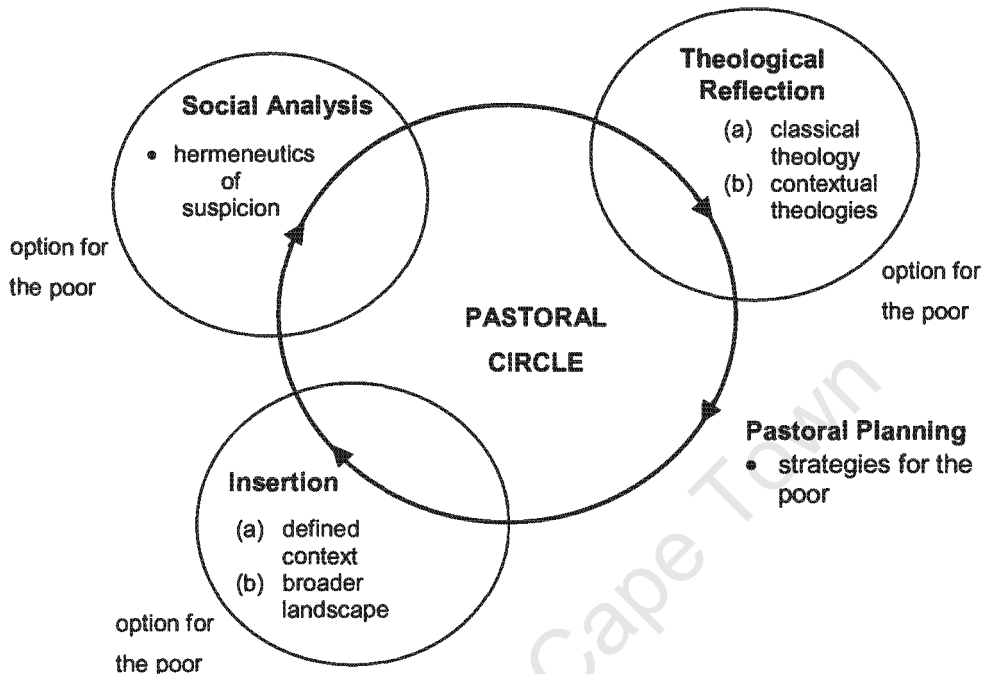


The above diagram represents an enlarging of the analytical process at each of its stages. This is not to detract from the methodology of the pastoral circle; rather the additional circles are added to facilitate a more thorough analysis.

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<sup>109</sup> Holland and Henriot, *Social Analysis*, 8.

## Revised Pastoral Circle: Diagram 2



### **Insertion**

Holland and Henriot argue that "insertion" locates the geography of our pastoral responses in the lived experiences of individuals and communities. This entails locating in a context before we begin the process. It also means being conscious regarding whose experience is being considered. Also the experience of the poor and oppressed must play a privileged role in the process.

Insertion then sets the scene. It can define a context in the sense of narrowing down a subject. Equally, it could act as broader landscape, it could expand and elucidate a subject, it could act as an in-depth introduction which could then be refined in the "social analysis".

As the pastoral circle stands at present, a point on the circle to indicate "insertion" somehow does not do justice to this dynamic concept. An additional smaller circle around the point of "insertion" could, at face value, enrich the pastoral circle. My

additions are by no means definitive, but they seek to enhance the spirit of the circle and to make this more explicit.

### **Social analysis**

The intended ethos of the circle will be preserved and all analysis will be partial to the plight of the poor. This option for the poor means a commitment to changing social structures to benefit the poor and marginalized. Yet equally a “hermeneutic of suspicion” needs to undergird any analysis.

### **Theological Reflection**

This reflection will consider both classical and contextual theologies as well as appropriate biblical texts, with a stated bias towards the poor.

### **Pastoral planning**

Specific pastoral issues will emerge from the social analysis and theological reflection.

## **Revised Pastoral Circle: Example 1**

### **Poverty in South Africa**

#### **Insertion**

Poverty in South Africa is the experience of many people in both urban and rural areas.

#### **Social Analysis**

##### ***Structural analysis***

Haddad points us firstly to the sudden and unexpected closure of the RDP parliamentary office within two years of its establishment. Issues of reconstruction and development, it was asserted, were not to be dealt with in isolation from other government ministries.

Some have argued that this decision was taken by the government as a preparatory move towards a fundamental shift away from a people-driven towards a market-driven economic policy. This was followed in 1996 by the publication of “Growth, Employment and Distribution,” a macro-economic strategy (GEAR). In developmental terms, this ideological shift has crucial implications for delivery and access to services and resources.

The Report on Poverty and Inequality in South Africa establishes our disparity in income

In *per capita* terms South Africa is an upper-middle-income country, but despite this relative wealth, the experience of most South African households is of outright poverty or of continuing vulnerability to being poor. In addition, the distribution of income and wealth in South Africa is among the most unequal in the world, and many households still have unsatisfactory access to education, health care, energy and clean water. This situation is likely to affect not only the country's social and political stability, but also the development path it follows: countries with less equal distributions of income and wealth tend not to grow as rapidly as those with more equitable distributions

Further, poverty is characterised by the inability of individuals, households or communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living. Poverty is perceived by poor South Africans themselves to include alienation from the community, food insecurity, crowded homes, usage of unsafe and inefficient forms of energy, lack of jobs that are adequately paid and/or secure, and fragmentation of the family. In contrast, wealth is perceived to be characterised by good housing, the use of gas or electricity, and ownership of a major durable good such as a television set or fridge.

Poverty is not a static condition; individuals, households or communities may be vulnerable to poverty as a result of shocks and crises (uncontrollable events which harm livelihoods and food security) and long-term trends (such as racial and gender discrimination, environmental degradation and macroeconomic trends). Vulnerability to poverty is thus characterised by an inability to devise an appropriate coping or management strategy in times of crisis. Poverty may also involve social exclusion in either an economic dimension (exclusion from the labour market and opportunities to earn income) or a purely social dimension (exclusion from decision-making, social services, and access to community and family support).<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> *Poverty and Inequality in South Africa* (A Report prepared for the Office of the Executive Deputy President and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Poverty and Inequality; 13 May, 1998).

### *NEPAD and Sustainable Development*

The Foreign Affairs Department offers us a cryptic overview of NEPAD. NEPAD is considered as one of the most important developments of recent times for its conception of a development programme placing Africa at the apex of the global agenda, by:

- Creating an instrument for advancing a people-centred sustainable development in Africa based on democratic values;
- Being premised on the recognition that Africa has an abundance of natural resources and people who have the capacity to be agents for change and so holds the key to her own development; and
- Providing a common African platform from which to engage the rest of the international community in a dynamic partnership that holds real prospects for creating a better life for all.

The primary objective of NEPAD is to eradicate poverty in Africa and to place African countries both individually and collectively on a path of sustainable growth and development to thus halt the marginalisation of Africa in the globalisation process. At the core of the NEPAD process is its African ownership, which must be retained and strongly promoted, so as to meet the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples. While the principle of partnership with the rest of the world is equally vital to this process, such partnership must be based on mutual respect, dignity, shared responsibility and mutual accountability.

The expected outcomes are:

- Economic growth and development and increased employment;
- Reduction in poverty and inequality;
- Diversification of productive activities;
- Enhanced international competitiveness and increased exports; and
- Increased African integration.<sup>111</sup>

A Report on Achieving the Millennium Goals for the Development of Africa drafted in June 2002 places NEPAD very much within IMF World bank macro politics. The goals themselves are commendable:

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<sup>111</sup> Foreign Affairs Department, *NEPAD overview* (May 2002).

- Goal 1: Eradicate Poverty and Hunger
- Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education
- Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women
- Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality
- Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases
- Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability
- Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

At the recent Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development, world leaders reaffirmed their clear and unequivocal support for these goals. Accelerated progress toward meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) will require action by African countries and intensified support from the international community. African countries need to act in three main areas:

- Deepening macroeconomic reforms, and enhancing domestic competitiveness and efficiency, as foundations for a favorable investment climate and pro-poor growth.
- Strengthening democratic institutions and systems of public budget and financial management to ensure that governments are accountable to their people, especially for the effective use of public resources.
- Investing adequate resources in human development. In the reforming countries, a more effective framework for channeling increased assistance is being put in place, consisting of country-owned Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) at the national level and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) at the regional level. These countries will need the support of the international community if their progress is to be sustained and accelerated—and if they are to improve their economic and social performance and move toward the MDG.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Development Goals in Africa: Progress, Prospects, and Policy Implications (June 2002).

### *Structural Adjustment*

While NEPAD claims to “advance a people-centred sustainable development in Africa based on democratic values”, the Millennium Report indicates that they seek “to deepen macroeconomic reforms, enhancing domestic competitiveness and efficiency, as foundations for a favorable investment climate and pro-poor growth.” The rhetoric then of people-centred sustainable investment is still within the dominant western paradigm of “macroeconomic reforms”. These macroeconomic reforms are known as structural adjustment or balanced budgets and trade. This system, Rist argues, can be traced back to the need for the colonies to be economically and financially self-supporting.<sup>113</sup> Rist offers us a fuller explanation of structural adjustment: it is intended to restore a number of equilibria - the bloated administrative apparatuses designed to look after the regime’s clientele rather than serve the public, the low productivity of nationalized corporations, tax evasion often linked to activity in the ‘informal’ sector, or subsidization of basic foods to ward off popular discontent.

Rist argues that, externally, a payments imbalance might be attributed to bad world prices for primary products, a low level of foreign investment, excessive repatriation of profits, over purchasing from abroad, especially of weapons, the growing weight of debt service and so on. In practice, all these phenomena come down to the notion that government, companies and individuals are living beyond their means.

It should be stressed, however, that this situation arose because the industrial countries (especially the North American commercial banks) fell over themselves to recycle the petrodollars in and after 1975. The ‘excess liquidity’ led the financial institutions into a totally irresponsible credit policy. Under normal circumstances, a banker, in deciding whether or not to grant a loan, will assess the risk and demand all manner of guarantees that the borrower’s use of it will yield profits as least as high as the anticipated interest. In the second half of the 1970’s, however, Rist reminds us, industrialized countries lent any sum to just about anyone for any purpose, and happily put up with inflation to lower the real cost of oil products. The rise in interest rates was such that the borrowers became unable to keep up payments. This monetary disorder led to the economics of

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<sup>113</sup> Rist, *The History of Development*, 58.

adjustment and the correction of 'trade balances'. But the adjustment (through devaluation, for example) was demanded of debtor countries.

So Rist contends that the budgetary austerity and market liberalization involved in adjustment policies often meant drastic cuts in the public service, in subsidies of all kinds, and in health and education benefits. Well-being had to be adjusted downwards to the "imperatives" of the market economy. To mitigate this new deterioration in living standards, someone thought up the term "adjustment with a human face" – which was supposed to combine IMF-style austerity with the humanitarian concerns of the UNICEF. A human face was thus supposed to make adjustment acceptable.<sup>114</sup>

Some people, Rees & Smith argue, including very eminent economists, have a touching (almost religious) faith in the ability of either markets or governments to work their "magic"; but out of the world of the ivory tower economics is not merely a set of mathematical relationships. Economic questions cannot be separated from the type of society in which we wish to live. Thus the issue of governments versus markets can be seen as a question of balance, rather than a question of "either-or"; the comparison should be between an imperfect market and an imperfect government, not some ideal abstraction. Among the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) that have developed most rapidly in recent years, we can detect at least some idea of "partnership" between the enterprise economy and the state. It could further be argued that among the More Developed Countries (MDCs) showing stagnation or decline over the last decade, there has been too much reliance either on markets or on the state, and too little attention paid to the idea of a mixed economy.<sup>115</sup>

### *Economic Alternatives*

These economic policies have had a profound effect on developing nations - structural adjustment always leads to massive unemployment. Economics are politicized; they form a fundamental part of our lives and thus the theological arena. Many alternatives are being suggested - the London-based New Economics Foundation has launched the "Jubilee Plus" movement for an international bankruptcy framework to institutionalize the

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<sup>114</sup> Rist, *The History of Development*, 171-173.

<sup>115</sup> Gareth Rees & Charles Smith, *Economic Development* (Hampshire, Basingstoke; Macmillan Press, 1998) 34-35.

handling of international debt. This has emerged from the view that the unfairness of the manner in which Third World debt occurred does not justify the debtor manner of imposing its house keeping measures on indebted nations. The Jubilee Plus framework is based on Chapter 9 of the United Nations Legal Code. This would mean in effect that debtors and creditors could chose an ad hoc body to assess the legitimacy of the debts and seek a fresh fair solution. More radical opinion has it that "Drop the Debt" is the only fair way to go.<sup>116</sup>

### ***The African Renaissance***

These matters affect Africa. The African Renaissance captures this ethos of self-determination:

The renaissance of our Africanness is not about rediscovering, but about reiterating who we are and what we as Africans are all about (Thaninga Shope).

The African Renaissance is a unique opportunity for Africa to define ourselves and our agenda according to our own realities and taking into account the reality of the world around us. It is about being agents of our own history and masters of our own destiny (Malegapuru Makgoba).<sup>117</sup>

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Thabo Mbeki, speaking on the matter of "The African Renaissance", places the Renaissance squarely in the economic sphere. Changes in economic policy and the achievement of stability within African governments as a result of democratic forms of government have meant economic growth. Mbeki states:

These economic objectives, which must result in the elimination of poverty, the establishment of modern multi-sector economies and the growth of Africa's share of economic activity, are an essential part of the African Renaissance.<sup>118</sup>

### ***Globalisation***

This all-important sphere of economics affects all aspects of our existence in Africa. Globalisation in particular affects our economy. Mbeki attempts to put a positive hue on globalisation when he declares that:

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<sup>116</sup> *The Mail & Guardian* (7-13 June, 2002).

<sup>117</sup> Malegapuru William Makgoba ed., *African Renaissance* (South Africa, Sandton and Cape Town; Mafube/Tafelberg, 1999) XII.

<sup>118</sup> Mbeki, *The Time has Come*, 248

The process of globalisation emphasises the fact that no person is an island to himself or herself. Rather, all humanity is an interdependent whole in which none can be truly free until we are all free, in which none can be truly prosperous unless none elsewhere in the world goes hungry, and in fact none of us can be guaranteed a good quality of life unless we act together to protect the environment.<sup>119</sup>

So again, the basic economic model, the prevailing economic orthodoxy, is not challenged but rather humanised.

### *The Ethics of Globalisation*

Holland and Henriot, however, raise serious questions about the fundamentals of globalisation and its intrinsic unfairness. The internationalisation of capital has upset the national balance of power between capital and labour. Transitional capital is able to increase its control over national economies. It does this in two ways. Firstly, it ends the monopolistic conditions that made it possible for corporations to bend before workers' demands without being undercut by competitors. Secondly, global capital will flow wherever the return is greatest. Returns will be greatest where wages are restrained and taxes low (hence social services are curtailed). This development places authoritarian states that repress their workers and provide few social services at a competitive advantage in the world market. This movement is restoring laissez-faire competition on a global scale, with the same "punishments" for benevolence and "rewards" for ruthlessness. However, the rewards and punishments are now meted out to nations rather than family firms.<sup>120</sup>

Our social analysis of poverty seeks to touch on issues that are of concern to the poor and marginalized. The brief analysis seeks to retain the ethos of the hermeneutical circle – a concern for the poor and the marginalized.

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<sup>119</sup> Mbeki, *The Time has Come*, 250.

<sup>120</sup> Holland & Henriot, *Social Analysis*, 78-79.

## Theological Reflection

### *Liberation theology and development*

How does Africa enter or compete in such a global economic system? How do we gain a share of the world's economic activity? These are equally theological questions. While Holland & Henriot are engaging in an economic critique, liberation theologians serve as an example of a willingness to reflect upon and engage in matters that concern the poor in Latin America. We see this in their vigorous assessment of development and neo-colonialism.

Migues Bonino contends that Spanish conquest and colonial Christianity meant that "obedience to the great King of Spain and submission to the King of heaven" were demanded as a single act. A semi-feudal society that existed in Spain was perpetuated - large fertile pieces of land were given over to leading families to develop. As a result, much of the fertile land was in the hands of a minority of landowners. So even though popular Catholicism grew, nevertheless the colonial church was tied to a colonial structure and ordinary people were alienated.<sup>121</sup>

Further, Gutiérrez argues that colonialism was replaced by neo-colonialism, an economic and cultural penetration by multinationals. The great hope for development in the 1950's was to come under severe criticism, due both to the deficiencies of the development policies proposed to the poor countries to lead them out of their underdevelopment and also to the lack of concrete achievements of governments. This is the reason why developmentalism became synonymous with reformism and modernisation, which meant timid measures, ineffective in the long run and counterproductive to achieving real transformation. Moreover, there is a growing realisation that development will only come about with a struggle to break the domination of affluent countries.<sup>122</sup>

Poor countries are not interested in modelling themselves after wealthy countries, amongst other reasons, because they are increasingly more convinced that the status of

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<sup>121</sup> Migues Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, 5-7.

<sup>122</sup> Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 26.

the latter is the fruit of injustice and coercion.<sup>123</sup> Migue Bonino puts it a little more succinctly: it is not about “development and underdevelopment, but domination and dependence.” The time for development is now over; it is now time for liberation.<sup>124</sup>

Certainly liberation theologians have no hesitation aligning themselves to a particular position. In terms of our theological reflection, poverty demands some type of interaction with economic realities. This is so integral to context in South Africa that it cannot help but form a significant backdrop. Equally, the environment provides goods and services that sustain human development - so development also needs to sustain the environment.

So our theological reflection would include liberation theology, black theology and an analysis of the biblical texts that highlight God's concern for the poor.

A theological response would mean facing the present and the historic injustices of poverty and framing an appropriate pastoral response.

The pastoral circle as a methodology enables a thorough examination of social conditions. The methodology by implication encourages a cross-disciplinary approach, for a social analysis requires a cross-fertilisation with other disciplines. Moreover, it ensures that theological reflection is not esoteric and removed but engaged in societal realities.

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<sup>123</sup> Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 22.

<sup>124</sup> Migue Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology*, 16,21.

## **Revised Pastoral Circle: Example 2**

### **Women and Development**

#### **Insertion**

Women's experience in the broad South African context.

#### **Social Analysis**

##### ***Women and Development***

Beverly Haddad gives us a picture close to the ground in South Africa. In reviewing GEAR from a gender perspective, she argues that "the prescription for cuts in social spending and ambitious growth targets spell disaster for nearly 60% of women who, earning no income at all, will gain nothing from the formal market economy". Further she argues that the critical areas of poverty and inequality have not been addressed, there being neither a comprehensive employment nor rural development strategy. Thus in the final analysis, GEAR continues to afford women low social and economic status.<sup>125</sup>

##### ***The effects on women***

For the majority of South African women, oppression and poverty are a daily reality. In describing oppression in South African society, Mamphela Ramphele used the model of a pyramid with white males at the top, followed by white females, then black urban men, black urban women, black rural men and lastly black rural women. Thus the black woman is triply oppressed in terms of sex, race and class and is the poorest, most marginalized person in society.<sup>126</sup> De Gruchy argues that over the past three decades development has neglected the needs of women. The assumption that anything that benefited the poor would obviously benefit women was not shown to be the case. Due to power dynamics governed by gender relations in beneficiary countries and communities, what benefits poor men does not necessarily benefit poor women and can

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<sup>125</sup> Beverly Haddad, "Theologising Development" in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, (no. 110, July 2001) 11.

<sup>126</sup> Cochrane et al, *In Word and Deed*, 62.

in fact make their lot worse. Simply adding women to the existing development paradigm is inadequate.<sup>127</sup>

Haddad argues that the apartheid legacy has further entrenched poverty in the lives of women by denying them formal education, with the literacy rate estimated to be a mere 50% in rural areas. Health services have been totally inadequate in poor communities. In assessing the leading causes of death among women it is asserted that “the single largest official category of causes of death is simply called ‘ill-defined causes’, probably because so many women have no access to formal health care and their diseases are never diagnosed let alone treated”.

Lack of access to economic, educational and health services has resulted in a vulnerability exacerbated by the legacy of apartheid legislation such as the migrant labour policy. This forced African women to stay in rural areas and care for their children through informal agricultural and crafts production. Women who did live in the cities, did so with little pay, subjected to long hours, within particularly oppressive working conditions as domestic workers providing white families with cheap labour and reliable childcare. Even with the end of apartheid black women have remained disproportionately in the rural areas and in domestic labour.<sup>128</sup>

Poor women are structurally disadvantaged by macro economic policies and development policies that exclude women, especially poor rural women. This is an issue about poverty that cannot be divorced from gender realities. To be concerned about fundamental poverty alleviation means to be concerned about the plight of women in South Africa.

### **Theological Reflection**

The full humanity of women and the resulting hermeneutical implications are indeed fundamental concerns of feminist theology. The “experience of women” as a starting point for feminist theology becomes a crucial tool in the journey towards the full humanity of women. The plight of poor women and the full humanity of all women are not add-

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<sup>127</sup> De Gruchy, *Millennium Declaration*, 69-71.

<sup>128</sup> Haddad, *Theologising Development*, 9-10.

ons, but are crucial to our nationhood, to building a coherent inclusive theology. Christian feminism is a crucial aspect of our doing theology in South Africa at present.

To take the concerns of women seriously is bound up with the poor, for it is poor women who are so often at the bottom of the pile. Yet all above examples: the nature of poverty and women and development are not arbitrary examples. Rather they form the matrix of the insertion in the topic which I ultimately want to explore. The topic is: "Becoming a Person in South African: the Theology of the Self". The previous examples are the bedrock of such a topic. The pastoral circle by implication means my analysis will lean to wards the situation of the poor. A framework on poverty and the corresponding economic realities are a necessary background to do justice to such a subject. Women, as the poorest of the poor, likewise cannot be ignored. It is in this milieu, in this broader landscape that I wish to explore the notion of "Becoming a person in South Africa".

The pastoral circle as a methodology gives a clear pattern to an analysis: from context to analysis to theological reflection to pastoral planning. Our additional circles enable this pattern to be more specific. Moreover, the circle enables this process of analysis and insight to continue ad infinitum. A broad and complex topic like "Becoming a Person in South Africa: The Theology of the Self" can be formulated and shaped within the pastoral circle without necessary reducing the complexity of the subject. The structures of the pastoral circle, I would argue, enable clarity without reducing the scope of the analysis.

### **Becoming a Person in South African: The Theology of the Self**

Finally, we consider the topic for which we want to develop an appropriate methodology: "Becoming a Person in South African: The Theology of the Self".

#### **Insertion**

People who live in South Africa are influenced by a background of colonialism, apartheid, poverty and cultural diversity.

#### **Social Analysis**

This will entail the interaction among the broader historical development of the self, the historical-philosophical analysis of the self and the realities of our colonial and apartheid past, along with our cultural diversity. All this will be immersed in a fundamental concern for the poor and marginalized.

#### ***Broader Historical Development of the Self***

Richard Logan in his article "Historical Change in the Prevailing Sense of Self" identifies a number of historical stages through which the notion of the self has passed. Logan identifies five stages:<sup>129</sup>

#### **The Later Middle Ages: The era of the self as newly autonomous subject in the world**

This period was characterised by the individual's awareness of separation from the larger whole, that is 'I' with little awareness of self as "unique individuality". In keeping with this beginning sense of self, philosophers of the time wrestled with the new discovery of their individual wills versus the Will of God, but still sought to use their new autonomous viewpoint and reasoning to arrive at a strengthened faith in the larger Corporate Being.

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<sup>129</sup> Richard D. Logan, 'Historical Change in Prevailing Sense of the Self' In Krysia Yardley & Terry Honess (eds.), *Self Identity: Psychological Perspectives* (Britain, Chichester, John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1987) 13-25.

### **The Renaissance and Reformation: The Self as Assertive Subject.**

The Renaissance individualist asserted individuality but did not reflect on the notion; instead one identified with one's effects on the world and society. Autobiographies consisted of narratives recounting such activities rather than on self-reflection.

### **The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: The Self as Competent Subject.**

The seventeenth century "Age of Reason" with its rationalism was closely followed by the eighteenth century Enlightenment with its notion of empiricism. While with rationalism and empiricism the self is capable of initiating and conducting well reasoned thought and systematic observation, it nevertheless limited in its self-consciousness by virtue of still being orientated to the outer world rather than its own 'inner' character.

### **The Modern World: The Era of the Self as Observed Object.**

Renaissance individuality was based on respect for talent, or property or legal rights, but invariably stopped short of an interest in the inner life of a person. The major philosophers of the nineteenth century began to move away from "how do I reason about the world", to "how does the world make me feel".

### **Post Modern Culture: The Era of the Self as Existential Object**

With a more complete removal from the group, the products of one's labour and one's past history becomes more removed. The self as object so long sought after now becomes a kind of lost object, so much so that it has become deeply 'inner', and so deeply is held to be, not a created object, but an essence that is existentially 'there'. The self as subject has now become merely the tool of the search for self ("know your self").

### ***Social Facets of Meaning***

While Logon's rendition provides us with a valuable framework, it doesn't sufficiently explore the social facets of meaning. Kay Deaux argues however, that meaning has both personal and social aspects.<sup>130</sup> It is difficult to identify social identities without

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<sup>130</sup> Glynis M. Breakwell, *Social psychology of Identity and the Self Concept* (Britain, London, Surrey University Press, 1992) 4.

considering their personal meaning. The social identity remains an empty container without the meanings that individuals use to fill these categories.<sup>131</sup>

Yet Deaux still adheres to an individual-centred tradition, for the individual still gives meaning to social categories. Gergen contends, however, that it is no longer the individual who is at the centre of 'knowledge' production, but the social group. The individual's act of labelling is but a by-product of social interchange. It is a social group that furnishes the vocabulary with which emotional "identification' is to proceed, along with semantic rules for proper usage.<sup>132</sup>

Further Liebkind contends that cultural differences are tied to historical experiences, some of which are based on socio-economic stratification of a more recent nature and others of which are rooted in a distant part of which nobody is conscious. This historical older cultural tradition is sometimes called deep culture. Liebkind thus argues that there is a tight bond between culture and identity.<sup>133</sup>

### ***Philosophical and historical analysis of the self***

As we explore the historical-philosophical context of the self, we automatically place ourselves in dialogue with classical theology. This is seen in the following brief analysis of the historical –philosophical nature of the self. Our analysis utilises Winquist's framework for the understanding of the self: 'The Philosophy of Being' gives way to 'The Philosophy of Consciousness' in the Enlightenment period, to the 'Philosophy of Language' as part of Post-Modernism.<sup>134</sup>

### ***The Philosophy of Being***

In the Christian era, Platonism and Aristotelianism became dominant philosophies. Both emphasised the difference between being and becoming. In the world, everything is becoming something else and changing. Yet Plato maintained that there is a realm of

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<sup>131</sup> Kay Deaux, 'Personalising Identity and Socialising Self' in Glynis M. Breakwell, *Social Psychology of Identity and the Self Concept* (Britain, London, Surrey University Press, 1992) 21.

<sup>132</sup> Kenneth J. Gergen, 'Toward Self as Relationship' in Krysia Yardley & Terry Honess (eds.), *Self Identity: Psychological Perspectives* (Britain, Chichester, John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1987) 57.

<sup>133</sup> Karmela Liebkind, 'Challenging the Boundaries of Social Psychology' in Glynis M. Breakwell *Social psychology of Identity and the Self Concept* (Britain, London, Surrey University Press, 1992) 149.

<sup>134</sup> Taylor, *Critical Terms*, 225.

being that is an eternal unchanging form or idea. In this philosophy of Platonic dualism, a Greek god belongs to this unchanging realm of being. The immutable Greek god belonging to this realm cannot have direct contact with the world. A mediator is needed. This mediating power was known as the Logos, meaning reason and word. The Greek philosophers saw the human being as twofold: body and soul. The body belongs to the world of becoming and change. The soul is the real person. The body is but a house or a set of clothes. The ultimate aim of the soul, which is immortal, is to be released from the body.<sup>135</sup>

It was into this philosophical milieu that Tertullian formulates distinctive Trinitarian terminology. Tertullian invented the word "Trinity" (Latin: Trinitas). It is in this context also that Tertullian introduced the Latin term *Persona*, a translation of the Greek word "hypostasis". While there has been much debate regarding this word, it is now generally accepted that "persona" means 'a mask' worn by an actor in a Roman drama. The term hence signifies the role that someone plays. Tertullian wished to convey that behind the plurality of roles, lay a single actor. Yet at the heart of this word "persona" lay an ambiguity, a lack of clarity; *persona* somehow referred to another, to a variety of roles rather than rooting personhood in a definitive essence.<sup>136</sup>

Winquist's Philosophy of Being asserts that the "authentication of the person is in the transcendence of finitude, thought union with God, the original plenitude of being". The finite person in other words is not a 'self-sufficient reality'. The person is the *personae*, the mask.<sup>137</sup> This basic duality involving the self by and large prevailed until Descartes.

### ***The Philosophy of Consciousness***

The Reformation and the Age of Reason saw the transition to the philosophy of consciousness. Calvin, as the one who developed the ideas of the Reformation, ensured a shift from the institution of the church to the individual status of the person. Calvin launches into his Institutes with the heading "Without knowledge of self there is

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<sup>135</sup> Tony Lane, *The Lion Concise Book of Christian Thought* (England, Lion Publishing, Hertfordshire 1984) 12.

<sup>136</sup> Alistair McGrath, *Christian Theology*, (England, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1994) 250.

<sup>137</sup> Taylor, *Critical Terms*, 226.

no knowledge of God".<sup>138</sup> This leads to the notion that to contemplate will cause us to recognise our own state: "we must infer that man is never sufficiently touched and affected by the awareness of his lowly state until he has compared himself with his majesty".<sup>139</sup> This leads on to the 'experienced self' becoming central to the Reformation. So, as Winqvist observes, 'paradoxically the reformation enfranchised the concept of the self by putting the self in question'.<sup>140</sup>

It was in Descartes' Meditations that he uses the tool of 'radical doubt' as the foundation for philosophical research. Descartes sets out to show that if the mind is emptied of all its sense-dependent beliefs, it is not emptied of ideas or concepts and that the ideas that remain are sufficient to form the basis of a science. We have innate ideas or concepts independent of our senses.<sup>141</sup> Now this approach would presume we could somehow access control and regulate our thought process. Descartes held on to the 'transparency thesis' that nothing can occur in a mind of which the mind is not conscious.<sup>142</sup> . So there was a shift in the framework of thinking; "I think" and "I am" were understood to carry similar meanings. By this very process of thinking and rationality I actualise myself. Being is conceived in conscious thinking. This was fundamental to the shift to a Philosophy of Consciousness. So Winqvist observes that 'the impurity of the self noted by the Reformers in a quest for salvation was noted by Enlightenment philosophers in a quest for knowledge'.<sup>143</sup>

### *Philosophies of Language*

Now Kant, in contrast to Descartes, maintained that our experience is structured by the categories and thoughts we bring to it, and thus that we produce rather than reproduce the world we think we know. So all knowledge according to Kant derives from experience. We have no access to any uninterpreted given.<sup>144</sup> Kant appears to break the back of the Cartesian thought. Winqvist argues that perhaps unwittingly Kant's

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<sup>138</sup> John T. McNeill ed. *The Library of Christian Volume XX Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion 1* (Westminster Press) 35.

<sup>139</sup> McNeil, *Calvin*, 39.

<sup>140</sup> Taylor, *Critical Terms*, 227.

<sup>141</sup> John Shand, *Philosophy and Philosophers*, (UCL Press, 1993) 77.

<sup>142</sup> Sydney Shoemaker, *The First-Person Perspective and Other Essays* (England, University of Cambridge, 1996) 50.

<sup>143</sup> Taylor, *Critical Terms*, 238.

<sup>144</sup> Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (United State of America, University of California Press, 1985) 2-3.

position undid the sense of certainty and confidence that characterised the Enlightenment.<sup>145</sup>

Apart from Cartesian thought, philosophers like Berkeley, Hobbes, Hume and James continued to explore issues surrounding the self. William James defined the Material me, the Social me and the Spiritual me, in his grappling with self experience. This led on to Freud who with his psychoanalytic theory contributed to the widespread concern with self. Among those who followed Freud there were Erich Fromm and Karen Horney. Fromm made contributions emphasising the importance of self-love and its necessity for happiness. Horney made contributions to our knowledge of self-alienation – the person's feelings of estrangement from his true self.<sup>146</sup>

All these early studies in psychology were part and parcel of what historians have described as the undermining of rationalism as a movement from Modernism to Postmodernism with its pre-commitment to relativism and pluralism. Maybe the notion of the 'autonomous self' was overturned in this movement, but there were still numerous sub texts: the expressive self of the Romantics, the solitary self of the Existentialists and the pretence of no self of the Positivists.<sup>147</sup>

In other words the shift from Cartesian thinking to Postmodernism did not mean a univocal thrust, rather a plethora of meanings emerged. As 'pure' Enlightenment and Romantic thinking became outmoded, they spurred many new forms and theories in the study of self. As other disciplines emerged the study of the self became no longer the reserve of philosophy and theology.

Other contributors like Marx, Taylor argues, adopted a clear materialistic approach to the person, because he deals with 'motivations' at its bottom level of explanation. At base what moves people is getting what they need to live.<sup>148</sup> Lukes argues that the 'who I am' is answered both for me and for others by the history I inherit, the social positions I

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<sup>145</sup> Taylor, *Critical Terms*, 231.

<sup>146</sup> Kenneth Gergen, *The Concept of Self*, (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971) 6-7.

<sup>147</sup> David Tracy, Interpretation, conversation, argument. In *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion and Hope* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 82.

<sup>148</sup> M. Carrithers, S. Collins & S. Lukes eds., *The Category of the Person* (England, Cambridge University Press, 1985) 270.

occupy and the moral career on which I am embarked. Lukes quotes Fortes to assert his conclusion that 'the basis of each individual's knowledge of who he is and where he belongs as a person is identified by kinship, descent and status. It is the principal medium for appropriating to himself – internalising we might say – the capacity for exercising the rights and duties, the roles and all the proper patterns of behaviour that pertain to his status as a person'.<sup>149</sup>

So clearly the self in postmodernism has now become entwined in many other disciplines. There is no linear progression in the development of self; various disciplines and schools of thought have put forward their emphases, all of which would be impossible to explore in this essay. So Winquist's notion of the 'philosophies of language' to describe this Postmodern shift is a most helpful tool.<sup>150</sup> For language and the deconstruction of texts play a significant role in Postmodernism. Further, Tracy epitomises this significance of language when he states that the Postmodern subject must pass through the radical plurality of our differential languages and the ambiguities of all our histories.<sup>151</sup>

In this milieu of Postmodernism with its emphasis on interpretation, the one certainty is the certainty of the need to interpret. Tracy contends we need to 'interpret in order to understand at all' and 'whether we know it or not to be human is to be a skilled interpreter'.<sup>152</sup> So the 'Philosophy of Languages', the domain of hermeneutics and the notion that we 'interpret in order to understand' become our interpretative tools for the self in the plethora of Postmodernism. Yet this broad category of 'Philosophies of Languages' rooted in postmodernism, still has to encounter the issue of the 'self and the other'. Levinas contends that the other constitutes the self. Ricoeur objects to this position.<sup>153</sup> Firstly it secretly depends upon a notion of two subjects whose selves are presupposed to be independent before they face each other. The other can also only face us as judge; it is a metaphor of separation rather than relationship. Ricoeur contrasts the notion of the self as constituted by otherness with the Cartesian ego, the

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<sup>149</sup> Carrithers et al, *The Person*, 299.

<sup>150</sup> Taylor, *Critical Terms*, 230

<sup>151</sup> Tracy, *Hermeneutics*, 82.

<sup>152</sup> Tracy, *Hermeneutics*, 9.

<sup>153</sup> James R. Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity: Community Wisdom and Theological Reflection* (United States of America, Minneapolis, Augsburg Press, 1999) 106.

exemplary philosophy of the independent individual which underlies so much modernity. In Cartesian thought, a free-floating subject with the capacity to always doubt and think - does not depend upon any spatiotemporal location. The supreme 'I' is stripped from its narrative identity, it has no story and no history, it is split off from human agents. This notion of the free-floating 'I' fails as does the 'I' as constituted by the other. For both are removed from a concrete totality. Both tendencies destroy a realistic engaged notion of a human being.<sup>154</sup>

The broader psychological and social psychological questions need to be explored against a historical-philosophical understanding of the self. This exploration will transpire in the South African context. Our history is indeed relevant to this task. Our collective past continues to have fundamental influence on the understanding of the 'self' today. Thus our history, our culture, our colonial past, our apartheid past – all feed into the notion of the 'self'. Colonialism and apartheid are thus significant backdrops in any analysis of the self in South Africa. What follows is a brief selective synopsis of colonialism, apartheid and its affects on culture. This serves as a type of indicator of the way in which the historical-philosophical nature of the self will be explored in a real, historic context.

### ***Colonialism and Apartheid***

Mbeki captures some of the far-reaching consequences of colonialism and offers a succinct overview.<sup>155</sup> Mbeki contends that for centuries the Western world has treated Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, as a source of cheap labour and raw materials. This has meant the export of wealth from Africa rather than its expansion within the Continent. Where there has been an infusion of wealth - in the form of investment - this was to generate larger volumes of wealth for export. The period of slavery constituted a massive export of cheap labour itself for use as a virtually cost-free factor of production. For Africa, this represented a large loss of human capital and therefore the severe undermining of the capacity of African communities to generate wealth.

Mbeki further argues:

In a very real sense, the enrichment of the West was predicated on the impoverishment of Africa. Colonialism sought to achieve the same objective by:

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<sup>154</sup> Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity*, 107.

<sup>155</sup> Thabo Mbeki, Address at the Third African Renaissance Festival (Durban; 31 March 2001).

- obtaining mineral and agricultural raw materials at as low a cost as possible;
- using cheap local labour to produce these commodities; and,
- preserving the African markets as exclusively as possible for products from the colonising country.<sup>156</sup>

Moreover, Mbeki contends that many African countries now suffer from food deficits and have become net food importers. The post-colonial period has not changed this situation fundamentally. In fact, diversion of resources away from wealth creation accelerates in the post-colonial period as more resources are needed to finance the new state machinery and to meet the pressing social needs of the people.

Employment in the public sector serves as an incentive for people to move away especially from agricultural activities, seeking public sector, urban service jobs. The net effect of all this has been the entrenchment of a downward vicious circle, confirming Africa's peripheral and diminishing role in the world economy.

Mbeki then refers to a necessary evolutionary movement:

- from slavery to colonial subjugation;
- from colonial subjugation to neo-colonial dependence;
- from neo-colonial dependence to genuine independence and democracy.<sup>157</sup>

### ***Colonialism, Conquest and Evangelism***

Indeed, colonialism and neo-colonialism are fundamental to understanding the African story. When speaking of the South African context, it will by its very nature at times include the broader African context. It is in this broader milieu in which we do theology. Yet the document *The Road to Damascus*, first published in 1989, speaks of a greater solidarity that we share with Third World Christians – El Salvador, Guatemala, Korea, Namibia, Nicaragua and the Philippines.

The document highlights colonialism as a key issue. All the countries, bar Korea who was colonised by Japan, were colonised by European lands that prided themselves on being Christian. Conquest and evangelism, colonisation and the building of churches

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<sup>156</sup> Mbeki, Third African Renaissance Festival

<sup>157</sup> Mbeki, Third African Renaissance Festival

advanced together. The document speaks candidly about the consequences of colonialism:

As a result of "discovery and conquest", millions of people have been killed; indigenous populations have been eliminated; entire civilisations and cultures have been destroyed. Millions have been enslaved, uprooted from their native land, deculturised and deprived of their wealth and resources. Women and children have been victims of additional and distinct oppression. Natural resources have been exploited and abused to such an extent that they cannot be replenished.<sup>158</sup>

### ***Colonialism: a Minority Rule***

Colonialism affected countries at every level; Mamdani argues that the reorganising of the colonial state in Africa was in response to a central issue: the "native question". "Direct" and "indirect" were two broad answers to how a minority could rule over a majority. Direct rule was Europe's initial response to the problem of administrating colonies; there would be a single legal order, defined by the "civilised" laws of Europe. No "native" institutions would be recognised, and those civilised would have access to European rights. Citizenship was a privilege of the civilised; in Cecil Rhode's famous phrase, "Equal rights for all civilised men".<sup>159</sup> Further, Mamdani argues that in the context of settler capitalism, direct rule involved the appropriation of land, the destruction of communal autonomy and the defeat and dispersal of tribal populations. So the vast majority of "natives", the supposed "uncivilised", were excluded from the rights of citizenship.

Direct rule was essentially centralised despotism. Indirect rule (emerged through the experience of Natal in the second half of the nineteenth century), in contrast became a mode of domination over a "free" peasantry. Land remained a communal "customary" possession. Tribal leadership was either selectively reconstituted as the hierarchy of the local state or freshly imposed where none existed. Alongside received law was imposed

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<sup>158</sup> Third World Christians from El Salvador, Guatemala, Korea, Namibia, Nicaragua, Philippines and South Africa, *The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion* (Britain, London; Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1989) 3-4.

<sup>159</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, "Introduction: Thinking Through Africa's Impasse." In Mamdani, M., *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (South Africa, Cape Town; David Philip, 1996) 16-17.

a customary law that regulated nonmarket relations in land, family and in community affairs. This indirect rule in turn was a mediated, decentralised despotism.<sup>160</sup>

Direct and indirect rule evolved as complementary ways of “native” control. However, this is not the end of the story; these same rural tribal authorities became the very source of ethnic tribalism that led to revolt against the colonial authorities. So as Mamdani argues: “ethnic tribalism thus came to be simultaneously the form of colonial control over natives and the form of revolt against it”.<sup>161</sup> In what Mamdani terms the “South African Exceptionalism” we encounter an interesting anomaly, the centre of gravity for resistance is not located in the countryside as in most African countries. Rather the locus of popular struggle in South Africa was in the townships. The depth of resistance in South Africa was rooted in the urban-based worker and in student resistance, not in peasant revolt in the countryside.<sup>162</sup>

This serves as a reminder to reiterate the effect of the colonial policy; the inter-ethnic divide was part of a larger split between town and country.<sup>163</sup> This very divide was exploited by the apartheid government when in 1986 it revoked influx control. The government hoped that rural migrants would flock to the townships and quell the fires of urban revolt.<sup>164</sup>

### *Colonialism and the Great Trek*

For South Africa, colonial conquest was not confined to Britain. The Dutch settlers were equally to influence our history. Mbeki contends that when England abolished slavery in 1834, nearly two centuries after the arrival of slaves in Cape Town, the descendants of the original settlers rebelled against this decision. Rather than attempting to re-impose slavery by the imposition of arms, these Boers elected to ‘trek’ out of British jurisdiction. Thus began the so-called Great Trek into the interior of the country.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Mamdani, *Late Colonialism*, 17.

<sup>161</sup> Mamdani, *Late Colonialism*, 24.

<sup>162</sup> Mamdani, *Late Colonialism*, 29.

<sup>163</sup> Mamdani, *Late Colonialism*, 24.

<sup>164</sup> Mamdani, *Late Colonialism*, 31.

<sup>165</sup> Thabo Mbeki, *Africa: The Time has Come* (South Africa, Cape Town and Johannesburg; Tafelberg/Mafube, 1998) 11.

The Great Trek meant again the enslavement of Blacks and seizure of their land. Key to Mbeki's argument is that the South African settlers themselves had been part of the expropriated of Europe - they re-established themselves as independent producers by expropriation of people and land.<sup>166</sup>

At the advent of a capitalist economy based on accumulation, the Boers sought to stay with a disrupted natural economy that had become patriarchal in nature and dependent upon settlers for employment. Land seizures had disrupted the natural economy and thus a form of dependency had developed. The new form of capital emerging from Europe along with the emancipation of slaves meant a fundamental threat to the Boer's established way of life.<sup>167</sup>

So Mbeki argues that from Calvinism the Boer extracted the doctrine of predestination and perverted it. For Calvin, the chosen of God, were those who emerged successful within this new emerging capitalism. Such success for Calvin, was without regard to race or ideology. In the Boer patriarchal economy however, this was read as, "the chosen of God are those who are white".<sup>168</sup> Luther, understanding the kingdom as belonging to two realms (perhaps as an attempt to justify the status, quo), declared that "an earthly kingdom cannot exist without inequality of persons. Some must be free, others serfs, some rulers, other subjects".<sup>169</sup>

So essentially Mbeki's argument vis-à-vis Calvinist and Lutheran theologies is that their dovetailing is a potent mixture: Calvinist perversions extracted the notion that the Boer was the chosen one along with a Lutheran justification of feudal social relations. This was a combination that aptly fitted the Boer community eager to maintain the notion of "master of their own house" and locked into a self-serving patriarchal economy.

### ***The Emergence of Apartheid***

Mamdani and Mbeki, honing in on particular issues of our colonial past, elucidate Nolan's comment that:

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<sup>166</sup> Mbeki, *Africa*, 12.

<sup>167</sup> Mbeki, *Africa*, 12.

<sup>168</sup> Mbeki, *Africa*, 13.

<sup>169</sup> Mbeki, *Africa*, 130.

The actual specifics of colonial rule help us understand how structural apartheid was able to emerge; the complete system of racial capitalism.<sup>170</sup>

The document "The Road to Damascus", states tersely:

One of the most serious and lasting legacies of European colonialism is racism. In South Africa it has been institutionalised and legalised in the form of the notorious system of apartheid.<sup>171</sup>

Our South African context needs the backdrop of colonialism: the Dutch settlement, the British settlement and the particular mix of theology brought by settler and missionary alike. Apartheid did not emerge in a vacuum and equally its devastating effects will not simply disappear. This is our context.

### *Colonialism and Culture*

Colonialism exported a brand of individualization of the gospel that had its roots in Western culture. The nuances in African culture were simply not accommodated by missionary endeavours. Starting nearly a hundred years ago, African churches began to break away from the missionary churches. Partly because of white domination in those churches and partly because African Christians were unwilling to exchange African customs for western customs in order to be regarded as true Christians.<sup>172</sup>

Nolan gives us a flavour of these African Independent Churches in that they represent a bewildering complexity of interpretations and practices. Some are very traditional, in the sense that they have kept much of the teaching of the practice of the missionary churches. Others have very much in common with charismatic or Pentecostals. Only a few could be described as preaching a social gospel in the usual sense of the term. What they have in common though, and what makes them different, is that they are totally independent of the missionary churches and thoroughly African.

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<sup>170</sup> Albert Nolan, *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel* (Cape Town, Claremont; David Philip, 1988) 175.

<sup>171</sup> Third World Theologians, *Road to Damascus*, 1988: 4.

<sup>172</sup> Nolan, *God in Africa*, 2-3.

The indigenous African churches met a particular need that was ignored in the intellectualised Christianity of the missionary kind.<sup>173</sup> Desmond Tutu commented in this regard: "The white man's largely cerebral religion was hardly touching the depths of his African soul; he was being redeemed from sins he did not believe he had committed, he was being given answers, and often splendid answers, to questions he had not asked".<sup>174</sup>

Mndende reminds us about African Traditional Religion that has always been a fundamental part of African life. Racism and colonialism were not just about economic deprivation; Blacks had to adjust to white sacred spaces, be it school, the work place and so on. They had to adopt white values of supposed civilisation - they were forced to live like chameleons. Christianity, civilisation, schooling and missionaries were all synonymous. At home, blacks were forced to practice their belief systems under another name – culture.<sup>175</sup> Christians have never defined African Tradition Religion under theology but culture; African Tradition Religion has been regarded as a *praeparatio evangelica*.<sup>176</sup> African Traditional Religion was thus forced to go underground.

In the new democratic South Africa, the black leadership, Mndende argues, see their past suffering predominately in terms of economic deprivation. The full extent of the destruction of colonialism and racism is not acknowledged; Christianity has nearly destroyed the identity of Black people.<sup>177</sup> Indeed one cannot underestimate the power of culture and religion to create meaning and significance in life.<sup>178</sup>

Archie Mafeje in his analysis of social class and religion in Langa distinguished three basic correlations. On the top of the pile were those who attended European mission

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<sup>173</sup> Kofi Appriah-Kubi and Sergio Toress (Eds), *African Theology en Route* (United States of America, New York, 1979) 117-118.

<sup>174</sup> Desmond Tutu, "Whither African Theology?" in Fashole-Luke, Gray, Hastings and Tasie (Eds), *Christianity in Independent Africa* (Britain, London; Rex Collins, 1978) 366.

<sup>175</sup> Nokuzola Mndende "From Underground Praxis to Recognised Religion: Challenges facing African Religions in the *Journal for the Study of Religion* (Volume 11, Number 2, September 1998) 115.

<sup>176</sup> Mndende, *African Religions*, 118.

<sup>177</sup> Mndende, *African Religion*, 120.

<sup>178</sup> Abdulkader Tayob "Managing Cultural Diversity in a Democratic South Africa: Is there a Surplus Value to the National Project?" in the *Journal for the Study of Religion* (Volume 11, Number 2, September 1998) 104.

churches, then the African Independent Churches and at the bottom of the pile, African indigenous religion. Mafeje asks whether being “urbanised” or achieving “the social status of the civilised” necessarily entails assimilation into the “white middle class cosmic view” associated with European Christianity?<sup>179</sup>

Here we are faced with the issues of urbanisation. Dawes & Honwana contend that African culture is not just the culture of so-called ‘traditional’ rural people. Contemporary African societies have a hybrid cultural character, displaying the influence of both the East and the West. While containing a substantial modern sector, they are predominately pre-industrial. The features commonly live together in the same communities, even in the same individual.<sup>180</sup> African Traditional Religion cannot be divorced from the process of urbanisation and the resultant classism.

There are many issues here that impact on doing theology in South Africa. The Christian colonial past, the flagrant disregarding of traditional African religion, the way in which colonialism and apartheid robbed people of their culture and dignity as well as the resulting economic deprivation. The way in which we do theology now is situated in a dynamic of a “tragic and hope-filled past”. Any topic of consideration needs to be situated in this dynamic.

The rich interaction of the ‘self’ rooted in theology, history, philosophy, contemporary society, social psychology and psychology forms a vital part of our social analysis sector of the pastoral circle. Clearly, this particular social analysis of the self, in the spirit of the hermeneutical circle, will have a particular bent towards understanding the notion of the self as it pertains to the poor.

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<sup>179</sup> David Chidester “Mapping the Sacred in the Mother City: Religion and Urban Space in Cape Town in the *Journal for the Study of Religion* (Volume 13, Numbers 1&2, 2000) 21.

<sup>180</sup> Andy Dawes & Alcinda Honwana, “Children, Culture and mental health: Interventions in Conditions of war” in *Children, War and Persecution – Rebuilding Hope: (Proceedings of the Congress in Maputo Mocambique, 1-4 December 1996. A special edition of the Journal Rebuilding Hope)* 74.

## **Theological Reflection**

This interaction between the self and society then needs to be broadened into the theological arena. Theologians like Bultmann and Tillich address this notion of the theology of the self. The “theology of the self” is equally another discipline that has to be understood before an adequate attempt can be made to reflect. So ultimately theological reflection will incorporate a “theological understanding of the self” interacting with the “historical-philosophical understanding of the self” and the “socio-historical realities of the context in South Africa”.

Also theological reflection will encompass Liberation, Black and Feminist theologies which encompass a theological search for personal wholeness. Such indigenous theologies focus on the well being of individuals faced by oppression, racism and sexism. Relevant pastoral planning will emerge from the interaction among classical theology, indigenous theology and the many issues raised in the social analysis.

## **Conclusion**

A subject like our suggested one, *Becoming a person in South Africa: The Theology of the Self* could be extremely broad, psychologically and philosophically obscure and theologically erudite. The discipline of the pastoral circle methodology facilitates a planned approach within in this extremely broad topic. Further, the added circles around the stages of “insertion”, “social analysis”, “theological reflection” and “pastoral planning”, I believe could enable each process to be enriched. As each additional circle reminds one about the commitment to the poor and marginalized, it thus becomes engrained in the method. Also the additional circles enable a thorough exploration of context. For while some issues may not be relevant for a detailed consideration as part of “social analysis”, their inclusion in the “broader landscape” at the point of “insertion” could add a richness to the process. Also the additional circles enable a more thorough examination at each point of insertion on the circle. This enhances the actual methodology as each point is encircled, strengthened and emphasized. Moreover, the spiral effect of the pastoral circle naturally facilitates fresh insights and a never-ending spiral.

Finally, the pastoral circle enables us to move with ease from classical theology to contextual theologies within “theological reflection”. Moreover, it enables one's thinking

to be grounded and rooted in practical ways forward. Pastoral planning thus takes the many ideas of “social analysis” and “theological reflection” and channels them into pastoral planning.

Such a methodology has all the ingredients for the type of analysis that I find fundamentally appealing. It is imbued with a clear option for the poor, it enables an examination of context, it facilitates social and theological analysis and ultimately it seeks to be practical and change lives.

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