

**THE FUNCTION OF DOUGLAS JOHN HALL'S  
THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY  
IN HIS  
THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

**BY**

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The 1984-1990 generation of students and staff of the University of the Western Cape in general and the Faculty of Theology in particular require special mention because it is in that place in their midst and in that turbulent period that I experienced my first formative academic years.

Furthermore, this moment of gratitude cannot go by without particular mention of my promoter, Professor D.J. Smit. In the vacuum of academic role-models you provided me with fresh air and new horizons.

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Finally, I give thanks to God whom I know is quite comfortable with my revaluation of all Christian values.

Vincent A. van Breda  
Mitchells Plain, Autumn, 1994.

DECLARATION.

I, Vincent Arthur van Breda, declare that "THE FUNCTION OF DOUGLAS JOHN HALL'S THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN HIS THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY" is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature: *V.A. van Breda*

Date: *25/4/94*



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"To understand the meaning of the Christian faith, the Christian community must come to a correct understanding of its concrete historical situation. Conversion to God implies self-knowledge. This principle also applies to communities; they must come to a correct collective self-understanding."

Theology in the Americas, S. Torres and J. Eagleson (eds.), (Orbis Books, 1976). p. 434.

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a stylized classical building with six columns and a pediment.

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## SUMMARY

No theologian can credibly claim to be able to speak on behalf of the whole human race in all places at all times and under all circumstances. In recent years theologians stressed the importance of the particular group. In our day authentic theology is characterised by the need to know the self (chapter 1).

Douglas John Hall accepts this and therefore consciously theologises on behalf of those in the dominant culture of the North American continent. He describes the primary characteristic of the human condition of this group of people as the experience of the failure of their symbolic world. This disintegration is especially felt with regard to the perception of the human being (anthropology).

So, in chapter 2 I focus on Hall's theological anthropological perception of those in the dominant culture of the North American continent.

Hall views the primary task of all disciplines in this context - including Christian theology - in the present time as providing resources of meaning in this world of disintegrating symbols. Consequently, he proposes his theological methodology as such a resource.

In chapter 3 I focus on Hall's theological methodology as a means out of this present condition of meaninglessness - due to the disintegration of especially the anthropological symbol - for those in the dominant culture of the North American continent.

A basic premise of this study is that anthropology determines theology. Therefore, the primary focus of this study is to reflect on the function of Douglas John Hall's theological anthropology in his theological methodology (chapter 4).

This study is being done at a time when the need for original and authentic thinking for those in the "Coloured experience", of whom I am a part, is extremely acute. This is especially true for those who are doing theological thinking for this group of people.

In my opinion the question of identity is the primary problem facing all disciplines within this context - especially Christian theology. Therefore, I am of the opinion that we will be able to develop an acceptable theological method which could lead us in the creation of our own theology only until we come to terms with this question of identity.

Thus this reading of Hall does not take place in a vacuum, but is being done to begin to respond in a creative manner to this question of identity (chapter 5).

## SINOPSIS

Geen teoloog vandag kan daarop aanspraak maak om namens die hele mensdom op alle plekke en by elke geleentheid te praat nie. In die onlangse verlede het teoloë al hoe meer die belangrikheid van die spesifieke groep begin beklemtoon. In ons dag en tyd word ware teologie gekenmerk deur die noodsaaklikheid van self-kennis (hoofstuk 1).

Douglas John Hall aanvaar ook die beginsel en teologiseer daarom bewustelik van die mense in die dominante kultuur van die Noord Amerikaanse kontinent. Hy beskryf die primêre karaktertrek van die toestand van die groep mense as die ervaring van die disintegrasie van hul simboliese wêreld. Die disintegrasie word veral beleef binne die kader van hul mensbeskouing (antropologie).

Daarom, in hoofstuk 2, fokus ek op Hall se teologies-antropologiese persepsie van die in die dominante kultuur van die Noord Amerikaanse kontinent.

Volgens Hall is die hoofsaak van alle dissiplines in die konteks - insluitende die Christelike teologie - in die huidige historiese moment die verskaffing van bronne van betekenis vir die wêreld met sy disintegrerende simbole.

Hy stel sy teologiese metodiek voor as so 'n bron.

In hoofstuk 3 fokus ek op Hall se teologiese metodologie as 'n instrument om die situasie van betekenisloosheid te hanteer vir die in die dominante kultuur van die Noord Amerikaanse kontinent.

'n Basiese bousteen van die studie is die aanname dat antropologie bepaal teologie. Daarom is die primêre fokus van die hele studie die funksie van Hall se teologiese antropologie in sy teologiese metodologie (hoofstuk 4).

Die studie word geproduseer in 'n tyd waarin die behoefte aan oorspronklike en bevrydende denke oor die mense in die "Bruin ervaring", van wie ek 'n onlosmaaklike deel is, baie akuut is. Dit is veral waar vir die wat teologiseer namens en binne die groep mense.

Ek is van mening dat die vraag na identiteit die sentrale vraag is wat alle dissiplines in die gemeenskap in die gesig staar. Dit is veral waar vir die Christelike teologie. Ek is verder van die opinie dat ons sal in staat wees om 'n aanvaarbare eie teologie te ontwikkel slegs as ons die vraag van die identiteit van ons mense in die "Bruin ervaring" in 'n houdbare manier antwoord. Die lees van Douglas John Hall vind dus nie in 'n vakuum plaas nie, maar word gedoen om in 'n kreatiewe manier te begin antwoorde bied vir die soeke na identiteit (hoofstuk 5).



## Content

Summary

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Bibliography

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## CHAPTER 1.

### THE THEOLOGICAL NECESSITY OF KNOWING ONE'S IDENTITY.

The development of theology in recent years is characterised by a sensitivity for the particular. No theologian can credibly claim to be able to speak on behalf of the whole human race in all places at all times and under all circumstances.

This basic premise came to be an accepted principle in theological methodology especially after theologians in the margins began to speak on behalf of groups of people whose life experiences were totally ignored or underplayed within traditional (European) theology.

Furthermore, theology, as with the rest of human creative expression, evolves out of people's self-definition. Many of the questions and anxieties about their lives find expression in this form of human expression. Christian theology is no exception.

In my opinion the question of identity, which at present is experienced in a very acute manner by the people within the "Coloured experience"<sup>1</sup>, is that issue which should be central in the creative expression of all disciplines - including Christian theology - in this community.

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<sup>1</sup>I prefer to define this community from an experiential point of view and not that of race or ethnicity. These two categories are too fluid and controversial within this community. My argument is precisely that this community is still grappling with self-definition. In the absence of an acceptable self-definition I use the descriptive phrase "those in the 'Coloured experience'" to point to the people of whom I speak. My definition of this group of people is thus done from an experiential/existential point of departure.

A quick scan of some sources of the DEW line<sup>2</sup> dealing with this community (see also chapter 5) reveals an acute discomfort with the official categories of identification and a deeply felt anguish due to the confusion caused by this official name-giving in the midst of the actual experience of namelessness.

The reality of not having a proper name is a theme which is reflected by diverse authors - both from inside and outside of this group, e.g.

Wie is ek  
Sometimes a Whitey  
Sometimes a Coloured  
All depends who got the wallet.

(.....  
.....  
.....)

Iemand vra ... wie is jy werklik ?  
What the heck is ek  
(.....)  
.....)<sup>3</sup>

Elaine Durbach<sup>4</sup> expresses the same sentiment when she says:

"When I set out to write this text  
I didn't know that I was pursuing

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<sup>2</sup>Hall uses the concept "DEW line" (i.e. "Distant Early Warning Line") to depict people (i.e. "social scientist, anthropologists, historians, and (increasingly) physical scientists") in the North American society and elsewhere who warn the rest of society when something is wrong in it. The metaphor comes from the examples of "rabbits and canaries who were used in the early mining or submarine industries to monitor the supply of oxygen, and through their bodily reactions, which were faster, to warn the human beings present when the commodity runs out." He gets this concept from Marshal McLuhan . (see D.J. Hall Thinking the Faith - Christian Theology in a North American Context, (Augsburg Fortress, 1989), p. 138. see also footnote 89, Ibid.).

<sup>3</sup>Wie is ek - a poem by J. Josephs in Optog, eds. W. Adams, L. Koza, P. Petersen, (Domestica Publishers, 1990), p. 94.

<sup>4</sup>see J. Rubythan & E. Durbach, With Mixed Feelings - A Glimpse of Life in the Coloured Sectors, (Don Nelson, 1976).

a mirage. (...)  
My first lesson lay in the fact that there are half a million Coloured people in Cape Town, they are half a million different individuals with little more in common than that label and its consequences.<sup>5</sup>

Gavin Lewis also points to this difficulty in defining this particular section of the South African social landscape when he states that:

"Indeed, the two major government commissions of inquiry into the Coloured People, in 1937 and 1976, both proved unable to agree on a definition of 'a Coloured'."<sup>6</sup>

Professor Richard van der Ross also refers to this phenomenon surrounding life in the "Coloured experience" when he notes that:

"... the Coloured are probably the most heterogeneous population group in the country. This is evidenced by the difficulties which law-makers have in defining a Coloured person. The Population Registration Act (No 30 of 1950) says that a Coloured person is not a White person and not a Bantu."<sup>7</sup>

Besides noting the difficulty in defining those in the "Coloured experience" conceptually and semantically, van der Ross also points to the fact the legal definition of this group of people is a negative one i.e. "not white and not black"<sup>8</sup>.

Richard Rive also points to this negative dimension in the legal definition when he notes that:

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid. p. 9. see also p. 10-13.

<sup>6</sup>G. Lewis, Between the Wire and the Wall - A History of South African Coloured Politics, (David Phillips Publications, 1987), p.3.

<sup>7</sup>R.E. van der Ross, Myths and Attitudes - An Inside Look at the Coloured People, (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1979), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup>R.E. van der Ross, A Political and Social History of the Cape Coloured People (1880 - 1970 in Four Parts, (Belleville South, UWC, 1973), p. 846.

"'Non-European' and 'Non-White' are highly insulting labels. They imply that the persons described are negative entities, non-somethings."<sup>9</sup>

The negative dimension in the previous official attempts at definition is also touched upon by Durbach when she says that:

"... while Coloured as an adjective is usually acceptable, "Coloured" as a noun is offensive to many of those so labelled, especially when used by a non-Coloured ..."<sup>10</sup>

Finally, Ian Goldin adds his voice to the numerous commentators who reflect the problematic nature of the attempt to define the people in the "Coloured experience" and thus lack of self-created name for this group when he says that:

"The statutory definitions of Coloured, Black, Asian and White are notoriously arbitrary and are based on pseudo-scientific notions which have long since been discredited."<sup>11</sup>

He goes on to focus specifically on this group of people and says that:

"No single definition of Coloured exists: a succession of contradictory legislative measures and legal precedents has only added to the ambiguity surrounding the term."<sup>12</sup>

A primary characteristic of all the above-mentioned authors is the fact that they respond in no uncertain terms to the attempts to define the human being in the "Coloured experience" from

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<sup>9</sup>R. Rive, Writing Black, (David Phillips, 1981), p. 2.

<sup>10</sup>see Rubythan & Durbach, op. cit., Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>I. Goldin, Making Race - The Politics and Economics of Coloured Identity in South Africa, (Maskew Miller Longman (Pty) Ltd., 1987, p. xxv.

<sup>12</sup>see Goldin, op. cit., p. xxvi.

outside of this group, especially from officialdom. The clear position that they all maintain is that people in the "Coloured experience" are not such readily defined entities and that the official attempts at definition are highly problematic.

In my opinion this lack of an acceptably defined name reflects more than just a namelessness in the narrow sense of the word. It reflects a major crisis in this community i.e. the crisis of identity.

Very few attempts were made from inside of this group to define itself. This implies, in my opinion, the lack of meaningful attempts to liberate this section of the South African society from the trauma of being without the most basic resource for daily living i.e. a name (a sense of self). The result of this is a community which reflects the unspoken inner turmoil in indirect ways. The painfulness and trauma of this inner turmoil are experienced in an intense manner exactly because it is suffered by the majority of those who belong to this community whilst being unaware of it.

The pain and trauma are sometimes visible only to the most sensitive in this community i.e. those acting as the DEW line of this group of people.

The question is then: "How does one theologise in a community which is at best still grappling with its self-definition and at worst not even aware that the need for a proper name (i.e. self-definition) is of vital importance ?

Within this realisation it becomes obvious that this problematique then is the question to which the sensitive (DEW line) in its ranks urgently need to find answers. This is

especially true for its theologians. In my opinion the question of identity is the primary theological question for us in the "Coloured experience". Sadly though, a browse of the academic works of theology of recent years reveals nothing of the urgency which characterises this problem.

The result is a visionlessness in the various communities of faith and a general confusion as to where we belong within the political and cultural scene of South Africa. This lack of serious struggle with the question of our identity plays itself out in the tensions of the various congregations where strong distinctions are made between questions of "the spirit" and questions of "the flesh". The question of identity is not even remotely thought of as being a spiritual matter. The result is that the question of our namelessness never receives any significant attention in the daily activities of our communities of faith. This in turn has the effect where the Church on the one hand is regarded by the older generations as an institution where "the way we did things in the past" should be maintained and on the other as an institution whose relevance is difficult to fathom by the younger generations.

Neither of these two perceptions come anywhere close to what the Church ought to be in our time and place.

In the community at large the result of this is that the present political processes which we are experiencing are regarded with dread and paralysis. The result of this is a pitiful attachment to the past oppressors of those of us in the "Coloured experience" as if they are our liberators and an inability to recognise those who are (at least within this historical moment)

our true liberators.

Thus the question of identity for those in the "Coloured experience" is not just another academic exercise. This question is closely linked to the issues and decisions of our time and place which are facing the whole South African community - especially those in the "Coloured experience".<sup>13</sup>

The people in the "Coloured experience" who are in search of a proper name are not unique within the theological spectrum. Theologians from the margins i.e. of Black - , Feminist - , and Liberation theology all express discovered identities in the face of the dominant European theology.

These theologies emphasise the fact that knowing one's identity is necessary for authentic theology.

Theologians within First World contexts realized the context-relatedness - in terms of time and place as well as sociological grouping - of their truth claims. The two conferences of the "Theology in the Americas - project" held in Detroit 1975<sup>14</sup> are examples of this.

Theologians who formed part of the two conferences express the link between theology and the need to know one's context - in particular one's identity - as follows:

"To understand the meaning of the Christian faith, the Christian community must come to a correct understanding of its concrete historical situation. Conversion to God implies self-knowledge. This principle also

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<sup>13</sup>See my sermon on Psalm 88, appendix A as well as the news paper clipping of recent months, appendix B.

<sup>14</sup>Theology in the Americas, S. Torres and J. Eagleson (eds.), (Orbis Books, 1976).



applies to communities; they must come to a correct collective self-understanding.<sup>15</sup>

Douglas John Hall, although not directly involved in this particular project, is one of the increasing number of First World theologians who realises the importance and necessity of a collective self-understanding for authentic theology to take place.

He states this clearly when he says that "Theology can only occur at the point where the tradition meets the spirit that informs a culture".<sup>16</sup>

Hall reflects this view in his own theological development and background when he says that:

"... my theological journey has involved two primary points of evolving awareness: awareness of the long doctrinal tradition of the Christian movement, and awareness of my context."<sup>17</sup>

For Hall authentic theology takes place when the dialectical tension between these two elements is maintained.

The discovery of the importance of the latter emphasis of Hall's theology was seminally influenced by Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Cost of Discipleship, but primarily by the "future shocking events of the 1960's such as Viet nam, the increasing cultural, economic, and political aggression of the American Empire, the crisis of

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid. p. 434.

<sup>16</sup>D.J. Hall, "Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross" in A Christian Declaration on Human Rights, A. O. Miller (ed.), (William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977), p. 109.

<sup>17</sup>D.J. Hall, "A Brief History of My Theological Sojourn", an unpublished paper prepared on request of the organisers of an ad hoc meeting of clergy and others at Stoney Point Centre in New York, November 12-13, 1992.

the environment, the plight of the two-thirds world, etc.,"<sup>18</sup>  
which became part of the North American reality.

These events led Hall to conclude that:

"... the human situation could no longer  
be thought of in generalized terms.  
And if our perception of 'the situation'  
(Tillich) had to become so specific,  
then the response from the side of  
the faith had also to become more explicit."<sup>19</sup>

This consciousness about the contextual nature of theology led  
Hall more and more in the direction of developing "an indigenous  
theology" for the North American continent.

Hall is thus adamant the "Contextual awareness is not an option  
for theological work, (but) is one of (its) two necessary points  
of reference."<sup>20</sup>

Due to the general acceptance of 'context' as a necessary  
dimension of theological thinking within liberal theological  
thinking, Hall is of the opinion that the other necessary point  
of reference in theology i.e. tradition, is neglected and even  
sometimes negated, because it is identified by many with the  
European captivity of theology.<sup>21</sup> For Hall the negation of "the  
tradition" (i.e. "the theology that has been done") can only lead  
to making the same mistakes of the past.

Therefore, he justifies his reconstructionist theological  
methodology when he says that:

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. p. 17.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. p. 22.

"... to repudiate the past, or some of it, we have to struggle with it. Therefore, I find myself turning, increasingly, to the task of rethinking the tradition ..."22

Hall's whole theological enterprise is geared to "rethinking the tradition" within the realities of the specific "context" of the North American society.

This is amply reflected in his numerous articles, monologues, and conference papers - published as well as unpublished - between 1971 until as recently as 1992.

These include in chronological order:

1. "The Theology of Hope in an Officially Optimistic Society" in RELIGION IN LIFE, Vol. 40, (1971), p. 376-390.
2. The Reality of the Gospel and the Unreality of the Churches, (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1976).
3. "Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross", in INTERPRETATION, Vol 30, 1976, p. 153-168.
4. Lighten Our Darkness: Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross, (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1976).
5. "Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross" in A Christian Declaration on Human Rights, A.O. Miller (ed.), (William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977), p. 107-128.
6. "Rethinking Christ: Theological Reflections on Shusako Endo's 'Silence', in INTERPRETATION, Vol. 33, 1979, p. 254-267.
7. "Rethinking Christ" in Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity, A. T. Davies (ed.), (Paulist Press, NY, 1979, p. 167-187.
8. The Canada Crisis: A Christian Perspective, (The Anglican Book Centre, 1980).
9. "Who Tell's the World's Story ? Theology's Quest for a Partner in Dialogue", in INTERPRETATION, Vol. 36, 1982, p. 47-53.
10. The Steward: a Biblical Symbol Come of Age, (NY, Friendship Press, for the Commission on Stewardship in the USA, 1982).

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid. p. 23.

11. "Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross" in Theology and Technology (Essays on Christian Analysis and Exegesis, C. Mitcham and J. Groote (eds.), (Univ. Press of America, 1984).
12. "The Diversity of Christian Witnessing in the Tension Between Subjection to the Word in Relation to the Context" in Luther's Ecumenical Significance - an Interconfessional Consultation, P. Manns and H. Meyer (eds.), in collaboration with C. Lindberg and H. McSorley, (Fortress Press, Phil., 1984), p. 247-267.
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17. God and Human Suffering - An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross, (Augsburg Publishing House, MN, 1986).
18. When We Pray - Thinking our Way into God's World, (Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA, 1987).
19. "A Venerable Tradition - Looking Back at the New Theology" in THE TORONTO JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY, Vol. 4, 1988, p. 251-265.
20. "Theological Education as Character Formation" in THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION, Vol. 24, 1987/88, suppl. I, 1988, p. 53-79.
21. The Stewardship of Life in the Kingdom of Death, (W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1988, (Revised Edition)).
22. "Luther's Theology of the Cross" in CONSENSUS, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1989, p. 7-19.
23. Thinking the Faith - Christian Theology in the North American Context, (Augsburg Press, MN, 1989).
24. "Theology - Between the Tradition and a Banana Peel - A Perspective on Theology for Christian Ministry" in WORD AND WORLD, Vol. 10, 1990, p. 209-215.

25. "The Theology and Ethics of the Lord's Prayer", an unpublished paper delivered at the annual Neumann Symposium at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ, 1991.
26. "Reinhold Niebuhr: An American Theologian" in JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA, 1992, p. 3-12.
27. "Creation in Crisis" in DIANOIA: A LIBERAL ARTS INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL, Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring, 1992.

So, given the urgent need for a solution to the question of identity in the "Coloured experience" and the context-sensitivity of Douglas John Hall's theology I engaged him as a theological dialogue partner.

In this dialogue I moved from the basic premise of this thesis i.e. that anthropology determines theology.

With his sensitivity to context Hall is speaking on behalf of and to a particular group of people in a particular geographical area on earth. Therefore I intend, firstly, to focus on his theological anthropology - the theological perception of the people from whom and on behalf of whom he theologises (chapter 2).

Furthermore, it is my intention to focus on the theological methodology which he proposes for those in the particular context of the dominant culture on the North American continent (chapter 3).

In line with the above-mentioned basic premise of this thesis I am of the opinion that Hall's method is heavily influenced, if not determined, by his theological anthropology. Therefore I, thirdly, intend to reflect on the function of his theological anthropology in his theological methodology (chapter 4). This will be the focal point of this study.

But, as indicated above, this study is being done at a time when the need for original and authentic theology for this particular group of people - those in the "Coloured experience" - of whom I am a part, is extremely acute.

However, I am of the opinion that we will not be able to develop an acceptable theological method which could lead us in the development of our own theology until we come to terms with the question of our identity.

This study of Hall is thus not taking place in a vacuum or just to gain knowledge for knowledge sake. It is being produced at a time - in my life and the people whose experiences I share - when the question of personal and group identity are prevalent and thus begging for answers.

Therefore, I intend to conclude this study with tentative strokes which, in my opinion, form part of the broad picture of the theological anthropology of the people from whom and on behalf of whom I theologise - i.e. those in the "Coloured experience" (chapter 5).

In this process of soul-searching and creative questioning I approach Hall as a dialogue partner to facilitate this process of discovery so that we may uncover our proper name.

## CHAPTER 2.

### THE THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF DOUGLAS JOHN HALL.

A failing being. That is the dominant element in Douglas John Hall's perception of the human condition in the dominant culture of the North American continent. From this perception he moves on to postulate a theological method through which people could be equipped to deal honestly with this condition of failure. In this chapter I plan to focus on the elements surrounding his conclusion as well as the conclusion itself i.e. an anthropos who experiences failure.

When Hall identifies "failure" as the predominant expression of the human condition, he is not posing it as a reflection of the universal human condition. He views it as a reflection of life on the North American continent. More specifically, he views it as a reflection of the life of the dominant culture on this continent.

Hall consciously views himself as a theologian who is concerned with the "conscientization of the non-poor" (Freire). This particular focus came as a result of the influence of the 1975 Detroit "Conference on Theology in the Americas" and the statement of its follow-up Conference<sup>23</sup>. But besides this indirect influence, Hall has the dominant culture of the North American continent as his primary audience because he is of the opinion that,

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<sup>23</sup> D.J. Hall, Thinking the Faith - Christian Theology in the North American Context, (Augsburg Fortress, 1989), footnote 2, p. 17.

"when theology is concentrated on the oppressive contexts of minorities there is a tendency to neglect or camouflage the crisis of the majority culture."<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, he expresses the view that,

"the situation of the minorities will not be altered greatly ... until the crisis of the majority has been confronted."<sup>25</sup>

Hall thus has a very focused audience from and on behalf of whom he theologises.

This continent's primary characteristic, in his opinion, is that it is "officially optimistic"<sup>26</sup>. Through this concept Hall points to "a society whose great foundational sickness is its hidden but increasingly unconcealable disbelief in the (optimistic) way of life it continues, nonetheless, to proclaim and to stand for."<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, he concludes that this optimism is not "a spontaneous response to existence, (but) the positive outlook valued by this culture is a carefully cultivated and nurtured construct, deliberately drawing upon well-rehearsed positive data of past and present human achievement, and judiciously omitting, suppressing and repressing the data of despair ..."<sup>28</sup> This positive outlook is sharply reflected in the foundational myth of this continent i.e. the American Dream which does not make provision for failure<sup>29</sup> on both the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 156; also p. 157.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> D.J. Hall, "The Theology of Hope in an Officially Optimistic Society" in RELIGION IN LIFE, Vol. 40, (1971), p.379.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> D.J. Hall, THINKING ..., op. cit., p. 162.



cognitive and experiential levels.

According to Hall's analysis, this positive outlook which informs life in the dominant culture of the North American continent is the product of a process which developed over many centuries.<sup>30</sup> This development was "a revolt against the domination of man by divine/demonic powers, and their earthly representatives ... (which resulted in humanity declaring himself)... to be autonomous ... the determiner of his own destiny"<sup>31</sup>.

Yet, in the midst of this positive anthropology, life for those in the dominant culture of North America is characterised by disintegration and failure. The components of this experience of failure in the midst of a theoretically positive anthropology are diverse, but are primarily reflected in the fact that those in the dominant culture experience the failure and the subsequent effects of this failure of the modernist anthropology.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, this world-view which emphasised the centrality of humanity's abilities and its endless potential came about as " (1) a response to the failure of the image of man that dominated the Middle Ages, ... (2) (because of) a new awareness of man's

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<sup>30</sup> Hall relies heavily for the analysis of this cultural process on the works of George P. Grant. Cf. George P. Grant, Time As History, (Toronto: CBC, 1969) and George P. Grant, Philosophy in the Mass Age, (Vancouver: Copp, Clarke, 1966), ch. IV. Cf. T. Hegeudus, "Douglas John Hall's Contextual Theology of the Cross" in CONSENSUS, Vol 15, No. 2, (1989), p. 35, footnote 10.

<sup>31</sup> D.J. Hall, Lighten Our Darkness - Toward an Indigenous Theology of the Cross, (Westminster Press, 1976), p. 45.

<sup>32</sup> D.J. Hall, "Creation in Crisis" in DIANOIA - A Liberal Arts Interdisciplinary Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, (Spring 1992), p. 12.

position in the natural universe, ... (and) ... (3) ... (because of) ... a view of the relationship between man and God that was clearly different from both the medieval view of this relationship and the Biblical view."<sup>33</sup>

Within a background of subjection which was the characteristic metaphor used to reflect humanity in the Middle Ages, Modernity came to lay the emphasis more and more on humanity's mastery of its own destiny in nature and history. This world-view, according to Hall, "... was born in the darkness of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, emerged into view in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was formalized in the eighteenth and mechanized for production in the last century."<sup>34</sup>

The point that he is constantly making throughout his monologues and articles is that this perception of the human being is presently disintegrating. This forms the backdrop of his analysis that the human condition in this present era is characterized by failure of its structures of meaning and is consequently in search of new ones in the midst of the possibility of despair. Events such as Hiroshima, Auschwitz and Vietnam, in his view, announced this failure. The accompanying pain of these events highlights the fact that those in the dominant culture of North America live a life with a gulf between their expectations of life (i.e. inevitable progress) and their experience of life (i.e. constant failure and pain).

Consequently, Hall is strongly of the opinion that the modern

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<sup>33</sup> Hall, Lighten Our Darkness ..., op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.43.

image of humanity is wrong and presents present-day humanity on the North American continent with the question of survival.<sup>35</sup>

Within this need for means to survive the present anthropological crisis of failure, the question, according to Hall, is "... can Christianity sufficiently disengage from the positive outlook to discover an alternative role<sup>36</sup> ... (to) ... offer anything that might contribute to a meeting ground for (a creative conflict between) expectation and experience ..."<sup>37</sup>

The temptation for Christian theology at this juncture, according to Hall, is to proceed as if the Christian faith has all the answers to the problems facing humanity. But in Hall's view of things the opposite is true. The Church, and consequently Christian theology, are in fact part of the problem. They contributed to the condition of failure because "... the type of Christianity which established itself in North America ... was a Christianity which adjusted itself to modernity ..."<sup>38</sup> In effect, an amalgamation between Protestantism and Americanism took place which resulted in the situation where Christianity and (the American) ... way of life became inextricably bound up with

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.63.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p.41.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p.73.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p.78; see also D.J. Hall, "Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross" in A Christian Declaration on Human Rights, op. cit., p. 116; see also D.J. Hall, "Creation in Crisis" in *Dianoia - A Liberal Arts Interdisciplinary Journal*, op. cit., p. 3-7; see also D.J. Hall, Imaging God - Dominion as Stewardship, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids MI, 1986), p.24.

one another.<sup>39</sup>

This "amalgamation" played itself out primarily on the anthropological level<sup>40</sup>. The Christian view of humanity came to be identified with the modern image of humanity i.e. as technocratic master of the environment.<sup>41</sup>

Consequently, the next pivotal question which Hall poses is what in the Christian faith and theology facilitated this "amalgamation" between the modern perception of humanity and that of Christian anthropology. The implication of this question is that Hall expects that Christian theology has a certain culpability in the creation of the condition of failure i.e. the perception of humanity as master of history and nature.<sup>42</sup>

In Hall's opinion Christianity could contribute to an image of humanity as master, "... because the idea of mastery is present in the biblical view of man"<sup>43</sup>. This biblical view, which is but an element of the fuller picture of humanity in Scripture, was, according to Hall, taken over by the modern image of humanity at the expense of the other dimension in the biblical perception of humanity i.e. its radical corruption. Christian theology on the North American continent thus contributed to the condition of failure with regard to modern anthropology's image

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<sup>39</sup> Hall, Lighten our Darkness, op. cit., p.79.

<sup>40</sup> D.J. Hall, "Creation in Crisis" in DIANOIA - A Liberal Arts Interdisciplinary Journal, op. cit., p. 6; see also D.J. Hall, Imaging God - Dominion as Stewardship, op. cit., p.11.

<sup>41</sup> Lighten our Darkness, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.; see also Hall in DIANOIA, op. cit. p. 8. see also Hall in Imaging ..., op. cit. p. 25-32.

of humanity as master by eliminating the negative dimension of the biblical perception of humanity.

Furthermore, Hall is especially convinced that Christian faith contributed to the condition of failure on the North American continent with regard to the reality of the failing environment<sup>44</sup>. In this respect "it took over one of the primary elements of biblical anthropology - i.e. man's transcendence of nature - (and) it eliminated the biblical consciousness both of man's involvement in and his tragic distortion of nature ... (thus, distorting humanity's "dominion" over nature)..."<sup>45</sup>

Finally, Hall is of the opinion that Christianity contributed to the condition of failure on the North American continent with regard to people's inability to honestly deal with this condition through their earth-denying spirituality.

This earth-denying spirituality, in Hall's view, plays itself out in the dominant forms of the perception of prayer - and therefore indirectly the perception of Jesus Christ<sup>46</sup> - on the North American continent today. Thus, in his opinion, "Imago Christi precedes theologia Christi."<sup>47</sup>

Hall consequently identifies four dominant perceptions of prayer on the North American continent which, in his view, reflect how

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<sup>44</sup> see Hall in DIANOIA, op. cit.; see also Hall, Imaging ..., op. cit.; see also D.J. Hall, The Stewardship of Life in the Kingdom of Death, (William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1985.

<sup>45</sup> Hall, Lighten our Darkness, op. cit. p. 79.

<sup>46</sup> D.J. Hall, When We Pray - Thinking Your Way into God's World, (Judson Press, Valley Forge, 1987), p.13.

<sup>47</sup> D.J. Hall, "Rethinking Christ - Theological Reflections on Shusako Endo's 'SILENCE'" in INTERPRETATION, Vol 33 (1979), p. 254.

inadequate people's spiritual resources are to deal with the condition of failure there, and as a consequence contribute to this said condition.

Firstly, Hall identifies prayer to a "divine Christ" which "...treat(s) his humanity as a kind of formality ...(which) ... is something to be suffered ... in order that the essential thing, namely his divinity, may be manifested."<sup>48</sup> The danger of this perception of the Christ and thus of prayer, according to Hall, is that the reality of being human might be ignored because prayer is regarded as "chiefly a spiritual activity ...(through which) ...the faithful seek incorporation into the "body of Christ ..."<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, "prayer is (regarded as) ... growth in grace towards the new ...(thus seeking) identification with (the divinity in) Christ."<sup>50</sup> For Hall the primary objection which can be levelled against this perception is that it contradicts the fact that "... the whole movement of divine grace as it is presented in the continuity of the two testaments is towards creation and not away from it"<sup>51</sup>.

Secondly, Hall identifies prayer which focuses on "Jesus as conqueror". Hall is of the opinion that "... whilst the mentality that fastens upon the divine Christ lures the human spirit away from this world, the concept of Jesus as conqueror moves the faithful towards the world - with militant

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<sup>48</sup> Hall, When We Pray, op.cit., p.15.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p.16.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p.17.

intent!"<sup>52</sup> With this image comes a strong sense of having an "enemy" (i.e. Satan) which has been vanquished. In Hall's view, this enemy more often than not coincides with "earthly enemies (of those in power), i.e. the infidel, the heathen, the unbeliever, the Turk and the Jew(<sup>53</sup>) ..."<sup>54</sup> Prayer consequently becomes a discipline through which we are equipped to conquer the world for Christ. This perception of prayer and Christ is problematic for Hall because it ignores the reality of life in a pluralistic society<sup>55</sup>.

Thirdly, Hall identifies prayer connected to the image of Jesus as being that of a judge. This spirit projects "...an angry Jesus who is about to destroy a world that is no longer ... redeemable."<sup>56</sup> This is supposedly only for the elect. Prayer in this faith posture is then primarily a means to escape the judgement of God through Jesus and participate in the company of those who shall experience the rapture<sup>57</sup>.

According to Hall this spirituality ignores the central core of the Christian message i.e. the idea of the divine pathos which finds expression in the passio Christi.<sup>58</sup>

Finally, Hall identifies a spirituality which fastens itself on

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p.18.

<sup>53</sup> D.J. Hall, "Rethinking Christ" in Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity, A.T. Davies (ed.), (Paulist Press, NY, 1979).

<sup>54</sup> Hall, When We Pray, op. cit. p.19.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p.21.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p.22.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p.24-25.

an image of Jesus as the "embodiment of the divine love ..."<sup>59</sup> In this spirituality prayer becomes a means through which the faithful reaffirm their inclusion in the love of Jesus. The danger in this faith posture is that it expects Christ to be "... affirmer and acceptor of (the faithful) ... and to turn a blind eye to the unacceptable things (they do)."<sup>60</sup> In expecting this of their spirituality, according to Hall, is to expect Christ "...to turn a blind eye to the persons of the whole world (the Third World especially) whose existence is profoundly affected by what is wrong (with those in the dominant culture on the North American continent)..."<sup>61</sup> The danger in this faith posture is that "it is robbed of an entire quality that is signified by the biblical word metanoia, meaning repentance, change, turning about ..."<sup>62</sup>

The result of these earth-denying spiritualities is that a gulf is created between the material and the spiritual with the former regarded as less important for life in Christ. Hall sums it up when he says that "...the first approach encourages world denial and evasion of creaturely responsibility; the second a triumphalistic bid for worldly power; the third outright rejection of the created order; and the fourth an uncritical acceptance of the status quo."<sup>63</sup>

The consequence of this is that in conjunction with the positive

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p.27.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p.30.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p.30.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.



outlook (i.e. the American dream, humanity as master), this earth-denying spirituality leaves those in the dominant culture unable to deal with negative events such as Hiroshima, Auschwitz, Vietnam, the threatening ecological disintegration, etc.,. In the paradigm of modernity this is not supposed to happen because history is viewed as moving in an inevitably positive manner and in the paradigm of Christianity it is supposedly not part of the essential dimensions of Christian life<sup>64</sup>.

But at the present time in the life of the North American continent the negative is taking on proportions which cannot be ignored. According to Hall these "proportions" were "ushered in, dramatically enough, by Vietnam, by the crises of human survival, and by the scandalous failure of our institutions."<sup>65</sup>

Yet the contradiction between the expectation of the positive and the experience of the negative cannot just be admitted. For "... in the moment of such an admission one would have stepped out of the state of contradiction into something else - perhaps cynicism or nihilism..."<sup>66</sup> Thus it might lead to the elimination of expectation of the positive (i.e. hope for the future). But, in Hall's view, "...sensing that they are suspended over an abyss, that their expectations are no longer credible, individuals and societies in a state of contradiction make all the more effort to vindicate their aspirations ... by allowing their expectation

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<sup>64</sup> D.J. Hall, "Rethinking Christ" in Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity, op. cit., p.175.

<sup>65</sup> D.J. Hall, "Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross", op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>66</sup> D.J. Hall, Lighten Our Darkness ..., op.cit., p.22.

to persist without the actualities of experience ..."<sup>67</sup>

Hall identifies two, in his opinion, unacceptable "influential moods"<sup>68</sup> which characterise the people within the dominant culture of North America's response to this situation of meaninglessness. These two responses Hall identifies as cynicism and credulity.<sup>69</sup> The former refers to a response which refuses to face reality and the latter refers to a response which refuses to accept the unpleasantness of reality to the extent where illusory worlds are consciously created and maintained. It is precisely this analysis of the human condition of those in the dominant culture on the North American continent which gives Hall's theology a political urgency<sup>70</sup>. This is so because those in this state of mind are presently in a position to control and influence the well-being of vast numbers of people - if not life on the planet as we know it.<sup>71</sup>

Within this situation of contradiction caused by the experience of the modern perception of the human being as annihilating and destructive despite the expectation of mastery, the struggle with which present-day humanity in the dominant culture of the North American continent is faced, is "... a struggle for a new image

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p.23.

<sup>68</sup> D.J. Hall, "Beyond Cynicism and Credulity: On The Meaning of Christian Hope" in THE PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN, Vol VI, No. 3 (1985), 202.

<sup>69</sup> Hall, Thinking ... op. cit., p.172-176; see also Hall, "Beyond Cynicism and Credulity ...", op. cit. p. 201-210.

<sup>70</sup> Hall, "Beyond Cynicism and Credulity ...", op. cit., p.206-207.

<sup>71</sup> Hall, Thinking ..., op. cit., p. 37.

of man ..."<sup>72</sup> This struggle is primarily a revolt against the modern perception of humanity (i.e. that the human is master). The revolt against this perception of the human being, according to Hall, is bedded in the realisation that "...the end of the process of what the seventeenth century began to call 'progress' with man at the helm, is the denigration and the extinction of man ..."<sup>73</sup>

Presently, a new image of the human being is emerging from existentialist resources with more clarity. According to Hall, this is an ideal resource to use for the creation of a new anthropology on the North American continent because it explores "...not only the loss of meaning by man in the industrial society but also his primary way of coping with this loss: namely, repression of the question of meaning..."<sup>74</sup> Because of the necessary-positive dimension of the previously accepted image of humanity (i.e. the human being as inevitable master), the alternative to the acceptance of the failure of this image, in Hall's analysis, seems to be despair. But the emerging image of humanity "...first of all rebels against the fatalism inherent in this failure ...(and) ... is a revolution of hope: ... an expression of human expectancy, which refuses to abide in experience, but looks for possibilities not bequeathed to it by history..."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Hall, Lighten our Darkness ..., op. cit., p.158.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p.159; see also Hall, "Theology of Hope in an Officially Optimistic Society" ..., op. cit., p. 382.

<sup>74</sup> Hall, Lighten our Darkness ..., op. cit., p.167.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p.170.

It is precisely this dimension in the emerging anthropology which is different from other attempts at developing an alternative image of the human being (i.e. "hippies and others ... who, by opting out, are doing precisely what the class in power want them to do"<sup>76</sup>).

In the face of these unsuccessful attempts at developing an alternative image of humanity, the question is "... how does a people, or even a single individual, move beyond the concept of mastery ..." <sup>77</sup> in the attempt to create a tenable alternative perception of the human being on the North American continent?

For Hall it is evident that this could be done when, instead of "opting out", one who contributes to the new image of humanity on the North American continent announces "...the extent to which one belongs to the dominant culture, the officially optimistic society, which one is supposedly denouncing and supplanting ..." <sup>78</sup> This announcement should be done, furthermore, in the honest realisation "...neither that we (North Americans) are already possessed of a new spirit nor that we are wholly without an alternative to the old one ... (yet) ... it may nonetheless be regarded as 'real' even if it is not 'realized' among us ..." <sup>79</sup>

As was indicated, the process through which an alternative image to humanity is being developed is already well under way. A

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p.171.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p.171.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p.173.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p.173.

certain degree of clarity with regard to the emergent image of humanity is even detectable. Within a context where the human is perceived to be master, the emerging image appears to be guided by a realisation that "... unless man turns from mastery to serving, from grasping to receiving, from independence to interdependence, he will simply not last very long on the face of the earth ..."<sup>80</sup> With this realisation Hall views the emerging image of humanity as expressed in the search "...for a new relationship between man and nature; ... for a new human identity; ... for an alternative to rationality; and for community ..."<sup>81</sup>. This search, in Hall's opinion, is characterised by the fact that the previous guiding concept of mastery is substituted with that of receptivity<sup>82</sup>.

But this emerging image of the human being is not free of potential dangers<sup>83</sup> i.e. that "...it shares with all other historical images the propensity to dehumanise, even though in the primary sense it is a new bid for humanity against a reigning imago that is leading to death..."<sup>84</sup> This is what happened to the present inadequate image of the human as master between its original medieval background and the present technological society.

With the realisation of the potential dangers Hall is adamant that the mistake of Christian modernism should not be repeated

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p.183.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p.173.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p.183-184.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p.192-193.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 194.

(i.e. to adapt the Christian perception of the human to this emergent image and then to view it as essential humanity). According to Hall, the position is rather that "... in the emergent image of man, with its concept of receptivity instead of mastery, there is a potential new identity for man, by means of which he might preserve his humanity ... but in making this strong affirmation in favour of the emergent imago we ought not to overlook that this image of man, too, is an approximation ... of what we confess to be essential manhood ..."<sup>85</sup> Thus Hall proposes the necessity of "... maintaining a certain distance, so that we can, if necessary, become witnesses to the dehumanizing tendencies implicit also in it ..."<sup>86</sup>

It is clear that for Hall "facing the experience of negation (in North America today) ... means (amongst others) ... facing the bankruptcy of (their) image of man ..."<sup>87</sup>

In this process he foresees a central role for the Church in the midst of other cultural forces which are also participating in the search for a new image of humanity.

In Hall's analysis, the Church "... could be an important factor in preventing the demonic and dehumanizing elements within the emergent imago hominis from becoming dominant ... (and) ... it could help to keep the receptivity characteristic of the new imago from falling into passivity, quietism, or the sort of half-secular otherworldliness that already informs so many counter

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p.191.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p.198.

cultural experiments"<sup>88</sup> Finally, "...it could assist in the birth of an image of man which maintained an appropriate dialectical tension between man's natural and historical dimensions ..." <sup>89</sup> But of all the possible roles which the Church could play, according to Hall, the more important concern for the Church on the North American continent within the dominant culture there is not so much the emergent image of man as the preparation for the birth of this image<sup>90</sup>.

Within all this "... the challenge to faith is ... whether it can help men to face the failure of the old image without capitulating to despair ..." <sup>91</sup>

Thus, from the vantage point of Christian theology, Hall is of the opinion that this image of mastery, taken over as a result of the influence of modernity on the Church in North America, could be dispensed with. This could be done by revisiting those elements of biblical anthropology which were taken over in an undialectical manner. The elements to which Hall is referring are the mistaken perception of humanity's relationship to nature as that of having "dominion" and, more importantly, rediscovering the dimension of the radical corruptness of human nature.<sup>92</sup>

Through revisiting this element in the biblical anthropology which was previously used to support the modern perception of the

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p.201.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p.202.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> D.J. Hall, Imaging God - Dominion as Stewardship, op. cit., p. 61- 87).

human being, Hall now postulates an image of humanity which is viewed primarily through its multifaceted relationality to God, nature, and fellow humanity. Instead of viewing humanity as master, Hall now views humanity from an "implicit"<sup>93</sup> biblical ontological point i.e. as a being being-with<sup>94</sup> (Mitsein) - as in relation to and connected to "God, humankind, and otherkind"<sup>95</sup> - the rest of reality.

But this is the ideal, the principle position with regard to the biblical perception of the human being. Presently though, the experience of humanity the dominant culture on the North American continent is characterised by a search for meaning in the midst of the disintegration of structures of meaning, especially its anthropology.

A consequence of this is the fact that these people are caught up between cynicism and incredulity<sup>96</sup> which is in Hall's view the dominant expression of the human condition in the midst of the failure - the dominant characteristic of that condition.

In Hall's opinion this is so because of inadequate resources to honestly enter into dialogue with the pain which is accompanying this disintegration.

The question which consequently faces theologians in the present day is whether they have something to contribute to the answer

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<sup>93</sup> D.J. Hall, "Creation in Crises", DIANOIA ..., op. cit., p.19.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 20; see also D.J. Hall, Imaging God ..., op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p.143-165.

<sup>96</sup> D.J. Hall, "Beyond Cynicism and Incredulity: On the Meaning of Christian Hope" op.cit..



which humanity in the midst of the negative is seeking. Put in another way, theologians are faced with the question of how to prepare the ground which would give people the space to honestly engage and enter the negative. With this question Hall opens the way for the postulation of his theological methodology - the means through which he proposes preparatory work could be done so that people in the dominant culture of the North American continent may honestly enter the negative.



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### CHAPTER 3.

#### THE CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY OF DOUGLAS JOHN HALL.

Under the rubric of theological methodology a theologian is expected to account in a credible and coherent manner for diverse aspects of the assumed relationship between God (a being outside of ourselves and our earth-bound reality) and humanity.

Paul Avis sums up the questions involved in the theological methodological endeavour when he says that:

"Theological method is one of the most crucial, fascinating and at the same time difficult areas of modern religious thought. It raises questions like: What sort of subject is theology? How does it go about its tasks and what procedures, sources and criteria does it employ? Is theology a science, and if so, how does it relate to the natural and human sciences? Does it focus on an object unique to itself or does it scan the whole of our significant experience for insights and information relevant to its theme? Does it go hand in hand with philosophy or regard it as a rival? Can theology obtain objective truth, or is it the most subjective, personal and idiosyncratic of studies? How does it seek to come to terms with the irreversible pluralism of the modern world and of the chronic diversity of its own traditions? Finally, is it a privileged discipline, with divinely guaranteed sources of information and perhaps divine assistance in expounding them, or is it just another form of human effort, relying like its sister disciplines on arduous research, rigorous analysis and vigorous debate, in which all the resources of human insight, imagination and constructive energy are brought into play? Theological method insists that these issues be tackled before we go on to ask what

Christian theology teaches about God and man, Christ and salvation, the church and the world."<sup>97</sup>

In short then: A theologian is asked to reveal her or his perception of this relationship between God and humanity (ontology, essence), how and through which sources this reality can be grasped (epistemology), the relation between reason and revelation which are both making epistemological claims, the position of the human being in this given reality (anthropology), what the task of humanity is in this reality (ethics), and where this reality is leading toward (teleology).

It is my contention that of all these methodological dimensions, the anthropological element should be recognised as having determining significance - and is the proper starting point - for the rest of the methodological enterprise in the present age. This is so because the issues we are faced with in our day are closely linked to our physical being i.e. our skin colour, our gender, our stomach, our living environment, etc.,.

The problem with which we have to contend is how Hall answers the above-mentioned questions and how his methodological solutions respond to his anthropological concerns - as reflected in his theological anthropology (Chapter 2).

In Hall's view a condition of desperation and failure is central to the American human situation on the North American continent. Together with this analysis he is equally of the opinion that "to entertain the negative ... is a spiritual feat of which most North Americans are simply not capable. We have no frame of

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<sup>97</sup> P. Avis, Methods of Modern Theology - The Dream of Reason, in Contemporary Christian Studies, (Marshall Morgan and Scott, UK, 1986), p. xi.

reference, no mythos, for such an experience of negation."<sup>98</sup> Therefore, he is of the opinion that the question with which this anthropological condition confronts theological methodology there is whether it can provide humanity with the resources from which to admit this condition of desperation and whether it can provide the human being with a way into this desperation.<sup>99</sup>

It is clear from the outset that Hall's theology is not an attempt to give a complete answer to the human condition in the North American context. It is rather an attempt to help people to deal with the question of the condition of desperation and meaninglessness which confronts them there<sup>100</sup> in the present time.

In this chapter I shall attempt to formally and structurally deal with how Douglas John Hall deals with these above-mentioned issues in his theological methodology.

Hall defines method as the:

"... manner in which practitioners of any discipline reflect upon their subject with a view to its comprehension and communication ..."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> D.J. Hall, "Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross" in A Christian Declaration on Human Rights, ed. A.O. Miller, (William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977), p.115.

<sup>99</sup> D.J. Hall, Lighten our Darkness - Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross, (Westminster Press, 1976), p. 16; see also D.J. Hall, "Theology of Hope in an Officially Optimistic Society" in RELIGION IN LIFE, Vol 40 (1971), p. 389; see also D.J. Hall, "Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross", in INTERPRETATION, Vol.30 (1976), p.162; see also D.J. Hall, "Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross" in A Christian Declaration on Human Rights, (William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977), p. 119-120.

<sup>100</sup> D.J. Hall, Lighten our Darkness - Toward an Indigenous Theology of the Cross, (Westminster Press, 1976), p. 203.

<sup>101</sup> D.J. Hall, Thinking the Faith - Christian Theology in the North American Context, (Augsburg Fortress, 1989), p.325.

He regards theological method as particularly complex because it deals with the question of whether (in the meeting of the our story and God's story<sup>102</sup>) our existence has any purpose in the fact that God exists.<sup>103</sup> (He thus takes the existence of God as a given and thus indicates that to prove the existence of God is not part of his methodological project.) For Hall, our interaction with the Christian message and our search for meaning is the dominant dimension in the theological methodological discussion.<sup>104</sup> More clearly, he is of the opinion that "the human story sets the tone for the whole theological enterprise."<sup>105</sup>

This subjective interaction with the Christian message is consequently the source of the tension which is, in his opinion, a characteristic of the problem of theological method.

This tension plays itself out in the fact that in some respects our lives show similarities with this message, but the message in other respects is outside our day to day experience and perceptions. Hall uses the concepts of "continuity and discontinuity" to express this position. Thus, he sums it up by saying that "while the core of the Christian message (kerygma) is discontinuous with human experience, the message is nevertheless obviously intended for human beings and must therefore in some way be continuous with their

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<sup>102</sup> Hall, *Thinking ...*, op. cit., p.89.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. p.326.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> D.J. Hall "Who Tells the World's Story ? Theology's Quest for a Partner in Dialogue", *INTERPRETATION*, Vol. 36, (1982), p.49.

experience ..."<sup>106</sup>

According to Hall, this tension is a fundamental part of the Christian message which should inform the methodological expression of theology i.e. by sustaining it in the methodological enterprise.

According to Hall this tension finds paradigmatic expression in the fact that the Christian message was known as "good news"<sup>107</sup> The newness (discontinuity) of the message, according to Hall, lies in the fact that the coming of the Messiah was an event which was not produced by the old cause-and-effect sequence of the historical process, this despite the fact that Israel was a community longing for it to happen (continuity)<sup>108</sup>.

A further manner in which the Christian message reflects its continuity/discontinuity tension is what Hall refers to as the symbol of the virgin birth. This symbol reflects the discontinuity in the sense that the conception was something outside the realm of natural occurrence and enwrapped in the grace of God. Yet, the continuity is expressed in the fact that "the impossible event, possible only to God, clothes itself in the most possible, even ordinary everyday occurrence: a baby born to a young (unwed) mother ..."<sup>109</sup>

For Hall " ...the symbol of the virgin birth and likewise, the story at the centre of the Christian faith, serves to express the fundamental tension in the Christian theology which (should)

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<sup>106</sup> Hall, Thinking ..., op.cit., p.327.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p.328.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p.329.

manifest itself in the theological method ..."<sup>110</sup>

In short, he is adamant that " ... no theological method can be adequate which does not do justice to this tension..."<sup>111</sup>

This tension is also felt on the level of the communication of the gospel. It manifests itself in the fact that attempts to proclaim the glad tidings of the message encounter resistance by those who experience the "good news" as a matter of offense.<sup>112</sup>

For Hall, "... these two polaric factors in the Church's attempt to communicate with the world - the drive and promise of communion on the one hand, the human refusal on the other; ... - affect its methodological decisions in a fundamental way ..."<sup>113</sup>

The result of this position of Hall, with regard to the influence of the Christian message and its communication, is that " ... this raises for theological method (the question of) how to devise a mode of reflection and communication which does justice both to the continuity and the discontinuity dimensions within the gospel ..."<sup>114</sup>

Traditionally attempts were made to "solve" this tension which is characteristic of the Christian message and its communication.

This solution of the tension historically took the form of one of two extreme methodological approaches i.e. to opt for an

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid. p.331.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p.331.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. p.335.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

approach which either minimises the discontinuity between the gospel and the world as reflected by Tillich's methodology<sup>115</sup> or one which boldly acknowledges the disparity between the gospel and the world and takes its stand on the givenness of revelation as reflected by Barth's methodology<sup>116</sup>.

In Hall's opinion this could only be done at the expense of a sound methodological approach. The tension should rather be sustained - the central element of Douglas John Hall's theological methodology.

Sustaining the tension could be achieved through firstly, the differentiation between moments requiring an emphasis on the discontinuous lines and others requiring an emphasis on the continuous lines between the story of humanity and the story of God. This in Hall's opinion constitutes the major task of apologetic theology which has the function of creating the climate in which the real scandal<sup>117</sup> of the kerygma can be

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid. p.339-342.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p.336-339.

<sup>117</sup>Hall gets this concept of "offense/skandalon/scandal" from Paul's use thereof in I Cor. 1:17-25. see p. 342-346. "During the present century, and drawing upon antecedents in Luther, Pascal, Kierkegaard and others, theologians have used the concept of the skandalon/(scandal) to refer, not to the "Jewish" rejection of the gospel, as Paul does here, but to the offense of faith in the Christ to human wisdom and religion as a whole. ... the scandal of the cross is not just an offense to the intelligence, but rather the fact that it touches too closely upon the essential stuff of our lives. It at once confirms what we darkly suspect to be the truth of our condition - that we are "lost", that our being is "being-towards-death" (Heidegger) - and it offers us new life only through a lived encounter with this lostness and death. ...It causes us to face realities that we would rather not face. ... The skandalon of the gospel is an existential one. It is the "ontological shock" (Tillich) of recognizing the utter contingency of our being, ...".

\_\_\_ " A false skandalon is when some aspect of Christianity is



encountered<sup>118</sup>. Christian apologetics fulfils this function of creating the climate for kerygma, in Hall's opinion, when it "... pares away what is unessential both in the Church and in human experience, so that a real meeting of humanity and the God of the gospel may occur ..."<sup>119</sup>

In conjunction with the above-mentioned methodological position, Hall suggests that the inherent tension in the message of the gospel could be sustained methodologically by a consideration of context as a conscious part of the theological process. For Hall "Truth is a contextual matter ... (and furthermore,) ... the context sets the agenda for theology."<sup>120</sup>

This methodological tool - context - forms a pivotal element in Hall's theological methodology. Through it he consciously reflects his actual ontology, i.e. what he regards as the reality in which his anthropos in relationship with God operates.

Hall's contextual sensitivity was stimulated by the "Conference of the Americas" (Detroit, 1975)<sup>121</sup> and the statement of its follow-up conference<sup>122</sup>. Directly though, it was influenced by the human condition on the North American continent. He suggests

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identified as the core of the faith as such, or elevated as to be inseparable from the core of the gospel - the authentic skandalon - THE PERSON, JESUS, THE CHRIST".

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p.342.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p.348.

<sup>120</sup> see Hall "Who Tells the World's Story ...", op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>121</sup> Theology in the Americas, eds Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, (Orbis Books, Maryknoll NY, 1976).

<sup>122</sup> Theology in the Americas - Detroit II Conference Papers, eds. Cornel West, Caridad Guidote and Margaret Coakley, (Probe edition, 1982 by Orbis Books Maryknoll NY).

as much when he says with regard to the rediscovery of the prominence of creation theology there that "... life in the latter fifth of the century ... has become complex and uncertain ... the familiar moral, spiritual, and even intellectual signposts which guided previous generations are down ..."<sup>123</sup> Context is significant in his methodology due to the human condition there because the graveness of the North American human condition was dramatically ushered in by "... Vietnam, by the crisis of human survival, and by the notorious failure of our (the American) institutions"<sup>124</sup>. Thus "context" as a methodological tool (starting point), for Hall, grew out of the severity of the crises in which humanity on the North American continent found itself.

Hall projects the contents of this methodological tool on the assumption that "there is no such thing as non-contextual human thought, including theological thought"<sup>125</sup> F i r s t l y , in his opinion, "...to claim that Christian theology is by definition contextual is to insist that the engagement of the milieu in which theology is done is as such a dimension of doing theology ..."<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, in his definition of the methodological tool "context", Hall is of the opinion that "the theological activity must involve a conscious and deliberate

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<sup>123</sup> D.J. Hall, God and Human Suffering - an Exercise in the Theology of the Cross, (Augsburg Publishing House, MN, 1986), p.50.

<sup>124</sup> Hall, "Toward an Indigenous Theology of the Cross" in A Christian Declaration ..." op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>125</sup> Hall, Thinking ..., op. cit., p.76.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. p.75.

engagement of the context (in which it operates)"<sup>127</sup>. Additionally, this envisioned engagement of the context should not be done in a detached manner with the aim of just comprehending the historical moment. Rather, it means "... the nurturing of a dialogue with one's culture, ... in which the world is allowed to speak for itself ..."<sup>128</sup> In this dialogue "What has to be learned from the world is not only language, metaphor, idiom (... , but ...) ... the self-interpretation of that world"<sup>129</sup> The implication of this is that Hall regards the context as a contributor to the theological task itself. This contribution of the context to the theological task is for no reason other than the fact that "theology has an internal need for dialogue with a worldly power ..."<sup>130</sup> Hall broadly identifies this dialogue partner as the DEW line of society. In his opinion this includes existentialism which he regards as "the chief reflective response to the "mature" stage of society based on the image of man as master of the technological society ..."<sup>131</sup> Together with existentialist philosophers, Hall also regards many of the present generation of "social scientists, anthropologists, historians, and physical scientists"<sup>132</sup> as dialogue partners with and contributors to the theological task.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid. p.78.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. p. 79.

<sup>129</sup> D. J. Hall, "Who Tells The World's Story ? Theology's Quest ...", op. cit., p.48.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>131</sup> Hall, Lighten our Darkness ..., op. cit., p. 165-167.

<sup>132</sup> Hall, Thinking ... op. cit., p. 138.

This part of the content of his contextual sensitivity, Hall admits, involves " ... the risk (for the theologizing community) of hearing things which it had not anticipated and to which it could not readily respond ..."<sup>133</sup> This element of risk is intensified even more with Hall's further characterisation of context as meaning "... not only to invite the representatives of the world to enter into the theological dialogue, but also that (the disciple community) should itself be prepared to go out into the world ... (to participate in it)<sup>134</sup>. This "emersion" into the world is necessary for Hall as a means to affect the successful communication of the gospel to the world. The next dimension of Hall's definition of context is his perception that it should shape the form and content of theology. In this part of his definition Hall is of the opinion that the historical questions, concerns, and frustrations of this world, in which the theologising community finds itself, determines faith's self-understanding and shapes its content. For him this does not imply an automatic degeneration into relativism but means the reshaping of recurring themes within the tradition of Jerusalem (George Grant) to the questions of the particular time and place in history.

Finally Hall explains his methodological tool, context, through

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. p.81; see also D.J. Hall, "The Diversity of Christian Witnessing in the Tension Between Subjection to the Word and Relation to the Context" in Luther's Ecumenical Significance - An Interconfessional Consultation, eds. P. Manns and H. Meyer (in collaboration with C. Lindberg and H. McSorley), (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1984), p. 260.

the metaphor of story<sup>135</sup>. In this conception, history is the unfolding of the story of God (in the tradition of Jerusalem) and the story of humanity (sometimes promethean-like and other times in a self-degrading manner). Within this reflection of history, theology is then perceived as happening at the point where these two stories meet<sup>136</sup>. Given the unpredictability of humanity, the story of God has an unpredictable character<sup>137</sup>. Consequently, for Hall "...God's story is no fixed drama from which there is no deviation, but an ongoing tale, the comprehension of which makes it mandatory for those who follow it to sustain an equally active attempt to comprehend the human story ..."<sup>138</sup>

Furthermore, Hall views the essential elements involved in contextual thinking as, firstly, the understanding that the hermeneutical process is not just a movement from text to context, but a dialectical interaction between the two. He is of the opinion that "... whilst affirming that the lens through which Christian theology views the world is the tradition of Jerusalem ... as it is apprehended, primarily, through the Scriptures of the two testaments (it) also insists that humanity's ever-changing conception of its world constitutes an active ingredient in the theological discipline ..."<sup>139</sup> The

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<sup>135</sup> Hall, Thinking ..., op. cit., p.90.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. p.91; see also D.J. Hall " Who Tells the World's Story ? ..., op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>138</sup> Hall, Thinking ...,op. cit., p.92.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. p.128.

fact of this dialectical interaction between text and context implies, for Hall, that the disciple community has the responsibility to read the "signs of the times"<sup>140</sup> - the second element in contextual thinking. This reading of the nature of the present time, Hall admits, is an exercise fraught with danger and risk, but still one which belongs to the condition of discipleship.

Consequently, he offers guidelines which could help the disciple community to do the necessary judging of these signs of life. These include ascertaining who the victims of society are and listening to their own testimony of their lives as victims<sup>141</sup>; looking at society through the eyes of its most reflective members<sup>142</sup>; comparing the pursuits and values of society with the images of humanity in our authoritative sources<sup>143</sup>; and listening to the broader disciple community and its perception of the problematique of the present time<sup>144</sup>.

Within this methodological framework Hall takes the relationship between God and humanity as the primary reality. This reality is characterised by a certain degree of continuity as well as discontinuity. This tension is a pivotal element in Hall's methodology and should at all times be sustained. The solution of this tension in Hall's opinion always leads to a distortion

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<sup>140</sup> D.J. Hall, "The Diversity of Christian Witnessing . . .", op. cit., p. 255; see also Hall, Thinking . . . op. cit., p. 131.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. p.134-136.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. p. 136-138.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. p. 139-140.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. p.140-141.

of reality.

Within this ontology history is regarded as the meeting ground of this relationship. From the contextual emphasis of Hall's methodology history is not regarded as a universal concept but refers specifically to the context from which Hall theologises i.e. those in the dominant culture of the North American continent.

So Hall's ontology entails the relationship of God with humanity (those in the dominant culture) in history (on the North American continent), "circa the final decade of what was suppose to be the Christian century"<sup>145</sup>.

The human condition on this continent to which Hall responds is that of those in the dominant culture of this continent. According to Hall, this human condition is characterised by an undialectical emphasis on the positive i.e. humanity's mastery over the rest of creation. This resulted in the distortion of essential humanity which is made up of both limiting and unlimiting characteristics. The problem within this anthropology, according to Hall, is that the ontological tension in humanity itself was resolved in favour of one element i.e. humanity as master. This came about due to the combination of modernity's perception of humanity and the undialectical use of positive elements within biblical anthropology by liberal theologians. The problem at present is that the positive expectation of humanity within the above-mentioned anthropology is not tenable due to the overwhelming experience of negation in the dominant culture of the North American continent.

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.14.

Therefore humanity in this context is characterised by failure. The task of theology (ethics) in the present time is then subsequently to rediscover the limiting dimension in the human condition (and through that sustain the ontological tension of continuity and discontinuity) which is also part of essential humanity.

Knowledge of essential humanity and its relationship with God can furthermore be gained from both God (i.e. through the scriptures) and humanity itself (i.e. through its self-definition in history). Both sources of knowledge are important to Hall in his theological methodology and, in his opinion, should be maintained in any credible methodology.<sup>146</sup> Yet he gives more weight to the scriptures and its perception of reality, the human condition in it, and its perception of possible solutions to the human condition<sup>147</sup>. Scripture as a source of knowledge should not be used in a manner which takes it to reveal truths which are applicable to all people in all places and at all times. The suitability of the word of God to a particular time and place is determined by the people and their place on earth. For those in the dominant culture of the North American continent, according to Hall, the epistemological key within the tradition of Jerusalem to unlock true knowledge of their present condition is the Christ in the "thin tradition" which Martin Luther called the "theologia crucis". In the spirit of Martin Luther, Hall regards this dimension of the crucified (negative) Christ of his methodology as "the whole spirit and method of

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 417.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 420.



authentic theology."<sup>148</sup> He goes on to say that:

"Theologia crucis refers to the whole enterprise; it is as much an eschatology as a soteriology, as much a doctrine of God as a christology, ecclesiology, pneumatology, anthropology, etc."<sup>149</sup>

The significance of this methodological point of entry becomes clear when the antithesis of the theologia crucis, i.e. "theologia gloria", is expressed. In Hall's view the primary defect of this approach to faith is that it is "a triumphalistic theology which is able to maintain itself intact only by lying about reality."<sup>150</sup> The opposite is true about the theologia crucis. In Hall's view "the theology of the cross, at base, is about God's abiding commitment to the world."<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, "in the theologia crucis tradition ... humanity and the human condition are at the center of the whole story."<sup>152</sup>

Therefore, Hall regards this tradition as an appropriate key to gain essential knowledge about the relationship of God and humanity on the North American continent in the present time, because of the triumphalist character of the anthropology there and the need for its people to realise their limits. Thus, in a context where humanity is undialectically projected as master, Hall proposes the tradition of the theology of the cross as the appropriate epistemological key and paradigm through which the

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<sup>148</sup> D.J. Hall, "Rethinking Christ" in Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity, ed. A.T. Davies, (Paulist Press, NY, 1979), p. 177.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> D.J. Hall, Thinking ..., op. cit., p.25.

<sup>152</sup> Hall, Rethinking ... ed. Davies, op. cit., p. 181.

equally essential dimension of humanity as a limited being may be rediscovered<sup>153</sup>. This is part of his methodological concern that the continuous and discontinuous dimensions in reality (ontological tension) should be sustained.

This knowledge which may be gained through the suffering Christ of Luther's theology of the cross does not take place for itself or to provide a final theological statement on life within the North American continent<sup>154</sup> but with the purpose to provide those in the dominant culture with the means to engage their condition of darkness<sup>155</sup>.



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<sup>153</sup> see Hall, "Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross" in A Christian Declaration ... op. cit., p. 127; see also Hall, "The Theology of Hope in an Officially Optimistic Society" , RELIGION IN LIFE, Vol. 40 (1971), op. cit., p. 388.

<sup>154</sup> Hall "Rethinking Christ", in Anti-Semitism ..., op. cit., p. 179.

<sup>155</sup> see footnote 3.

## CHAPTER 4.

### THE FUNCTION OF DOUGLAS JOHN HALL'S THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN HIS THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY.

Douglas John Hall theologises on behalf of the "non-poor" (Freire) on the North American continent who are presently facing the possibility of despair due to the disintegration of their symbolic world. This is particularly true with regard to their self-identification. His whole theological programme is focused on the aim to provide this particular community with the means to deal with this disintegration and possible despair in a healthy and creative manner. He poses his theological method as that instrument which could lead to a creative encounter with the condition of failure of this community.

His theological method includes the active participation of humanity in the methodological process in which knowledge is gained of God's involvement with this community in crisis.

Hall is thus saying that this community plays a determining part in the manner in which he reflects on God's involvement in their condition of failure.

In this chapter I plan to reflect on the function of Hall's theological anthropology in his theological methodology.

A pivotal element in Hall's theological methodology is his insistence that the tension which is part of the reality of God and humanity in relationship be maintained. From this it is thus quite clear that humanity plays at least some part in Hall's theological methodology.

This chapter aims to come to some conclusion as to just what the

function of this involvement is.

My tentative conclusion with regard to the question is that Hall's anthropology determines his point of entry into the theological task. Hall theologises from a particular community in a particular geographic space on earth. His anthropology is thus not universal, but pertains to a particular community i.e. those in the dominant culture of the North American continent. Because he uses this particular community (anthropos) as a point of departure, Hall views the context as an important dimension in his theological methodology. Secondly, because of the prevalent necessary-positive anthropological image in this context (i.e. of humanity as necessarily master), Hall is of the opinion that this community does not have the resources to give meaning to the negative experiences which they are presently facing. Hall therefore approaches his theological enterprise from the negative in order to contribute to the development of such resources. Hall uses Luther's distinction between *theologiae crucis* and *theologiae gloriae* as the theological key through which he arrives at the possibility of approaching life from the negative in a meaningful manner<sup>156</sup>. His methodological approach of the theological task via *negativa* is thus primarily influenced by the theological need to counteract the prevalent necessary-positive anthropology in the North American context. Thirdly, Hall views the prevalent necessary-positive anthropology in the dominant culture of the North American continent as a reflection

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<sup>156</sup> D.J. Hall, "The Diversity of Christian Witnessing in the Tension Between Subjection to the Word and Relation to Context" in Luther's Ecumenical Significance (An Interconfessional Consultation), eds. P. Manns & H. Meyer (in collaboration with C. Lindberg & H. McSorley), (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1984), p.252.

of how one anthropological dimension (i.e. the positive - humanity as master) was overaccentuated at the expense of the other equally central anthropological dimension (i.e. the negative - humanity as sinful being). In Hall's opinion this wrongful elimination of the negative dimension within humanity can only be corrected by a methodology which attempts to sustain the tension between apparently mutually exclusive opposites.

In his discussion of the elements which, in his view, inform the theological methodological debate (i.e. faith, the bible, doctrinal traditions, human experience, prayer, the church, and "the world") and issues which form pivotal parts of any theological method (i.e. the problem of knowledge, the closely connected problem of the relationship between reason and revelation, and the problem of authority), Hall allows the mentioned anthropological concerns to shape his methodology.

Firstly, he approaches these elements and issues contextually (i.e. the way they operate in the dominant culture of the North American continent. Secondly, he approaches them via *negativa*<sup>157</sup> (i.e. through what a particular element or issue is not). Finally, his positive definition of any element or issue attempts to maintain the tension between seemingly opposite positions.

I now intend to reflect on Hall's discussion of these themes primarily with the help of his monograph: THINKING THE FAITH: Christian theology in a North American Context (Augsburg, 1989), part II, p.247-429, and hope to illustrate the function of Hall's

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<sup>157</sup> D.J. Hall, "Beyond Cynicism and Credulity: On The Meaning of Christian Hope" , THE PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN, Vol VI, No. 3 (1985), p.201.

theological anthropology in his theological methodology.

The first element which Hall identifies as being part of the debate within theological methodology is faith.<sup>158</sup> Hall is of the opinion that a distinction should be made between two distorted conceptions thereof on the North American continent. The one is the perception of faith as meaning "to accept a body of doctrine" and the other is the perception of faith as "a belief-ful attitude".<sup>159</sup> In Hall's view "the former type of faith is associated with doctrinal and ecclesiastical "orthodoxy" (and) the latter belongs to circles of less doctrinaire pietism".<sup>160</sup> Against these distortions Hall defines faith as "... (that which) occurs from the human side, when we know ourselves to be encountered, judged, and accepted by the gracious God."<sup>161</sup> In effect then, Hall defines faith in terms of a relationship (i.e. a reflection of "faith in"). For Hall "there is an objective as well as a subjective component in the relational understanding of faith".<sup>162</sup> The objective side reflects the fact that the object of our faith lies outside of ourself (i.e. in God) and the subjective side reflects the fact that "... (to) believe involves the decision and the commitment

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<sup>158</sup> D.J.Hall, Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context (Augsburg, 1989), p.248.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. p.249.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p.248.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. p.249.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

of the self ...".<sup>163</sup>

With this relational definition of faith Hall now addresses the question concerning faith in relation to the theological task. In his opinion two possible views should be avoided (i.e. fideism<sup>164</sup> and subjectivism<sup>165</sup>). The former suggests that "theology can be undertaken only by believers (and assumes) that the human intellect is incapable of attaining true knowledge of God."<sup>166</sup> In fideism "a strict discontinuity is perceived between those who are recipients of revealed truth and those who are not."<sup>167</sup>

Hall is of the opinion that to perceive faith as trust in God "the lines of demarcation between belief and unbelief, believers and disbelievers are at least more fluid than fideism supposes."<sup>168</sup> For Hall this is especially true for him in the context of the dominant culture of the North American continent with its post-Christian religiously pluralistic characteristic where, in his opinion, lots of "co-workers" of the kingdom of God are present who are not necessarily part of the Christian fold. The latter position (i.e. subjectivism) suggests that "faith by itself is sufficient for the theological task ... (and) ... is essentially if not exclusively the articulation of personal

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. p.250.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. p.252.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. p.250.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

religious feeling."<sup>169</sup>

Against this position Hall asserts that "a faith which manifests an inordinate interest in itself is a contradiction in terms."<sup>170</sup> This self-oriented faith in Hall's opinion is a particular characteristic of faith in the North American context. Because of his relational definition of faith Hall is of the opinion that faith as trust in God is much more inclusive. Furthermore, he states that the "intention of that grace which makes faith possible is exactly to free the self from preoccupation with itself and to turn towards the other - i.e. God, neighbour, the world."<sup>171</sup>

Against these two perceptions of faith's relation to the theological task Hall views faith as basically "love in understanding ... (because in Hall's opinion) ... faith expresses itself in the will to comprehend just as insistently as in the will to perform good deeds."<sup>172</sup>

The result of this perception of faith, according to Hall, is that "if there is faith in such context there will be a disciplined passion to understand ... (which opens up the necessity that) ... all Christians must in some measure become theologians."<sup>173</sup>

The second methodological element which Hall touches on is the Bible.

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid. p.252.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. p.254.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. 255.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. p.257.



In the North American continent the dominant perception of the Bible is either that it is the product of human beings and thus not to be singled out as if it contains ultimate truths or it is invested with absoluteness.<sup>174</sup>

In Hall's view both the above-mentioned secular and biblicistic views of the Bible must be rejected.<sup>175</sup>

Rather, for Hall, the "authority of the written word (is qualified)... as soon as ultimacy is given to the living word, the Word Incarnate, the Word which remains person and Spirit...".<sup>176</sup> With this qualification on the use of the Bible in the theological task, Hall is of the opinion that "...for the disciple community the Bible exists as its fundamental source of imagination and courage."<sup>177</sup> He perceives it furthermore as the "font of information" about the original revelation.

This perception of the Bible, according to Hall, makes dialogue with biblical scholarship very important. But this is but one part of the dialectic in the question of the use of the bible in the theological task. For Hall it is especially important that theology be in touch with the here and now i.e. the context. Thus for Hall "(theology's) ongoing discourse with the biblical text is determined in large measure by its worldly context."<sup>178</sup>

The third methodological element which Hall pursues is that of

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid. p.259.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. p.260.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. p. 261; see also Hall, *The Diversity of Christian Witnessing ...*, op. cit., p. 253.

<sup>177</sup> Hall, *Thinking*, op. cit., p. 262.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. p.203.

doctrinal traditions.<sup>179</sup>

In Hall's opinion this element of theological methodology is especially fluid due to the disintegrating societal conditions on the North American continent.

In his discussion of this methodological element, Hall suggests the maintenance of the tension between the need for a usable past (tradition) and the present (context). Hall maintains that "... (a) theology which is sensitive to context cannot be satisfied with any and every past articulation of belief."<sup>180</sup> Rather, "It needs a past which can be truly foundational for what it feels must be said here and now."<sup>181</sup>

In answering the question as to what the theological community's attitude toward tradition should be, Hall warns against modernism and traditionalism which are prevalent in the North American religious context. Here, modernism "seeks to minimize ... the regulative role of tradition within theology."<sup>182</sup> Traditionalism, on the other hand, reflects the tendency to conceive of the real task of theology as the preservation of the corpus of Christian teaching handed over by the past.<sup>183</sup> Traditionalism's primary weakness, according to Hall, is the fact that it "is not primarily interested in speaking to the realities of the present moment ... (but rather), ... aims to preserve aims

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid. p.263.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. p.265.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid. p.267.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. p.269.

and practices of the past."<sup>184</sup> He stresses his objection to this approach to tradition with the critique that it "rejects ... the notion that the context provides the mold ... which theology must allow to shape its articulation of the faith."<sup>185</sup>

In Hall's opinion the dialectic between dependence and independence should rather be developed.

Against the modernist impulse to negate the past, Hall maintains that the past is essential to the theological task . Against traditionalism Hall argues that "...the process depicted within the Christian tradition itself ... is an unfinished one which needs to be rethought by every new generation."<sup>186</sup>

The fourth methodological element which Hall deals with is experience which became an extremely important element in the methodological process due to the breakdown of external authority and the emergence of the individual<sup>187</sup> and a more frequent appeal to the heart in the face of the crisis within reason.<sup>188</sup> The importance given to experience as a methodological element should not be taken uncritically. On the one hand, Hall is of the opinion that experience cannot be taken as proof of truth<sup>189</sup> nor should it be totally ignored.<sup>190</sup> In Hall's opinion it is especially the former which results in "anthropology (being)

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. p.271.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. p.273.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. p.275-277.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. p.278.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. p.280.

deduced from theology"<sup>191</sup> and the latter contains the danger of theology turning into ideology.<sup>192</sup> But given his contextual sensitivity, Hall argues that experience - both public and personal - be seriously considered in the methodological process. The fifth methodological element which Hall deals with is prayer. He is especially critical of the perception of prayer on the American continent which is devoid of a thinking dimension.<sup>193</sup> Hall views this thinking dimension as being an openness or receptivity on the part of the one praying. In Hall's view this means that the one praying is responding to an impulse which is internal and external to the self.<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, he is of the opinion that those who are praying are not just active agents in the methodological process, but pray through active dialogue and resolute questioning of those internal and external impulses. The sixth methodological element which Hall identifies is the Church.<sup>195</sup> Hall views theology as being a component of the life of the Church. Yet again, in Hall's view, the tension should be maintained between the Church as entire disciple community and thus primary theologisers, and the few theologians within.<sup>196</sup> Finally Hall identifies the world as an important methodological element. Hall is adamant that no adequate theology could be done

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36 Ibid. p.281.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. p.282.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. p.285; see also D.J. Hall, When You Pray - Thinking Our Way Into God's World, (Judson Press, Valley Forge, 1987).

<sup>194</sup> Hall, Thinking, op.cit., p.287.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. p.289.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid. p. 292; see also p. 296.

without the world as dialogue partner.<sup>197</sup>

Here Hall identifies especially the arts and humanities as a significant dialogue partner. For Hall artists<sup>198</sup> are ideal dialogue partners because they reflect a sensitivity and perceptiveness especially about crises in the human condition long before any other sector of society notices them.<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, artists have the ability to express the essential spirit of an epoch<sup>200</sup>, and reflect a unique and effective capacity for communication.<sup>201</sup>

Hall approached all of these elements within the methodological debate from the context of those in the dominant culture of the North American continent (i.e. the manner in which they are perceived there). This contextual dimension in his methodology thus refers to a particular geographical space and a specific group of people. Anthropology, and specifically, the theological anthropology of those in the dominant culture of the North American continent thus acts as the locus of Hall's methodology. Furthermore, because of the prevalent necessary-positive image

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid. p.299-300; see also D.J. Hall, "Who Tells the World's Story? Theology's Quest for a Partner in Dialogue" in INTERPRETATION, Vol. 36, (1982).

<sup>198</sup> Hall uses the concept of artist as the "Distant Early Warning" (DEW) line of society of Marshal McLuhan to emphasis the critical sensitivity and thus essential role of artists as dialogue partners of theologians. see *Thinking ...*, op. cit., p.138; see also p. 319. He also refers to them as "chroniclers of the spirit" . see D.J. Hall, "Creation in Crisis" in DIANOIA - A Liberal Arts Journal, Vol.2, No.2, (Spring 1992), p.1. see also Hall, "Creation in Crisis" in *Dianoia* op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>199</sup> Hall, *Thinking ...*, op.cit., p.316.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. p.320.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

of themselves, this group of people is without resources to admit and face its present life of disintegrating resources. To facilitate the process of developing resources which might enable entry into the negative, Hall approaches his theological task via negativa. His theological anthropology thus functions as motivating factor for this methodological dimension (i.e. to approach any theological issue from the negative). Finally, Hall's methodological approach which emphasises the maintenance of the tension between apparent opposites flows out of his perception of reality (i.e. God and humanity in relationship), but also as a result of those in the dominant culture's tendency to negate the negative in their self-perception. With regard to the maintenance of the tension, Hall's theological anthropology functions as a motivating factor to retrieve the negative element within humanity (i.e. its corruptness), in order to sustain it, together with the positive (i.e. its special place in creation). Hall's interpretation of these elements (i.e. faith, the Bible, doctrinal traditions, experience, prayer, the Church, and the world) are not the only methodological components which are moulded by his theological anthropology. His perception of the problem of knowledge, the relation between reason and revelation, and the problem of authority are also closely influenced by his conscious attempt to theologize from a community with a particular theological anthropological make-up.

Thus, Hall's theological anthropology has a similar pivotal function in his approach to these dimensions in his theological methodology.

In Hall's opinion, theology, because of the abuses flowing from

it, cannot claim to have sole right to knowledge but has to earn that right within the world of various epistemological claims. On the other hand, he is of the view that the recognition of past abuses does not automatically mean a total submission to societal methodological systems and methods of knowledge. The discontinuity between Christian and societal epistemologies - especially the dominant technological variety - must be stressed. According to Hall "...the first principle of our knowing ('an eternal Thou') sets us once in conflict with a society which has made it less and less possible for human beings even to say 'thou' to one another, let alone to address an 'Eternal Thou' (Buber)".<sup>202</sup>

In his methodological deliberations Hall is very much aware of the fact that voices of protest against rational systems within technological society do not just come from those in religious settings, but also from within the ranks of those who operate from the rational fold. This fact of the epistemological landscape is what Hall points to when he says that there are discontinuous as well as continuous lines between theological epistemology and rational epistemology. Because of the present fluidity of the dividing lines between these two epistemological traditions, Hall suggests the pursuit of alternative forms of thinking and being in the present time. Given this fluidity Hall is thus in search of allies within the tradition of Athens "... to describe anew, for the post-modern era, the sort of knowing that is linked with trusting and with mystery".<sup>203</sup> He goes on

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid. p.371.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. p.372.

to ask after the possibility "...to discover common ground and the prospect of profitable exchange with those who are 'not of this fold' ".<sup>204</sup>

Thus, Hall's contextual conditions allow him to stress the continuity between Christian and other forms of knowing.

In his development of a Christian epistemology Hall makes a distinction between various types of knowing (i.e. knowledge, acknowledgement and trust<sup>205</sup>). For Hall the first type of knowing entails the acquisition of data. This data refers to the historical events on which the Christian faith is built. In his view this kind of knowledge is not enough for Christian faith. The inadequacy of mere factual knowledge for Christian faith, according to Hall, is proven by the difference between the factual knowledge the first disciples had due to their first hand experiences with Jesus and their post-Pentecostal belief.<sup>206</sup>

With this distinction Hall introduces the next level of knowing in a Christian epistemology (i.e. acknowledgement). Through this level of knowing Hall attempts to explain the movement from fact to faith. For Hall this level of knowing signifies the moment when some of the data acquired becomes significant. A significant dimension of Hall's Christian epistemology is his acceptance that one never gets to acknowledge all the factual knowledge about the Christian faith which implies that not all dogma or precepts of faith necessarily lead to belief.<sup>207</sup> Hall goes on to identify

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid. p.373.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid. p. 377.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. p.380.



a kind of knowing which is different from either the acquisition of data or the acknowledgement of this data. This kind of knowing, in Hall's view, is accompanied by an active decision "...which involves not only rational activity but the activity of the whole self."<sup>208</sup>

This kind of knowing asks for a transition to take place from data and the acknowledgement thereof to something deeper. This transition is not easy and is characterised by an acceptance that "believing is and must be a form of knowing which transcends rationality and all the data accessible to reason".<sup>209</sup>

This mysterious dimension to knowing, in Hall's view, is not unique to Christian knowing. For him "Christian knowing ... is not of another order ... (rather) ... whom is known may be considered unusual, indeed unbelievable in an age of religious unbelief."<sup>210</sup>

Hall's three levels of knowledge reflect his acceptance that Christian epistemology is built on factual knowledge, which need not be acknowledged in full for one to have faith. The question which he has to answer given this position is "if people often truly believe who do not know or acknowledge very much with respect to the traditions, doctrines, and dogmas of the faith, then why should Christians exert themselves to understand this tradition and communicate it to others ?"<sup>211</sup>

For Hall this question opens up the traditionally difficult area

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid. p.383.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid. p.384.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. p.384.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. p.386.

within Christian epistemology. This difficulty is that if human beings by their own effort cannot know God or communicate God to others then, (God) must engage in an act of self-communication - must reveal God's self."<sup>212</sup>

In short, Hall accepts the fact that Christian epistemology reflects a discontinuity between our knowledge and the acknowledgement of data on the one hand and belief or trust on the other. The continuity between our knowledge and God's revelation lies in the fact that trust does not occur apart from the hearing of information.

According to Hall this transformation between knowledge, acknowledgement and trust is brought on by the Holy Spirit. He is also of the opinion that it "presupposes the attempt by the human being with his or her various faculties to comprehend and share the Christian message."<sup>213</sup>

Thus in Hall's Christian epistemology humanity plays an active part in acquiring knowledge of God. The question with which he subsequently deals is the relationship between reason and revelation which are both making epistemological claims. The question is "How according to Christian tradition, does the knowledge of God in God's self-revelation relate to ordinary human rationality, and vice versa?"<sup>214</sup>

For Hall the present meaning of these two categories is not only obscured by past debate, but is also conditioned by the present historical and geographic context. As with the rest of his

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid. p.386.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. p.387.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. p.388.

theological enterprise, Hall thus approaches the discussion of this relation contextually whilst attempting to sustain the tension between past debate and present historical and geographic conditions.

The primary characteristic of the debate in the USA on the relation of these two categories is the significant change which took place with regard to the meaning of "reason". This change in meaning, according to Hall, sets the stage for dialogue between the protagonists of these epistemological traditions.<sup>215</sup>

Despite the potential for dialogue, Hall is not ignorant of the difficulties between these two categories which, in his view, provide the backdrop for the dialogue to be more meaningful.

The mentioned change in the perception of "reason" in Hall's analysis was precipitated by the realisation that presently reason "(manifests) a destructive and potentially annihilating independence".<sup>216</sup> As a result, more and more of those who approach life from the tradition of Athens are beginning to make a distinction between two types of reason. Here Hall uses the thought of Karl Jaspers<sup>217</sup>, Paul Baran<sup>218</sup>, Martin Heidegger<sup>219</sup>, and George Grant<sup>220</sup> to reflect the movement in these circles from a perception of reason which leads to

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid. p. 389.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid. p.392.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. p.393.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid. p.394.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. p.397.

destruction, to a perception of reason which could contribute to the building of community between all creatures on earth.

For Hall this movement from a technical to a relational perception of reason has great significance for Christian epistemology.

Because of these four modern thinkers Hall is of the opinion that "Christian theology with imagination does not have to go very far in today's world to discover representatives of reason who are ready to pose the kinds of questions in which theology has vested interest - questions of meaning, of the good, of the nature of being, etc."<sup>221</sup>

This openness to dialogue brought on by the realization of the destructiveness of unchecked reason does not mean that Christians are in a position to respond positively to it. The danger according to Hall is that "... the capitulation to scepticism on the part of many of the world's former champions of the goddess of the intellect can appear (to be) the seal of divine approval upon a return to authoritarian forms of religion in which the claims of science and the human mind are set aside."<sup>222</sup> What is required rather, is not to rejoice in the humiliation of the human mind, but to contribute to the process through which the world might know peace.

Hall thus suggests a theology of revelation which does not humiliate, but which can fulfil and exalt the quest of the intellect.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid. p.400.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid. p.402.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

Consequently, Hall moves from the assumption that "revelation is the basic epistemological presupposition of Christian belief and theology."<sup>224</sup> Hall goes further and elaborates on this epistemological point of departure by stating that "theology treats of a mystery of knowing which cannot be immediately or fully shared beyond the community of belief."<sup>225</sup> This revealed mystery for Hall is not of "manageable, manipulable dimensions" but the disclosure of a presence."<sup>226</sup> Therefore, in his opinion "Christian revelation is not in the first place a what, but a who."<sup>227</sup> The implication of this perception of Christian revelation is that it cannot be contained, retained, possessed, or used ...(but) ... can only be encountered and lived with".<sup>228</sup>

For Hall this "detrionphalisation" of revelation is essential for dialogue with equally humbled reason.

A further dimension of Hall's perception of revelation is his understanding that "it is mediated through historical events, (of which) the decisive event (is) the one of which Jesus as the Christ is the centre".<sup>229</sup> An implication of this dimension of Hall's definition of revelation is that he (with the help of Paul Tillich) makes a distinction between "original revelation" and

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid. p.403.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid. p.404.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid. p.406.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid. p. 408.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid. p.409.

dependent revelation".<sup>230</sup> Hall views the original revelation as normative for all consequent events and as having the function "to establish the identity of the revealing God, so that in every subsequent generation the spirit-enabled remembrance of His presence could become the historical basis and norm of authenticity and sound teaching."<sup>231</sup> Through the distinction between these two types of revelation Hall establishes the relationship between revelation and history. Revelation is closely linked to history because it is meant to be "grasped by the whole (human being) not only the spirit and not only the mind".<sup>232</sup>

Thus Hall warns against an undue spiritualising and an undue intellectualising of revelation.

With this definition of reason and revelation out of the present reality of the North American continent Hall now sets out to reflect the relationship of these two categories in his Christian epistemology. Hall achieves this in four theses.

Firstly, he views both categories as "integral to the knowing which is part of Christian faith and theology."<sup>233</sup> With this thesis Hall thus argues against the fideist position which wants to reserve "real" knowledge for revelation. On the other hand he is not reclaiming all forms of reason, but only the type in the North American context "(which is moving) away from the earlier self-sufficiency of empiricist and pragmatist versions of thought

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid. p.414.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid. p.415.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. p.417.

towards a conception of thinking which contains within itself a dimension of depth that Christians ought to recognize ..."<sup>234</sup>. This "friendly reason" is then the type which Hall projects as the dialogue partner of revelation in the process of Christian knowing. Hall states that "No matter how important it is to maintain the noetic priority of revelation as point of departure for belief and church, reason must at least be permitted to contribute questions and to establish checks and balances against the power temptations of the (often self appointed) representatives of revelatory truths within the disciple community."<sup>235</sup>

Hall, in this regard, wants to maintain the tension between the continuity and discontinuity of human thought and Christian belief.

Hall's second thesis concerning the relationship between reason and revelation is that "revelation has noetic priority".<sup>236</sup> With this thesis Hall means that "What the Christian claims to know ... is not in the first place something that is derived from the application of rationality but something offered from beyond the capacities of human thought and will."<sup>237</sup> This knowledge, once again, is not mere data, but a person, "... the presence of the 'I am' "<sup>238</sup>. This for Hall is the basis for revelation's noetical priority in its relationship with "friendly reason".

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid. p.419.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid. p.420.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. p.421.

Thus, in Hall's opinion, "The discontinuity between ordinary human thought and the thinking of the disciple community is to be found, not primarily in the different ideas and concepts from one or the other source, but primarily in the new perspective upon the whole of reality which is given to belief in and through the presence of the revealing God."<sup>239</sup>

This dimension of Christian epistemology is in Hall's view the contribution of theology to the analysis of the human condition. The third thesis through which Hall explains his perception of the relationship between reason and revelation is that "... whilst reason is not able to anticipate revelation, it is able to comprehend the human condition in terms that are frequently sympathetic to faith's analysis; therefore reason is always potentially capable of dialogue with revelation."<sup>240</sup> In this dialogue process Hall sees the task of Christian theology not necessarily to attempt to answer ontological and teleological questions or to expect the world to accept its answers to these questions, but "to provide a forum which will permit the world to ask them."<sup>241</sup> This in Hall's view is especially important within the American context where the search for answers is much more acceptable than the postulation of questions. This willingness to engage the questions of his place and time is important to Hall who is of the opinion that "only when we have achieved that kind of solidarity with the human questions ... then we shall have the right to explore again in new ways, the

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. p.422.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid. p.425.



revelatory answer to the human question."<sup>242</sup>

The final thesis through which Hall explains his perception of the relationship between reason and revelation is that "(it) will always be conditioned by contextual factors."<sup>243</sup> As was stated before, Hall is of the view that reason in the present age is not necessarily hostile toward revelation, but is rather reflecting the questions and frustrations of the human condition. Thus Hall is of the opinion that those in the dominant culture of the North American continent "have come to a point in history when what is called for is not the kerygmatic protest of faith against reason's vain pretensions, ... but the earnest attempt of Christian apologetics to comprehend, and to help give birth to a human quest for meaning that may be more desperate than any that has ever been."<sup>244</sup>

In his analysis of the relationship of reason and revelation, Hall moves from the vantage point of its contextual expression (i.e. the manner in which it operates in the midst of a particular group of people in a particular geographic space on earth). From this vantage point Hall discovers that both these epistemological traditions are without credible ground to be triumphalistic. His context, and more particularly the group of people from whom he theologises, provided him with the point of entry through which he could discover the potential for meaningful dialogue between these two traditions.

Thus Hall maintains the continuous and discontinuous lines

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid. p.426.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid. p.427.

between these two categories in his argument concerning Christian knowing. But closely linked to the problem of epistemological claims is that of the basis on which such claims are made i.e. the problem of authority.

Consequently, the final methodological dimension which Hall deals with is that of the problem of authority. The question of authority is especially acute in Hall's context due to the disintegration of traditional sources of authority, especially that of the Church.

Attempts are made on the North American continent to remedy this vacuum of authority by a call to return to the Bible on the one hand or the positing of confessional traditions on the other as sources of authority.

This crisis of authority, in Hall's analysis, is further emphasised by the end of Constantinianism in this context. The termination of the fusion between Church and state is usually experienced as a threat, but in Hall's opinion this breakdown of the Constantinian dimension of the dominant culture should not be viewed as a threat, but as an opportunity for the Church to review its authority patterns.<sup>245</sup>

Hall's suggested revised authority pattern is yet again characterised by the preservation of the dialectical tension between God as sole "source of authority" on the one hand and human "provisional" sources of authority on the other.

From the prophetic tradition Hall establishes his critique of any human claims of authority and through that emphasises the discontinuity between God's authority and humanity's claims of

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid. p.431.

authority.<sup>246</sup> God's authority, according to Hall, relativises all other claims of authority - especially that of humanity. This is then precisely what makes the question of authority a problem in Christian theology. The problem is "If the divine sovereignty is finally incapable of being stated in specific ways ... (i.e.) stated in theological truths that are permanently valid, then is this authority finally not too elusive as to be ineffectual?"<sup>247</sup>

Furthermore, closely linked to the claim of the Spirit as authority, the question, according to Hall, remains how it can be recognised. Additionally, those who claim the Word as the authority are faced with the question as to how one can prevent Scripture from becoming a false authority.

Hall unlocks this problem surrounding the question of authority by defining the "elusive" nature of God's authority. On the one hand God's authority is locked up in the mystery of God's self-revelation (i.e. "I will be who I will be") and on the other hand the fact that this mystery of God's self-revelation can only be felt and seen by us on account of its unveiling of itself.<sup>248</sup> According to Hall the centre of this mystery is the fact that God is close to us - not unknown - through love. He states it more clearly when he says that "the mystery which lies at the heart of the divine authority is nothing other than the love of God."<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid. p.432-435.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid. p. 435.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid. p.437.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

For Hall the love of God as the reflection of the authority of God is then the key through which the Bible, tradition and ecclesial authorities should be viewed.

Through this key the ecclesial authorities become provisional authorities. They become provisional because love as the reflection of God's authority is focused on the beloved. Hall states this clearly when he says that "If love is the form of authority then its content will depend upon the situation of the beloved."<sup>250</sup> Thus Hall's theological anthropology informs also his perception of the problem of authority. For Hall the provisional character of these forms of authority lies in the fact that they are finite and dependent on God as the Authority above all authorities.<sup>251</sup> Furthermore they are provisional because they are "given as gifts, as comfort, by a provident God ... good enough (only) for the time being."<sup>252</sup>

In his explanation of these provisional sources of authority Hall is, yet again, preserving the tension between two seemingly mutually exclusive perceptions (i.e. God as ultimate "source" of authority and the reality of human sources of authority).

In his analysis the Bible's authority lies in the fact that it is "the unique witness to the divine Word".<sup>253</sup> Furthermore, tradition's authority is locked up in the fact that it provides "a certain stability, perspective and sense of direction (for the

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid. p.438.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid. 439.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid. p.442.

future)"<sup>254</sup> Finally, ecclesial authority is focused essentially in its missionary task ... for life in the world.<sup>255</sup>

In this chapter I attempted to reflect on the function of Hall's theological anthropology in his theological methodology. In his discussion of those elements which inform any theological method (i.e. faith, the Bible, doctrinal traditions, experience, prayer, the Church, and the world) as well as the major themes in any theological debate (i.e. the problem of knowledge, the relationship between reason and revelation as two dominant epistemological traditions and the problem of authority), Hall's theological anthropology, in my opinion, played a determining role.

Firstly, Hall theologises from and on behalf of a particular community in a particular geographical space on earth (i.e. those in the dominant culture of the North American continent. Because of this particular community, context is an important dimension in Hall's methodology. All the above-mentioned methodological elements and issues are reflected upon from this starting point.

Secondly, because of the necessary-positive self-perception of his primary audience, they lack the resources to deal with their present experiences of desperation. In order to facilitate the development of these resources, Hall enters his theological methodology via negativa.

Finally, Hall identifies a lack of dialectical thinking within this community, the result of which is usually the negation of

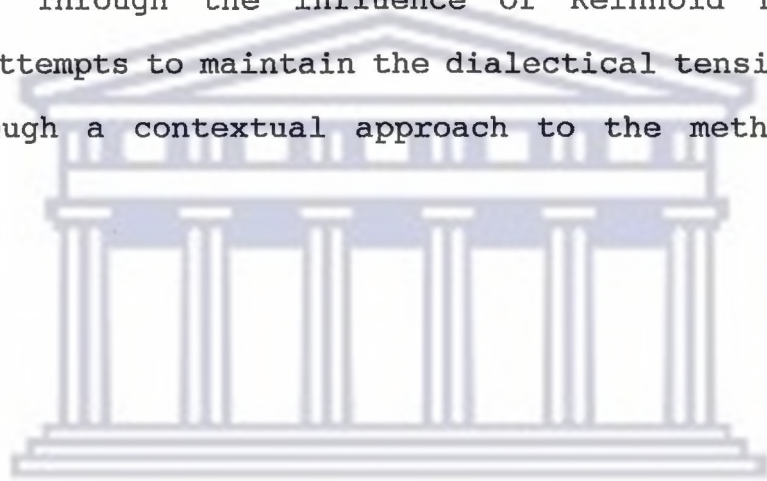
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<sup>254</sup> Ibid. p.444.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid. p.446.

an element of two seemingly mutually exclusive perceptions. Hall seeks to address this anthropological characteristic through arguing that the dialectical tension between two such perceptions be preserved.

Thus, unlike neo-orthodox theologians (especially Karl Barth) who minimise the role of humanity in the methodological process, Hall gives a significant role to the human being. Yet in the same vein he does not over-emphasise the role of humanity within the methodological debate (as was done particularly by liberal theologians). Through the influence of Reinhold Niebuhr<sup>256</sup>, Hall rather attempts to maintain the dialectical tension between the two through a contextual approach to the methodological debate.



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<sup>256</sup> "The Cross in Contemporary Culture", in Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of Our Time, ed. R Harries, (W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. Grand Rapids, MI, 1986), 183-204.

## CHAPTER 5.

### FROM ANTHROPOLOGY TO THEOLOGY.

We have come to the final chapter in this study.

In chapter 1 I attempted to establish the necessity for any theologian to be aware of his or her identity if he or she wishes to do authentic theology. I also pointed to the fact that this is precisely the area which is underdeveloped in the intellectual tradition dealing with the people in the "Coloured experience" in general and their theological thinking in particular.

With this set problematique I consequently read Douglas John Hall's theological anthropology (chapter 2), his theological methodology (chapter 3) and the function of his theological anthropology in his theological methodology (chapter 4).

I did this to facilitate a healthy dialogue with the yet underdeveloped perceptions of the question of identity in myself in particular and the people in the "Coloured experience" in general.

In this final chapter I intend to make an attempt to contribute to the theological anthropological debate in the theological community of the people in the "Coloured experience". Furthermore, I wish to create for myself and those who share my anguish, the beginnings of an identity which will enable me to live life to its maximum potential.

I regard the solution to the question of identity as an important prolegomenon and a vital factor in any attempt at doing authentic theological thinking in this community. The development of a contextual theological method in particular in this community

cannot be done without solving this problem. So firstly I intend to point out the theological anthropological and methodological elements in Hall which may be taken over and those elements which we cannot take over uncritically in our attempt at doing theology in the "Coloured experience".

A primary characteristic of Hall's theology which I regard as useful in my theological endeavour is his attempt to provide his context - the "non-poor" - on the North American continent with resources for daily living at this particularly critical juncture in their history.

Therefore I intend secondly to use this key of "resources for daily living" as a paradigm to reflect in broad strokes on the history of the people within the "Coloured experience".

The history of these people is characterised by a systematic pilfering of their resources for daily living. The cultural and economic influence of the people of Europe caused a dramatic and traumatic vacuum of resources (i.e. spiritual and material) for those in the early "Coloured experience". This traumatic vacuum of resources was caused, amongst others, by the enslavement of people from Africa and Malaysia as well as the dispossession of the early Khoikoi and San groupings together with the reduction of their actual numbers through disease, brought in from Europe (i.e. small-pox). The vacuum was such that at some stage the Khoi and San groups of people were threatened with the possibility of extinction (Marais). They had to draw on some resource which could provide them with the means to survive the threat to their existence in this hostile environment with its depleted traditional resources for daily living. Religion, and more



specifically Islam and Christianity (through the mission stations of the Moravian Brothers and the London Missionary Society, amongst others), provided them with this means of survival. Due to the influence of the European missionaries, the people within the "Coloured experience", especially those within the Christian faith, took on the European world-view and became totally westernised.

It is my opinion that this history of dispossession and the consequent filling of the vacuum of meaning through religious paradigms, especially Christianity, constitutes a primary characteristic of the theological anthropology of the people in the "Coloured experience" in the present time.

As a result of this history of dispossession there are difficulties in coming to a satisfactory definition of the people within the "Coloured experience".

The acuteness of this problem has already been established in this study.<sup>257</sup>

So I thirdly, with the help of poets and novelists in this community, intend to paint in broad strokes the characteristics of the human condition within the "Coloured experience" which are the result of this dispossessed history. Arguably this picture will by far not be complete, but I am of the opinion that all these characteristics may be summed up by the following three positions: namely, that (a) the result of our history of dispossession of "resources for daily living" is that we are (b) presently a group of people searching for acceptable resources of meaning. Consequently, (c) we are living in the tension of

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<sup>257</sup>see Chapter 1, p.2-6.

being thrown away by the European world and all its resources for daily living and the attempt to align ourselves to the African world and all its emerging resources of meaning. Both of these options have historically uncomfortable and psychologically taxing dimensions to them. Thus, a further characteristic of the theological anthropology within the "Coloured experience" is one of living between these two major resources of meaning in the South African context.

Any attempt at doing authentic theology in this community must take our condition of "inbetweenness" seriously. This theological enterprise will have to contribute to the process of developing resources for daily living in this reality. Theology can even contribute to the process through which we can develop resources for daily living from our own wells (Guitierrez).

In this study I have read D.J. Hall as a dialogue partner and methodological guide to gain a way out of the problem of identity in the "Coloured experience". In this process I have discovered many elements in his work which can be retained as helpful methodological means to solve issues on my own stated journey. The elements worth retaining are fourfold i.e. (i) his insistence that theology can only be authentic if it is conscious of its own context with regard to time and place. Hall's determination to do theology on behalf of those in the dominant culture of the North American continent makes his theological endeavour credible and it resonates well within myself who wants to theologise on behalf of those in the "Coloured experience".

(ii) Next to the insistence on context as an important dimension

of theological method, Hall furthermore insists that Christian theology should not operate in a vacuum, but should be regarded as part of an inter-disciplinary pool from which resources for life, for those in the particular context, are produced. As a consequence, Christian theology, in Hall's approach, is not confined to the Church, but has to speak to the whole society in which it operates.

(iii) A further healthy dimension of Hall's theological methodology is his insistence on dialectical thinking i.e. maintaining the tension between two seemingly mutually exclusive dimensions of any given issue. For Hall reality includes both negative and positive dimensions. He insists that the negation of any one of the two will lead to a distortion of this reality. This methodological dimension in Hall's approach provides space for those in the "Coloured experience" to make sense out of their seemingly mutually exclusive worlds i.e. Africa and Western Europe.

(iv) Finally, in this day of the breakdown of traditional sources of authority, Hall's suggestion that Marshall McLuhan's DEW line (artists, novelists and poets) be used as dialogue partners for theologians who want to paint a trustworthy picture of the human condition in the present time, constitutes a credible option. It is especially helpful in my context where there is a lack of credible sources to draw from to paint a picture of those in the "Coloured experience".

But besides the retainable elements in Hall's methodology I have also discovered others which, in my opinion, will not be helpful

in my theological pursuit in my context.

Firstly, although understandable and, in my view, correct in his context, I do not believe that his entry into theology via negativa should be retained. Unlike the North American context where a necessary-positive approach to life is part of the problem, we here in the "Coloured experience" are faced with a group of people with little or no confidence in themselves. This must still be developed and our theological method cannot contribute to that which must be broken down.

A second element of his theological method which cannot be taken over in an uncritical manner is his reconstructionist approach to the theological task. Hall's basic argument is that different contexts ask for different emphases within the tradition of Jerusalem which must just be rethought. In his context - the dominant culture of North America - he proposes the reconstructed (indigenised) peripheral tradition of Luther's theologia crucis. My opposition to this dimension within Hall's methodological approach is based on the assertion that every theological tradition - especially those developed in the margins - are reflections of resistance against the dominant values of the dominant culture. In my opinion Hall does not take this into consideration and therefore makes the transition too easily from the way the tradition of Luther operated in its own peripheral context to the way it should operate in the dominant culture of North America. Hall's theological method in this instance is more assimilationist than reconstructionist. This, in my opinion, is more an example of the dominant culture's ability to take its contradiction into itself and through this perpetuate itself. My

critique is also based on the anticipated discomfort when, sometime in the future, a theologian in the dominant culture of South Africa decides to use my theological anthropology of the people in the "Coloured experience" to invigorate and perpetuate that projected bankrupt section of society without acknowledging how it developed out of struggle against the dominant values of the present time.

So, in the following section I intend to use elements of those retained dimensions in Hall's theological approach to facilitate the discussion around the question of identity of those in the "Coloured experience".

I now aim to use Hall's insistence that theology should operate as part of an inter-disciplinary pool of resources<sup>258</sup> from which resources for daily living in the present time must be produced as a key to point out how those in the "Coloured experience" have a history of pilfered resources for daily living.

The early history of those in the "Coloured experience" with the colonisers from Europe (before and immediately after the 1652 colonisation) is characterised by gradual annihilation.

The various groups of people who constitute the genepool of the present-day people who live within the "Coloured experience" (i.e. "Bushmen, Hottentot, Slaves, Europeans"<sup>259</sup>) all - to a

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<sup>258</sup>see Hall on "friendly reason" (p.19) and the DEW line (p.10). see also chapter 1, note 2.

<sup>259</sup>J.S. Marais, The Cape Coloured People (1652-1937), (Longman, Green and Co., 1939), p.1.

lesser and qualitatively different extent the European component - went through the trauma of the question of survival. This fact has a direct bearing on the present human condition of those who evolved out of these diverse groupings and now find themselves within the "Coloured experience".

When the Dutch, under the leadership of Jan van Riebeeck, formally colonised the southern tip of Africa "... between 1652 and 1662 ... he found tribes of Hottentots with whom he established more or less friendly relations, since he needed their cattle."<sup>260</sup> According to Marais "The Hottentot put up a remarkably feeble resistance to the weak white community (... and) fought two little wars against the Europeans within 25 years after van Riebeeck's arrival, but from the year 1689 onward there was no resistance on the part of the Hottentots to the European advance."<sup>261</sup>

The almost immediate impact of the "European advance" on this community was the disintegration of their already very fragile<sup>262</sup> tribal system.<sup>263</sup> This disintegration was exacerbated by a succession of smallpox epidemics<sup>264</sup> in 1713, 1755, and 1767 which was brought on by the European settlers. According to Marais, this resulted in the fact that the

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<sup>260</sup>Ibid.

<sup>261</sup>Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>262</sup>I. Schapera also points to the easily released and weak tribal bonds between the clans in his The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa Bushmen and Hottentots, (Stephen Austin and Sons, 1930), p. 330.

<sup>263</sup>Marais, op.cit., Ibid.

<sup>264</sup>Ibid. p.6-7.

Hottentots "... no longer appear in the records as organised communities, but as the broken-spirited remnant of a race, all whose feelings of nationality and clanship had been crushed out by (this) great calamity."<sup>265</sup> A definite result of this disintegration, according to Marais, was that the "... Cape Hottentots sank into a position of a landless proletariat - labourers or vagrants in the land of their ancestors<sup>266</sup> ( - ... in grave danger of becoming extinct<sup>267</sup>). It is precisely this level of disintegration which later made Erika Theron conclude that it stimulated closer ties with the white people of the infant colony.<sup>268</sup> She goes on to say that it even led to this group of people becoming politically insignificant and not resistant to the process of assimilation into the life of the European settlers.<sup>269</sup>

This is the position of disadvantage from which the present-day people within the "Coloured experience" braved their habitation of the southern tip of Africa when they first met with the people from Europe.

But this community also experienced from this early time the "push-pull" existence of limited advantage and benefit from having close links with those in power.

Primary examples of temporary reprieve from total dispossession

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<sup>265</sup>Ibid.

<sup>266</sup>Ibid, p.7.

<sup>267</sup>Ibid. p.9.

<sup>268</sup>Die Kleurling Bevolking van Suid Afrika, eds. Erika Theron and Marius J. Swart, (Universiteit uitgewers en boekhandelaars, 1964), p.3

<sup>269</sup>Ibid. p. 190.

and emasculation are Caledon's pass laws of 1809 and Ordinance 50 of 1828.

In broad strokes these laws can be interpreted as means through which the people within this early "Coloured experience" were included into the political, legal and economic life of those in power<sup>270</sup>. The result of this is that the people within the "Coloured experience" became junior partners in the administration of the colony<sup>271</sup>. They even became co-extermimators of other components of the Southern African population.<sup>272</sup> But this inclusion was never fully accepted. It was repealed after a relatively short space of time.

The fact that this community was never fully accepted as part of the mainstream of the European community and even had to make political, legal, and economic advances in competition<sup>273</sup> with a component of this mainstream was clearly demonstrated by the repeal of Ordinance 50 of 1828. The initial institution acted as a direct contributor to the northward trek of the Afrikaners. A consequence of this repeal was the fact that the people within this community were yet again reduced to being just a cog within the economic machinery of the minority European settlers.

In this time of reduced access to resources for daily living religious institutions (i.e. mission stations) provided a safe haven in an unfriendly world. It is at this juncture that the large-scale acquisition of a European (British and German) world-

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<sup>270</sup>Marais, op.cit., p. 110-122; see also p.256.

<sup>271</sup>Ibid. p.15.

<sup>272</sup>Ibid, p.17, see also p. 131.

<sup>273</sup>Ibid, p.12.



view took place.

Within this unfriendly world of pilfered resources within the early "Coloured experience" there were limited means to draw from to make sense of the crisis and the trauma of the question of survival. The only powerful paradigm available with acceptable social institutions which provided the space for a meaningful engagement of the hostile world (although in a highly controlled form) was religion and more specifically the Christian and Islamic faiths.

The Muslim component within the "Coloured experience" came from Malaysia with their institutions and officials intact. Therefore, the mosque acted as a powerful alternative reference point for those in the enslaved employ of the small settler community.<sup>274</sup>

The question of survival in this component of the people within the early "Coloured experience" was, in my opinion, not as acute as in the Khoi communities of the broader Cape colony. To them the question of survival was more intense because all their social networks - especially the already loosely organised clanships (Schapera) - were rendered redundant due to the impact of the technologically superior settlers from Europe.

The results of the engagement of the torchbearers of what was then the dominant ideology of Europe (i.e. the missionaries from the British (eg. Bet-el) and German Missionary societies (eg. Genadendal)) were the total acquisition of the Western European world-view and the forging of direct links (genetical,

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<sup>274</sup> A. Davids, M.Thesis (UCT), Mosques of the Bo-Kaap: A Social History of Islam at the Cape, (Athlone: South Africa Institute of Arabic and Islamic Research, 1980).

psychological, cultural, and others) with that sub-continent. Hence our present condition of "inbetweenness" - the condition of belonging solidly to two worlds i.e. Africa and Western Europe. I am of the opinion that this dialectic of the LMS (Bet-el) and its political agitation and advocacy tradition coupled with the Moravian missionary tradition linked with economic empowerment (Genadendal) could be elements of the pool of resources to enter into in the endeavour to develop a healthy base of resources for daily living in our day.

More recently the question of survival facing this community came in the wake of relatively successful attempts at pushing back the obstacles placed on this community in the second decade of this century (amongst others the Apprenticeship laws of 1924). As a result of economic pressures on the already depleted resources of the areas outside of Cape Town a steady process of urbanisation took place with its high point during the middle years of the fifth decade of this century. The result was the establishment and strengthening of existing vibrant communities in places like District Six, Claremont, Mowbray, Wynberg, etc.,. This set the stage for the biggest shock in recent history and the onset of another cycle of systematic and conscious dispossession and "THE RAPE OF A PEOPLE. i.e. the HATED GROUP AREAS ACTS Nos 41 of 1950 and 77 of 1957 (as amended)"<sup>275</sup>.

The physical results of this law were more or less completed by 1970 when people were moved en masse to areas on the Cape Flats like Hanover Park, Bonteheuwel, Elsies Rivier, etc.,. Those who

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<sup>275</sup>Al J Venter, A Profile of Two Million South Africans, (Human & Rousseau, 1974), p. 7.

could afford the expense left the soil of their origin for far away places like Canada, Australia and others. The social, economic, political, psychological, and other results of this recent mechanism of dispossession which yet again forced this community to struggle with the question of survival are still experienced and analysed. They acted as direct impetus of this study.

Sadly, the cumulative effect and result of this history of systematic dispossession and subtle assimilation into the dominant culture of South Africa is the difficulty in conceptually and semantically defining the people within what I refer to as the "Coloured experience" - In short the trauma of having no self-created name.<sup>276</sup>

Despite the expressed difficulty, a process of uncovering an acceptable self-created name must be initiated.

In my opinion one can pursue various avenues in the attempt to draw a picture of the people in the "Coloured experience" i.e. through interviews, empirical observation, reading of literature concerning this group of people, etc., .

I find all of the above-mentioned methods to be inadequate but not totally unacceptable. They must be done in conjunction with a strong measure of critical analysis from the most sensitive sectors (the DEW line) within this group.

Interviews are inadequate because this assumes the ability to critically self-express. Given our position in the "inbetweens" we do not have a readily strong, transformative and critical

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<sup>276</sup>see Chapter 1, p.2-6.

self-expressive character. On the contrary, we always end up talking about ourselves in somebody else's paradigm.

Furthermore, I regard an empirical study as less than ideal because the years of living in the shadows of powerful groupings have caused the people of this particular community to live a dual life i.e. that in the public eye and that in the privacy of the group. In short: that which is observable is in most - if not all- cases not a true reflection of real identity and sense of self.

The study of literature concerning this group of people is just as problematic. The reason for this is that original written self-expression from this group is extremely limited. A wide range of literature was produced over the years by especially those in the dominant culture of South Africa who participated in the process of naming us. This literature usually distorts more than clarifies when it comes to the question of Coloured identity.<sup>277</sup>

In recent years though, a range of authors evolved out of this community to give expression to what I refer to as the "Coloured experience". This expression usually took on a poetic form. In classical DEW line manner these poets and novelists express issues and questions of which this community itself is not fully aware.

I am particularly interested in this form of self-expression. It is then also my intention to reflect on this section of

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<sup>277</sup>J. Gerwel, Literatuur en Apartheid - Konsepsies van 'Gekleurdes' in die Afrikaanse Roman tot 1948, in Taal en Politiek Reeks 1, (Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland, Belville, 1988), especially p.43-56, and 56-73.

literature to give what I regard as a more authentic reflection of what I have come to accept as the "Coloured experience" and what it means to find oneself in the "inbetweens".

My approach is given legitimacy by D.J. Hall's use of Marshall McLuhan's DEW line (artists, novelists and poets) as dialogue partners in his endeavour to paint a credible picture of the human condition in his context in the present time.

This approach is given further support by Professor Hein Willemse of the University of the Western Cape, when he states that:

"Literature, in this sense, is evidence of man's reproduction and interpreting the surrounding concrete materiality. ... If literature is related to the historical sphere, so is also the poet (and the artist generally). An analysis of the artist as intellectual can be of prime importance in understanding the essential power relationships in society. The artist, the intellectual, registers these power struggles and a study of his artifacts will reveal attempts to circumscribe and inhabit his world. The reflections and ponderings of the artistic intellectual vacillations, anxieties, and anger provides sensitive barometer readings of a particular historical setting."<sup>278</sup>

With this established rationale I shall now proceed to reflect on essential dimensions of the "Coloured experience" with the help of the DEW line from this community.

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<sup>278</sup>H. Willemse, "Die Wrange Klag, die Satire en Opstandigheid van die Kleurling - Towards a Critical Reconstruction of the Intellectual History of the Black Afrikaans Poets" in On the Political Economy of Race, Vol 1, (UWC, 1984), p.25.

A central characteristic of the "Coloured experience" in recent years and one which will resound for generations to come is the "Group Areas Acts Nos 41 of 1950 and 77 of 1957 (as amended)"<sup>279</sup>. This historical experience of those in the "Coloured experience" is the most recent expression of years of a disposable existence. In the short space of twenty years (1950-1970) this community was systematically reduced yet again to being a "landless proletariat" (Marias). This legislation negated all the relatively successful attempts to overcome the previous generations of dispossession (i.e. repeal of Caledon's laws and ordinance 50 of 1928, the 1924 Apprenticeship laws, etc.)

The trauma of this piece of legislation is intensely portrayed by especially Adam Small in his dramas eg. Kanna Hy Kô Hystoe<sup>280</sup>, Krismis van Map Jacobs<sup>281</sup>, and Joannie Gallant-hulle<sup>282</sup>.

Peter Snyders also reflects on this theme in his drama "Political Joke"<sup>283</sup> when he likens the experience of the Group Areas Act removals with that of the trauma of divorce. The character "Sally", who went through the crises of both, states that:

"Die trauma is dieselfde ... Die doelloosheid, swerftog op soek na

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<sup>279</sup>Al J Venter, A Profile of Two Million South Africans, (Human & Rousseau, 1974), p. 7.

<sup>280</sup>A. Small, Kanna Hy Kô Hystoe - 'n Drama, (Tafelberg, 1965).

<sup>281</sup>A Small, Krismis van Map Jacobs, (Tafelberg, 1983).

<sup>282</sup>A. Small, Joannie Galant-hulle, (Perskor, 1978).

<sup>283</sup>P. Snyders, Political Joke - 'n Gespreksdrama, (Perskor, 1983).

'n plek om jou wortels te anker. Die  
eensaamheid in 'n skare van vreemdelinge,  
elkeen ewe eensaam."<sup>284</sup>

Furthermore, the sense of dislocation from the rest of the community and the alienation from those who go through the same uprooted experience as well as the social decline are also expressed by the same character when she says that:

"Dit is nie lekker nie, Sammy,  
om ontwortel te word uit die  
gebied waar jy gebore was en  
onder moorderaars, verkragters  
en allerhande soort rommel  
gegooi word nie."<sup>285</sup>

A further characteristic of the theological anthropology of the people in the "Coloured experience" is the condition of chronic socio-economic decline and entrapment in the cycle of pilfered resources. This feature is vividly sketched by JFS Smith in his evaluation of themes within community theatre in the "Coloured experience" (for him "black community") when he says that:

"In die township-bestaansruimte word die  
lewe oorwegend gedramatiseer as uitsigloos,  
met weinig of geen kans vir die betrokkenes  
om daaruit te ontkom of om daarbo uit te styg.  
Makiet en haar gesin wag tevergeefs op Kanna  
wat soos 'n Moses hulle na n nuwe beter bestaan  
moet lei; Boytjie Valentine se poging om as  
potensiele Springbok aan sy "fokol"-bestaan te  
ontkom, misluk, die Salies word vanuit 'n redelik  
gerieflike bestaan na n township toe gedwing,  
ens. Terwyl in bepaalde dramas n pertinente strewe  
na beter telkens gefrustreer word, is daar in  
ander dramas n opvallende afwesigheid van so 'n  
strewe ..."<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>284</sup>Ibid. p.22.

<sup>285</sup>Snyders, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>286</sup>J.F.S. Smith, "Swart Afrikaanse Gemeenskapsteater - 'n Voorlopige Ondersoek" in Swart Afrikaanse Skrywers, reds. JFS Smith, A van Gensen, H Willemse, (UWK Drukkery, 1985), p.30.

He goes further and states that :

"Die uitsiglose bestaan van karakters word ook weerspieël deur sosiale misdrywe en euwels en ontbeuringe wat as deel van die alledaagse bestaan gesuggereer word. Drank misbruik, verkragting, geweldadigheid, sedeloosheid, kru taal kry 'n konstante aanwesigheid in die dramas." <sup>287</sup>

The psychological state of mind of those in the "Coloured experience" which is a result of its discarded existence is furthermore reflected by Smith in his analyses of theatre on the Cape Flats when he says that:

"Selfbejammering, lotsbeklaging, oorgelewerdheid aan 'n uitsiglose en gedenigreerde bestaan oorheers. Protes, verzet, is die uitsondering en nie die reel nie." <sup>288</sup>

Adam Small is particularly diligent in exposing especially the dependent religious dimension of those in the "Coloured experience" in his dramas.

In his Kanna Hy Kô Hystoe the character of the waiting Makiet constantly points to the fact that "Maar die Here, Hy is darem oek genadig." <sup>289</sup> despite and in the face of the obvious absence of the grace of God in her real material and immediate circumstances.

Gerwel notes Small's sensitivity in also his poetry about the paralysing religious dimension in the "Coloured experience" when he concludes that:

"... die godsdienst van liefde lei inderdaad tot passiwiteit in die aangesig van lyding ...

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<sup>287</sup>ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>289</sup>Small, Kanna Hy Kô Hystoe, op.cit., p.60.



Daar is egter reeds in hierdie vroeëre gedigte die weifelende en ontnugterende besef dat die passiewe godsdiens van liefde weinig aanklank vind en die latere bitterheid van baie van Small se poësie word al hierin voorafskadu."290

JFS Smith, in his evaluation of the content of community theatre in the "Coloured experience", also notes the paralysing religious expression in this community when he says that:

"In 'n groot aantal dramas val die karakters se bewustheid van en kinderlike geloof in God en gedwee aanvaarding van Sy wil (own emphasis) op: ..."291

With this characteristic of religious dependence goes a further strong attribute of those in the "Coloured experience" namely, a psychological loneliness covered with laughter.

Al Venter touches on this dimension of those in the "Coloured experience" through his deliberation on the question: What is a Coloured. In his reflections on people from the "Coloured experience" he cites a person saying:

"In spite of all this, we have not forgotten how to laugh. Why? You don't have to look far for the answer. Its a defense mechanism against all the hardship and frustration we have to endure. A safety valve if you like."292

And still another said as a response to an Anglican Church priest of Bonteheuwel's urge that " instead of smiling our people must learn to say: For God's sake stop this it hurts"293:

"But Father, if I don't find time to

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<sup>290</sup> J.Gerwel in Swart Suid Afrikaanse Skrywers, eds. JFS Smith, A van Gensen, H Willemse, (UWK Drukkery, 1985), p.16.

<sup>291</sup>J.F.S. Smith "Swart Suid Afrikaanse Gemeenskapsteater - n Voorlopige ondersoek" in Swart Suid Afrikaanse Skrywers op. cit., p.31.

<sup>292</sup>Al J Venter, op. cit., p.7.

<sup>293</sup>Ibid.

laugh and make jokes about my lot, I would break down and cry."<sup>294</sup>

A further dimension of the anthropology of those in the "Coloured experience" is the unhealthy dependence on others to liberate them or to be the cause of better conditions. This reflects no trust in their own abilities.

Yet again Small is an example of sensitivity of this dimension in the "Coloured experience". His drama "Kanna Hy Ko Hystoe" is focused in essence on the tension of the awaited Messiah-like visit of the character "Kanna" who is expected to do something about the ritual of death which is the material condition of the rest of the cast.<sup>295</sup>

Nowhere in the drama does any one of the characters realise his or her own strength and ability to transcend conditions of adversity. In the end the Messiah-like character, "Kanna", also succumbs to the pressure of the superhuman responsibility and expectation of him. The drama ends up with him broken down in front of the open casket<sup>296</sup> of the woman, Makiet, who sacrificed herself for him<sup>297</sup> and expected him to grow in stature in this community which was supposed to have resulted in them having a better life.<sup>298</sup>

All these above-mentioned paralysing characteristics of those in

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<sup>294</sup>Ibid.

<sup>295</sup>Small, Kanna Hy Kô Hystoe, op.cit., p.19.

<sup>296</sup>Ibid, p.71.

<sup>297</sup>Ibid. p.26.

<sup>298</sup>Ibid, p.19.

the "Coloured experience" drew varying degrees of resistance. In the theological spectrum meaningful resistance and attempts at providing alternative frameworks of meaning came from those theologians in the ranks of the Black theological expression.<sup>299</sup>

For Ian Goldin the years of disposable living have led to a situation where,

"... the position of coloured people has deteriorated sharply. Their exclusion from white society and the segregation of all aspects of their lives have increased their alienation. For many coloureds, increasingly disillusioned by the failure of white and coloured politicians to advance their position, the only way forward is through their joint organisation with African men and women. This radicalisation of coloureds since 1976 has propelled coloureds to the forefront of the struggles waged against the regime, ..." <sup>300</sup>

At this present juncture in the historical evolution of the people in the "Coloured experience", the tension of living in the "inbetweens" is experienced in a very acute manner. A decision on the direction of the country is expected. The present contrasting nature of the political affiliation within the "Coloured experience" is a contemporary expression of the inner turmoil of living in two worlds but not being fully part of either. This is the tension of living in the "inbetweens", between the margins and the shifting centre in a world called the

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<sup>299</sup> see A.A. Boesak, Farewell to Innocence: A Social Ethical Study of Black Theology and Black Power, (Kampen:Kok,1976) as an example of a theologian from the "Coloured experience" who operated in the ranks of Black theology.

<sup>300</sup>I. Goldin, Making Race - The Politics and Economics of Coloured Identity in SA, (Maskew Miller Longman (Pty) Ltd., 1987), p. 243.

"Coloured experience". The years of resistance both in the Church and the broader community against those structures which contributed to this torn human condition find practical political expression in electoral support for the African National Congress as a means to gaining access to the central resources of power. Any attempt at doing authentic theology in this context must take this condition of "inbetweennes" and this world of the "Coloured experience" seriously.



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APPENDIX A.  
Transscript of a Sermon on Psalm 88  
Conducted on Sunday 20 June 1991  
by Prop. VA van Breda  
at the Wynberg DR Mission Church  
(Rev. RH Botman - Resident Pastor)

Br en Sus ek wil net 'n vraag aan u vra ... Het u al ooit so 'n negatiewe Psalm gehoor soos hierdie een ... het u al ooit 'n Psalm tee gekom waar iemand so met God worstel dat daar byna geen positiewe woord is in dit wat hy sê ... in dit wat hy skrywe nie.

Die Psalm digter kry dit baie goed reg om sy crises wat hy beleef om dit in woorde om te sit ...iets wat die hedendaagse mens mens moeilik reg kry ... om te sê hoe ons voel as dit met ons sleg gaan.

Br an Sus hoeveel van u het al geworstel met God. Hoeveel van u het al so met God geworstel dat u aan die rand van ongeloof staan. Hoeveel van u hat al so geworstel met God waar u neig om geloof in God te verloor ... asof u u geloof in God verloor het. Dit is tot hierdie graad van worsteling wat ek u wil uitnooi. Ek wil u uitnooi om so met God te worstel sodat u juis u geloof in die God wat ons aanbid kan behou. Ek wil u uitnooi om saam met die Psalmis te worstel met die krisis wat hy deurmaak.

Hierdie tipe worsteling vind gewoonlik plaas in momente van krisis. Dit gebeur wanneer die antwoorde van die verlede nie meer antwoorde bied op die vrae van die moment nie ... waar die antwoorde nie meer strook met die realiteit van die lewe nie.

Br en Sus die preek gaan nie noodwendig poog om u met mooi en klinklare antwoorde huis toe te stuur nie . Die preek wil eerder op twee wyses ... op twee maniere met u omgaan.

In die eerste plek wil dit soos 'n Jakob van ouds wie met God

worstel wil dit u toelaat ... dit hê dat u ook moet worstel met God ... soveel so Br en Sus dat u dalk mank uit die huis van die Here sal gaan ... mank in die simboliese sin van die woord.

Die preek gaan u ook nie met mooi en met positiewe antwoorde antwoorde huis toe stuur nie, want dit wil hê dat ons op hierdie wyse van worsteling met God soos wat die Psalmis dit doen ... met God moet worstel.

Vanoggend wil ons saam met die Psalmis uitkreet: Here, waarom keer jy jou rug op ons ... waarom lyk dit asof jy nie meer aan ons dink nie !

Die preek het ook ten doel om saam met die Psalmis uit te skreeu: Here, ons is moeg van teëspoed ... ons is moeg daarvan om net net 'n bestaan te maak ... Here waarom keer U U rug op ons !

Waar kom hierdie vraag vandaan ... waar kom die behoefte vandaan om so sterk met God te worstel ?

Die uitroepe van desperaatheid ervaar 'n mens as jy staan en later reflekteer oor die siekbed van 'n onbekende vrou erens in Victoria hospitaal ... as jy daar staan met kommunikasie wat onmoontlik is en jy wonder: " maar wie is sy, wie is haar familie ... is daar iemand wie aan haar dink of is sy 'n vergete ou vrou ... onbekend in 'n hospitaal agter gelaat deur die lewe.

As 'n mens voor hierdie realiteit staan Br en Sus kom die behoefte by 'n mens om uit te skreeu: "Here, waarom keer jy jou rug op ons, waarom lyk dit asof jy nie meer aan ons dink nie !". Dan is die behoefte daar om uit te kreet: "Ons is moeg daarvan om teëspoed te beleef"

Maar met verdere en nadere refleksie Br en Sus op hierdie insident - op hierdie siek onbekende vrou - kom 'n mens agter ...

maar sy is 'n refleksie van ons ... 'n versinnebeelding van vele ander van ons met wie ons te doen kry in ons gemeenskap.

In 'n baie groot mate is sy eintlik 'n simbool van ons wat elke dag ... of liewer ... elke Sondag in die erediens kom sit. Sy is 'n simbool van ons as gemeenskap.

In ons gemeenskap Br en Sus ervaar ons vele mense wat dakloos is. Op 'n dag soos vandag waar dit reën is daar mense - soos wat ons hier sit - wat nie 'n huis ... 'n plek het om in te bly nie ... mense wie sonder kos elke dag rondloop en bedel. Ons kan nie een vanoggend sê dat ons nog nie met so 'n persoon te doen gekry het nie. Mense wie werkloos is ... mense wie geen gesinservaring het nie a.g.v. die disintegrasie daarvan. En as ons dit sien Br en Sus dan kom die behoefte op om te vra: "Here, waarom lyk dit asof jy nie meer aan ons dink nie"

Br en Sus laat my toe om die mense van wie die onbekende vrou n voorbeeld is ... 'n simbool is ... laat my toe om hierdie mense nader te omskryf. Net soos sy naamloos en identiteitloos is reflekteer sy ook ons naamloosheid en identiteitloosheid. Ons is 'n gemeenskap wie so vervreemd is van sy eie geskiedenis dat dit lyk of dit onmoontlik is om daardie geskiedenis terug te win. Die enigste historiese figuur wat daar van melding gemaak word - en in die volksmond enigsinds bekend is - is die karikatuur van n Harry die strandloper. Die identiteit Br en Sus wat ons nog gehad het ... wat ons gehad het komende van die plekke waar ons gebore was is ook van ons weggeneem. Dit a.g.v. die groepsgebiede verskuiwinge. Net die anderdag - en ek praat van Vrydag wat verby is - het ek die voorreg om saam met 'n vriend sy familiehuis in Constantia te herontdek - 'n ou varlate huis ... 'n vervalde huis

- en hy kon my die verhaal vertel van hoe hy as jong kind na die huis kon gaan waar sy oupa gebly het. Maar hy kon my ook die verhaal vertel van hoe hierdie huis ... hoe hierdie plek van identiteit van hulle as familie weggeneem is. En Hy kon my vertel van 'n aand toe groot mense huil ... toe groot mense in trane rondom die woord sit en hierdie verskuiwing wat hulle moes deurmaak ... om daaraan betekenis te gee. En hoeveel van ons het nie al so 'n ervaring gehad. Hoeveel van ons kan so n storie vertel. Ons sit hier as gemeenskap wie beroof is van hierdie bron van identiteit ... hierdie bron waar ons mens-wees in opgevat is.

Maar naas die ervaring wat ons elkeen op 'n manier ervaar het, is ons ook deel van n gemeenskap waar ons jeug min of geen toekomsvisie het nie ... waar die jeug nie groot drome droom nie ... waar die jeug tevrede is met die bietjie ... die krummels wat van die tafel van die lewe afrol.

Ons is ook deel van 'n gemeenskap waar daar geen of min rolmodelle is waarvolgens kinders hulle lewe kan inrig nie. Ons is deel van 'n gemeenskap waar die sterkste rolmodel - en ek wil dit waag om te sê - waar die sterkste rolmodel 'n bendelid is. Dit word bewys deur die feit dat soveel van ons jong kinders in hul manier hoe hulle omgaan met hulle lewe ... dat hulle daardeur aandui dat dit is die rigting waarin hulle wil beweeg. En so kan ek voortgaan om aan te dui hoe hierdie gemeenskap waarvan u an ek deel is ... hoe hierdie gemeenskap net nie kan wen nie.

As ons die sopllyn ervaar - elke Dinsdag en Donderdag een keer in die maand - dan kom 'n mens agter dat dit mense is wat vasgeval is in hul armoede ... en dit lyk nie asof hulle kan wen nie.

As ons bewus word hoe ons ouers letterlik hul hande deurwerk van



soggens vroeg tot saans laat met geen tyd vir rekreasie ... met geen tyd om aan hulleself te spandeer nie ... hoe hulle soos skape elke oggend vroeg weggebring word werk toe en dan ook op hierdie manier teruggebring word in die aand.

Ons is deel van 'n gemeenskap waar kinders hulle huis probleme ... die krisis wat hulle beleef in hulle huisgesinne saam bring skool toe. Waar dit soms onmoontlik is om betekenisvol onderrig te gee aan 'n kind ... want die kind worstel met 'n pa wie werkloos is en n ma wie nie weet hoe om die krisis te hanteer nie. En so kan ek voortgaan en so kan ek aangaan.

Ons is inderdaad ook deel van 'n gemeenskap waar die enkele individue wie dit reg kry om uit hierdie siklis van vasgevallendheid ... om daaruit uit te styg ... waar hierdie individue vervreemd word van hulleself ... vervreemd word van die gemeenskap om een of ander vreemde Europese lewensstyl aan te neem ...

En in ons dag en tyd word ons as gemeenskap wat hierdie krisis ervaar gevra om ... en ons is deel van 'n proses van transformasie in n land ... 'n proses waaraan hierdie gemeenskap ... waaraan ons as gemeenskap ... waaraan ons as gemeenskap van gelowiges moet deel neem. Maar ons ervaar hierdie proses so verlamrend ... ons ervaar hierdie proses so verwarrend dat ons allerhande vreemde vrae vir onself vra ... soos byvoorbeeld: "wie gaan aan ons dink as FW de Klerk en Nelson Mandela gaan praat ... wie gaan aan ons dink ... wie gaan namens ons praat ... (by) wie en waar pas ons in ?" Sulke vreemde vrae vra ons juis a.g.v. die verwarring wat ons beleef in onself.

Br en Sus as ek as jong mens ... as ek as gelowige jong mens al

hierdie dinge sien en ervaar van hierdie gemeenskap waarvan u en ek deel is, dan kom die vrae in my gemoed baie spontaan by my op: "Here, waarom keer jy jou rug op ons ... waarom lyk dit asof jy nie aan ons dink nie ... waarom lyk dit asof jy jou rug (lank reeds) op ons gekeer het." Dan kom die (byna) rebelse kreet (...) na vore: "Here, ek is sat ... ek is moeg van teëspoed ... ek is moeg daarvan dat ons net nie kan wen nie."

Maar nou is dit so dat hierdie kreet ... hierdie vraag aan God gerig word, want dit is een ding wat ek besef (naamlik) dat hierdie gemeenskap (dat) tenspyte van sy gebrokenheid ... ten spyte van sy identiteitloosheid ... ten spyte van sy honger en sy dors om uitkoms te wil hê en te wil kry ... dat dit 'n gemeenskap is wat vas hou aan God ... wat nog altyd deur nog wil glo aan God. Die feit dat ons bymekaar is hier vandag is 'n bewys daarvan ... die feit as ons kyk na hoe ons strate lyk ons Sondagoggend (lyk) hoe so baie van ons oppad is na ons verskillende kerke om daar God te gaan aanbid is 'n aanduiding dat hierdie gemeenskap ten spyte van sy gebrokenheid ... ten spyte van sy verwardheid nog steeds aan God wil bly vas hou.

"Here, waarom keer jy jou rug op ons ... waarom lyk dit asof jy nie aan ons dink nie ... Here, ons is sat ... ons is moeg van teëspoed. Die Nuwe Vertaling sê: "Here, die swaarkry het vir my te veel geword.

Dit is dieselfde kreet waarmee die Psalmdigter van Psalm 88 met God worstel. En met eg menslike taal ... met eg menslike maniere (is hy besig) om sy gevoelens uit te druk ... worstel hy met God. En u het seker al gewonder waarom ek nie met meer respek my vrae aan God rig nie byvoorbeeld deur te sê (soos wat die ou

vertaling ook sê ): "Here waarom (is dit dat) U nie meer aan ons dink nie ..." Maar dis die manier: " Here, waarom dink jy nie meer aan my nie" ... (dit) is presies die manier hoedat die Psalmdigter met God praat. 'n Aanduiding van die desperaatheid van sy situasie ... n aanduiding Br en Sus van die krisis wat hy in sy lewe ervaar en beleef.

En met hierdie treurige lied wat ons in die eerste vers agter kom - die vreemde woord "Mahalat leanot" is eintlik n aanduiding dat hierdie lied is 'n treurige en stadige lied wat gesing word deur hierdie mens in krisis - ... met die treurige lied probeer die Psalmdigter vir God vra: "Here, waarom keer jy jou rug op my .. waarom lyk dit asof jy nie aan my dink nie ... waarom lyk dit asof jy jou rug op ons (my) gedraai het. En hy sê dit inderdaad baie duidelik ..."Ek is moeg daarvan om teëspoed te beleef.

Hy worstel met God, Br en Sus, op hierdie eg menslike wyse, want dat hy God in sy lewenservaring as afwesig ervaar het, is gewis. Dat hy God as afwesig ervaar het in sy lewe is 'n feit ten spyte van die feit dat hy so lank en so hard bid ...ten spyte van sy smeekgebede ... ten spyte van sy petisies.

Hy se in v.5 " ek staan met my een voet in die graf" . Hy sê verder "ek is iemand wat in die dieptes ingewerp is". Hy sê dit onomwonde hy is soos iemand aan wie God nie meer dink nie. Selfs familie Br en Sus selfs die mense wat veronderstel is om naby aan hom te wees, is nie meer daar nie. En selfs vir hulle het die Psalmdigter iets afskuweliks geword. (En die woord "afskuwelik" het die betekenis van hy het iets onrein geword waaraan jy nie moet vat nie, want as jy daaraan vat sal jy ook onrein word. Ons kry die idee dat hy blind kon wees, want hy sê in v.10 en v.

19 .... (in) v. 10 sê hy van " ...sy oog vergaan van ellende; (in) v.19 sê hy " ... sy bekendes is duisternis (die Engelse vertaling praat van duisternis wat sy metgesel is).

Ons kry ook die idee dat hy melaats kon gewees het in v. 19 wat sê dat hy afskuwelik en onrein geword het vir sy naaste en sy familie lede en v.16 sê hy dat hy "van jonk af ellendig is ... gereed om te sterwe" en hy dra die verskrikkinge van God en hy is 'n radelose mens.

Hy maak van baie sterk taal en duidelike taal gebruik om sy posisie voor God uit te druk. Hy maak van baie sterk taal gebruik om vir God te sê hoe moeilik dit met hom gaan.

Dit is binne die ervaring dat hy bid. Dit is binne die ervaring dat hy ernstig tot God bid soos wat hy sê in v.2 " Ek roep U aan, O God, dag en nag." In v.10 praat hy van hy brei sy hande uit na God. En in v.16 praat hy ook van hoe hy God aanroep elke dag. Ons het nie met iemand te doen wat nie glo nie ... (maar) ... ons het met iemand te doen wat dit ernstig bedoel met God (...) ten spyte van dit alles waar dit lyk asof God hom nie verhoor nie.

Dit bring ons by v.11 en v.13. Retoriese vrae. Vrae wat hy weet wat die antwoord is ... vrae wat met 'n definitiewe NEE beantwoord moet word. Want binne die Hebreeuse verstaan van die dood en lewe na die dood is dit nie moontlik vir God om nog wonders te doen nie. Hy weet uit sy Hebreeuse agtergrond dat in die graf ... in die doderyk word daar nie meer van God se goedertierenheid vertel nie. Hy weet dat die mag van God afgesny is van hulle wat alreeds gesterf het. Binne sy ou testamentiese verstaan van die dood en lewe na die dood - al(mal) sy vrae is NEE:

NEE, God se goedertierenheid word nie aan hulle vertel wat dood is nie.

NEE, God se mag word nie aan hulle vertel wie in die doderyk is nie. En soos ons kan sien Br. en Sus. hy ervaar homself as iemand wat dood is. So, eintlik sê hy vir homself: "God is afgesny van my ...ek kan nie meer met God praat nie.

Maar dan sien ons Br. en Sus. - en dit is myns insiens die enigste positiewe punt in die Psalm. Die ou vertaling maak dit baie meer duideliker in v.14 waar dit sê: "Maar ek, Here, roep u aan om hulp ..." ... ten spyte van die feit dat al my vrae met "NEE" beantwoord moet word ... ten spyte daarvan roep ek u nog steeds aan. Ten spyte van die feit dat hy homself as iemand wat dood is, ervaar .. ten spyte daarvan worstel hy met God ... bid hy tot God.

En dit is binne hierdie situasie ... dit is binne hierdie konteks ... dit is binne hierdie omstandighede van desperaatheid waar hy bid. 'n Mens kan byna sê skreeu tot God waar hy sê: "Here, ek bid jou heel dag en elke dag ... my swaarkry het vir my te veel geword." Die ou vertaling sê: " ek is sat van teëspoed ... ek is moeg daarvan. Here, waarom lyk dit asof jy nie aan my dink nie ... waarom verstoot jy my."

In die sterk taal druk die Psalmdigter sy ervaring van verwyderdheid ... van afgesnydheid van die genade van God aan. In die sterk taal druk hy dit uit en die Psalmdigter lyk of hy op die rand staan om sy geloof in die God te verloor. Hy staan op die rand om te wil sê: "maar nou glo ek nie meer aan die God nie, want hoe is dit moontlik ... hoe is dit moontlik ... dat hy kan ernstig bid tot God, maar dat hy nog steeds 'n ervaring het

soos iemand wat besig is om te verdrink soos wat ons lees in v.18. Hoe is dit moontlik dat God van Hom kan vergeet het ... dat God nie meer aan hom dink nie. Hoe is dit moontlik dat God Hom verstoot. Hoe is dit moontlik dat tenspyte van die feit dat hy dit so ernstig met God bedoel dat hy nie meer die genade van God in sy lewe ervaar nie.

As ek na die vele onbekendes ... die vele vergete mense ... die vele agtergelate mense in ons gemeenskap in ons dag en tyd kyk ... as ek na hulle kyk Br. en Sus. ... as ek kyk na mense in ons gemeenskap waar dit lyk asof hulle net nie kan wen nie, want hulle is vasgeval in 'n honger en 'n dakloosheid en 'n werkloosheid siklis. As ek reflekteer en ek dink aan hoedat ons van ons identiteit ontnem is ... en hoedat ons op vele maniere minder mens gemaak is in hierdie samelewing van ons. As ek sien hoe uitsigloos ... hoe sonder visie ons jong mense rondloop ... hoe gebroke ons gemeenskap is ... hoe verward ons is ... hoe ons die politieke gebeure van die dag - waaraan ons moet deelneem - hoe ons dit as verwarrend ervaar. As ek dit sien Br. en Sus. en as ek weet ... en as ek dit weet sê ek weer Br. en Sus. ... dat ons baie bid ... dat ons 'n gelowige gemeenskap is ... hoe is dit moontlik dat God ons kan vergeet het.

As ek na al die dinge kyk Br. en Sus. dan kom die vrae by my op: "Here, waarom verstoot jy ons ... waarom lyk dit asof jy nie aan ons dink nie ...". Dan kom die rebelse kreet na vore wat sê: "Here, ons is sat ... ons is moeg van teëspoed. Hierdie swaarkry wat ons beleef, het vir ons te veel geword. Ons is moeg daarvan om identiteitloos te wees. Ons is moeg daarvan om soos 'n vrou naamloos in 'n hospitaal ... gesigloos, geskiedenisloos ...

vergete te wag ... te wag op 'n familie wat nie kom nie ... te wag op 'n predikant wat nie kom nie ... te wag op iemand wat haar moet kom eien ... ons is moeg om te wag op God ... ons is moeg om te wag op die dood.

"Here, waarom verstoot jy ons ... waarom lyk dit asof jy nie aan ons dink nie ... ons is moeg van teëspoed.

AMEN.

Kom ons sluit die oë.

Baie dankie, Here Jesus, dat u vir ons die geleentheid kon gee in hierdie erediens om tot u te roep. Here Jesus, soos die Psalmdigter van ouds wil ons u aanroep in ons desperaatheid.

Here Jesus, ons ervaar soveel dinge in ons gemeenskap en dit lyk asof ons net nie kan wen nie. Dit lyk, Here, asof u van ons vergeet het ... dit lyk asof ons as gemeenskap afgesny is van u genade.

Maar nou weet ons dat ons vir u soveel kere bid ... ons is as gemeente honderd en tien jaar oud ... ons het soveel voorbeelde van mense wie al jare in die gemeente is en (vir) jare u aangesig soek ... maar ten spyte daarvan ervaar ons ons lewe in desperaatheid ... identiteitloos, gesigloos, geskiedenisloos, ... in verwarring. En saam met die Psalmdigter wil ons uitroep en vir u vra: "Maar, Here, hoekom lyk dit asof u nie aan ons dink nie ... hoekom lyk dit asof u u aangesig vir ons afgesluit het ... toegesluit het.

Saam met die Psalmdigter wil ons uitroep: " Ons is sat ... ons is moeg van teëspoed."

Maar nou kan ons ook nie anders as om aan die enigste positiewe element in die Psalm vas te hou nie ... om daaraan vas te hou dat

ten spyte daarvan dat ons ons lewe as identiteitloos ...  
gesigloos ervaar ... dat ons dit as moeilik ervaar ... dat ons  
nog steeds vir u en u aangesig opsoek dat ons nog steeds na u  
roep ... dat ons nog steeds kan sê:

" Maar, Here, ... tog roep ons u aaangesig ... tog roep ons na  
u vir 'n antwoord."

Ons kom bid, Here, vir die gemeenskap waarvan ons deel is ... vir  
die jeug wat tevrede is met die bietjie wat hulle kry ... wat nie  
drome droom nie.

Ons kom bid vir hierdie gemeenskap ... van ouers wat verskuiwings  
ervaar het in hulle lewe ... wat daardeur hulle identiteit moes  
prysgee of moes opsê of weer op 'n ander manier herontdek.

Ons bid vir hierdie gemeenskap wat moet deelneem (aan 'n proses)  
in hierdie land van ons, want ons is aan die einde van die dag  
deel van hierdie wêreld ... hierdie land waarbinne ons bly. Ons  
kan nie anders as om daaraan deel te hê nie, want ons lewens word  
daaraan (daarin) opgeneem. Oor ons word besluite geneem.

Here, kom skud ons los, kom maak ons wakker uit ons verwardheid  
... kom maak ons wakker uit ons apatie en die manier waarin ons  
sê: " Maar dit het niks met ons te doen nie".

Kom bevry ons, Here, as ons dit bid in die woorde van 'n  
Psalmdigter van ouds wat dit op eg menslike wyse dit waag om vir  
u te sê dat hy sat is en moeg is van teëspoed.

**AMEN.**





## Notes in the House

by JOHN SCOTT

# Nobody's sure now just who is who

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. — Some MPs are waking up only now to the implications of next year's democratic elections, with perhaps no one more stunned than Louis Stofberg (CP, Sasolburg).

He could hardly believe his ears yesterday when Desmond Lockey (LP, Northern Cape) said voters had to be educated.

"Isn't this a shocking thing!" exclaimed Mr Stofberg. "That they should be educated to vote! It's an insult to all voters."

Then there were the squatters. Surely they weren't going to have the vote, too?

"But they are citizens," interjected Jannie Momberg (ANC, Simon's Town).

"The whole of Sasolburg is virtually cancelled by the squatter vote," declared Mr Stofberg, appalled.

He turned to Patrick McKenzie (NP, Bonteheuwel), who had earlier declared: "We have been waiting for this election for three centuries."

"On behalf of whom does he speak?" demanded Mr Stofberg.

Mr McKenzie was not a Bushman. He wasn't a Hottentot. He wasn't a settler from the Netherlands.

"But I like him," conceded Mr Stofberg. "I listen to him."

"But what am I?" grinned Mr McKenzie.

"I don't know," confessed Mr Stofberg.

What was anybody these days? "Patrick's an Afrikaner, man," remarked chief Nationalist whip. Kerpies Niemann.

...

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