Themelios

THE GOSPEL COALITION

Contents

Editorial: Who is My Neighbour?

There is no country untouched by the problems discussed in this issue of *Themelios*. We may not live in the countries highlighted in the following articles, but all societies face the question of different cultural groups living among them. Often we do not see those of different groups because we are trained by habit or custom to ignore their presence. Informal segregation in housing also removes them from our neighbourhoods. These other cultural groups may be part of our country or they may be 'guest workers' who do unpleasant but necessary jobs in society. Most countries have some type of influx control laws to preserve jobs for their own nationals. However, economic conditions have caused millions of people to seek employment in countries other than their own. On the high end of the scale, professional people such as medical doctors, scientists and engineers are welcomed as valuable immigrants. On the lower end of the economic ladder, unskilled labourers do the work considered demeaning to the inhabitants of their host country. Furthermore, political conditions have made refugees of millions of people.

What attitudes do we have to those outside our cultural group? How do we regard the laws that regulate their lives if they are not citizens of our country? Are we interested in their spiritual welfare? Would they be welcome in our Christian fellowship? Are they people for whom Christ died, but with whom we would not associate?

As Christians, we like to think that our attitudes are formed by our relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet in the area of interaction with those of other cultures we are often controlled by our own cultural background. We may be outraged at the treatment given blacks in South Africa (and rightly so), but be defensive of the policies of our own government toward minorities or foreigners in our country. After all, we reason, the situation here is different. But if you carefully read and consider the arguments in this issue, you will find that the same racial prejudice, the same fears of unrestrained mixing of cultural groups, the same danger of loss of identity of a cultural group is present in all societies.

It is easy to claim that one is not prejudiced toward those from other ethnic or cultural backgrounds. However, the key test is in the encounter with the ethnic or cultural group that most threatens your own. The attitude we display toward this group shows our real position. Please note that this does not need to be a 'racial' barrier, for often the greatest hostility is seen between peoples of the same racial classification (however the term is

defined). One needs only to think of the civil wars currently raging to confirm this observation. Another form of hostility is the use of jokes to put down another cultural group. Our humour directed against other nationalities betrays our attitudes.

The formation of a cultural or ethnic group's attitude toward those outside that group can be the product of many factors. Some have an historical basis in the injustice done by one group to another group. Others have a more current reference in the present system of discriminatory treatment they have received. There is even a future aspect in the fear of what could happen between the cultural groups. This can be a fear of being dominated by another group, or of being culturally overpowered by another group, or even simply that the quality of life would be changed if significant mixing were allowed. It is possible that factors from the past, present and future can all coalesce to produce the group's attitude. Make no mistake, these factors are reason enough for animosity. This is the stuff wars are fought over.

In any Christian approach to the subject the attitudes of the groups must be seriously considered. Just as the gospel deals with real guilt over sin and real alienation from God, it must also deal with real fear and hatred in the area of both personal and group identity. Unless we admit our need for God's justification, we cannot receive forgiveness of our sins. In the same way, we need to face the attitudes we hold toward other cultural groups before we can receive the power from God to overcome our sinful attitude.

Two things are equally incorrect. The first is to deny that we have a problem relating to other cultures, and the second is to admit the problem, but to deny that God's Word has anything to say in the matter. In terms of the denial that a problem exists, the test referred to above dispels that notion. We all have the problem in one form or another. We may be part of an oppressed or disadvantaged group. We may be oppressors. Even more likely in human events is that we are simultaneously oppressed by one group and the oppressors of another group. There may not even be an oppressor-oppressed relationship, but the mere fact of cultural differences between groups can be enough to cause problems in relationships.

Having recognized the problem, how do we deal with it? Some interpreters of the Bible have fastened on to the isolation required of Israel as a justification for racial, ethnic or cultural exclusiveness. However, they have not read their Bibles correctly. For while full admission to all the religious practices of Israel, in particular the right to partake of the Passover (Ex. 12:48) and to enter the sanctuary of the temple (Ezk. 44:9; *cf.* Acts 21:28, 29) was limited to those who were circumcised, attendance at all religious festivals was open to outsiders (Dt. 16:11, 14) There was one law for native and stranger (Ex. 12:49; Lv. 24:22). But there is more than toleration and equal rights. The commandment is for the Israelites to show their love for the alien (Lv. 19:34). As God shows us his love for the stranger by giving him food and clothing, so must the Israelites show their love (Dt. 10:18, 19). The positive acceptance of the alien is a lesson all God's people must take to heart. It is based on God's love and justice. Therefore, the Old Testament provides no support for racial or cultural discrimination within a country.[1]

Jesus' own example shows us that ethnic and cultural differences between countries

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[1] 'For further material see the article 'Foreigner' in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary,* vol. 1 (Leicester: IVP, 1980), p. 520.

should not be a barrier. Jesus travelled through Samaria, stayed in their villages, taught them. No groups could have had greater enmity than the Jews and the Samaritans, yet it was a Samaritan whom Jesus used as an example of what it meant to be a neighbour (Lk. 10:25–37). One can almost hear the crowd murmur, 'Is there such a thing as a good Samaritan?' The Samaritans were apostate in religion and mixed in racial ancestry. Yet in the teaching of Jesus the Samaritan is the one who shows mercy, not the priest or the Levite.

We, like the lawyer in this passage, seek to justify ourselves. We ask, 'who is our neighbour?', hoping the answer will leave us secure in our cultural isolation. But the Word of God breaks powerfully into the situation and says all of God's creatures are our neighbours.

That they are difficult neighbours is not the point. We are to love them as we love ourselves. To truly love ourselves is to accept our faults and shortcomings, so that we can see ourselves as we truly are. Just as it is false self-love to love an image of ourselves that ignores our faults, so is it false love for our neighbour to ignore the differences between us. These differences, whatever their origin, must be clearly faced. Some will be easily reconciled, some will only be reconciled with great difficulty, some will be irreconcilable. But we must strive for reconciliation of all differences except the true division based on Christ's work. And in that as well, our efforts must be by all means to persuade men and women of their need to be reconciled with us by Christ.

What then do we make of cultural differences? We accept them as products brought about by different circumstances and in part by alienation from God. We look for their transformation by God so that differences will not be abolished but given over to his service. To see the other as the fellow servant or potential fellow servant of God is to see a part of the great assembly pictured before God's throne in Revelation 7:9. We need not forsake our culture to appreciate another, but we need to forsake the concept that ours is the only culture fit to worship the Lord of all the earth.

Editorial notes
Readers may be interested to know of the recently established *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, edited by the Rev. Isaac Simbiri. It is a journal particularly for Africa, but it contains articles of international interest. Thus a recent issue includes an article on polygamy and the African church by Josphat Yego, and another on contextualization (with special reference to the ideas of Daniel Von Allmen) by Don Carson. For further details write to EAJET, Box 49, Machakos, Kenya.

Race, class, caste and the Bible

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Introduction

On the surface a subject like this may appear straightforward. However, there are a number of potential pitfalls. The Bible provides, for example, no clearly defined reference-point from which to start. This means that any attempt to cross-reference is hazardous. Moreover, the terms used in the title will not be found in Bible dictionaries, however sophisticated they may be: neither race, class nor caste are biblical words. The terminology as systematically developed and defined in modern times was unknown in the ancient world, though discrimination on the basis of ethnic identity was evident (*e.g.*

Nu.12:1; Acts 18:2). We are faced, therefore, with a classical case of hermeneutical investigation. Inevitably our approach to the text will have to be deductive: looking for teaching which appears to be related to the themes as these have been developed in recent years.

A case can be made for starting with the reality of race, class and caste, and the debate which has surrounded each, before investigating the biblical material. Unless we have a clear idea of what phenomena we are looking at it is difficult to address relevant questions to the biblical text. This approach does not imply that we can understand a current situation independently of biblical teaching. Contemporary analysis may have to be modified as a result of the unique biblical perspective on human relations in society. The text of Scripture, as revelation from the living God of history, gives us knowledge of the human predicament which no amount of

social analysis could uncover. A hermeneutical approach to this subject is designed to effect a proper engagement between the Bible and what is happening in everyday life. When theologians start only from a theoretical base in the text, like two unidentified ships passing each other in the night they will probably fail to engage with concrete situations.

People have become particularly conscious of race, class and caste only in the last few centuries. In general terms race has become a matter of comparative study only since the expansion of the European peoples across the globe from the 15th century onwards. Contact between peoples of different skin-pigmentation and the aggressive subjugation of indigenous peoples in Latin and North America, Africa and Asia by people with pallid skins has provoked both curiosity and conflict. The belief that one kind of people was intrinsically superior to another became necessary in order to justify European colonial domination of other nations. That is why people from the Third World often assert that racism in the modern age is particularly a white person's problem.[1]

Class, though not a concept invented by Karl Marx, is closely associated with his name. Contemporary sociological study has been deeply influenced by his class analysis of society. Discussion of social stratification tends to divide between those who support the Marxian thesis in general terms and those who do not.[2]

Caste is a phenomenon confined to the peculiar circumstances of the Indian sub-continent. It came into existence as a factor in the culture shaped by Hindu religion. Though caste has been part of Hindu Indian society for millenia it only became a fiercely disputed issue when the British conquered India and the modern missionary movement from the West began with William Carey.[3]

Each of these topics has to do with divisions which exist today among human beings. They function either as a way of justifying or of explaining powerful and stubborn social discriminations. Their importance relates to the steady upsurge in the last 200 years of egalitarian ideals which have permeated society from an intellectual stratum to the masses of the people.

Supposed racial differences, in particular, have been used in some parts of the world (South Africa is the most obvious case) to maintain a rigidly anti-egalitarian society. However, the notion of racial variations is fraught with insuperable problems. Often, for reasons of convenience, highly speculative ideas about different grades of human intelligence and ability have been confused with observable cultural diversity.

Race
1. General remarks
As we have already hinted there is no one biblical word for race, which would denote a separation of human groups into distinctive entities on the basis of different physical features:

the characteristic phrases, in Greek, *to genos tōn anthropōn*, or, in Latin, *humanum genus*, sum up the reality: 'race'

means those descended from one common stock, and the only large-scale application of the term is to humankind as a whole.[4]

It is not easy to produce a definition of race that is not already loaded with prejudice and inherited stereotypes. The content given to words about race is usually weighted with negative words, images and linguistic symbolisms. In ordinary English speech 'black' and 'dark' often contain disapproving connotations: a 'blackguard' is a scoundrel; a 'blackleg' is a swindler or someone who betrays his companions; 'to blacken' is to slander someone's character; the 'dark side of things' is their worst aspect; 'to darken counsel' is to confuse the issue, *etc*. For the sake of increasing awareness of present attitudes and policies the kind of distinctions often made need to be uncovered. In what follows the reader should be aware that so-called distinctives have little, if anything, to do with characteristics inherited through the exchange of genes in interbreeding. Most of them are gross simplifications based on absurd generalizations.

a. Distinctives based on how people appear
Black people are popularly considered to be good athletes and good musicians (often in the field of jazz), but to be less capable than other racial groups at picking up intricate mathematics or languages. Intelligence tests (carried out largely in the USA) are said to establish that the 'average' level of intelligence of black peoples is lower than that of white or mongoloid peoples. The method of testing is, however, highly suspect in that it does not make sufficient allowance for cultural variables: what is being tested reflects the bias of the tester. In any case, even by the dubious standards used, the variations in I.Q. within 'races' is considerably larger than the average variations between races. Something like 70% of the whole human race fall within the same area on the graph. Under-achievement at school may simply reflect the goals of a particular educational system and the expectations of teachers. Any supposed range of intelligence bears no relation to racial distinctives. Its measurement is likely to be culturally conditioned.

b. Distinctives based on how people act
This area covers such things as people's food, dress, family life, beliefs and values, mode of speaking, relationship to time, hospitality, the use of etiquette in personal relationships, *etc*. Clearly, none of these has anything to do with genetic differences. They are all variables which result from a long history of cultural development, and help to give meaning to life and to secure a basic, corporate identity ('roots'). They may become the excuse for racial discrimination and antagonism, but only because some people, on the basis of ignorance, feel threatened by what is different.

c. Distinctives based on what people do
Since the last major war there has been a massive movement of people from one part of the world to another.

Two main causes account for this unprecedented migration: the need of the Western industrialized nations to acquire cheap labour in an expanding economy (paralleled more recently by oil-exporting Arab states), and refugees fleeing from violence and famine. In the first case competition for jobs and an increased use of social services in a period of economic stagnation have produced in some quarters virulent calls for repatriation.

Where political and economic life becomes destabilized, some people look for scapegoats among minority populations. The most obvious examples in European history have been the Jews and the gypsies, not only under Nazism, but down the centuries. Indeed, a plausible case can be made for considering that the Christian church in its prolonged discrimination against Jews and its past attitudes to Muslims ('infidels') has been the originator of racist attitudes.

2. The biblical evidence

When we turn to the Bible we must be careful to guard against importing the alien modern category of race into our study of the text. Other categories, however, come closer to matching the modern patterns, such as ethnic groups, peoples and nations.

Israel, for example, was clearly a separate people. A sense of ethnic distinctiveness grew during the time of bondage in Egypt (e.g. Ex. 1:7-8; Dt. 26:5). The consolidation of a consciousness of peoplehood is associated with the giving of the covenant at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:5-6). Israel, as a nation identified with a territorial state, did not become a reality until the reign of David. As one nation it lasted less than 100 years. The Northern kingdom then survived as a separate entity for another 100 years and the Southern for a further 200.

Israel's identity as a people was linked to the liberating activity of God in the events of the Exodus, to his self-revelation as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex. 2:24; 3:6; 3:15; 4:5) and to his giving of the law. They were a distinct ethnic group before God brought them into the promised land (Dt. 7:6-8). They also survived as a people the loss of their land, the monarchy and the temple.[5] In Romans 9:3-4 Paul lists those things which characterized the Jews as a separate race (sungenos – co-people, in plural form): calling, covenants, the revelation of God's glory, worship, promises and direct descent from the patriarchs. Most of these spring from the grace of God's election; they have nothing to do with inherent human differences.

The rest of the world was divided into peoples and nations. The 'people of the land' ('am hā'āres) in the earliest period were a body of free men, enjoying civic rights in a given territory. The phrase was still used in this general sense at the time of the return from exile (Hg. 2:4; Zc. 7:5; Dn. 9:6). In Ezra and Nehemiah, however, it denotes non-Jewish people, those who are antagonistic to Israel and with whom marriage is forbidden. The Jews, returning from Babylon, were no longer the 'people of the land', enjoying the same political status accorded to Samaritans, Ammonites and Moabites.[6] In the rabbinical period the 'am hā'āres took on a religious significance. They were those who were ignorant of and did not practise the law.

The concept of nation is not defined or well-established in the Bible. In general terms it refers to a group of people with a cohesive system of political and military rule. Authority was centralized in a king (cf. 1 Sa. 8:5, 20; Dt. 17:14) who ruled through carefully-picked subordinates. Kingship in the ancient Near East was sanctioned by an intricate religious system. When Israel patterned its government on that of other nations it was accused by the prophets of going astray by abandoning the terms of the covenant.

The theme of the nations is taken up in the New Testament, particularly in the book of Revelation. The nations (kings, kingdoms) will be judged by God and ruled by Christ (Rev. 1:5; 2:26; 12:5; 13:7). They will also be healed (Rev. 22:2), come and worship (Rev. 7:9; 15:4) and bring into the holy city, Jerusalem, all their treasures (Rev. 21:26). God is the sovereign ruler over all nations (Ps. 67:4), who laughs to scorn all their pretensions to power (Ps. 2:1-12; 59:8). He deals with all impartially and indiscriminately on the basis of both judgment and mercy (Is. 10:5ff.; 29:23-25; Am. 1:3ff.; 9:7). Finally, he gives the nations as a heritage to his anointed Son (Ps. 2:8; Is. 55:5).

Fundamental for the current debate about race is an investigation into the unity and diversity of ethnic groups in the Bible, and the legitimate conclusions that can be drawn from the evidence.

All peoples are united through a common creation, through the universal consequences of the fall and through the promises offered to all through redemption in Christ. These are the most basic facts of a common humanity. They are far more significant than differences based on the colour of one's skin, language, customs or religious and political beliefs.

a. Creation

The opening chapters of Genesis give us an account of the primal history of humankind before any divisions took place. We are to understand that all races find their origin in Adam and Eve. Indeed, Eve is called 'the mother of all living' (Gn. 3:20). Paul echoes this firm conviction in the Areopagus speech: 'God . . . made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth' (Acts 17:26). He is probably referring to the 'Table of the Nations' (Gn. 10:1-32), which accounts for all the inhabitants of the earth as descendants of Shem, Ham and Japeth: 'These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations; and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood' (Gn. 10:32).

All the nations were descended from Noah and spoke the same language (Gn. 11:1). The Noahic covenant (Gn. 9:8ff.) extends to every living creature, including all human beings, without distinction. The basis of the covenant is the divine image in human beings (Gn. 9:6). It is this which gives to human life its unique sanctity: 'of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood

be shed.' We should not be surprised, following the biblical statements about common origin, that all human groups share the same type of blood, are inter-fertile and can receive and donate organs across so-called racial boundaries.

The unity of the whole race was accepted by the ancient world. Paul appeals to a common belief when he quotes from Stoic philosophers (Aratus and Cleanthes): 'we are indeed his offspring' (Acts 17:28). There is no attempt to make distinctions based on the fact of human life.

Conversely in the modern world, wherever there has been a retreat from belief in a God-centred world (theism) together with a general, uncritical acceptance of the evolution of the species through natural selection, the unity of humankind based on belief in a personal creation has been seriously eroded. The main result has been the increasing violation of the integrity of human beings, either for political or medical ends.

b. The fall

As every group is descended from Adam, so everyone has been affected by his one act of disobedience: 'sin came into the world through one man . . . death spread to all men because all men sinned . . . death reigned from Adam . . . by one man's disobedience many were made sinners . . .' (Rom. 5:12ff.); 'by man came death . . . the sting of death is sin' (1 Cor. 15:21, 56).

The reality of evil as a force which pervades and affects the decision-making processes and relationships of all human beings can only be accounted for on the basis of a total human solidarity which is both historical – going back to Adam – and lateral – spreading out to engulf all sons and daughters of Adam living at the same time.

Sin is manifest most clearly in the refusal to love and serve God (Rom. 1:21-25). The consequence is anarchy in interpersonal relationships (Rom. 1:26-31). No-one is exempt: 'all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin' (Rom. 3:9). The effect of sin is subtle; never more so than when human beings believe they are free of its presence in particular instances. Racist attitudes and practices are often the result of a failure to discern how sin has caused a total distortion of our approach to life. Because we have a false view of God, we also have a false view of his creatures. The making of 'graven images' (Ex. 20:4 – today mental pictures rather than literal idols) has produced as its result the manipulation and exploitation of man and woman, the image of God.[7] Racism becomes inconceivable where human beings recognize their guilty failure to love God and their neighbour as themselves, confess it and receive God's forgiving grace.

c. Redemption in Christ

The offer of a way out from the bondage of sin is offered on equal terms to every human being: 'if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world' (1 Jn. 2:2; Jn. 1:29).

God is no respecter of persons. Freedom from the guilt and power of sin (in all its varied manifestations) is by grace alone through faith alone. No-one has any grounds at all to boast of their wisdom, power, righteousness or status. The way of salvation planned and accomplished by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit excludes all boasting and self-righteousness (1 Cor. 1:28-31). In the light of every human being's overwhelming need to receive forgiveness, healing and transformation, belief in special privileges and superiority is totally out of place. God's ultimate intention is to restore every kind of broken fellowship caused by sin. This reconciliation has already been achieved in Christ.

The message of Scripture, then, points to a radical and unequivocal equality of all people in their human nature. Nevertheless, the basic unity of all human beings in no way minimizes the rich diversity of the ways in which they express their humanity. It is by stressing diversity, divorced from commonality, that some Christians (particularly in South Africa) have sought to justify the forced imposition of separate development by racial groups.

It is important to have clearly in view the exact nature of the biblical evidence adduced to support apartheid:

> Contrary to popular misconceptions, the DRC (Dutch Reformed Church) does not build its biblical case for its approach to race relations on such Old Testament episodes as 'the curse of Ham', nor does it transpose the 'people of God' motif from Israel onto the Afrikaner *volk*. But it does make a great deal of the creation narratives and the proto-history of Genesis 1-11. Two dominant themes emerge. The first is that 'the Scriptures teach and uphold the essential unity of mankind and the primordial relatedness and fundamental equality of all peoples . . . The second and subsidiary conviction is that 'ethnic diversity is in its very origin in accordance with the will of God for his dispensation'.[8]

The South African DRC, then, believes that

> in specific circumstances and under specific conditions the New Testament makes provision for the regulation on the basis of separate development of the coexistence of various peoples in one country.[9]

In the final analysis the biblical basis for separate development seems to rest on the flimsy foundation of one particular interpretation of the story of Babel, on certain conclusions drawn from the incidence of the tongues on the day of Pentecost and on one verse in the book of Acts. The arguments are as follows.

At the tower of Babel God structured diversity into the human race by confounding human language and scattering different peoples over the face of the world (Gn. 11:7-8). The implication of the story is that the human race is no longer one people. Moreover,

> not only were languages divided at Babel, but the spirit of one group became different from that of another. As a result they stood against one another with a different and divergent consciousness. It may safely be presumed that the confusion of tongues necessarily presupposed profound psychological changes, and that these varied directly, by reason of the psycho-physical unity of man, with the somatic changes which resulted in different nations and races.[10]

Though the event of Pentecost

made abundantly clear that the people of God is both supra-national and supra-racial and transcends all the distinctions that exist among mankind[11]

it also confirmed the multiformity of human social existence. According to Acts 2:5ff. people, even after the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them, still spoke (or rather heard) in different languages. The mighty works of God were told in Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Egyptian and so on. People were still forced to live in separation. God's revelation still has to be translated into the hundreds of different languages and dialects spoken across the globe. Finally, it is maintained that Paul refers to an appointed separate development when he states that God not only created all to be one but also 'determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation' (Acts 17:26). This verse is taken by some to refer to an alleged creation order, equivalent to the establishment of the family. Separate development is argued, then, on the basis both of creation and the fall into sin. Significantly, the theological rationale is silent about the effects of redemption on the possibility and desirability of a multi-racial society.

This is not the place to enter into a long discussion on the present policy of the South African government and the positive support it receives from the majority of the white DRC. Three brief comments may be made.

Firstly, the texts quoted do not substantiate the conclusions drawn from them. Acts 17:26 (which probably reflects Dt. 32:8) says no more than that 'the distribution of mankind over all the habitable world must be seen in the light of God's providential acting in history'.[12] The text says nothing about different racial groups, nor about an immutable separation of people according to cultural variants. A literalistic interpretation should drive one to the conclusion that there was no place for white people in South Africa, for their allotted boundary would be Europe. Linguistic variations have nothing to do either with race or with the separation of groups into autonomous political entities.

Secondly, the real reason for the policy of separate development, imposed unilaterally by force on one people by another (stronger in military terms), is not to be found in any authentic exegesis of the Scriptures at all. It is due entirely to the desire for self-preservation. The rationale given is that 'the love commandment gives a primacy to man's love for himself over his love for his neighbour'[13], but that even the latter demands a civil and cultural guardianship. This argument is a not very subtle smoke-screen designed to bolster the survival of a people (*volk*) at all costs. Separate development could, then, be said to be more the result of tribalism than racism.

Apartheid in South Africa might take on a new complexion (a little more consistent, a little less ideological), if the Afrikaner people established their own homeland, proportionate in size to their percentage of the total population of the country. Tribalism can only be defended by resorting to a tribal god. The DRC, unfortunately, has supplied the material to try to make this god respectable. The rest of the world church is wholly unimpressed. It was, therefore, principally on theological, rather than political, grounds that the DRC's membership of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches was suspended in 1982, and apartheid declared a heresy.

Thirdly, the issue ultimately is that of submitting to the authority of the Scriptures, whatever the consequences. Those who disagree with the position of the DRC make the point that the concept of separate development has been read into Scripture rather than out of it. The consequence has been that 'the relative idea of differentiation between peoples, to which Scripture points . . . has become an *imperative* for division between peoples'[14]:

At all costs, the concept of separate development must not be surrendered – which means that its theological basis must be affirmed – for the future of the Afrikaner people is regarded as tied up with the success or failure of this policy.[15]

The ultimate authority of God's revelation is thus set aside in order to be able to accept another ('higher') principle which cannot be challenged. Jesus' words to the religious leaders of his day apply exactly: 'thus by your own tradition, handed down among you, you make God's word null and void' (Mk. 7:13, NEB).

Before moving on to look at the issue of class we need to mention briefly the suggestion made by some theologians that the Bible itself contains the seeds of racism in some of its attitudes and assertions. John Baker, for example, writes: 'recent scholarship has opened our eyes to the way in which anti-Judaism, and anti-Jewish propaganda, have infected so much of the New Testament.'[16]

The evidence he gives for this very sweeping generalization is that the term 'the Jews' is always used pejoratively in John's Gospel; that the passion narratives of the gospels of Matthew and John try to lay the blame for Jesus' death on the Jews, both leaders and people; that the book of Acts presents the vast majority of the Jews as 'utterly bigoted and unscrupulous in their hostility to and persecution of Christians', and that the promises of God are taken away from the Jews and re-applied to the Christian people (Romans 9-11 being a partial exception).

General accusations merit general refutations. However, with regard to the above statements one wonders how many exceptions have to be found for the generalization to collapse. The term 'the Jews' is not always used in a disparaging sense in John's gospel (*cf.* Jn. 4:22; 11:45). More importantly the phrase is used in a technical, not a literal, sense for those among the nation who could not admit that the Messiah was in their midst. It contrasts, then, with 'the people' (Jn. 7:31) and 'the crowd' (Jn. 12:17) who were, of course, also ethnically Jews. The real contrast both in John's Gospel and in the thought of Paul is between the Jew and the Israelite (Jn. 1:47, 49; Rom. 2:25ff.), the one who does not believe and the one who does (*cf.* Jn. 1:11-13). The term is no more implicitly racist than asserting that someone of another religious persuasion is not a Christian. That a misinterpretation of the phrase was used in a racist sense in subsequent centuries is hardly John's fault.

New Testament writers in presenting some Jewish people as hostile to Jesus Christ and his followers are

following the same pattern as the Old Testament prophets who declared God's judgment on his people's unbelief. They are arguing that rejection of the message of salvation through Christ crucified and risen is due to a failure to understand the implications of the law and the prophets. Submission to Christ is not the abandonment of the Jewish heritage, but its fulfilment. That is hardly a pronouncement of anti-Jewish sentiment. John Baker's statement, evidently shared by others, distorts the real situation through over-reaction. Anti-Semitism in the church of later centuries arose in the face of the implicitly anti-racist implications of the proclamation of the new age in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:28; 6:15; Eph. 2:11ff.; Phil. 3:3ff.; Col. 3:10-15).

Class
1. General remarks
The popular notion of class is not always precise. For this reason, perhaps, it is frequently used with emotional feeling: sometimes as a severe criticism – 'you reflect your class interests', 'the trouble with the church is its middle-class values' – sometimes in a romantic way to idealize, for example, the solidarity of working-class people torn apart by the impact of a mobile and self-centred society.

One does not have to accept Karl Marx's interpretation of class to admit that his opinions have been decisive in shaping all future thought. Though he did not invent the term, for the classical economists of the 18th century spoke of three classes – landowners, the owners of capital, and the workers (owners of labour) – he imprinted his own distinctive ideas on the debate. Everyone now has to respond. Peter Worsley writes: 'it has been said that all modern sociology is a debate with the ghost of Marx'.[17]

Marx and his life-long friend and colleague, Engels, argue that different classes have arisen in history as a result of their different relationships to the means of production (land, natural resources, capital and labour power). These relationships (ever since the first communities which had no division of labour) have always been in conflict. There exists, then, a fundamental conflict of interests between different sectors of society according to who creates and who is the main beneficiary of wealth. Engels, in the *Preface to the 1883 (German) Edition of the Communist Manifesto*, says 'all history has been a history of . . . struggles between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social development'.

Exploitation (or expropriation) is the name given to the process by which the owners of the 'fallow' means of production (land, natural resources and capital) make profits out of the 'active' means of production (the labour-power of the worker). The latter, who turn potential wealth into real wealth, are only paid back part of the wealth they create; the 'wealth-owners' pocket the rest. This is seen by Marxists (and non-Marxist socialists) as robbery, for the fruit of the worker is taken away and given to another. In a non-socialist system of economic life the worker is not able to own and control what he produces. He is given a wage in exchange for the energy expended in the manufacturing process.

Societies are not destined, however, to continue for ever as the arena where hostile forces are bound to clash. When 'working class' people realize the true nature of their exploitation and organize themselves to take control of economic power, placing the means of production under the common ownership of the whole populace, class antagonism will be at an end. By definition there will only be one class and therefore no classes!

The Marxist view, then, states that class divisions are not inherent to society, but the natural outcome of particular economic systems. They are not, therefore, inevitable, and certainly not desirable. The Marxist view of society is utopian in its belief that an alternative way of organizing human life can and must be implemented. It owes much to the radical egalitarianism, based on the assumption of natural law that all people are by birth equal in rank, which arose at the end of the 18th century. What is a fact of nature must be converted into a fact of society. Achieving equality is thwarted primarily by the unequal (and, therefore, unjust) distribution of the ownership of wealth.

This uncompromising Marxist view of class has not gone unchallenged. A different explanation of class (or social stratification as they prefer to call it) is given by sociologists who adopt a 'functionalist' approach to reality. Their views are contained in the following assumptions about present societies:

a. Order and stability are the most important factors for the functioning of any human community. Ideas of struggle, conflict and antagonism, therefore, threaten civil harmony and the continuance of proven structures.

b. People are not equal by nature. Considerable differences both in a person's ability and ambitions are facts of life.

c. Classes in the Marxist sense have largely disappeared. Modern society is more complex than that described by Marx 100 years ago: *e.g.* joint-stock companies, which have arisen largely since Marx's death, have separated ownership from management of industry; the rise of professional groups through job specialization has produced a society with a continually graded hierarchy. Stratification, therefore, is open and mobile. Classes, by implication, are not immutable factors in a capitalist economic system.

d. Stratification is generally accepted by all groups as necessary to enable society to function in the most efficient way possible. Ranking in society is based on a set of values commonly held concerning the nature of success and efficiency. Allotting rewards and privileges is the only effective means of discovering and encouraging the best talents for the most important jobs.

e. A permanently unequal distribution of rewards is unimportant, if the lower strata of society continually achieve a higher living standard in real terms.

2. The biblical evidence
The complexity of the issues which surround the current debate about class mean that it would be unhelpful to attempt in the limited space available here a general survey of the biblical material followed by broad conclusions.

Bearing in mind my opening remarks about the danger of a question-begging approach to Scripture which arbitrarily and selectively quotes certain texts and excludes others, I would suggest that the following elements present in Scripture (grouped under the same three headings) are relevant to the subject.

a. Creation

The declaration that together man and woman are created in the image of God (Gn. 1:26-27), and its repetition after the fall into sin (Gn. 5:1-2; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Col. 3:10; Jas. 3:9; cf. also Mt. 19:4; Mk. 10:6), has been the most powerful charter in human history for considering all people equal in worth, dignity and the respect due to them.

There is no religious sanction in the Bible for any notion that some people have been created 'more equal' than others. This is a surprising fact given the strong presence of such an idea within contemporary middle-Eastern religious systems. In many of them only the king was considered to possess, in a special sense, the divine nature. The Bible consistently demythologizes the aura surrounding kingship and all political power (cf. Dt. 17:14-20; 1 Sa. 8:5-22; 10:17-19; Ps. 8:4-8; 82:6-7; Lk. 13:32; 20:25; 23:8-9; Jn. 19:9-11).

God's repeated concern to rebuke and limit the arrogance of human power and authority (cf. Ezk. 34:3-4; Zc. 2:8-3:7; Is. 47:8) and to lift up the weak and defenceless (Is. 11:4; Ps. 72:2-4; 12:14; Is. 3:14-15) has implications for economic equality among all. Social status was unjustly used as a lever for economic gain (cf. 1 Sa. 8:11-17; Ezk. 46:18; Je. 6:13; 8:10; 17:11; 22:13-14; Hab. 2:6ff.), whilst the intention of economic life within Israel was to distribute fairly the bounty of God's creation to all. Thus, no-one would become another's bond-servant through the power to hire (wage-labour) and fire, but all would have independent resources guaranteed to them in perpetuity (Dt. 24:14-15; Lv. 25:25, 28, 39-41; Jb. 7:1-2; 14:6; Mal. 3:5).

b. The fall

The universal sinfulness of humanity is often used as a reason for accepting the inevitability and even suitability of a society permanently organized to promote inequality. The argument assumes that people will only strive to create wealth, which is necessary if all are to enjoy a dignified life, when they see that it is in their individual or group interests to do so. To harness human beings' natural selfishness, therefore, society must devise a pattern of rewards even when these produce unequal benefits received from the system. The same argument goes on to dismiss any other ordering of society as idealistic, because predicated on a false, romantic optimism concerning human nature.

This line of reasoning proceeds deductively from the general to the particular, and becomes a major contributing factor to the defence of the private enjoyment of accumulated wealth. As such, it is frequently and vigorously employed by certain conservative Christian groups within the affluent nations. The logic may be sound, but the argument is spurious for it contradicts the actual evidence of the biblical text.

The Old and New Testaments proceed in the opposite direction. They depict in detail the many consequences of sin. From these they move to a more general view of sin as idolatry, rebellion or breaking the law of the covenant. This method accords with an outlook on life which concentrates on the concrete and specific and avoids abstract generalizations.

Thus, in terms of economic life, the Bible does not speculate about what kind of incentives may be necessary to guarantee a wealth-producing society. Rather, it starts from what is actually happening and interprets it as a particular manifestation of sin. In this way poverty is said to be the result of three possible factors: either misfortune, a refusal to work or oppression and injustice. Of these three the latter is overwhelmingly mentioned as the most common (among hundreds of texts cf. Ho. 5:10; 12:7-8; Am. 2:6-7; 8:4-6; Mi. 2:8-9).[18] The response that God requires to each of the three factors is: firstly, compassionate care, resulting in a sharing of resources; secondly, a change of lifestyle followed by a sharing of effort; and thirdly, the establishment of justice, leading to a sharing of power and responsibilities.

The Bible supports the view that conflict is endemic within the economic and social life of people, and that it is this that causes inequality. Nowhere does it endorse the view that structured inequality is necessary to harness human beings' selfish impulses in a fallen world.[19]

c. Redemption in Christ

In the last twenty years much has been done by theologians, biblical scholars and ordinary Christian people to *recover* the corporate and social nature of salvation in Christ, alongside its personal aspects. What one author has called 'a lost bequest'[20] unaccountably disappeared from the agenda of most churches for over 100 years. This is a sad reflection on the fact that Christians tend to endorse uncritically a way of life which suits their interests – in this case the freedom of the individual to choose his or her own future, and thus to choose simultaneously Jesus, free-enterprise evangelism, a culturally congenial Christian fellowship and economic and social betterment. The late 18th and early 19th centuries' heirs of the Reformation and Great Awakening preached a robust gospel in which Christ's redemption was understood to cover patterns of social life in which human relationships were structured by collective forces.

This assumption was built on a correct grasp of the purposes of the biblically revealed God. Redemption is placed within the context of human beings' total environment – creation, society, culture and personal relationships. God calls his people to anticipate, as far as possible, the final consummation in the present moment. The promise is the final coming into being of God's rule (kingdom) of justice and shalom (cf. Is. 60:21; 65:17ff.; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1, 27); the means of achieving it are

found both in forgiveness and new life available through the blood of the new covenant and in obedience to its demands.

The terms of the covenant (Ex. 24:3-8) were an indication of a society liberated from oppressive and exploitative patterns of life (Ex. 20:22-23:19). The prophets God sent in his name called the people to observe them and warned of the serious consequences of their violation. They find their eventual fulfilment and realization in Christ's work of reconciliation and the restoration of all things (2 Cor. 5:19-21; Eph. 1:10, 2:16; Col. 1:16, 20).

If the functionalist interpretation of inequality is strongly *ideological* – *i.e.* the legitimation and defence of society which promotes particular self-interests – the Marxist conviction that class antagonism will be ended by a drastic change in property relationships is *illusory*. Both clash with the biblical view of sinful human reality and God's liberating activity accomplished in Christ.

The present fundamental flaw in the human model requires a new design. The real human problem, highlighted by a class-analysis of society, is the relation between power and freedom.[21] Human beings as they are – not touched by Christ's redemptive power – seek to extend and guard their freedom by gaining power for themselves and using it to curb the challenge of those wishing to share their freedom. This power, however, corrupts (because of fear and self-assertion). Those who wield it can only maintain their supposed freedom by propagating lies and restricting by force threats to their security.

From a biblical perspective true freedom can only be enjoyed by those who renounce all counterfeit versions (*i.e.* the idea that freedom is the absence of restriction on belief, choice and activity either by divine or human agencies), cast themselves upon the forgiving, merciful grace of God and avail themselves of the fruit of Christ's sacrifice for sin. Such a view always has and will continue to have powerful, revolutionary implications for the way society should operate.

Caste
1. General remarks
The origins of the caste system in India are lost in the mists of time. It seems likely, however, that it began as a result of the conquest of other peoples by the Aryan invaders during the first millennium BC. As far as can be known, there was no caste system among either the Dravidian people (the largest pre-Aryan racial group) or the tribal peoples. The Aryans probably did not practise caste separation amongst themselves either.

These presumptions have led some to detect a racist background to the development of caste. A. Beteille writes:

> Traditionally, fair skin-colour has been associated with the 'Aryans' from whom the Brahmins claim descent . . . Fair skin-colour and features of a certain type have a high social value . . . in the whole of India.[22]

This view is given further substance by a quotation from the Mahabharata, an epic of the middle of the first millennium BC, in which the four main castes are said to have different coloured skins.[23] Such a belief clearly exaggerates, as shades of skin-colour are not easily separable into well-defined groups. However, the racial element is powerfully present in traditional customs regulating marriage. The strict requirement that marriage only take place within the same caste suggests an attempt to preserve racial purity. This is bound up with the belief that one's birth into a particular caste is regulated by *karma*:

> The idea of desserts is associated with birth in a particular caste. A man is born in a high caste because of the good actions performed by him in his previous life and another is born into a low caste because of bad actions.[24]

Almost every commentator on the caste system agrees that it is inextricably bound up with certain notions found only in Hindu systems of belief. For example,

> A man who accepts the caste system and the rules of his particular sub-caste is living according to *dharma*, while a man who questions them is violating *dharma* . . . If he observes the rules of *dharma*, he will be born in his next incarnation in a high caste, rich, whole and well endowed. If he does not observe them he will be born in a low caste . . .[25]

Dharma is a strict code of practice which applies traditional cultural norms.

The most easily recognizable feature of the caste system is the emphasis on purity and pollution:

> Contact of any kind, touching, dining, sex and other relations between castes . . . results in the higher of the two castes being polluted . . . The polluted member of the higher caste has to undergo a purificatory rite in order to be restored to normal ritual status.[26]

Theoretically the distinctions and discriminations based on caste are due more to ritual than to social status. Caste differentiation, then, cannot be neatly linked to differences in wealth or power.[27] In practice, however, this rigidly unegalitarian system has been used to foster and maintain relations of exploitation.[28] This is particularly true for the fifth caste peoples variously called 'outcasts', 'untouchables', 'Harijans' (children of God, the name Gandhi gave them), 'Panchamars' and 'Dalits' (broken or oppressed people, the name they give themselves).

The Dalits feel very strongly that the caste system operates continually against their struggle to improve their opportunities in society. They also believe that the main sanction for persistent inequality is the Hindu religion.[29] Dr Ambedkar who assumed leadership of the depressed classes in the 1920s believed that the caste system could only be ended when Hinduism itself was massively rejected by the people.

There are, however, other forces at work undermining the caste system. The impact of Christian faith has been well documented by Duncan Forrester.[30] Egalitarian ideas were particularly strong amongst the early 'dissenter' (or non-conformist) missionaries from England, who resented the discriminatory apparatus of class in their own homeland, and among American missionaries influenced by the ideas of the universal

rights of mankind. Criticism of the caste system has also occurred among reforming Hindus (such as Keshub Chandra Sen, Vivekananda and Gandhi). The latter two, however, along with Radhakrishna, never questioned the fundamental bulwarks of caste, namely the hereditary principle, endogamy (marriage within the caste) and rules governing social intercourse. At the most, they were critical of the present shape of caste (in particular, untouchability – Gandhi), but not the occupational divisions of society based on birth. Radhakrishna in his book, *Hindu View of Life* (1927), justifies the existing social order on the basis that caste occupation eliminates competition and therefore reduces conflict. Later, however, in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, he comes to the conclusion that caste no longer fits modern society.[31]

It was those Indians who broke with Hinduism by fully accepting secularist (and sometimes Marxist) views who most vehemently attacked the whole edifice of caste. One such was E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker[32] who believed that the traditional caste system, dominated by Brahmins, was the root cause of exploitation, inhumanity and slavery. He campaigned fiercely for the rights of women, in particular for an end to the culturally enforced widowhood.

It is, perhaps, the arrival of a society adapted to technological advance which will ultimately have the biggest impact on caste practice. Physical separation is more difficult to achieve in an urban than in a rural environment. It is interesting to note that pollution through physical contact was first challenged when Hindu women began to go to Christian hospitals for delivery of their babies. Doctors, nurses and orderlies had to touch people of other castes. Divisions based on occupation break down in modern society, because the division of labour is far more widely spread. Strong cultural forces still promote the system of arranged marriages and the accompanying practice of giving dowry. So-called love marriages are the exception, though increased social mobility (not least work overseas) may make it more likely in the future.

2. Biblical evidence
As there seem to be good grounds for suspecting that racism is a major factor in caste separation the same biblical arguments concerning race apply here also. In addition questions of ritual, purity and contamination, and Jesus' intention to create a universal, eschatological people of God seem appropriate.

a. Purity and pollution
At the time of Jesus ritual acts of purity had a deep religious significance. Two groups of people who felt a special vocation to halt the religious indifference of the Jewish nation – the Pharisees and the Essenes – emphasized the symbolic acts by which pollution was avoided. Behind the sharp controversy recorded in Mark 7:1-13 there is a world of religious observances. The Pharisees, however, were not merely trying to show the

superiority of their righteousness over that of other Jews. As Jeremiah states, 'they set out to represent the priestly people of salvation at the end time'.[33] They were consciously seeking to obey the God of their fathers by being a people dedicated to holiness. They liked most to call themselves 'the separated ones'.

The Essenes carried separation to much greater lengths. They surpassed all other groups in maintaining themselves free of all compromise with those they considered law-breakers and unclean: Gentiles, the common people (who by definition were ignorant of the law), diseased people, even those with slight physical blemishes. Monastic communities with strict regulations for entry were the logical conclusion of this particularist view of righteousness.

Jesus, in contrast, went out of his way to cross those barriers and boundaries which separated people on grounds of religious purity. 'The contrast between Jesus and all attempts at forming a 'remnant' group emerges at one quite definite point: *separation* from outsiders.'[34]

The conflict between the religious consciousness of Pharisee and Essene and Jesus' programme of the kingdom has to do with liberation from sin that cuts off from the life of God. Those who cast themselves in the mould of the 'holy remnant' saw religious observances as an end in themselves. They became the guarantee of God's favour and acceptance. This attitude led to a concentration on the details of oral tradition (the halakah), which were intended to avoid the possibility of breaking the great commandments.

The most crucial result of this approach to holiness was the inability to understand grace and receive forgiveness. Simon, the Pharisee, knows about forgiveness. But he does not know what it means for himself. Grace, which comes through Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:17), was the principle that shaped all that Jesus said and did. Declaring all food to be clean (Mk. 7:19; *cf.* Rom. 14:14; Col. 2:20-23) was radical by any standards of contemporary religious practice (and remains so for many religious traditions today). Associating himself with every category of those the holy men considered outcast was proof that he understood God's will in sharp contrast to other teachers of the time.

Jesus' willingness to eat with 'publicans and sinners' (Mk. 2:15-17) was the most categorical statement that traditional religious views of purity and pollution were now finished. Yet this kind of table-fellowship was the essence of the kingdom (Lk. 22:15-16). It signified that religious discrimination was abolished: 'when you give a feast invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind' (Lk. 14:13 with Lk. 14:15, 21-24).[35] Moreover, Jesus' willingness to touch and be touched physically by those generally considered unclean demonstrated further his absolute opposition to conventional norms of religious behaviour (*dharma*?) (*cf.* Lk. 5:12-13; 7:38-39; 8:43-44).

b. The founding of a new community
Caste, as we have seen, finds justification in certain aspects of Hindu belief and practice. It has been part of a

way of life going back at least 2,500 years. One is a Hindu when born into a family which shares this long cultural heritage. One is born, then, into a particular caste, making the accident of birth determine one's religious way of life, status in the community and ritual purity or uncleanness.

The Christian view is entirely different. The conviction that all people have been created equal in dignity and status and that birth gives no ground for claiming either superiority or essential natural differences is confirmed by the kind of community of disciples Jesus formed. Hinduism has no equivalent to the position of the church in Christian belief. The church is that community of people who belong to the new age and are called to practise its values in the midst of the age passing away. Hinduism has no concept of *kairos*, of a decisive moment when God acts in the world to do a new thing (Is. 43:19; 48:6; Mk. 1:15; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 4:4; 6:15). The idea that God is directing history towards a final goal and that the church is an essential part of his total plan of salvation sets apart Hindu and Christian.

The reality and meaning of this new community of the Messiah is in direct conflict with every division between people based on the hazard of birth. The most characteristic activity of Jesus was that he associated with every kind of person, especially the outsiders.[36] His followers, likewise, are expected to open themselves indiscriminately to all people. Jesus turned to those excluded by the 'remnant theology' of the Pharisees and Essenes and expects his followers to do the same.

Paul, using different language, affirms the same reality of the Messianic community when he states that the consequences of being in Christ are the end of distinctions based on ethnic differences, religious or political privilege, gender, education, technological achievement or cultural traditions (Rom. 10:12; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27-28; Col. 3:11; *cf*. Jn. 17:11, 21, 23; Eph. 4:4-6). To go on living as if these distinctions were crucially important denies Christ's work of reconciliation and empties it of all significance (Eph. 2:14-19).

Conclusion

In a biblical perspective the existence of racist attitudes, class antagonism and caste distinctions are the manifestation of fear and insecurity. These result in an aggressiveness which seeks to exclude others from sharing privileges or contact.

Fear divides, isolates and creates hostility. It generates distance and alienation. It is incompatible with the love of Christ, for, by definition, love operates only when fear is absent (1 Jn. 4:18-19). Love, therefore, integrates, brings close (Eph. 2:12-13) and casts out all suspicion and prejudice.

Love is expressed by doing to others what we would like them to do to us (Mt. 7:12), by giving ourselves in sacrificial service to those in need and, above all, by caring for those who verbally and violently abuse us (Lk. 6:27-31).

Our convictions about God and the world he has made

cannot tolerate separations and exclusions based on skin-colour, the ownership of wealth, or communal discrimination. On the other hand, love rejoices at the diversity of human life wherever this expresses the fulness and complementary nature of all God's creatures.

Christ's love is a vocation to a new way of being human. Those who wish to follow him are challenged to separate themselves from sin (in particular pride, arrogance, exploitation and false piety), but never from the world (*i.e.* from other people – *cf*. Jn. 17:15-16; 1 Cor. 5:10). Conventional religion reduces life to a careful system of laws and customs. This is the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, not of the kingdom (Mt. 5:20). Moral duties are limited to isolated acts of goodness. They are minimum requirements designed to fulfil the obligations expected by one's religious community. God's grace through Jesus, which makes the kingdom possible, is not intended primarily to enable individuals to find emotional or social security within their own small world, but to be free of fear and false evaluations of others in order to carry through costly acts of generosity, reconciliation and healing.

[1] The relation between racial discrimination and caste is discussed later in this article. That discussion suggests that notions of ethnic superiority are not confined to contemporary times. Nevertheless, the theoretical legitimation of discrimination is a recent phenomenon.
[2] *Cf*. M. Haralambos with R. Heald, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* (Slough: University Tutorial Press, 1981), pp. 24-97.
[3] *Cf*. D. Forrester, *Caste and Christianity: Attitudes and Policies on Caste of Anglo-Saxon Protestant Missions in India* (London: Curzon Press, 1980).
[4] J. A. Baker, *Race and the Bible* (London, 1984).
[5] *Cf*. R. Clements, *Old Testament Theology* (Basingstoke: Marshalls, 1978), pp. 79-87.
[6] *Cf*. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1965), pp. 70-72.
[7] *Cf*. P. Richard, 'Biblical Theology of Confrontation with Idols' in P. Richard *et al.*, *The Idols of Death and the God of Life: a Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983).
[8] John de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 71.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[10] 'Report on Race Relations' to *The Reformed Ecumenical Synod* (1968).
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] 'Race Relations', Minority Report to *The Reformed Ecumenical Synod* (1968).
[13] 'Report on Race Relations', *ibid.*
[14] John de Gruchy, *op. cit.*, p. 75, quoting J. J. F. Durand, 'Bible and Race: the Problem of Hermeneutics', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 24 (Sept. 1978), p. 8.
[15] John de Gruchy, *op. cit.*, p. 76, summarizing an argument of B. Johanson, 'Race, Mission and Ecumenism: Reflections on the Landman Report', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 10 (March 1975), p. 60.
[16] *Op. cit.*
[17] *Introducing Sociology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 301.
[18] *Cf*. further T. Hanks, *God So Loved the Third World* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983), pp. 3-39.
[19] This is a view which Brian Griffiths seems to adopt when he says, 'In the West capitalism has proved to be an efficient economic system yet it seems to have lost its legitimacy. Historically this was provided by a Judaeo-Christian world-view which emphasized a service of individual responsibility and justified the economic inequalities which result from the work-

ings of the market place' (*Morality and the Market Place*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982, p. 125). In my judgment he is wrong on two counts. Firstly, he confuses biblical justice with natural justice. The first says, 'to everyone according to their needs'; the second, 'to everyone according to their desserts'. Secondly, real life does not substantiate the assumption that there is a necessary correlation between the distribution of rewards and either a person's talent or his importance to society. The highest paid people in modern capitalist societies are not the greatest contributors to the production of wealth – namely, pop and film stars and sports celebrities.

[20]R. Dowley, *Towards the Recovery of a Lost Bequest: a Layman's Notes on the biblical pattern for a just community* (London: ECUM, 1984).

[21]*Cf.* J. Miguez, *Towards a Christian Political Ethics* (London: SCM, 1983), pp. 87-99.

[22]'Caste in a South India Village' in A. Beteille *et al.*, *Social Inequality* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 276. Caste was also associated from an early period with different occupations.

[23]*Cf.* K.M. Sen, *Hinduism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 28.

[24]M.N. Srinivas, 'The Caste System in India' in A. Beteille, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-267.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 267, *cf.* also M.N. Srinivas, *Caste and Other Essays* and J. Hutton, *Caste in India*.

[26]M.N. Srinivas, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

[27]L. Dumont, 'Caste, Racism and Stratification: Reflections of a Social Anthropologist' in Beteille, *op. cit.*, pp. 352-354.

[28]*Cf.* Somen Das, 'Christian Response to some selected movements for Social Change in India in the 19th and 20th centuries' in V. Samuel and C. Sugden, *The Gospel among our Hindu Neighbours* (Bangalore: PIM, 1983), p. 42.

[29]*Cf.* A. Rajagopal, 'The Scheduled Castes' Struggle for Justice' in *The Pursuit of Truth and the Scheduled Castes* (Bangalore Theological Forum 2, 1982).

[30]*Ibid. Cf.* also Amelot Pavadas, *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society* (Bangalore: NBCLC).

[31]Forrester, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-168.

[32]*Cf.* Somen Das, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-36.

[33]New Testament Theology, vol I: The Proclamation of Jesus (London: SCM, 1971), p. 144.

[34]*Ibid.*, p. 174.

[35]Paul, apparently, saw the radical consequences of the gospel with regard to this issue more clearly than Peter (Gal. 2:11ff.). He also rebuked Gentile Christians for a sense of superiority over Jews (Rom. 11:17ff.).

[36]*Cf.* J.A. Kirk, *A New World Coming* (Basingstoke: Marshalls, 1983), pp. 100-102.

Church and state in South Africa

Jim Stamoolis

Christians often talk about the South African situation on the basis of little information and without much understanding of the issues faced by their brothers and sisters in that country. This article by the IFES Theological Students' Secretary, who formerly worked in South Africa, explains the situation and discusses the issues.

The question of the church's role in the political life of a country arose first in the ministry of Jesus. While rejecting the offer to become the political messiah, Jesus clearly delineated the authority of the state (*cf.* Jn. 19:11). The state's demand for loyalty has been the source of conflict for many Christians. Often Christians died rather than deny their relationship with God.

The crucial task for every group of believers (be they local churches, regional churches or a national church) is to examine their own function in society to see if they are bearing witness to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is difficult both to ascertain and accomplish because of our tendency to conform to the cultural expectations of society and because of the personal sacrifice opposition to the state may involve. In many countries, especially those composed of groups from various cultural, ethnic and denominational backgrounds, there may be no agreement on what would appear to be even the most basic social principles. Diversity in doctrinal belief is compounded by diversity in Christian social ethics.

The question of allegiance to the state is further complicated when the state makes a claim to be Christian. A government that declares itself to be operating on Chris-

tian principles effectively undercuts certain potential opposition. Political figures who invoke the name and sometimes the authority of God, even if their lives and actions seem to contradict the working of God's grace in their lives, can have their persuasive power multiplied among Christians who accept their words at face value. Therefore the question of church-state relationships involves many complex components.

In analyzing the components of the social and political situation in South Africa, the complex dynamics of what appears to be a simple problem become evident.

The present situation

The Republic of South Africa is an example of a society where racial separation is governed by a set of thorough laws. While South Africa is not unique in having laws on racial segregation, it is unique in claiming a Christian basis for doing so.[1]

In many countries the various ethnic groups are often found living in separate areas. In South Africa this separation has legal status, so that it is unlawful for people to occupy a home in an area not assigned to their racial classification. Likewise schools (primary and secondary) are racially segregated. Some limited enrolment is permitted at tertiary institutions across racial lines, but for the most part, even tertiary institutions are segregated, with the establishment of separate colleges and universities for different racial classifications.[2] The list of separate public facilities is quite long and would

include separate transportation, hotels, restaurants, restrooms, entertainment and recreational areas. The chief justification for this separation is the theory that racial groups must be kept separate for their own best interests. A key piece of legislation is the prohibition of mixed marriages which makes it unlawful for South Africans classified as 'white' to marry a person of another racial classification, no matter where the marriage is performed. If it is performed in South Africa, the minister who conducts the ceremony is liable to prosecution. The couple, even if married outside South Africa, are also guilty of a civil violation and can be imprisoned.

The separation of the races meant the large-scale removal of people from areas which had been inhabited by their ancestors, in some cases for several generations. These removals entailed great hardship and personal distress for the people affected. The law under which this population transfer occurs is known as the Group Areas Act, which was first introduced in 1950 and subsequently amended several times.[3] The justification for this action is the supposed consolidation of ethnic groups and the removal of 'black spots' from the midst of white land areas.[4]

Racial discrimination also has an economic side. The supervisory and managerial positions are reserved for those of the white race group. In any case, no non-white (a term used to describe all the racial classifications apart from the whites) would have authority over a white. The reservation of certain jobs for certain race groups and the differential in wages paid on the basis of racial classification has meant severe economic distress to the non-whites. The financial success of South Africa and the high standard of living of its white population is due to the relative poverty which the rest of South Africa endures.[5]

In no other society is the contact between the races so thoroughly defined by law. Several questions immediately arise. What are these classifications? On what are they based? What is the real result of this racial segregation? And finally, what role does the church have in the South African situation?

The racial classification system
To maintain such a rigid separation in South African society, a thorough system of race classification has been developed. Currently, the population of South Africa is approximately 30 million. The largest population group in South Africa is that of African tribal ancestry. The black African peoples of South Africa number 21 million, divided (though not equally) among 16 different languages. For the purposes of this article, they will be referred to as the blacks.[6]

The next largest population group (5 million) is the so-called European, or white, race group. This is composed of European-descended settlers, some of whom can trace their lineage back to the arrival of the first Dutch colonists in 1652. The white population group is divided 40/60 between those who would claim English as a mother tongue and those who speak Afrikaans, a South African-evolved language comprised of Dutch, with some

German, French and African vocabulary. It is incorrect to assume that 40% of the white population is of British descent, as many immigrants from other countries choose to adopt English as their home language, rather than Afrikaans. English and Afrikaans are the two official languages of South Africa. All public documents, signs and notices appear in both languages. The 60% of the white race group which is Afrikaans-speaking consider themselves to be white Africans. They have long since dropped the notion that Europe is their homeland.[7] The solidarity of the white population speaking Afrikaans is an important factor in the racial situation in South Africa.[8]

The third largest group is those who are classified by the South African government as coloured. These are people whom the government determines to be of mixed racial ancestry, the offspring of marriages and liaisons between early Dutch colonists and slaves or the indigenous people. This also includes any descendant of any of the mixed marriages in South African history. Linguistically, especially around Cape Town, this group speaks Afrikaans and is culturally close to the white race group. The coloured number approximately 3 million.[9]

The fourth population group is those of Indian descent. In the 1860s a number of indentured servants were brought from India to work in the sugar cane plantations of the east coast of South Africa. These stayed and were followed by their families and other traders and business people, so that at present the Indian population is about one million people. This group has maintained its own identity and 85% are Hindu.[10]

In the political situation of South Africa, only the people classified as whites have the rights of full citizenship. Under a new constitution, the coloureds and Indians have some limited voting rights, though not for the main house of Parliament. The history of voting rights in South Africa is tragic, in that in the Cape Province, blacks and coloureds had been able to vote for white representatives to Parliament but lost the right (blacks in 1936, coloureds in 1956) through a series of parliamentary moves.[11]

Under the process of separate development, or apartheid, the black population group are being made citizens of independent black 'nations' within the borders of South Africa. It is in these homelands that the black people have political rights. However, these homelands are only 13% of the land area of South Africa.[12]

Therefore it can be seen that the whites, a very small minority of the South African population (approximately one-seventh of the total population of the area) own 87% of the land and effectively exercise political control over the entire population.[13]

How the situation developed
The Dutch settlers arriving at what became Cape Town in 1652 did not find an empty country. There were indigenous inhabitants. Though there were minor clashes, the colonization proceeded without serious opposition for nearly 150 years, until the settlers migrating eastward

came in contact with the Bantu tribes occupying the east coast of South Africa. In a series of wars with the Xhosa people, the eastward expansion of the colonists was halted. The British occupation of the Cape in the early 1800s and the subsequent abolition of slavery (1834) led to an exodus of Dutch-descended settlers who moved into Natal. Here they had clashes with the Zulu tribe.[14] However, it was the annexation of Natal by the British that led to a further trek into the interior.[15] The African tribes in the interior had been disturbed by a series of tribal wars, which made the situation for the settling of the colonists favourable.

It is conceivable that the two republics founded by the colonists would have remained as independent countries had not diamonds been found in the Orange Free State and subsequently gold in the Transvaal Republic. Both led to British pressure for annexation. In the case of the diamond fields, these were annexed without a war; regarding the gold fields, it took two wars with the Boer Republics before the situation was resolved and all of what is now the Republic of South Africa came under British control.[16]

The Dutch settlers, or Boers (farmers) as they chose to call themselves, were basically an agricultural people. Their own self-perception is that they were taken advantage of by British entrepreneurs and British civil servants. There is some truth to these claims as there were some very heavy-handed attempts to suppress the Dutch language and make the Boers and their children use English.[17]

While the Dutch East India Company, which organized the Cape Town settlement, had no plans to establish a permanent colony, the Dutch burghers became adventurous pioneers and pushed into the interior of South Africa. It was this pioneer spirit that opened the settlement of the interior of South Africa for the Dutch, and that formed the settlers. Therefore, the exodus, or Great Trek, of the settlers (from 1836 onward) was accomplished because of the perceived threat to the Boers' way of life and to their cultural values. Likewise, the Anglo-Boer wars were also an attempt to defend the rural, pastoral values of the independent Boer republics.

To note this is not to pass judgment on whether these feelings were correct or incorrect. It is merely to state that this is the perception of the situation held by the Boers.[18] After the war was over in 1902, there developed a renewed awareness of their identity by those who were descended from this Dutch settler stock. The identity grew and a formal language developed out of the low Dutch that the settlers had spoken.[19] The language became known as Afrikaans.[20] Afrikaner means a man of Africa. This must be noted because the Afrikaners see themselves as true Africans. It also explains why, in South African politics, it is difficult for the Afrikaners to find a word to call the black people of South Africa, because they have already preempted the word African for themselves. Therefore, various names, such as native, Bantu and now finally black, have been applied to what the rest of the world call the African peoples.

Having been beaten on the battlefield, the Afrikaners turned to politics.[21] What they could not gain by force of arms, they gained by parliamentary means, so that in 1948, an Afrikaner government was elected which continues to rule South Africa. While many of the practices which are now known as apartheid had their origin in South African history, since 1948 these have become systematically made into law.

The history of black South Africa only really touches on white South Africa after the initial contact made in the eastern region where the Xhosa tribes had been living in a settled situation.[22] The contact with the Zulu tribe came about when the Boers tried to settle in what is now Natal Province. The leader Shaka (1787-1828) welded a number of small clans into an effective and disciplined nation.[23] His army was the most powerful on the subcontinent. His defeats of the surrounding tribes led to a forced migration known as the Difaquane (1822-1836) which temporarily depopulated the interior. Each tribe, as it was defeated and displaced by Shaka's Zulus, in turn attacked and displaced another tribe further inland. This ripple effect, emanating from the Zulu conquests, destabilized vast areas in South Africa.[24]

It was this situation that enabled the Boers to establish themselves. However, the African struggle did not cease there. While the Afrikaners' history records the Battle of Blood River (1838) as being decisive in breaking the Zulu nation, this same Zulu nation handed the British Army one of its worst defeats in history at the battle of Isandlwana (1879).[25]

The continued resistance to domination and the emergence of gifted leaders who have advanced the cause of their people speaks of the vitality of the African peoples.[26] One of the consequences of apartheid is that the real contributions of the African peoples are not recognized nor is there a place in the overall political scene for the talents and abilities of the black leaders to be utilized.[27]

The reason behind apartheid
Given the history of the Afrikaner people and their cultural and, in a sense, linguistic isolation, they developed a very strong sense of being God's chosen people. Some would explain this as arising out of the Dutch Calvinism that the Afrikaners espoused. But others would see it as arising from their identification with the Israelite people of the Old Testament, who made their exodus from Egypt into the promised land. Whatever the original trekkers felt of their religious impulse, certainly much has been made of it in the contemporary development of the apartheid ideology. It is appropriate to speak of the mythology of apartheid, which reviews past history, especially that of the trek, and of misfortunes that befell the Afrikaner people, in biblical terminology. Therefore, the Afrikaner nation is viewed as the special people of God, with a mission to fulfil in the Southern African region.[28]

Since the mission depended on the ability of the people of God to carry out God's wishes in Southern Africa, strict lines of racial separation were maintained. Many biblical passages were introduced to support this separa-

tion, but it must be realized that the biblical support is not the primary pillar for the policy of apartheid.[29] The policy of apartheid is ideological and national. It comes from those who perceive themselves to be the heirs of a people who have suffered great injustices and are determined never to let these injustices happen again. The religious background of apartheid is devised to fit in with the existing ideology. Since, in the case of the Afrikaner people, their religious heritage is Christian and Calvinistic, this reformed heritage is applied to sustain the ideology. It can easily be demonstrated by reference to other countries where racial or national superiority is assumed, that other religious beliefs can be made subservient to national ideology.[30]

The best way to insure the continuance of the Afrikaner nation is to assure their continued position of power. The development of apartheid can only be seen in this light. It is to fence around and safeguard the Afrikaner people from possible influences or contamination from other sources. Lest it be assumed that this contamination only occurs from sources designated as nonwhite by the government bureaux, it needs to be seen that segregation in South Africa also exists on the level of English and Afrikaans speakers. The schools for children in the white population group are segregated by language, so that Afrikaner young people may not be tempted to leave the Afrikaner fold, and dilute the Afrikaner nation by marriage to English-speaking young people.

In South Africa, some thirty miles from Cape Town, stands a monument to the Afrikaans language. That a living language needs a monument in stone seems strange. But its existence points to the seriousness with which language is regarded in South Africa. Another type of monument to the Afrikaans language was the Soweto riots of 1976, when black school children held a protest against the use of Afrikaans in their high school.[31] The subsequent police action, and the escalating scale of violence, testify to the passions unleashed by language. The assault on Afrikaans was perceived by the Afrikaners as an assault on their very nationhood.[32]

The concept of nationhood and national identity that is so dominant in the Afrikaner tradition also motivates the black people of South Africa. One fascinating aspect of the South African scene is that these two competing nationalisms have so much in common. The same cycle of repression of identity and language, the economic disabilities, the loss of independence and self-government have been experienced by both groups. While some commentators see the Afrikaner oppression in terms of other models,[33] an observation that has many elements of truth, the picture of competing nationalism is more complex.[34] At present, the struggle is whether Afrikaner nationalism can continue to dominate or whether the tide of African nationalism will grow stronger and win out.

Would the ideal be a fusion of these two nationalisms? Whatever the political ideal might be that would bring peace and justice to the people of South Africa, the Christians there are faced with the question of how to relate to the competing ideological forces. Can they give their total support to either nationalism? Should the Christian support either the existing system or the prospect of the overthrow of the government? Or is there another alternative for the Christian?

Apartheid and the church

Because of the all-embracing scope of apartheid, even the church cannot escape the effects of the legislation. But the responses of the churches to the situation are different. Even in matters on which there is agreement, the approach or line of action taken varies considerably. Likewise, there is no absolute uniformity within any denomination.

One example of the government's attempt to control church life is found in clause 29(c) of the Native Laws Amendment Bill of 1957. The 'church clause' prohibited the attendance of an African at a church service in a 'white' area without the permission of the Minister of Native Affairs.[35] The response from the churches was swift and all made essentially the same point. This time the government had gone too far; this was a matter over which the state had no right to interfere. The original statement drawn up by the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) made this clear in unmistakable tones.

Most of the churches chose to make public their opposition by using open letters submitted to the press as well as the government. The DRC met privately with Dr Verwoerd, who as Minister of Native Affairs was the author of the legislation. The DRC subsequently published only part of the statement and omitted the sharp criticism of the state.[36] The other churches stated publicly their intention to violate the law. For example, the Baptist Union statement declared: 'The proposed bill will compel law-abiding Baptists, together with members of many other churches, to violate the law. This we do not desire to do, but where conscience and legislation conflict we must take our stand with conscience, whatever the consequences may be.'[37]

If one tries to categorize the position of the churches toward apartheid, one can make some general observations. The white Afrikaans Reformed churches support the government.[38] This is part of the Afrikaner group identity.[39]

The Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational denominations are often grouped together under the designation 'English-speaking churches'.[40] This is a clumsy and misleading description for several reasons. First, these are not the only churches in South Africa that use English. In fact, the majority of the members in each of these denominations are black and English is not their mother tongue. Furthermore, in each denomination, other languages are used in worship. But the term 'English-speaking' derives from their origin in Britain and their common opposition to apartheid.

To speak of the above two groups is not to indicate that the other denominations in South Africa have nothing to contribute to the debate. The Roman Catholic hierarchy have issued several statements and taken a firm stand against apartheid.[41] The various Lutheran synods have

also focused on the unity of the church, black and white, as a witness against racism.[42]

The question of compulsory military service for white men has also become an issue, with several young men from the Baptist and Anglican churches refusing to serve on religious grounds. The laws regulating conscientious objection are quite severe and some Christians have gone to prison for their beliefs.[43]

One notable expression of black protest against racial discrimination is the African Independent churches. The size, credal statements and histories of the more than 3,000 independent churches in South Africa vary a great deal, but the movement itself must be seen as a protest against the segregation and second-class status of the African in the mission churches.[44]

The social situation that developed from the first colony at the Cape did not leave the church untouched.[45] The first official separation of congregations by colour passed the Cape Synod of the DRC in 1857.

> The Synod considers it desirable and scriptural that our members from the Heathen be received and absorbed into our existing congregations wherever possible; but where this measure, as a result of the weakness of some, impedes the furtherance of the cause of Christ among the Heathen, the congregation from the Heathen, already founded or still to be founded, shall enjoy its Christian privileges in a separate building or institution.[46]

The weakness mentioned here was the antipathy on the part of some whites to worship with blacks. However, what was intended as an exception became the standard practice. Separate congregations, and eventually separate mission churches, were formed for the different racial groups by the DRC.[47]

The existence of separate congregations according to locality and therefore race creates problems for even the churches that are not intentionally divided. Contact between the groups varies both by denomination and congregation. Part of the task is to inform white congregations on the conditions under which their Christian brothers and sisters in the same denomination live.[48]

Apartheid is a heresy

The theological reflection on apartheid in one sense predates the implementation of the scheme in 1948. As was shown above, the roots of discrimination and the responses to it, both positive and negative, are part of the total story of South Africa. But the policies of the National Party from 1948 on have caused much theological discussion. Several conferences have been held to discuss the Christian response to the South African situation.[49]

However, the most far-reaching theological condemnation has come from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) who at their General Council in 1982 declared:

> . . . apartheid ("separate development") is a sin, and that the moral and theological justification of it is a travesty of the Gospel and, in its persistent disobedience to the Word of God, a theological heresy.[50]

In identifying apartheid as a heresy, it raised the issue to a *status confessionis*, which means it is not an issue about which disagreement is possible without contradicting the common confessions of the Reformed Churches.

The reaction of the DRC and the NHK was to dispute the decision as combining in an unscriptural manner theology and politics. Both official statements made in response accuse the WARC of being influenced by liberation theology.[51]

This type of argument is the same as has been followed by the DRC in previous statements. For example, in the DRC's landmark study of the racial question, *Human Relations and the South African Scene in the Light of Scripture*, we read the following:

> But at all times it will have to be taken in consideration that each society has its own nature and structure and must abide by its own laws. Thus church and nation each has its own structure and is sovereign in its own sphere, despite the intimate relationship between the two. Mutual boundaries will therefore have to be respected, for as soon as the church attempts to churchify the entire national life, it becomes a totalitarian institution which abrogates the principle of sovereignty in individual spheres. No nation, not even a Christian nation, is subject to the sovereignty of the church. The nation is, however, subject to the ultimate authority and discipline of Christ and His Word.[52]

Therefore, the political sphere is free from criticism by the church, though subject to the authority of Christ. It is difficult to comprehend how this authority is to be transmitted to the state, unless the political leaders are also regarded as men of faith. Therefore, the individuals who work in the political sphere must act on their Christian convictions in their state functions; this apparently is the only avenue by which the nation can be held accountable to the ultimate authority and discipline of Christ.

However, the real effect of such a position is to put the state in a realm where it can not be challenged and raise the commitment to the nation to a level equal to, if not higher than, the commitment to Christ.

The report goes on to make it clear that national identity is the key element in the believer's religious experience:

> Just as members of a certain people or nation may *in principle* not be prevented from becoming members of another people or nation, so members of one "national" church may not be forbidden to become members of another "national" church. In other words, *in principle* there is no exclusive national church in the sense that no believer from the ranks of any other people may join it if he should choose to do so, even if we should uphold the importance of national identity for the preaching of the gospel and for experiencing the communion of the saints. A separate church is certainly not a closed church.
>
> If, however, such a transfer of membership should disturb the order and peace of both church and people (peoples or sections of the people) to such an extent that the kingdom of God is no longer served, that the fellowship of believers and their ability to serve should suffer and the nation or nations concerned should find it difficult or impossible to give full expression to their national identity – in these circumstances a temporary arrangement against the transfer of membership

cannot be condemned since it would enhance the well-being of the churches concerned.[53]

The Afrikaner cannot conceive of a situation where national identity could be superseded or set aside. From their point of view, they must hold on to their position in South Africa because to do otherwise would be to threaten their national identity.[54] That alternative seems to be equivalent to national (in the sense of the Afrikaner nation) suicide.

Two questions arise here. The first is clearly political and pragmatic. Given the strong sense of Afrikaner identity and the need to preserve the nation, is the practice of apartheid the best policy? Faced with increasing guerrilla pressure on the borders of South Africa and the possibility of increasing 'terrorist' attacks within South Africa itself, can the present government control the situation and at what cost?[55] The Afrikaners believe that a defeat of the white government would threaten the very roots of the Afrikaner nation.

But even if the military might of white South Africa is able to keep the current government in power, is that the best way to assure the continuity of Afrikanerdom? For the second, more theological, question is: do the arguments used to back up separation of the Christians into nations meet the test of biblical truth? Does the Bible support the racial separation as envisioned by the Afrikaners?

At this point the debate is very strong. Many from within the Afrikaner nation have challenged either the emphasis on race or the equality of the existing system or both. In every case, the dissenter was isolated from the people he was trying to reach and considered in some sense misguided, if not a traitor, to his race.

One of the most famous and best documented examples of this is Beyers Naudé, a former DRC minister, who had held high positions of power in the DRC and was a member of the Broederbond.[56] Naudé was one of the founders of the Christian Institute and its director. Those involved in the Institute hoped it 'would enable members of all races of the Afrikaans and other churches to share together in bearing witness to the unity of the church and the lordship of Christ over society'.[57] From its beginnings in 1963 until it was banned in October 1977, the Christian Institute attempted that task. The banning of Naudé and the Institute is evidence of the seriousness with which opposition to apartheid is dealt.[58] The full story of the Institute and the dramatic details of Naudé's trial are important reading for the South African situation.[59]

Another Afrikaner deeply committed to Christian unity in South Africa is David Bosch. As one of the organizers of SACLA (Southern African Christian Leadership Assembly),[60] Bosch has been on the forefront of attempting reconciliation between Christians of different groups. Keenly discerning the tragedy of the situation, Bosch assumes a prophetic role. In his own words:

> It is the easiest thing in the world to criticize but desperately difficult to be prophetic. That presupposes solidarity. The critic condemns from the outside, the prophet confesses from within. The critic judges, the prophet weeps. The former therefore remains unscathed while the latter receives blow upon blow.[61]

Bosch sees the church as the 'alternative community' needed in South Africa. 'Unless this cross somehow becomes visible in us, there will be no reconciliation and the church's mission will remain incomplete. Reconciliation is costly.'[62] It is the church which must manifest reconciliation in the South African situation and it is the church which will suffer by being crushed between the two opposing nationalisms, but the suffering will be the means for reconciliation.

The amount of uniformity in the South African religious system might lead some to conclude that the prophetic voices are an insignificant minority. That they are a minority is granted, that they are insignificant is incorrect.[63] 'The Koinonia Declaration', produced by a group of Calvinists from Potchefstrom and a Reformed study group from Johannesburg, challenges the state to re-examine its activities. While accepting the existence of black homelands, it argues for a fair distribution of land and increased economic opportunities for blacks. It also makes a strong case for the removal of many current legal restrictions (like the prohibition of mixed marriages) and the granting of more freedom to the blacks in all areas (e.g. political, labour, etc.). In short, the declaration is an appeal for the advocates of apartheid to live up to the lofty claims of justice they make for their policies.[64]

Criticism or change?

There is no shortage of critics of apartheid. Some are Afrikaners who want the system to be made more humane. Migratory labour practices, pass laws, even the prohibition of mixed marriages, are some things that have been questioned. But even in criticisms, there remains the question as to whether the basic foundation of separate development is challenged.[65]

Even among the English-speaking whites, there are few who would advocate a complete change of the government. There are several reasons for this. In the forefront is the swart gevaar,[66] the fear of what would happen if the blacks were not controlled. This theme is used in political speeches, but is pervasively spread through the selective reporting of the government-controlled radio and television. White South Africans hear of the unrest in other parts of the world, and especially other parts of Africa. They are reminded of the communist threat to their security and of the way the rest of the world hates them. This propaganda serves to maintain the laager mentality, the idea that only within the circle of wagons (the laager) is there safety.[67] Therefore, the laager may need to be adjusted, but it can never be abandoned.

Threats to the safety of the laager are treated seriously. That is why protesters and dissidents are dealt with so severely. Beside the banning orders which cut off the banned person from public life, the threat of detention without trial is very real. Under South African law, any person may be arrested and indefinitely detained by the police without ever being charged with a crime.[68] This law

is effectively used against political leaders and others who oppose the government. Sworn testimony recounts the torture and beatings administered by police to political prisioners.[69] The death of Steve Biko, the black leader, while being detained, is only one of many.[70] Other deaths in detention are listed as accidents or suicide.[71] Therefore, for anyone, white or black, protest against the system is risky.[72]

In spite of the pressure to conform to the system, there are whites who do indicate their desire to see a more just society. Hard ethical choices must be made. Is it right to disobey the law? While more interracial contact is permitted by law than most whites realize or experience, it is still true that some choose to deliberately, though discreetly, disobey the law. The same type of problem is raised by the question of compulsory military service which was mentioned above. To resist is to go against the general trend of white society. But individual defiance of the law and individual refusal to serve in the armed forces do not change the basic structure. While the sacrifice or danger is real, the net effect has not changed government policies.[73]

Many cosmetic changes are taking place in South Africa. To outside observers and to the white group these changes often seem significant steps toward a new society. Perhaps some of them, had they occurred thirty of forty years ago instead of now, would have been. Perhaps. But the truth is that most shifts or developments are not changes in the basic structure of apartheid. The future seems to be one where there is the inevitable spectre of violence. A prospect which John Vorster (former Prime Minister) called 'too ghastly to contemplate'.[74] Facing a bloody civil war and unable to accept a political settlement which would mean majority rule, the white population tends to live for today and is tempted to give up hope for the future.

The black perspective
The division between black and white is so complete that on virtually every issue there is polarization. 'Actually you could become a kind of Euclid and propound an axiom: whatever pleases most white South Africans is almost certain to displease blacks and vice versa.'[75] Therefore, it is not strange to find that while to whites the situation looks bleak and frightening, for blacks the future is one of hope. It is eloquently expressed by Desmond Tutu:

> My opinion is that we are going to have a black Prime Minister in South Africa within the next five to ten years. No serious-minded person today thinks that it is possible for a group outnumbered five to one, as the white community is by blacks, can go on forever lording it over the majority. All the logic of history is against such a thing happening.[76]

To have hope is not to consider that the end will be obtained without a struggle. Rather the hope is that the struggle will result in freedom. Suffering is not foreign to the black peoples; therefore they are better prepared to endure affliction in order to press for a change. It is difficult for white South Africans, who are led to believe by the government that the blacks are generally satisfied,

that there is such an intensity of feeling. But then it is difficult for the whites to understand the oppressive and degrading nature of the system. White Christians often express surprise that black Christians are so critical of the 'Christian' government of South Africa. However, the real surprise and an indication of the power of God's grace is that black Christians still communicate with white Christians.

From the black perspective, little or nothing has been accomplished by the white Christians to relieve the most glaring abuses of the system. Individual examples, like the late Rev. Frikkie Conradie, who worked in Alexander Township,[77] or the Rev. Dr Nico Smith, who left the prestigious Chair of Missiology at the University of Stellenbosch to serve a black congregation in Mamelodi,[78] only highlight the lack of action on the part of so many others. Dr Smith and his wife have recently petitioned the government for the right to move from a white Pretoria suburb to a home in the black township so they can better identify with the people among whom they minister.[79]

But exceptions to the rule do not change the rule. The government is seen by blacks as cruel and oppressive. The close identification made between the Christian faith of the Afrikaner and the policies of apartheid present a stumbling block to the acceptance of the gospel.

> Many members of the Black community, especially the younger, urbanized, educated youth, regard the Bible and the message of the gospel as symbols of White religion, White domination, White oppression. The racial policies of our country, as accepted and propounded by Whites claiming to be Christians, and implemented with the justification of a sincere Christian motivation and concern, have filled the minds of millions of Blacks with serious confusion, growing doubt, and even sheer cynicism.[80]

Therefore, those who labour among these people face a double problem. For in addition to the normal scandal of the cross, the added scandal of the behaviour of most white Christians is added. Yet there are black Christians who combine their Christian faith with a social consciousness. In their sermons and speeches, the implications of the Christian faith are worked out. The gospel is applied to the situation. While some applications may sound political, it is because they are answering political questions. Preaching in the aftermath of the 1976 riots, Allan Boesak speaks of the actions taken by the police:

> Many ask the question: how are such things possible? How can persons who are so 'Christian' also be so brutal? . . . At one level it lies in the fact that when persons defend a policy that in its essence is a denial of humanity, with the result that inhuman laws and views become 'normal,' then it is safely predictable that the defense of such a system will be just as inhuman. . . . At another level, the answer is to be found in the way persons behave when they are estranged from God. Precisely for this reason apartheid is, in the final instance, sinful. . . . Apartheid and its results are the appalling embodiment of estrangement from God and his Word.[81]

Apartheid causes alienation between people by keeping them separate, but this alienation on the human level has implications in the relationship between God and man. 'If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has

seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen' (1 Jn. 4:20).

Conclusion

The emphasis on race denies the gospel. The challenge before the Christians in South Africa is to live out all the implications of the gospel. It cannot be regarded as an easy matter that can be solved without cost. Reconciliation is costly. To reconcile us to God, Jesus had to suffer on the cross. But the task given to the church in South Africa is to be partakers in reconciliation. As Christ's death abolished the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile, so in the church must the dividing wall be abolished in South Africa.

For in the end, one question remains, which loyalty will claim the hearts of South Africans? Some form of nationalism or allegiance to the King of Kings?

> The question with which the gospel confronts us here then is: Are you, white man, black man, Afrikaner, English-speaking South African, Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho or whatever you may be, prepared to count your identity in terms of your racial or language group as of merely relative importance compared to your identity in Christ? Indeed are you so prepared to do this that like St. Paul you will count it as so much *vuilgoed* wherever it threatens to impede the sovereign claim of the gospel – for the sake of Jesus Christ as your one and only Lord and thus for the sake of His righteousness (or justice) in our society? Or will you instead allow your group identity to qualify and limit the gospel, so that like Peter in Antioch you really deny that the principle of *sola gratia* is the only ultimate criterion of our lives, and so imply that 'Christ died for nothing'. (Gal. 2)?[82]

[1] See for example the following quotations given on the Day of the Covenant celebrations in 1966: 'We believe the only road is that which fulfils the demands of our Calvinist creed' (W. A. Maree, leader of the Nationalist Party in Natal); 'God saved the Afrikaner people at Blood River and allowed them to carry on to where they are today' (Prof. F. J. M. Potgieter, formerly of the Theological School, Stellenbosch); as cited by René de Villiars, 'Afrikaner Nationalism' in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, vol. II, eds. Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (London: OUP, 1971), p. 371. The Day of the Covenant celebrates the victory of a group of Afrikaners over a much larger Zulu force at a place subsequently called Blood River on 16 December 1838.

[2] On the question of university education, see H. W. van der Merwe and David Welsh (eds.), *The Future of the University in Southern Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1977).

[3] For an analysis of this and other apartheid laws, see K. L. Roskam, *Apartheid and Discrimination* (Leyden: A. W. Sythoff, 1960), pp. 58ff. An able comment on the act and its effects on the people is found in Alan Paton, *The Long View* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), pp. 101-127. See also, Leonard Thompson and Andrew Prior, *South African Politics* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982).

[4] One needs only to look at the scattered nature of the 'homelands' created for the blacks to question the principle of consolidation. *Cf.* Gerry Mare, *African Population Relocation in South Africa* (Johannesburg: S. A. Institute of Race Relations, 1980); M. Nash, *Black Uprooting from 'White' South Africa* (Johannesburg: S. A. Council of Churches, 1980); Cosmas Desmond, *The Discarded People* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

[5] To be accurate, one must speak of relative poverty, since the government information agencies are forever making comparisons between the standard of living of blacks in South

Africa with blacks in other parts of Africa and finding the black South Africans better off. This fact would seem to be reinforced by the flow of migrant labourers from the neighbouring countries to work in the mines. The real question, however, is whether the wage differentials paid for similar work are justifiable, since goods and services cost the same, no matter how much or how little the labourer earns. Therefore, in South Africa, lower wages mean a lower living standard and also lower life expectancy. Blacks have a significantly higher infant mortality rate that can be directly attributed to lack of health care and proper nutrition. On the economic aspects of apartheid see: Peter Randall (ed.), *Power, Privilege and Poverty* (Johannesburg: SPRO-CAS, 1972); *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol. 5:2 (August, 1979), which examines a major government study on the labour situation; D. Hobart Houghton, *The South African Economy* (Cape Town: OUP, 1973); and Ralph Horwitz, *The Political Economy of South Africa* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967). The role of economics in South Africa is extremely important since it is the abundance of natural resources, especially precious metals, that enables the government to bear the expense of apartheid. For an African's analysis of this phenomenon, see: Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane, *The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979).

[6] There are many resources available on the history and customs of these groups. A general survey is I. Schapera (ed.), *The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1966).

[7] See for example the book issued by the South African Information Counsellor. 'The white African nation speaks Afrikaans and English. They claim their African nationhood on the same grounds as the whites of the United States claim their American nationhood.' *All the Facts About South Africa* (Washington, DC: The South African Embassy, 1978), p. 4

[8] The Afrikaner people have been the subject of several studies, among them: W. de Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa: A Story of Afrikanerdom* (London: Rex Collings, 1975); T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); and Sheila Patterson, *The Last Trek: A Study of the Boer People and the Afrikaner Nation* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957).

[9] For a detailed analysis, see J. S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured People, 1652-1937* (first published 1939, reprint ed.: Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1968), and A. J. Venter, *Coloured: A Profile of Two Million South Africans* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1974).

[10] The Indians from the beginning of their immigration to South Africa under certain restrictions. *Cf.* Bridglal Pachai, *The South African Indian Question, 1860-1971* (Cape Town: Struik, 1971).

[11] See *Oxford History of South Africa*, vol. II, pp. 402-423. On the new constitution see: André du Toit, 'Perspectives on the Constitution', *South African Outlook* (October, 1983), pp. 159-162. In the August 1984 elections for the new houses of Parliament, 70% of the coloured and 80% of the Indian voters boycotted the elections.

[12] Alexander Kirby, *South African Bantustans: What Independence for the Transkei?* (Geneva: WCC, 1976).

[13] The policy of separation is defended by the South African government on the basis that 'South Africa is not a single integrated country like France or Germany. South Africa consists of the lands of several nations living under a political system inherited from a former colonial era.' *All the Facts About South Africa*, p. 5. Just how much the British Colonial Office had to do with the current situation is examined in: Benjamin Sacks, *South Africa, An Imperial Dilemma: Non-Europeans and the British Nation, 1902-1914* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1967).

[14] It was one of these clashes that forms the basis for a national holiday in South Africa on 16 December, celebrated as the Day of the Covenant. The Boers or Voortrekkers (Pioneers) made a vow to celebrate that day as a perpetual sabbath to the Lord, should they obtain victory over their opponents. At present, a

full size replica of the battle formation of the Voortrekkers' wagons marks the site at Blood River. A monument to the Voortrekkers is situated on a prominent hill outside Pretoria, the administrative capital of South Africa.

[15]For a history of the events of this period (1835-1854) see Oliver Ransford, *The Great Trek* (London: Cardinal, 1974).

[16]For the history of what led to these wars and of the wars themselves, see: Joseph Lehmann, *The First Boer War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972) and Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York: Random House, 1979). Much of the Boers' antipathy towards the British after the war was the result of the policies carried out on the Boer civilian population. See: S. B. Spies, *Methods of Barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and Civilians in the Boer Republics, January 1900-May 1902* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1977).

[17]See *e.g.* Irving Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism Against British Imperialism* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1981), pp. 147-168. See also de Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa*, pp. 90-122. There are examples of this disdain for the Afrikaners even before their defeat in 1902. See M. Streak, *The Afrikaner as Viewed by the English, 1795-1854* (Cape Town: Struik, 1974).

[18]*Cf.* F. A. von Jaarsveld, *The Afrikaner's Interpretation of South Africa History* (Cape Town: Simondium, 1964).

[19]The first translation of the Bible into Afrikaans was completed in 1933. Before that the Afrikaners used the Dutch translation. A. P. Smit, *God Made it Grow, History of the Bible Society Movement in Southern Africa, 1820-1970* (Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa, 1970), pp. 225-236.

[20]See Hexham, *Irony of Apartheid*, pp. 123-146, for an introduction to Afrikaans language movement.

[21]The history of the political development of the Afrikaner is more complex than the present near monopoly exercised by the National Party would seem to allow. See *Oxford History of South Africa*, vol. II, pp. 416-423. *Cf.* Alan Paton, *Hofmeyr* (Cape Town: OUP, 1964), the life of an Afrikaans politican who opposed the Nationalist movement.

[22]'Co-operation and Conflict: The Eastern Cape Frontier', *The Oxford History of South Africa*, vol. 1, eds. Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (London: OUP, 1969), pp. 233-271.

[23]For complete history see: E. A. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu* (London: Granada, 1969) and Brian Roberts, *The Zulu Kings* (New York: Scribner, 1974).

[24]See *Oxford History of South Africa*, vol. 1, pp. 391-405 and Peter Becker, *Path of Blood* (London: Granada, 1972).

[25]Philip Gon, *The Road to Isandlwana* (Johannesburg: A. D. Donner, 1979). A general history of the Zulu conflicts is Donald R. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears* (London: Cardinal, 1973).

[26]The struggle for freedom in South Africa is recorded in Edward Roux, *Time Longer than Rope* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972). *Cf.* Mary Benson, *South Africa: The Struggle for a Birthright* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966).

[27]Because their writings are banned (*i.e.* forbidden by South African law from being circulated or even possessed), the contributions of many black South Africans are not available to white (or even other black) South Africans. This is a real pity because many constructive proposals for the sharing of power are to be found in these works. The narrow ideology of the current government makes such suggestions too radical.

[28]See de Klerk, *Puritans in Africa*, pp. 213-222.

[29]Consider A. B. DuPreez, *Inside the South African Crucible* (Cape Town: HAUM, 1959) where the ideological factors are first discussed then the scriptural 'confirmation' is produced.

[30]A parallel is suggested by the modern state of Israel. The Israelis are determined to avoid another attempt at annihilation like the holocaust. Interestingly, South Africa and Israel have co-operated on several projects, a great number of which concern military matters.

[31]See *South Africa in Travail: The Disturbances of 1976/77* (Johannesburg: S. A. Institute of Race Relations, 1978), pp. 1-68 for a chronological account of the way in which the language question developed.

[32]This writer attended a university debate between an Afrikaner student leader and an English-speaking student leader where the Afrikaner student made this very point.

[33]*Cf.* Sipp E. Mzimela, *Apartheid: South African Naziism* (New York: Vantage Press, 1983).

[34]Edwin S. Munger, *Afrikaner and African Nationalism* (London: OUP, 1967).

[35]The story of the 'church clause' is told from the Anglican point of view in Alan Paton, *Apartheid and the Archbishop: The Life and Times of Geoffrey Clayton* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1973), pp. 275-288. Clayton wrote in a letter to the Prime Minister (J. G. Strijdom) '. . . we feel bound to state that if the Bill were to become law in its present form we should ourselves be unable to obey it or counsel our clergy and people to do so.' *Ibid.*, p. 280. Clayton felt the step he took in counselling disobedience a serious one, as harsh civil penalties could be applied to this type of protest. His associates recorded the strain he was under. Clayton died the day he signed the letter.

[36]"Towards the end of March a Commission appointed by the Federal Council of the N.G.K. (that is the Council of the N.G. churches of the Cape, the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, and Natal) drew up an eight-point statement setting out its view on the original clause 29(c). The statement was sound and forthright.

1. The Gospel of Jesus Christ emanates from God to all mankind and is subject to no human limitations.

2. The task is laid on the Church of Christ, in obedience to the Head of the Church, to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to all peoples.

3. The right to determine who, when, *where* and to whom the Gospel shall be proclaimed is exclusively in the competence of the Church.

4. It is the duty of the State, as the servant of God, to allow *full* freedom to the Church in the execution of its divine calling and to respect the sovereignty of the church in its own sphere.

5. When the State lays down provisions which limit the attendance of services of *bona fide* religious gatherings arranged by the Church, it affects the freedom of religion and the sovereignty of the Church.

6. Therefore it is to the benefit of the Church and the State that each should confine itself strictly to the task which through the Word of God is entrusted to it, and the Church is called upon to warn the State of possible obstruction of the execution of the task of the Church.

7. For that reason we regret that we and, as far as we know, other Christian Churches originally did not devote the necessary attention to all the implications of the original Act which already in principle imposed limitations on specific church gatherings.

8. The Church acknowledges the fact that the State is called upon to act against the propagation of sedition and incitement under the cloak of religion; but nevertheless the Federal Council feels that as far as this legislation is concerned it cannot agree with the width of impact of the proposed provisions of the Bill.

The Federal Council appointed a delegation to interview the Minister of Native Affairs, who assured its members that the Bill was not intended to interfere with freedom of worship so long as the freedom was not misused. To remove all possible misunderstanding he would re-word the clause, framing it in a positive rather than a negative form.

One can only suppose that Verwoerd asked for something in return. Be that as it may, the delegation published an account of the discussion, omitting all mention of points 5, 6, 7, and 8, and omitting the word *where* in point 3, and the word *full* in point 4. By omitting the word *where* the delegation virtually capitulated to the Minister. It was the *where* that all the controversy had been about.

The Minister's second re-wording did not alter the intention of the clause in any way. Instead of directing that no African shall attend a church service in a "white" area, he now took the power to direct that the attendance of Africans should cease as from a

date specified. Why that should have satisfied any delegation is beyond one's powers to explain.

The Bill became law on 24 April 1957. It was passed by 78 votes to 47 in the Lower House, the 78 in favour being Nationalists, the 47 being members of the United and Labour Parties, and the Native Representatives.' *Ibid.*, pp. 285-86.

[37]Statement of the Executive of the Baptist Union of South Africa, March, 1957, as cited by John W. de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 61.

[38]There are three white Reformed Afrikaans Churches. The largest and oldest is the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), referred to in English translation as the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). Two other churches were formed among the Voortrekkers. The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk (NHK) and the Gereformeerde Kerk (GK). The GK is also called the Dopper Kerk. The overt support for the policies of the National Party and the voices of dissent from some in the DRC are documented in: J. H. P. Serfontein, *Apartheid, Change and the NG Kerk* (Emmarentia: Taurus, 1982).

[39]"Afrikaner church leaders themselves have proudly described apartheid as the child of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), which is often referred to as "the Nationalist Party at prayer"' (Marjorie Hope and James Young, *The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981), p. 5).

[40]See de Gruchy for a complete discussion of this term, including why the Baptists and Pentecostals are not included in this group. *Church Struggle in South Africa*, pp. 85ff.

[41]W. E. Brown, *The Catholic Church in South Africa* (New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1960) contains a chapter on the Catholic Church's response to apartheid. Andrew Prior, (ed.), *Catholics in Apartheid Society* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1982) provides an update including the various church statements.

[42]De Gruchy, *Church Struggle in South Africa*, pp. 99ff.

[43]The February 1983 issue of the *South African Outlook* is devoted entirely to the issue of conscientious objection. See also, *War and Conscience in South Africa: The Churches and Conscientious Objection* (London: CIIR, 1982).

[44]See the two books by Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: OUP, 1961) and *Zulu Zion* (London: OUP, 1976) and Martin West, *Bishops and Prophets in a Black City: African Independent Churches in Soweto, Johannesburg* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1975).

[45]Jane M. Sales, *The Planting of the Churches in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 11-24, gives a brief account of the situation in the early colony.

[46]As cited in de Gruchy, *Church Struggle in South Africa*.

[47]For a history of the mission churches of the DRC, see J. M. Cronje, *Born to Witness* (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1982). An older work, still invaluable for understanding the situation, is W. J. van der Merwe, *The Development of Missionary Attitudes in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1934). Statistics on these churches are found in de Gruchy, *Church Struggle in South Africa*, p. 240.

[48]For example, see: *Christians and Apartheid: An Information Paper* (Braamfontein: SACC, n.d.) and *A Guide to Multi-Racial Contact* (Durban: S. A. Institute of Race Relations, n.d.). An interesting study is Robert Buis, *Religious Beliefs and White Prejudice* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1975). See also de Gruchy, *Church Struggle in South Africa*, pp. 92-97; and Peter Randall, (ed.), *Apartheid and the Church* (Johannesburg: SPRO-CAS, 1972).

[49]For a summary see: de Gruchy, *Church Struggle in South Africa*, pp. 53-101. Some of the important documents are: *The Christian Citizen in a Multi-Racial Society: A Report of the Rosettenville Conference, July 1949* (Strand, C.P.: Christian Council of S.A., [1949]); *Christian Principles in Multi-Racial South Africa: A Report on the Dutch Reformed Conference of Church Leaders, Pretoria, 17-19 November, 1953* (n.d.); *Christian Convictions About Multi-Racial Society* (Cape Town: Methodist Church, 1960); *Cottesloe Consultation, The Report of the Consultation Among South African Member Churches*

of the World Council of Churches, 7-14 December 1960 at Cottesloe, Johannesburg (n.d.); *Consultation of Church Representatives on Racism* (Braamfontein: SACC, [1980]).

[50]John de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio (eds.), *Apartheid is a Heresy* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1983), p. 170. The book contains several essays on the theological argument against apartheid and contains an appendix of the various theological statements on apartheid issued by South African churches.

[51]*Ibid.*, pp. 173-175; 183-184.

[52]*Human Relations and the South African Scene in the Light of Scripture* (Cape Town: Dutch Reformed Church, 1976), p. 45.

[53]*Ibid.*, p. 47. A point by point critique of this book is given by Douglas Bax, *A Different Gospel: A Critique of the Theology Behind Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa [1979]). A short version of *A Different Gospel* is found in *Apartheid is a Heresy*, pp. 112-143. Another critique is: Charles Villa-Vicencio, *The Theology of Apartheid* (Cape Town: Methodist Pub. House, n.d.).

[54]On the question of nationalism and Christianity, see: Theo Sundermeier (ed.), *Church and Nationalism in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Raven Press, 1975). The question of South African civil religion is the theme of the June 1977 issue of the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* No. 19.

[55]Cf. R. W. Johnson, *How Long Will South Africa Survive?* (Johannesburg: MacMillan South Africa, 1977) and two issues of *South Africa Outlook* on the destabilization of Southern Africa by military and economic means, May 1983 and August 1983.

[56]The Afrikaner Broederbond (brotherhood) is a secret organization, founded in 1918, dedicated to ultimate Afrikaner domination. The first full-scale exposé is: Ivor Wilkins and Hans Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1978).

[57]De Gruchy, *Church Struggle in South Africa*, p. 104.

[58]The banning of a person limits his movement (he must not leave the municipal district in which he resides without permission), his association (it is illegal to meet with more than one person at a time), his expression (he cannot make speeches, give interviews, be quoted in any form), his occupation (he must not enter any educational institution for any purpose). This in effect makes him a non-person while sparing the government the expense and burden of imprisoning the person in a state facility.

[59]For the story of Beyers Naudé and the Christian Institute see: *The Trial of Beyers Naudé: Christian Witness and the Rule of Law* (London: Search Press, 1975); Peter Randall (ed.), *Not Without Honour: Tribute to Beyers Naudé* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1981); Peter Walshe, *Church Versus State in South Africa: The Case of the Christian Institute* (London: C. Hurst, 1983) and Peter Walshe, 'Mission in a Repressive Society: The Christian Institute of Southern Africa', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 5:146-152. See also 'Towards a Confessing Church' in *Apartheid is a Heresy* (pp. 75-93) for a comparison with the church situation in Nazi Germany.

[60]See the 'SACLA Edition' of the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* No. 29 (Dec. 1979).

[61]David J. Bosch, 'Racism and Revolution: Response of the Churches in South Africa', *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* (Jan. 1979), 3:20.

[62]'The Church as the "Alternative Community"', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* No. 13 (Dec. 1975), p. 11. See also, M. Nash (ed.), *The Church and the Alternative Society* (Johannesburg: SACC, 1979).

[63]See *e.g.* Nico J. Smith *et al.*, *Storm-Kompas* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1981) and David J. Bosch, *Perspektief op die Ope Brief* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1982). For the DRC reaction to these documents and others like them, see Serfontein, *Apartheid, Change and the NG Kerk*, pp. 149-189. Serfontein also provides English texts on the most important 'dissenting' documents.

[64]'The Koinonia Declaration', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* No. 24 (Sept. 1978), pp. 58-64.

[65]This is Hexham's view: 'For the young Afrikaner Calvinists who produced it the Koinonia Declaration was an affirmation of faith in apartheid. What they rejected was the way the myth of apartheid had become incarnated, but not the myth itself.' *The Irony of Apartheid*, p. 197.

[66]*I.e.* the 'black peril'. *Cf.* the essay 'Fear: An Important Determinant in South African Politics', in Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), pp. 73-79.

[67]The image of the *laager*, or circle of wagons, comes from the days of the Voortrekkers who would use this defensive formation when attacked by the African tribes.

[68]A discussion of the detention laws is found in A. S. Mathews, *Law, Order and Liberty in South Africa* (Cape Town: Juta, 1978), pp. 133-163. Mathews concludes: 'The battery of detention measures now operative in South Africa obviously abolishes fundamental substantive and procedural rights of the individual. Less obvious than this is the violation of the general interest in the proper administration of justice.' (p. 162).

[69]See the news item: 'Full Text of Neil Aggett's Statement Before Death', *South African Outlook* (Sept. 1982), 112:146. *Cf.* 'Neil Aggett 1953-1982', *South African Outlook* (Mar. 1982), 112:48.

[70]See Donald Woods, *Biko* (New York: Paddington Press, 1978). The insensitivity of the government is highlighted by the comment made by the Minister of Police, James Kruger, 'It leaves me cold', when informed of Biko's death. (*Ibid.*, p. 166f.)

[71]*Cf.* Mathews, *Law, Order and Liberty*, p. 163.

[72]The system of secret police and informers is highly developed. *Cf.* Gordon Winter, *Inside BOSS: South Africa Secret Police* (London: Allen Lane, 1981). BOSS is the abbreviation for Bureau of State Security.

[73]The contributions are evaluated negatively from the black perspective in 'White Racism and Black Consciousness', *I Write What I Like*, pp. 61-72.

[74]Desmond Tutu, in an open letter to Vorster, agrees with the Prime Minister's assessment. *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1983), p. 2.

[75]Desmond Tutu, *Crying in the Wilderness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 68.

[76]*Ibid.*, p. 94.

[77]See the funeral sermon by Tutu, in *Hope and Suffering*, pp. 122-123.

[78]'Mr. Smith Takes a Black Parish', *Time*, 26 July 1982, p. 42.

[79]Personal letter, dated 7 September 1984.

[80]Beyers Naudé, 'Problems of Evangelism in South Africa: Political', in M. Cassidy (ed.), *I Will Heal Their Land* (Pietermaritzburg, Natal: Africa Enterprise, 1974), p. 279.

[81]Allan Boesak, *The Finger of God: Sermons on Faith and Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1982), p. 49. Boesak's work on black theology set the parameters for the discussion in South Africa. See *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1976).

[82]Douglas S. Bax, *A Different Gospel: A Critique of the Theology Behind Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa [1979]), p. 44.

Caste, mission and church growth

Philip Lewis

Caste has long been an issue for the churches of Indo-Pakistan. In this article the author, who is on the staff of the Christian Study Centre in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, explains and reviews the influential views of Dr Donald McGavran on caste and church growth. He considers those views within the particular context of the Indian sub-continent, but his reflections on the issues involved have relevance for the church's mission in differing cultural and social contexts.

Dr Donald McGavran (b. 1897) is the founding father and inspiration of the 'Church Growth' school of missiology. As its name suggests, this school stresses numerical increase in missionary activity and considers it the central concern of the church. It claims to offer a methodology for studying church growth in the past, drawing on the best insights of sociology, anthropology and the behavioural sciences, so as to identify which segments of society were responsive to the gospel. Such a study is seen as providing essential clues for devising an effective strategy today. The activity of the church and of missionary agencies – educational, medical, development – is assessed and evaluated in terms of its contribution to promoting numerical increase. Such concerns are institutionalized in the influential Institute of Church Growth of the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, USA, and disseminated through a Church Growth Bulletin and many monographs – often written by missionaries on leave at Fuller – some of which have been published by the William Carey Library. McGavran, then, is no voice crying unheard in the wilderness, but has gathered an able and devoted team around him, fired by his enthusiasm 'to proclaim Christ and to persuade men to become his disciples and responsible members of his Church.'[1]

No thought, missiological or otherwise, exists in a vacuum. Therefore to understand and evaluate McGavran's ideas we need to treat them as first and foremost a response to his experience as a missionary in India. Here he was born into a missionary family in 1897; to India he returned after his ordination in the USA in 1923 and worked for thirty years, largely in the fields of education and hospital administration. This is the logical starting point since 'India still conditions his thinking and behaviour, in spite of his world vision'.[2] We will then cross the border into Pakistan and assess the relevance of his missiology to a post-partition, independent Muslim country. This seems legitimate since McGavran makes large claims[3] for his missiology and has not seen fit to confine its relevance to Hindus in pre-partition British India. Finally, we will consider to what extent his missiology is securely rooted in the Bible. Sadly, missiology has often been the Cinderella of theology and

biblical studies with the result that 'missiologists have far too often used the Bible in naive and superficial ways'.[4]

Pickett as precursor to McGavran

The oldest Christian community in India, the Syrian Christians of Malabar in the south-west, claim St Thomas as their founder. Its origins and early history remain largely opaque and its existence only became well-known to the West in the sixteenth century with the advent of the Portuguese, who brought in their wake the Roman Catholic missions. However, the majority of Christians in India today are the product of group conversions, from within the depressed classes of Hinduism, between 1880 and 1930. In Pakistan today perhaps 95% of all Christians, Roman Catholic and Protestant alike, are descendants of the *Chuhra* caste, a caste of untouchable sweepers and landless labourers of the Punjab.[5] This pattern of movement into the church in this period holds good for most of India.

These dramatic group conversions generated considerable discussion and controversy within the missionary community in India and among Christian agencies throughout the world. For this reason the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon commissioned J. Waskom Pickett, to make 'an extensive, penetrating and objective study'[6] of the movement. Pickett's celebrated study, the fruit of three and a half years' intensive team work, was published in 1933.[7] Its findings allayed many fears. Firstly, it defended, in the face of Western individualism, the idea of a 'group decision' for Christ. In India life is lived as part of extended families and castes with important decisions, necessarily and properly, corporate. Moreover, the extended family and kinship network is the source of economic, psychological and emotional security. Pickett's study reassuringly showed that what was decisive for continued Christian growth and maturity was good teaching and pastoral oversight rather than the motives for becoming Christian. Secondly, the impact of group decisions on the wider community was favourably contrasted with the effects of drawing individual converts within the orbit of a 'mission station'[8] and its associated institutions such as hospitals and schools. The latter pattern too often uprooted the convert from his family, rendered him incapable of influencing them through the natural network of kinship and caste, drew him into a missionary ghetto in which Western habits were adopted, where he even 'lost (his) pride in Indian nationalism'[9] and where he was habituated to a dependence on missionaries for livelihood, marriage and so on. Group conversion avoided such dangers. Thirdly, the study was alert to the danger that converts would import caste prejudice and ethos into the church, but concluded that 'in every area we found an awareness of this danger and systematic attempts to overcome it. On the whole the danger is most acute in the South, where certain sections of the Roman Catholics have permitted such extreme caste distinctions as the segregation of outcastes in church services and the priority of higher caste converts in receiving the sacraments of the Holy Communion'.[10] Finally it urged mission agencies and churches to order their priorities

aright so as to remove the anomaly whereby 'groups who have professed the Christian faith . . . remain uninstructed and unled, while resources that might have met their needs are expended in trying to persuade others to do what they have done'.[11]

Anyone familiar with McGavran's writings will recognize the lineaments of many of his ideas in Pickett's study. This is not to belittle his missiology as merely derivative, but to reiterate that Pickett's work and the situation it reflected is the essential catalyst of McGavran's thinking. Pickett himself wrote that his attention was drawn to an early review of his book by McGavran which exhibited 'an enthusiasm traditionally associated with new converts'.[12]

Pickett's conclusions became, as it were, the point of departure for McGavran. Where Pickett was concerned that theological reservations and institutional inertia should not prevent missions from redeploying men and resources to maximize the results of group decisions, McGavran was more forthright. Since his concern was, unashamedly, church planting and numerical increase he went further than Pickett by rigorously evaluating other church and mission activities in terms of this criterion. In 1955 in an article in the *International Review of Mission* he even suggested a time limit of between fifteen and thirty years for a specific unit of work to be completed: 'as peoples are disciplined, it becomes possible to avoid the idea that the task of missions is endless proclamation to a disobedient people, endless philanthropy to Gospel rejectors and endless service to static little Churches'.[13] These emphases and priorities remain a constant in his thinking although, in his later work, he became more reticent about drawing up time-tables, since he became aware that the relationship between seed-sowing ministries and harvest is a good deal more complex and problematic.[14]

The second area in which McGavran developed the conclusions of Pickett's study was that of 'group decision'. One need not now be defensive about the concept, granted adequate follow-up, and its advantages in utilizing already existing kinship network in spreading the gospel seemed self-evident. McGavran developed this notion into what became known as the homogeneous unit (HU) principle, perhaps the central concept in his missiology. The HU is an elastic concept which denotes 'simply a section of society in which all members have some characteristics in common . . . whether political allegiance, geographical location, common language . . .'.[15] For our purposes we need to mention one type of HU, which has a 'people consciousness', *e.g.* 'when its members think of themselves as a separate tribe, caste or class. (Such as) the orthodox Jews (or) the castes in India.'[16]

For McGavran the HU becomes the target group for church planting. The rationale for this is a combination of pragmatic, sociological, cultural and biblical reasons. Hence McGavran's 'well-known statement . . . that people "like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers." That is, the barriers to the acceptance of the Gospel are often more sociological than theological: people reject the Gospel not because

they think it is false but because it strikes them as alien. They imagine that in order to become Christians they must renounce their own culture, lose their own identity, and betray their own people.'[17]

McGavran is less troubled than Pickett and an earlier generation of missionaries at the prospect of the proliferation of one-caste churches. Therefore, he endorses the suggestion of Canjanam Gramaliel, a third-generation Lutheran minister in Kerala, South India, for whom caste should be recognized as one of 'God's orders of preservation'. Therefore churches should be planted in all castes, which 'for some time would remain one-caste denominations . . .'[18] McGavran shares his confidence that 'becoming Christian and accepting the Bible as the only Scripture will destroy the religious sanctions which reinforce Hindu caste, and that with religious sanctions gone, the sense of separateness and class distinction will gradually disappear *while conserving the richness of Indian culture*'[19] (my emphasis). One is left, then, with a clear impression that caste, far from being an abomination to the Christian conscience, is part of that cultural richness which Christians must preserve, once certain objectionable features are removed.

These two issues, the priority of numerical growth and the HU as the vehicle to maximize it, generated most discussion at the Lausanne consultation on the HU principle in 1977. Its report reflected the continued misgivings many participants felt when it stated that 'we all understand the reasons why HU churches usually grow faster than heterogeneous or multicultural ones. Some of us, however, do not agree that the rapidity with which Churches grow is the only or even always the most important Christian priority. We know that an alien culture is a barrier to faith. But we also know that segregation and strife in the Church are barriers to faith. If, then, we have to choose between apparent acquiescence in segregation for the sake of numerical Church growth, we find ourselves in a painful dilemma. Some of us have had personal experience of the evils of tribalism in Africa, racism in America, caste in India, and economic injustice in Latin America . . . in such situations none of us could with a good conscience continue to develop HU Churches which seem to ignore the social problems and even tolerate them in the Church.'[20]

An attack on caste as the precondition for the mass movements
A recent study on caste, Christianity and the mass movements in India offers a way out of this impasse.[21] This monograph fills in a crucial gap in our knowledge of the genesis of the mass movements. Pickett's study was concerned to allay missionary fears and document the movement rather than 'attempt a critical study of the Christian mass movements. That task must await the effort of a competent Church historian.'[22] Forrester carefully documents the emergence of a consensus among Protestant missionaries by 1850 that caste was morally indefensible, incompatible with the gospel and thus demanded an uncompromising and systematic opposition.

Many missionaries were well aware that the conflicts within the Churches on the caste issue in the 1830s and 1840s had *not only discouraged numerical growth but had led to notorious schisms, and the reversion to Hinduism of large numbers from many South Indian Churches; but they regarded the egalitarian principle as too fundamental an issue to be sacrificed for the sake of short-term numerical advantages* . . . a corollary of the missionaries' detestation of caste was their acceptance of the role of protagonists of the poor, virtually the only people of influence willing to risk schism in the Churches or public disturbance for the sake of the depressed.[23]

What is significant is that those from the depressed castes who turned to Christianity as part of their corporate identity crisis, in search of increased human dignity, improved educational opportunities and so on turned to Protestant denominations more readily than to Roman Catholicism. Forrester's explanation is that Roman Catholicism 'tended to be very much more tolerant of the caste system and . . . commonly regarded it as distinguishable from Hindu religion. They did not see conversion as necessarily affecting the social status of converts . . . (therefore) the tolerant Roman attitude to the caste system made conversion to Catholicism a less plausible escape from that system than conversion to Protestantism.'[24] As a footnote to this discussion it is worth pondering a recent conversion movement of scheduled caste Hindus to Islam in 1981. It generated a good deal of controversy: some 325 families of the *Pallar* sub-caste in Meenakshipuram, a village in South India, became Muslim. Two Christian researchers documented the movement and asked the question: why did you consider Islam better than Christianity or Buddhism? They answered that 'Hinduism has many gods, expensive religious ceremonies plus caste discrimination. Buddhism is not common in India. Christianity has one God, but caste discrimination is also there. Muslims have one God and no caste discrimination.'[25]

It is apparent that the prophetic critique of caste developed by the Protestant missionaries and persevered in, despite some reversions to Hinduism, was honoured by God. It highlights the dangers of McGavran's preoccupation with numerical increase. Had his policy of tolerating caste been pursued earlier in the nineteenth century there probably would have been no mass movements. God is a surprising God and vindicated the missionary attack on caste in a most unexpected manner: the same missionaries who attacked caste were the proponents of individualism and thus did not anticipate the later group conversions!'

Pakistan: is McGavran's missiology relevant to the Muslim world?
We are fortunate in having a case-study of McGavran's missiology applied to Pakistan. Fred and Margaret Stock after eleven years of evangelistic work in Pakistan had been worn down by the factionalism among Christians. Their outlook, however, was turned upside down and revitalized by a year's study leave at Fuller Seminary in 1967. Here they drank deeply from the wells of church growth missiology and wrote their historical study of the mass movement to Christianity in the Punjab.[26] Their

research was controlled by four questions suggested by the School of World Mission faculty at Fuller: '(1) What caused the Church in the Punjab to grow at the turn of the century? (2) Which missionary methods were effective; which ineffective? (3) What segments of society proved responsive? (4) Are any of these factors part of the present-day scene?'[27]

This study, preceding Forrester's work, pays scant attention to the earlier missionaries' concerted attack on caste. Its conclusions are predictable given the questions with which they started: since most Punjabi Christians were the products of the mass movement among the 'churas', did similar groups exist today? The answer was that between half a million and a million such Hindu scheduled castes lived in the southern province of Pakistan, the Sind. Therefore the Stocks moved south. Consistent with McGavran's principles they considered it was 'essential that two divergent castes or tribes (should) not be integrated into one Christian congregation or Church organization . . . (since) we can trust to the Holy Spirit to gradually break down these barriers.'[28] Such ideas have generated considerable controversy. Bishop Bashir Jivan of the southern diocese of Hyderabad, who has worked in this field for over twenty years, is deeply critical of tolerating one-caste churches. He maintains that much of the work has always been done across castes – e.g. different castes live together in Christian hostels – and feels that McGavran's ideas simply serve to heighten caste awareness and exclusivism. The Bishop told me that, when McGavran came to Hyderabad in 1972 and insisted that evangelists should work within different caste groups, church elders from these different castes challenged him with the question: what then is the difference between Hinduism and Christianity?[29]

What is particularly disquieting about the Stocks' book is that in practice the 97% of the population, who are Muslim, are ignored. To explore the reasons for this uncovers the extent to which McGavran's assumptions are still shaped by his pre-partition experience among Hindus in India and exposes a serious logical flaw in his methodology. To ask historical questions about why a church grew in the past with a view to devising strategies for the present is a precarious enterprise. Any student of history knows how perilous it is to anticipate the future direction of events. Who in Pakistan at its creation in 1947 would have supposed that the Western trained, secular lawyer, Mr Jinnah would found a state, which thirty years after his death would claim his name as warrant for a process of fundamentalist, Islamic reconstruction?[30] One can and should rejoice in the past growth of the church, but to take this movement as in some sense normative for future developments is to forget that it too was a product of a particular set of circumstances, which have now passed. To forget this is to find oneself in the Stocks' position: because depressed Hindu castes converted in the past as part of 'group decisions', this becomes one's norm for Pakistan today. This involves discounting the majority community who did not convert in great numbers. It overlooks or belittles the fact that some Muslims did convert and that the Pakistan churches owe much to them, especially in the areas of liturgy and apologetic writings.

The mass movements in the past could take place because in pre-partition India the British government allowed them to happen and could reduce persecution. Secondly, the converts had in the missionaries powerful patrons to intercede with government officials. Neither of these factors operates today. What prevents Muslim families from becoming Christians today is more likely to be fear than cultural factors. The convert from Islam risks everything: family, property and life. Should this sound alarmist the reader should read the first few pages of Bilquis Sheikh's moving story of her recent conversion in Pakistan.[31] The chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology – the ideological centre of the fundamentalist, Islamic renewal movement in Pakistan today – a few years ago wrote a book justifying the death penalty for apostates from Islam, and criticized an earlier liberal work by a retired Pakistani judge which had sought to argue that apostasy was a sin rather than a justiciable offence.[32]

In Pakistan today one is back in a New Testament situation where the gospel triggers intense conflict. One is reminded of our Lord's frightening words: 'do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth, but a sword . . . a man's foes will be those of his own household' (Mt. 10:34a). For the Muslim convert today these words ring true. Often his choice is to stay in his village and risk death or flee to the anonymity of the burgeoning cities. In such an environment every conversion is a miracle, yet such miracles are increasingly evident in Pakistan today. To realize that God budgets for suffering is an encouragement both to the missionary and the convert. By focusing on cultural and sociological factors McGavran has sidestepped this crucial dimension which is written into every stratum of the New Testament. It seems he, and those influenced by him, are still writing mentally within a colonial era where the government often adopted an even-handed policy towards all religions and provided the freedom and security to convert. These days are largely gone, certainly for Pakistan and most of the Muslim world.

Church growth missiology in biblical perspective
While our treatment of McGavran's missiology has been critical, this in no way seeks to belittle his achievements. 'Under his leadership Church growth analysis has advanced in sophistication to the point where it has become an indispensable tool for the study of local Churches . . . so rigorous is he in dispelling romantic notions and false theological rationalizations of non-growth that he may be said to have de-mythologized this subject.'[33] Besides his preoccupation with numerical growth his missiology touches two crucial areas of contemporary concern: firstly, how to take cultural diversity seriously, thus avoiding the danger of missionaries exporting Christianity in an alien Western garb while affirming and demonstrating our oneness in Christ; secondly, how to hold together the great commission and the great commandment, proclamation (*kerygma*) and service (*diakonia*).[34] Even when one may disagree with him, one must credit McGavran, and those whom he has inspired,

with keeping such issues on church and missionary agency agendas.

This said, we may proceed to a consideration of three biblical themes, central to any serious missiological engagement with the Hindu and Muslim world. They will serve to evaluate the adequacy of McGavran's missiology within a biblical perspective.

1. Table-fellowship open to all – an essential dimension of the gospel or theologically neutral?

By insisting that the barriers to accepting the gospel are more sociological than theological McGavran often gives the impression that sociological factors are thus theologically neutral. Thus if Hindu notions of purity and pollution serve as a dissuasive for them becoming Christian, since this would mean joining in the Lord's Supper open to all castes, for McGavran the logic is clear: evangelize within one caste group.

The situation in the New Testament seems very different. What scandalized the Pharisee was Jesus' open table: 'the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners' (Lk. 7:34). As J. Jeremias reminds us, 'the mocking exaggeration should not give us the wrong idea that Jesus' normal company at table . . . was limited to "sinners"; it was quite enough to offend Jesus' opponents that *He excluded no-one from it*'[35] (my emphasis). The scandal Jesus' open table caused can only be understood when we realize that 'the supreme religious duty for contemporary Judaism was to keep away from sinners. Table fellowship in Qumran was open to the pure, to full members. For the Pharisee dealings with sinners put at risk the purity of the righteous and his membership within the realm of the holy and the divine.'[36] Knowing this, Jesus did not consider an open table an optional extra, which might be dispensed with if it unnecessarily antagonized a potential homogeneous unit, whether Pharisee or Essene. The reason is that such expressions of table-fellowship cannot be reduced to merely social events demonstrating Jesus' compassion, but they have a 'deeper significance. They are an expression of the mission and message of Jesus (Mk. 2:17), eschatological meals, anticipatory celebrations of the feast of the end-time (Mt. 8:11) in which the community of the Saints is already being represented (Mk. 2:19). *The inclusion of sinners in the community of salvation, achieved in table-fellowship, is the most meaningful expression of the message of the redeeming love of God*'[37] (my emphasis).

In the early church the open-table issue, this time involving Jewish and Gentile converts, again becomes a critical issue. Paul has to oppose Peter to his face at Antioch since 'before certain men came from James, *he ate with Gentiles*; but when they came he drew back . . . fearing the circumcision party' (Gal. 2:11-12; my emphasis). He and the Jerusalem leaders had the responsibility of commending the gospel to fellow Jews. In AD 44 Judaea reverted to the control of Roman procurators, which triggered an intensification of anti-Roman zealot activity. In such an environment the fact that Gentiles were being admitted on easy terms outside Palestine

could compromise their mission. This in part seems the logic behind Peter's withdrawal from table-fellowship at Antioch. Peter could be said here to endorse something like a McGavran stance. However, Paul was concerned with the impact of this withdrawal on the Gentiles who would infer from Barnabas' and Peter's withdrawal that they were, as uncircumcised, second-class citizens: thus the Acts 15 Jerusalem conference would be undone and Paul's affirmation that in Christ (there is) 'neither Jew nor Greek' (Gal. 3:28) neutralized.[38] It becomes apparent from these examples that C. René Padilla is right to insist that Christian fellowship across cultural barriers is 'not an optional blessing to be enjoyed wherever circumstances were favourable to it . . . (but) essential to Christian commitment'.[39]

2. Jesus as one who, in the prophetic tradition, precipitates a crisis

McGavran's preparedness to subordinate social responsibility to evangelism reflects a weakness in his missiology which betrays insufficient engagement with the Old Testament and the prophetic dimension of biblical faith.[40] This is a serious weakness, since Jesus' ministry stands very much within this tradition, his words and deeds inevitably precipitating a crisis: his open table challenges the self-assured piety of the Pharisee; his acts of healing are interpreted as usurping God's prerogative to forgive sins and therefore blasphemous; far from adopting a low profile he deliberately triggers a confrontation with the corrupt Sadducee aristocracy by prophetically driving out the money changers from the temple thus fulfilling Zechariah 14:21.

Justice can be done both to this aspect of Jesus' ministry and to evangelism when we recognize that 'the whole life of the Church – worship, fellowship, preaching, service – has a missionary *dimension*, but not all has a missionary *intention*. When, following the death of Stephen, the Jerusalem Church was attacked and dispersed, the scattering of believers produced an enormous misionary expansion (Acts 8), but there was no missionary intention. On the other hand, when, moved by the Spirit, the Church in Antioch laid hands on Saul and Barnabas and "sent them off" to preach among the Gentiles, the missionary intention was central . . .'.[41]

Protestant missionaries in nineteenth century India embodied this missionary dimension when they refused to compromise with caste in their medical and educational work. Indeed, as we have seen, the mass movements make little sense without this dimension. The fact is that McGavran himself furnishes many examples of this process. He instances the church in Puerto Rico which took up 'the cudgels for the peasants, loaned them money at a fair percentage, and reversed the flow of land. When, after this display of social justice, she proclaimed the Gospel, many heard and followed in the way.'[42] Similarly he documents how Korean Christians were active in the non-violent, non-co-operation movement launched by Koreans in 1919 against the Japanese to force them to grant self-government. Thus 'the Church became the rallying point for the oppressed Korean

people. Evangelism building on the pro-national stance of the Church produced a significant surge of growth in most provinces.'[43] Having acknowledged the close relationship between prophetic witness and evangelism or missionary dimension and missionary intention, McGavran can still write: 'Some Christian leaders under the circumstances prevailing in the 1960s (in the USA), and for a limited time, do well to turn from winning over to Christ to winning civil rights battles. But as a rule, the multiplying of cells of reborn Christians continues to have the higher priority.'[44] By insisting on giving priority to one activity McGavran has misunderstood the thrust of the gospel which is to hold them together as complementary – the efficacy of which he himself has so richly documented.

3. Christian obedience and suffering winning the resistant

Before Jesus' entry into Jerusalem he weeps for his people. His words and deeds have precipitated a crisis for contemporary Judaism. The cross is the measure of the extent to which his own people were, in McGavran's terminology, a resistant people. Yet his 'suffering unto death' creates a new situation: his disciples are reconstituted and forgiven by the risen Christ and empowered at Pentecost to witness to him. The first chapters of Acts show his suffering and resurrection challenging many who were formerly resistant, just as we are entitled to suppose that Stephen's martyrdom began a series of events which led to the conversion of the resistant Paul.

Christian obedience, precipitating a crisis leading to suffering, is a pattern indelibly imprinted in the New Testament. Yet this dimension of the gospels seems largely missing from McGavran's missiology, which makes little allowance for the gospel precipitating a crisis for Jews – and we may add Hindus and Muslims – with its inevitable corollary of suffering for those who witness to Christ. Even if one's missiology is primarily rooted in Acts and Paul's letters, as McGavran's seems to be,[45] it is difficult to understand his 'blind spot' since it is writ large here too.[46]

The gospel as it made its impact on the sub-continent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also precipitated a crisis among Hindus and Muslims which continues to this day. R. F. Young has documented Hindu responses to missionary preaching in Sanskrit writings in the nineteenth century in a provocatively entitled article, '*Extra vedos nulla salus*'.[47] Young has deliberately sought to 'convey the aggressive, inhospitable and uncompromising tenor of the original Sanskrit texts . . . symptomatic of resistant Hinduism.' This is a necessary corrective to the emphasis usually given by Western scholars to 'renascent' Hinduism which absorbed and assimilated the Christian challenge by developing new expressions of Hinduism, often insecurely rooted in the Hindu tradition.

Thus the gospel itself precipitates a crisis, creating a deep and unresolved polarization within Hinduism. The same is true for Islam in the sub-continent. Today in Pakistan a fierce struggle is going on between a Western-educated group, nurtured on an apologetic Islamic literature – developed in the late nineteenth century to defend Islam against Christian criticisms[48] – and a neo-orthodox reaction. The former seek to present Islam as an enlightened, egalitarian creed supporting a progressive society characterized by monogamy, a liberal penal code, equality for women (*etc.*), while the latter insist on polygamy, traditional Islamic penalties in all their rigour, and separation of the sexes.[49]

To reiterate, it was largely the impact of the 'Christian West' which created this crisis in Hinduism and Islam. In a situation of dangerous polarization, as one finds in Pakistan today, obedience to Christ is costly. Yet, as with the early church, it is often suffering which wins over the resistant. We do not find Paul forever goading his congregation into a concern for numerical increase, but rather encouraging them to hold fast to God in Christ in times of trial. The latter is a precondition of the former.

All of us read the Bible with our own situation in mind. Our present experience need not distort, but can often illuminate the gospel and lead us to rediscover dimensions hitherto hidden to us. The charismatic movement had led to a rediscovery of this important dimension of the gospel. Similarly national and expatriate Christians living in Latin America and Asia have rediscovered the prophetic dimension of the Bible with its concern for justice in men's dealings with each other. Those of us living and working in the Muslim world have begun to rediscover the centrality of suffering in the gospel, where witness (*martyria*) can so easily mean martyrdom.

[1]A. R. Tippett (ed.), *God, Man and Church Growth*, a Festschrift on McGavran's seventy-fifth birthday (Eerdmans, 1973), p. 38.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 19.
[3]'Till the ways of growth form part of the common knowledge of all those who are engaged in mission, the reconciling of men to God-in-Christ will limp when it should run', D. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Eerdmans, 1970), p. 69. This work represents the most systematic treatment of his ideas.
[4]Charles R. Taber, 'Missiology and the Bible', *Missiology* 11, no. 2 (April 1983), p. 229. The historical reasons for the marginal importance of missiology are given in a most useful article by David J. Bosch, 'Theological Education in Missionary Perspective', *Missiology* 10 (1982), pp. 13-33. For the situation in Britain see the same journal, pp. 229-243.
[5]See F. and M. Stock's *People Movements in the Punjab* (William Carey Library, 1975), foreword.
[6]See *God, Man and Church Growth*, p. 6.
[7]*Christian Mass Movements in India: a Study with Recommendations* (Lucknow, 1933).
[8]Bishop L. Newbigin wryly observes that 'since "mission" means going and "station" means standing still, one might think the "mission station" was the perfect contradiction in terms. It has been, nevertheless, the central element in the program of missions during most of the modern period.' *The Open Secret, Sketches for a Missionary Theology* (SPCK, 1978), p. 136.
[9]*Christian Mass Movements*, p. 342.
[10]*Ibid.*, pp. 324-325.
[11]*Ibid.*, p. 342.
[12]*God, Man and Church Growth*, p. 7.
[13]*IRM* vol. 44, pp. 400-401.
[14]In his later work, *Understanding Church Growth*, he cites the case of Andrew Mellor, a Methodist missionary, who in 1954 had seen the 'fanatical resistance' of a Nigerian tribe yield before the gospel. 'Andrew Mellor set off the decision, but the *hundred and ten years of Christian work*' (my emphasis) lay behind it (p. 305).

[15]*Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 190.

[17]*The Pasadena Consultation – Homogeneous Unit* (Lausanne Occasional Papers, 1978), p. 3.

[18]*Understanding Church Growth*, p. 319.

[19]*Ibid.*, p. 39.

[20]*The Pasadena Consultation*, p. 5.

[21]Duncan B. Forrester, *Caste and Christianity. Attitudes and Policies on Caste of Anglo-Saxon Protestant Missions in India*, London Studies on South Asia no. 1 (Curzon Press, 1980).

[22]*Christian Mass Movements*, p. 36.

[23]*Caste and Christianity*, pp. 71-72.

[24]*Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

[25]See *TRACI Journal*, New Delhi, April 1982, p. 31.

[26]*People Movements in the Punjab with special reference to the United Presbyterian Church* (William Carey Library, 1975). It contains an enthusiastic foreword by McGavran characterizing it as a 'brilliant book . . . authentic Church history (with) great relevance for the Church and her leaders today.'

[27]*Ibid.*, preface.

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 227.

[29]Another Pakistani, who works among Muslims, makes a similar point when he challenges McGavran's assumption that people find it easier to become Christian with a particular HU. He would qualify this by saying that 'some' people find it easier: '. . . some converts . . . having become dissatisfied with their cultural milieu, wish to challenge it. *They* do not wish to remain within their racial, linguistic or class setting . . .' Michael Nazir Ali, *Islam. A Christian Perspective* (Paternoster, 1983), p. 158.

[30]This irony of history is explored by a retired Chief Justice of Pakistan, Muhammad Munir, in his book *From Jinnah to Zia* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1979).

[31]*I dared to call Him Father* (Kingsway, 1978).

[32]Dr Tanzil ul Rahman, *The Islamic Law of Apostasy* (Lahore: Law Publishing Co., 1972), in Urdu.

[33]See James A. Scherer's review of McGavran's *Understanding Church Growth* in *IRM* 30 (1971), p. 127.

[34]For those who want to pursue these issues Bishop L. Newbigin offers an excellent evaluation in chapter nine of his book, *The Open Secret*. David Bosch's article, 'The structure of Mission: an exposition of Matthew 28:16-20', in *Exploring Church Growth*, ed. W. R. Shenk (Eerdmans, 1982), challenges the adequacy of McGavran's exegesis of these crucial verses.

[35]Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (SCM, 1971), p. 115.

[36]*Ibid.*, p. 118.

[37]*Ibid.*, p. 116.

[38]*Cf.* F. F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Free Spirit* (Paternoster, 1978), pp. 177, 178.

[39]'The Unity of the Church and the HU Principle', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* vol. 6, no. I (Jan. 1982), pp. 23-30.

[40]*Cf. God, Man and Church Growth*: 'McGavran's use of Scripture is strongly New Testament. He uses the Old Testament very little' (p. 21). The same writer argues that McGavran is not indifferent to social justice but rather 'believes that men have to be made new in Christ as a first step and that having accepted Christ they must serve and fight for social justice' (p. 37).

[41]L. Newbigin, 'Cross-currents in Ecumenical and Evangelical Understandings of Mission', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* vol. 6, no. 4 (1982), pp. 149-150. This distinction was developed by Hans-Werner Genischen in his work *Glaube für die Welt* (Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1971).

[42]*Understanding Church Growth*, p. 187.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 221.

[44]*Ibid.*, p. 33.

[45]'McGavran is essentially a biblical missiologist . . . the precedents of the early Church are his guidelines and he is well versed in the writings of Paul', *God, Man and Church Growth*, p. 20.

[46]Acts 5:41; 7:60; 9:16; 14:23; 20:19; Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10; *etc.* A similar point is made by B. R. Gaventa, who argues that 'for Luke one characteristic of Mission is that it operates in adversity and with *parresia*, with boldness', *Missiology* 10 (1982), p. 417.

[47]*Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* vol. 66, no. 2 (April 1982), pp. 81-95.

[48]The most famous work in this genre is Saiyid Amir Ali's *The Spirit of Islam* (1891). It is repeatedly reissued in Pakistan today. One historian has not unfairly accused Amir Ali of encouraging 'a sterile narcissism among English-educated Muslims (and) he helped to create that educational chasm between the modern-educated and the traditionally-educated Muslims, where the one does not know the religion he is defending but defends it all the same, and the other knows his religion but does not know against what he is defending it.' P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (CUP, 1972), p. 107.

[49]Munir, *From Jinnah to Zia*, is an excellent study of this ongoing struggle.

Issues for the church in a multi-racial society

John Root

The author of this article is vicar of a London church and a former chairman of the Evangelical Race Relations Group. His examination of Christian ministry in British multi-racial society will be of use not only to readers in Britain, but to those in comparable situations elsewhere in the world.

Over the past forty years Britain has become a multi-racial society.[1] Insularity has often blinded British people from seeing how far this has been part of a much wider 'south-north' pattern of migration, with the old industrial centres of north-west Europe and North America needing to draw in low-paid labour from much poorer areas. Thus alongside of migration from the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent to Britain, there has been migration to France from North Africa and the West Indies, to Belgium from central Africa, to the Netherlands from the East Indies, to Germany from Turkey, to Canada from the Caribbean, and to the richer north from the poorer south in the United States and

Italy. The earlier pattern of the metropolitan European powers administering their colonies for their own economic benefit was thus superseded by the importation of labour, often from those colonies, to maintain industrial profitability. In turn that pattern of drawing in labour has been now superseded, over the past two decades, by the exportation of capital to a new periphery of low cost industrial centres (especially in the Far East and Latin America), with growing unemployment in the old industrial areas, not least amongst those who migrated in a few decades earlier.

Britain, then, represents one particular pattern of a multi-racial society, which can be set alongside other patterns that have developed through different historical circumstances – either by conquest (as in the Americas), by colonization (as in southern Africa), or by commercial enclaves (as in South-East Asia or East Africa). This article will look at the issues raised for Christian faith and behaviour by Britain's pattern of becoming a multi-racial society. Hopefully it will have considerable relevance for countries with a similar history, but less relevance for those with a different kind of historical experience. In approaching these issues we are reminded that Scripture also comes from societies that were well aware of the ethnic diversity of their world, yet whose situation (both for Israel in the Old Testament, and for the church in the New) had a quite different configuration to our own. Thus whilst Scripture certainly relates to questions of 'race', our questions by and large are not the same as the ones they faced.

What is 'race'?
The first question raised by 'race' in societies such as Britain today is simply defining what it is we talk about when we talk about 'race'. An inaccurate understanding of what is at stake is bound to lead to ineffective or even harmful responses. As it has been used in the past forty years race has tended to be identified with colour – 'race relations' has been concerned with how people of different skin-colours relate to one another. One may well ask 'Why?'. If people choose to regard someone's colour as important, then to some degree it becomes so, but with the difficult consequence that even by attending to what others wrongly consider important – even to rebut them – one focuses attention on that issue.[2] In fact colour has taken on importance in the minds of many because it has been seen as indicating a genetic make-up, leading to 'scientific' differences in matters such as temperament, character, sexuality or intelligence. The Jamaican writer, Joyce Gladwell, records the shattering effect on her of reading the 1910-11 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*'s entry on 'the negro':

> The negro in certain . . . characteristics . . . would appear to stand on a lower evolutionary plane than the white man, and to be more closely related to the highest anthropoids. . . . The arrest or even deterioration in mental development is no doubt very largely due to the fact that after puberty sexual matters take the first place in the negro's life and thoughts. . . . The mental constitution of the negro is very similar to that of a child, normally good-natured and cheerful, but subject to sudden fits of emotion and passion during which he is capable of performing acts of singular atrocity.[3]

Such statements are now generally in disrepute; the only remaining disputed area is that of intelligence, where the impossibility of screening out socially-given variables, such as the mother's health and well-being, the child's physical, mental and emotional experience in early years, and the projections that society places on a child because of its colour, make comparison and assessment of objective differences meaningless.

This attempt to compare and identify hard and fast differences between races is alien to the biblical understanding of peoples, where physical differences may exist, but are not given significance or seen to predicate other differences.[4] The consistent testimony of Scripture is that the human race is one race – created as a unity by God (Acts 17:26), and all alike intended to be the recipients of the gospel (Mt. 28:19). To a society too easily disposed to make colour important, it is also worth noting that some contemporary societies take colour less seriously than Western Europe does.

Race and culture
Does this mean therefore that the Christian response should be to disregard differences of colour and appearance totally? In reality, most people's experience is that colour does provide a rough and ready indication of other differences; for example it is far more reliable to presume that a brown-skinned Indian in Britain will be of another world faith than a black-skinned West Indian or white-skinned Briton. Such differences, however, are based on the loose and imprecise guidelines of 'culture', not the rigid determinants of genetics; the Indian may be a Christian, the West Indian prefer Bach, the Briton like curry. Culture is a much more complex phenomenon than 'race', as narrowly defined in terms of colour. As well as individuals not conforming to their cultural norms, culture also develops (the broad culture of young blacks in Britain differs markedly from that of their parents) and knows of distinctions that have nothing to do with colour. Australians often feel culturally different from Britons, Jamaicans from Barbadians, Gujeratis from Bengalis, and so on and so on. For most people what matters to them about their culture is fairly specific details of family life, food, music, art, values, religion and the like which are far more finely drawn than a crudely simplified canvas of 'racial differences' will allow.

Culture – both culture shared, and at times culture borrowed, or held in distinction to other cultures – provides much of the meaning and richness of everyday human life. Despite its potential for idolatry and bringing people into bondage, it can also be a part of God's good gifts to us. Christians do well to take it seriously. It is not without significance that in the Acts of the Apostles Luke shows a sharp eye for all those minutiae of culture that made up the variegated world of the Roman Empire.[5] He frequently records where people come from, or their ethnic background, or the political and social particularities of places. How sad the contrast with modern Britain where people from a variety of backgrounds, cultures and places (including Britain itself) are lumped together with the hypocritically misleading term of 'immigrant' because of their skin

colour. Recognizing a person's particular culture is to affirm their dignity and humanity. Thus whilst Paul recognized that an undue degree of cultural pride formed an idolatrous barrier to the gospel (Phil. 3:5-11), he also saw that a Christian who would witness effectively in a multi-cultural world needed to be at ease in crossing cultural boundaries (1 Cor. 9:19-23). At the same time he owned a solidarity with his own fellow Jews which seems to go further than that of religious identity (Rom. 9:1-5); they are 'my brothers, those of my own race'.

There is a powerful temptation, however, for Christians to let their understanding of what race means stay at the level of culture. This encourages a 'live and let live' attitude that creates few problems for the comfortable, though it can encourage a condemning attitude towards those whose experience of a multi-racial society is more painful. Most seriously, it is held in blindness to the social realities of multi-racial Britain and similar societies.

In reviewing a book which describes in detail the variety of cultures of those who have migrated to Britain (*Between Two Cultures*, edited by James Watson), the sociologist Daniel Lawrence writes:

> I am concerned that (these essays) may encourage some of those who read them to continue to think of the relations between the indigenous population and ethnic minorities solely or primarily in cultural terms. Many decision makers have found this valuable but, in itself, quite inadequate perspective, congenial, not least because it tends to direct attention away from crucial political questions concerning the role which ethnic minorities occupy in our economic, political and social structures.[6]

The experience of many of us who have ministered in multi-racial areas for some time would confirm these comments: beginning from being primarily concerned with how different cultures could belong together in one church, we have found that the total situation could only be understood through recognizing 'the role which ethnic minorities occupy in our economic, political and social structures'.

Race and power

Britain has not become multi-racial because of the free intermingling of equal people of different races (a false perspective which can be more easily acquired in student circles, where there generally is much greater equality between students of different races). As was stated earlier the case was rather that the powerful, prosperous, usually imperial 'host' societies of Europe and North America drew in a labour force from impoverished, economically weak, usually colonized countries with a crying problem of unemployment. The consequence was that immigrants to Britain in the 1950s and early 1960s came to do poorly paid jobs, especially in transport, hospitals and heavy industry, and not surprisingly settled in the areas of poorest housing, schools and other facilities.

This initial disadvantage was sustained and intensified by the prejudices already existing in British society. Britain's imperial past had created its own rationale of racial superiority, a rationale that had permeated the whole society. It has been perpetuated particularly through the assumptions of a 'Euro-centric' education which has focused on white achievements ('discovering' Victoria Falls), and neglected white exploitation, for example in the tendency of text-books to attend to the abolition of slavery whilst neglecting the appalling brutality in its centuries-long imposition. These same assumptions are still popularly communicated through the media, which have systematically neglected both the suffering experienced by black people and their positive contributions to British society, whilst yet focusing on them as 'problems'. Thus the press has been very largely silent on the racial violence experienced by black people, while giving front-page and misleading coverage to 'black street crime'. Again, while the past two decades have seen a net outflow of migration from Britain, 'immigration' (which usually refers only to that minority of immigrants who are non-white) has been portrayed as a cause of overcrowding and in need of restriction. In view of the subsequent violence in Britain, the words written by Charles Husband in 1975 were sadly prophetic:

> If the news media provide a definition of events in Britain in which the black population are presented as a threat whilst the realities of racial discrimination and the distribution of the vital social resources of housing, education, employment and welfare receive only superficial coverage, then we should not be complacent about the future welfare of what is already a multi-racial society[7]

This understanding of how racism is diffused in our society is vital, for without it the phenomenon will be misunderstood. Racial prejudice is then wrongly seen as the wilful and evil choice of individuals who behave in an offensive and irrational way, with criticism limited to extreme groups (such as the 'National Front'). By contrast, recognizing the way that the mentality of the whole society is permeated by racist assumptions suggests that overt and militant racism is merely the tip of an iceberg upheld by more generalized attitudes and behaviour throughout the whole society. Racism is not simply a garment that people willingly put on, it is also an aroma that we unwittingly acquire. Simply to condemn extreme groups is ineffective; sin (as ever) is more subtle, complex and deep rooted than that.

Assumptions of superiority and exclusiveness towards non-whites generates behaviour that has far-reaching effects – there is reluctance or fear about the consequences of promoting a black person to responsibility; teachers have low expectations of black children in the class-room; neighbours are suspicious or uneasy if non-whites move next door to them. In a myriad of small ways what is inside people's minds comes to be reflected in the sort of behaviour evidenced in society, and patterns of racism are built up. The evidence that black people are so discriminated against is clear and well-documented.[8] The upshot is a continuing correlation between being non-white and being powerless and poor. Just as in a medical diagnosis a barium meal is used to draw attention to already present weaknesses in a person's body, so in society the very visible presence of disadvantaged black people in particular areas has the effect of drawing attention to already longstanding injustices. Certainly such

deprivation is not limited to black people, but black people do suffer unequally in British society from pressures that can contain them.

There is a wealth of theological material that applies to this understanding that 'race' is concerned with the way that distinctive ethnic groups are kept in positions of powerlessness and deprivation: there is the understanding of the Exodus as God's work in liberating an oppressed and trapped people; there are those elements in the law which sought to contain disparity between rich and poor, the prophetic teaching that God's concern for justice in society took priority over religious matters, Jesus' ushering in of a kingdom that means 'good news for the poor', and the apostolic church's efforts to promote practical equality of possessions and power amongst its members. All these speak powerfully to a situation where 'race' is very much bound up with the imposition and continuance of unequal relationships.[9]

Race and the church

Multi-racial societies such as Britain, therefore, point us to two separable issues. One is the co-existence of different cultures, where skin colour can be but is not always a pointer to such differences. The other factor is those differences in power, wealth and opportunity which can be summarized as 'class'. Balancing the importance of these two factors in a multi-racial society is not always easy. As we have seen, for Christians whose own background is with the advantaged, questions of culture tend to be easier to handle, so that a multi-racial society is largely seen as raising issues of how different cultures relate, and how Christians operate across those cultural differences. But to ignore questions of power and social class is to ignore what is at the core of what it means to be black for many people in Britain.

How should the church face these issues? The New Testament church transcended all known human barriers. This was seen to be a necessary consequence of what it meant 'to put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there can not be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all' (Col. 3:10, 11). Thus in the new people that God has made differences of religious background, culture and social class no longer count. This present reality in the church points forward to the eschatological worship in heaven of 'a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb' (Rev. 7:9).

It would be quite alien to the relation of theology to behaviour in the New Testament to see this as something the first Christians could believe but not practise; rather we read of them taking difficult and costly steps to ensure their common life reflected these convictions. Thus the 'cross-cultural' conflict between Hellenists and Hebrews in Acts 6 over the distribution of food to widows was resolved, not by agreeing to follow separate paths, but by meeting the complaints of those who saw themselves as disadvantaged (the Hellenists) through appointing seven deacons to oversee the food distribution – significantly men who by their names all seem to have come from the disadvantaged group. In the same spirit, Paul, when faced with a residual sense of ethnic and religious superiority in Peter's refusal to eat with Gentiles, faced the issue head on, and upbraided Peter's insincerity over a divisiveness that was seen as denying the 'truth of the gospel' (Gal. 2:11-16).

This short theological summary[10] should indicate the impermissibility of the 'homogeneous unit principle' that sometimes appears in Church Growth theories. New Testament Christians were not prepared to separate ethnically in the hope of pushing on faster with preaching 'the gospel'; rather they saw that failure to achieve a practically expressed integration of believers quite simply destroyed the gospel they were commissioned to preach.

Given this clear witness of the New Testament, the failure of the church in Britain today to be robustly multi-racial is profoundly disturbing. In an early study of *West Indian Migrants and the London Churches* (1962) Clifford Hill claimed that 66% of West Indian migrants had belonged to 'mainstream' churches in their homelands, compared with 4% in Britain. On one level, of course, this was a form of integration – a conforming to the secularized habits of their English neighbours; and for many migrants the disappointing emptiness and lack of fervour of the churches, alongside the pressures of over-time and Sunday working, were sufficient to cause them to leave off church-going. But many West Indians can also speak of the positive rejection they received in British churches, either being ignored or pointedly asked not to come back again.

Such overt racism hardly exists now, and its damage has been done; but we have seen that such racism is by no means the main enemy of black people in Britain. In various other ways non-acceptance of blacks is perpetuated in the churches. This may take the form of avoiding ordinary fellowship with black church members – such as ignoring them in the street, refusing or not giving hospitality; so that in a number of ways white Christians can put their ethnic identity and the prejudices of their peers above their oneness in Christ's new, multi-racial humanity. Less consciously it may take the form of undervaluing the abilities and contributions of non-white church members. Such attitudes are soon discerned by black church members, even if they rarely say so to white church members; with the result that what can seem a disappointing unresponsiveness by blacks to the well-meaning efforts of a church is lamented, but the reasons for it never exposed. Church members, in fact, will rarely differ from the prevailing assumptions of their own society unless specific steps are taken to help them see the effects of unconscious racism, and this sort of 'Racism Awareness' training is still in its infancy in the churches.[11]

Thus the burgeoning energies of black Christians have been increasingly exercised in churches with predominantly black leadership and membership. The reasons for this growth are manifold, and it would be wrong to see prejudice in the 'mainstream' churches as the exclusive cause; nonetheless overt rejection and unconsciously racist assumptions have played their part,

alongside of the ways in which a 'church of the educated' excludes those without formal education.[12]

To see the emergence of black-led churches as simply 'cultural', as many white clergy do (that is, a preference for 'their' way of doing things in terms of music, preaching, organization, moral standards and the like), is to side-step a more substantial issue: black churches are in large part a response to the experience of racism and oppression in British society, and they provide one way of handling the 'pressure' that unites black people. Thus mainstream leaders should seek neither to undermine them, nor simply to tolerate them as 'separate but equal' manifestations of Christianity, but rather seek to remove those things in society and church that make it so hard for Christians of different races to have fellowship together. On the principle of working from where we are, it is important to develop local, national and international links between the different racial/cultural/denominational traditions: in fellowship between leaders, in common worship and celebration, in combining in evangelism and social concern. But these should be seen as interim measures whilst seeking the further goal that every local church should reflect the ethnic variety of its locality. This means all churches will need a measure of cultural flexibility; whilst the 'mainstream' churches, which are far more often located amongst the powerful, will also need to hear and own the experience and voice of the powerless.

As regards the activities of a local church in a multi-racial area, the temptation is always to seek to be positive, in terms of promoting integration, whilst side-stepping the negative, that is the need actually to eradicate racism amongst its own members: and yet which will, if left unattended to, always frustrate positive measures to build a truly multi-racial church – that is, one which is multi-racial not only in attendance, but in leadership and the style of its activities as well.

That is not to decry the value of the positive: that is of a Christian fellowship that rejoices in its diversity, and where people of different races together offer themselves to God, love each other, and increasingly share their lives. It is my experience that such unity in the Spirit grows best when the church simply does what it is supposed to do – prays, worships, hears God's Word, and extends open-hearted love to all its neighbours. Gradually God draws together people of different backgrounds who are hungry for the spiritual reality found in Christ. By contrast focusing on people's ethnic identity rather than their common humanity, can lead to artificiality, awkwardness and self-consciousness. Occasional exceptions, when one particular group celebrate their ethnic identity, may have their place, but probably ought not to be institutionalized, except where a major dividing line occurs, such as language or background in another faith. Thus the tendency to be too concerned about techniques of drawing in ethnic minorities ought to be resisted: occasional practical hints about what churches may find effective (like having Watchnight services in areas of West Indian settlement) has some value, but preoccupation with technique can lead to a manipulative attitude.

More important is for church members, and leaders in particular, to have that cosmopolitan concern about the whole world and its peoples that we have already noticed characterized Luke's writing. Lack of curiosity and regard for other cultures is a form of racism. Only as we immerse ourselves in the world of others do we relate freely and easily. Clifford Hill's judgment on the church's failure to hold the loyalty of the first generation of West Indian migrants, that it could only be reversed by ministers who were at home with the traditions, family patterns and outlook of West Indian migrants, still has much to teach the church today.

In building a multi-racial congregation, where people of different races offer their personalities and share their gifts, much is being done to overcome racism. The negative, often media-induced stereotype, that the mixing of different races is a recipe for violent conflict, can be gloriously contradicted by a racially mixed fellowship of Christians. White superiority or condescension is muted by appreciating the contribution of black Christians; people cease to be 'immigrants' or problems and take on Christian names; the experiences and sufferings of others start to be taken seriously.

But alongside of all this must go the demanding work of removing the negative forces against integration – of helping white church members see and repent of their own attitudes of superiority, exclusion and unconcern. As with any encounter with sin, this can arouse resistance and hard-heartedness in people. Love, prayer, a clear understanding of God's word, the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and a growing trust that we are sinners made right with God through Christ alone, are the means by which people are helped to turn away from prejudiced attitudes and behaviour. Amongst other enemies, a particular danger evangelical Christians need to guard against is the complacency that because we are born again we will not be prejudiced – we need to see that because of its subtlety and because of the pressures of our world, racism will be the norm for white Christians unless they work hard at recognizing and countering it.

Church and society

Given that the church's first responsibility is to set its own house in order in promoting just race relationships, what responsibility does it have to the whole society, and how should it discharge it? Wrong attitudes in society inevitably seep into the church and whilst as far as possible they should be resisted, there is rarely a clear demarcation between church and world; inevitably and rightly so if the church is to encourage seekers and build up those who are immature in their faith. Thus racism in the church will be reduced in part only by reducing it in society; conversely if society experiences tensions between different racial groups, this is likely to be reflected by tensions and failure to relate in the church.

However it is not good order (in the sense of good race relationships) in the church that we should be primarily concerned about. The church is to be salt and light in the world: part of its stewardship is to set before men the blessing that comes from following the ways of God's kingdom. It is arrogant for Christians to talk as though nothing good can be achieved in the world outside of the

saving grace of Christ; since they are made in the image of God, people without Christ, though fallen, are nonetheless able to do good. It is an observable fact that people who are not Christians can show a higher commitment to racial justice and harmony than those who are; so we do not waste our time in calling upon all men to seek these things, even if we also preach that in Christ our capacity to love and care is immeasurably deepened.

The tragic consequences of a theology which makes a rigid distinction between the church and the world in this respect can be seen in Richard Gutteridge's study of the German churches' feeble and ineffective response to Nazi persecution of the Jews, *Open Thy Mouth for the Dumb*. He summarizes the pietistic reaction to the 'Crystal Night' of 9 November, 1938, as follows:

> Such warfare was necessary, and it could well lead to the liquidation of the Jews. It was inadmissible to judge or condemn it by reference to the Word, or to the spirit or the thought of the New Testament, since New Testament standards were valid only for the regulating of relationships between believing Christians.[13]

How then, can Christians work for a more just multi-racial society? One way is by communicating their knowledge of what is happening in their society. Referring to the urban riots in Britain in the summer of 1981, one writer has spoken of the 'comprehension gap'[14] that they revealed between the majority of British people and the media on the one hand, and those who actually live in inner urban areas on the other. The churches have members across this gap. It is vitally important that they communicate with each other, and in particular that the voice of those who suffer is heard and relayed by the church. The churches have their own communication networks, and often have access to national, secular networks; it is important that they are courageous in using these to relay experiences of life that many will find uncomfortable and prefer not to listen to.

Listening and communicating will lead to acting. There is a right modesty which should prevent Christians being too sure that they have got the definitive answer to a particular social question, and there needs to be a humble readiness to take seriously other points of view, whether coming from inside or outside the church; but as with any other moral question, an agnosticism which never leads to a principled stand is to deny the concreteness of Christian morality, and ignores the urgency of a situation which involves so much human suffering. Just as the complexity and variety of opinions about matters of sexual morality has not inhibited Christians from making specific moral stands, so too on questions of racial justice Christians must be prepared to commit themselves publicly to positions which will not command universal assent. Thus the Nationality Act introduced by the British government in 1981 was widely opposed by Christians as imposing discrimination against non-whites in an unjust way. Similarly current government proposals which diminish the resources of inner urban boroughs to meet educational and other needs, which surely intensify the disadvantages of ethnic minorities and others, ought to be opposed.

These issues need to be tabled as legitimate questions of Christian concern, just as abortion or pornography are. How they are dealt with will vary – by specific Christian pressure groups supported by individual Christians; by congregations or denominations discussing issues and publicly advocating policies; by Christians allying themselves with more broadly based groups. No one model of Christian social action should be applied exclusively.[15]

Race and other faiths

One major question a multi-racial society often raises for Christians is when ethnic differences broadly coincide with religious differences; in many parts of western Europe over the past forty years people of other major world faiths have migrated into traditionally 'Christian' countries. This is not the place to look in general at inter-faith relationships, but the understanding of race put forward in this article does have important implications for understanding these relationships.

We are warned against the false innocence that neglects the social situation in which a relationship with a person of another faith takes place. Such a relationship comes at the end of a long history, the effects of which need to be recognized for both sides. If the evangelist is white he needs a humbled awareness of his own complicity in racism, an awarenes that can become more acute as we listen to what the other has to say. The New Testament norm was for the weak to evangelize the strong (1 Cor. 1:18 - 2:8); so often we are working the other way round. We will need to be aware of the way we are perceived as the representatives of a more powerful and wealthy culture and one that has often been arrogant and overbearing. Until that is worked through there may well be a hidden response of subservience and resentment. Part of this process will involve sharing in God's indignation against all injustices, and letting the other person see this aspect of the Christian faith. We talk with the 'sinned against' as well as the sinner, and such preaching only has integrity if it comes out of a deep-seated desire to put wrongs right.

A white person will also need to recognize how far racism may have clouded his perception of the other person's faith, along with other aspects of his life and culture. For example, faced with the resurgence of Islam, the popular reaction in the West has been to portray it in the most unfavourable light, seeking out the worst examples, which can malign what Islam means to many of its believers. There is a sharp contrast between the picture of fanaticism, arrogance and violence that is depicted through the secular and Christian media and the reality of meeting the friendly, open-minded and courteous imam who lives down our road.

It is unfortunate that the church in Britain has too easily been caught in a dilemma between a 'hit and run' evangelism that is seen as threatening and intrusive and a social concern that has been embarrassed about pressing Christ's call for personal discipleship. Such a dilemma can only be avoided by an evangelism which is an integral part of long-term commitment to a multi-racial area. Short-term visits to preach or distribute literature,

especially if with only shallow roots in a local church, run the risk of reinforcing the impression that Christianity is alien and is bound to detach people from their culture. Only over time can relationships be built, commitment to working for racial justice be established, and confidence built up. It is in this context of whole-hearted commitment to sharing the life and the experience of a multi-racial area that we can bring life and reconciliation to others.

[1] In saying this I am aware that Britain was in many ways a multi-racial society for the preceding four centuries, with a substantial black presence; but (partly because it was largely male and not self-reproducing) one with a different relationship with British society. See James Walvin *Black and White: the Negro in English Society, 1555-1945* (1973).

[2] A clear parallel is with the way protests against pornography also publicize it.

[3] The quotation is taken from *Brown Face, Big Master* (IVP, 1969), pp. 53-54, referring to the 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, pp. 344-348. It is interesting to contrast this with statements produced by UNESCO-sponsored conferences of academics on the subject of race and racial prejudice, both in Paris, September 1967, and Athens, April 1981. The former states: 'Current biological knowledge does not permit us to impute cultural achievements to differences in genetic potential.'

[4] Nu. 12:7; Ct. 1:5; Je. 38:7; Acts 8:27; 13:1 all most likely refer to people who were dark or black-skinned, usually with little or no attention given to the fact.

[5] Acts 4:36; 6:1; 8:27; 10:1; 11:20; 16:14; 18:2; 18:24; 20:4.

[6] In *New Community*, vol. 6, nos. 1 & 2, p. 168.

[7] In *White Media and Black Britain* ed. Charles Husband (Arrow, 1975), p. 15.

[8] There have been many such surveys in local areas; David J. Smith's *Racial Disadvantage in Britain: the PEP Report* (Penguin, 1977).

[9] Ex. 3:7-9; Lv. 25:13-17; 35-38; Is. 1:10-20; Amos 5:21-24; Lk. 1:46-55; 4:16-21; 2 Cor. 8:13-15.

[10] For a fuller account, see David Bronnert's chapter on 'Culture' in *Obeying Christ in a Changing World*, vol. 3, ed. John Stott and Bruce Kaye.

[11] For further details: Ecumenical Unit for Racism Awareness Programmes, 56 Camberwell Rd, London SE5.

[12] As happened in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century England, with the exclusion of working-class evangelical non-conformity from the Church of England. See in particular *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914* by Alan D. Gilbert (Longmans, 1976).

[13] In Richard Gutteridge, *Open Thy Mouth for the Dumb: The German Evangelical Church and the Jews, 1879-1950* (Blackwell, 1976), p. 190.

[14] Kenneth Leach writing about the 1981 urban riots in Britain.

[15] The Evangelical Race Relations Group in Britain seeks to be a forum for Christians working at these issues. Their address is 12 Bell Barn Shopping Centre, Cregoe St, Birmingham B15 2DZ.