

The Black Church and family empowerment in South Africa

Masilo VS Molobi

Research Institute for Theology and Religion,
University in South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

The theme of this article came out of curiosity to trace the continuity of purpose of the liberation struggle against apartheid after 1994. The Black Churches have played a supportive role in the liberation struggle, and it is time to find out what strategies are in place to guide them after liberation from apartheid in South Africa. The new agenda for the Black Church and the black families in South Africa should now be at the top of the programme to improve the Black peoples lives. The struggle in the post-apartheid era needs to be evaluated from the perspective of those who were directly involved in opposing apartheid. The black denominations and families had to play a crucial role in addressing poverty, joblessness and crime in the urban areas. As a result the role of the Black Churches in South Africa is to pledge support for peace and stability in the black townships. Are there any organised programmes to lead the members of the Black Churches into the post-apartheid era in South Africa? This article aims to find answers to this question. The observation method is ideal for this discussion and allows a review of the Black Churches and the role of their communities, especially from the family's perspective.

Introduction

In this article Black Churches are viewed as sources of moral and ethical conduct based on the biblical foundation. The article also aims to create awareness around the biblical theology and interpretation determined by the black township context from 1976. The emphasis is on the identity of the Black Church in solidarity, survival and wholeness. The article aims to find out whether Steve Biko's political initiative and concession on black families is still relevant after apartheid. Black families are viewed as the embodiment of Christ's presence in the African community. This does not mean that blacks should live in isolation: the establishment of relationships with other cultures is important. The sluggish tendency of Black Christian Communities theology because of lack of integration, and the refusal to be mindful of the

missionary discourse, is worrying in the Black Church. To improve awareness and address the insufficiency of biblical hermeneutics is of high significance. The contextual planning for the realisation of spiritual growth, information dissemination, and the intellectual problem of losing connection with the grassroots are discussed. The majority of black township-dwellers expect the government to give them a healthy living and the church must offer them moral hope. For instance, the power of marriage as the source of self-respect, faith, worth and a place in history is always important for the future. There is weakness in the Black Church and family units which equally needs attention. It is necessary to reclaim the black township churches' ideas in a meaningful way.

The Black Church and liberation

In this article "Black Church" refers to the expression of faith for black Christians who belong to congregations of Christians. It is an expression of the Christian faith in the black experience for all black Christians, including those in white denominations (Deotis Roberts 1983:83). On the one hand, liberation refers to the blacks' unmerited suffering as a whole person at the hands of fellow human beings, many whom confess faith in the Christian God (Deotis Roberts 1983:115).

In urban South Africa, for instance, the Black Church has been a source of moral and ethical leadership in the black Christian community. Between 1976 and 1994 the Black Church and its theologians were vocal as representatives of the oppressed black majority in South Africa, emphasising the awareness that they also belong to the Kingdom of God. They maintained that God was on the side of the oppressed, emphasising Contextual Theology which culminated in the publication of the Kairos document in 1985.

The liberation struggle should likewise be read from the "soul" of the black township church and its spirituality; this should not be viewed as racism, but as a desire to understand the significance of its own existence and the way the Black Church influences its social environment. Walker (1996:53) views the Black Church as the church of this world, because it always speaks to the issues of the times. To him the scriptures justify the existence of humankind as body, soul and spirit. In this way the Black Church was able to understand its role in addressing all the aspects of human existence. Self-identity these days is magnified by the church's preaching of economic, educational, social and cultural empowerment without hindering the traditional biblical message of spiritual liberation. How will this impact on the scriptures?

Biblical theology and hermeneutics

Draper (1996:223) has warned that the Bible should not always be exempt from the "hermeneutics of suspicion" to which society is subjected, or else readings from it will simply be determined by the received and accepted tradition and new insights will be lost. What can the Bible do for the black families in their respective churches? For instance, the adoption of Exodus as the liberating hermeneutical key to interpreting the Bible forces South African readers to question the narratives of the conquest of Canaan, but this must not be manipulated. Draper (ibid.) also warned against the manipulation of the language, as the government did in the apartheid era.

Draper (1996) cites two instances of how people are likely to interpret a text. Firstly, Mosala reads "behind the text" to bring forth the message of liberation. According to Mosala, the Bible was written by the ruling classes and can only be influential when it reads against the grain (Mosala 1989). Mosala's interpretation is always going to be difficult for ordinary people to follow, although his argument makes sense. The popular approach seems to be that of Gerald West (1995:131-173), who suggests that Archbishop Tutu reads the Bible "on the text", at the level of the narrative. Both, nevertheless, take liberation as their fundamental principle of scriptural reading.

In the light of the above information, it seems that Draper (1996: 223) favours Bishop Tutu's view by indicating that "... it can provide us with a fresh perspective on faith and life". However, following the textual readings creates a dilemma. One cannot just accept what the Bible is saying without judging its relevance. Again, one cannot just become judgmental about the accuracy of the Bible; careful evaluation should concentrate on the real problem. Understanding the Bible from "behind the text" may indeed suggest it can be applied indiscriminately to justify anything and anyhow. Thus, the Bible is in danger of becoming a weapon for individual egos.

Reading "in the text" may well suggest that texts are read literally and taken that way without being correctly interpreted. As a result, dialogue must constantly be maintained between Bible users and theologians who help the untrained with the necessary reading of it. The training of Black Church pastors is of utmost significance in supporting understanding of the scriptures in the churches. How conscious are black Christians of this, and what do they see as a way forward for the growth of the black denominations?

Rethinking consciousness

If Black Churches are justified in reclaiming a legitimate identity, they will be helped to transform and rekindle new faith that can give a new life. But should that begin with the radical change of thought that Steve Biko called the "Black Consciousness"? De Beer (2008:170) says that such conscious-

ness needs to be interpreted afresh in the face of new challenges after the 1994 democratic elections. He asks this question:

What is a new consciousness, the new awakening, the new movement that yearns for ... what are the new struggles, the new manifestations of violence, the new silences that today has condemned people to the exclusion, indignity and death, as apartheid and evil forces did pre-1994?

Cone (1990:xiii) cites Paulo Freire in his preface, suggesting the rewriting of black history. His suggestion is that blacks and the oppressed must take history into their own hands. This will help the dominated black masses to dismantle the oppressive systems that have crushed them. Through the revolutionary praxis with critical and vigilant leadership, the dominated classes have learnt to proclaim their world and discover the real reasons for their past silence.

Evans (2012:151) proposes that the church had to grow out of Black Christian Communities theology with the new meaning of its message of serfdom. A Black Church that is vocal about the three theological feeders¹ will provide a possible African and black-cultured Christian community. Gutiérrez' (1984) book *We drinking from our own wells* avoids any suggestion that world salvation depends on human efforts. It is the gratuitous quality of God's love, revealed in Jesus Christ, it sets people free to work in the service of God's kingdom (Nouwen in Gutiérrez 1984: xviii).

Black Churches, according to Deotis Roberts (in Evans 2012:153), must focus on solidarity, survival and wholeness. These three form the household of God, which must be the inner cohesion of the community called the church. The understanding of the church as a household or a family points to the reunification of all families. The black family and the Black Churches are not mystical unions or ethereal frames: they are real embodiments of Christ's presence among the African people. As a result African Christians must recover the image of the body of Christ as a popular experience for the communal experience and solidarity they seek. The emphasis upon the unity in Christ's body is essential for the Black Churches' self-understanding.

Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement was more interested in conscientising the black nation than in normalising black people's lives in South Africa. Biko attempted to unite all the African social groups, from education and trade unions to the Black Churches. That was clearly recorded in Khoapa's book *Black Review* (1973). Who will take up and finish the assignment started by Biko?

¹ The theological feeders are solidarity, revival and wholeness.

Empowering the grassroots Christians

Deotis Roberts (1983:92) urges that there should not be a total separation from other communities, including whites. Rather, there should be a move to establish a relationship with the willing middle and higher classes of society to help carry the burden of lack of resources and give other necessary support, including financial (Khumalo 2003:84). This however does not suggest that the strong must oppress the weak in the name of resources. This factor will agree with indigenisation and contextualisation. They both need to complement each other, but with Christianity being alert not to compromise its genuine mission of reaching out to sinners in the world. The same cultures will want to compare their God-given values with what the gospel is offering them.

The other responsibility of Black Christian Community theology is to help strengthen development programmes in the black communities. Black Christian Community theology will boost and advance the fresh thinking that promotes Black Christian confidence among grassroots communities. It will promote training in different Black Churches and mobilisation for meaningful outreaches. Lastly, it will empower individuals to carry out the message of the gospel beyond geographical frontiers.

Concern for the economic condition of black people is a present reality for both the church and its leadership. The economic challenges to Black Churches are unprecedented. Deotis Roberts (1983:92) believes that

pastors and congregations will need to choose their own projects for action after deciding the greatest economic needs in their locale. Also, large efforts, both citywide and statewide, would be needed in order to effect changes that move beyond pacification to liberation for black people in the economic sphere.

He goes on to say that "Black Churches should support sanctions against businesses that earn large sums of money from black people but practice racial discrimination in various ways."²

The other most important need of the Black Church is to acquire healthy living. Since the title of this article deals with families, the power of marriage and family relationships is vital. The Black Churches may need to be reclaimed meaningfully from the spirit of dependency on the missionaries, without utilising that as an opportunity to grow independently.

² Ibid.

Focus of Black Christian Communities Theology

In the past, whenever a person tried to break free from apartheid, a “Siamese”³ shape used to form. One part of this Y-shape was weaker and became ineffective because of lack of support from the other part. The weaker part represents the side of the Black Church that has not always benefited from the social and economic opportunities. Mofokeng (1989) has blamed the sluggish process of Black Christian Communities theology on the “social forces interventions,” which he labelled epistemological raptures. Goba (1988) called this a lack of integrating Black Christian Communities’ theology with the structural forms of black experiences.

Earlier Makhathini (1993:14) blamed it on the Black Churches readily blessing the ideas of churches from abroad, ie. ‘the mother churches,’ and their missionaries not being questioned for disregarding the value of the local and indigenous community experiences. Mosala (1987) puts the blame on insufficient biblical hermeneutics and lack of understanding. It seems all of them were aware of what the problem was but did not know how to deal with it. The expiry of Black Christian Communities theology could be blamed for its failure to focus on the Black Churches and development. Black theologians should see themselves as sources and instruments to assist in conceptualising the collected ideas and records of the different Black Churches.

Black Christian Communities theology cannot afford to alienate itself from Black Churches, because that will bring failure to be recognised by different Black Churches faster than expected. For example, Black theologians in America are constantly testing their theories against people’s perceptions. After careful observation of his own church and others, Stephen Bantu Biko considered the church to be complicit because it “further assess to their insecurity by inward-directed definition of the concept of sin and its encouragement of the meaningfulness and attitude” (Duncan 2008:120–21). Biko was troubled by the pervasive influence of the church because:

- It makes Christianity too much of a “turn the other cheek” religion whilst addressing itself to a destitute person.
- It is stunted by bureaucracy and institutionalisation.
- It manifests in its structures a tacit acceptance of the system, i.e. “White equals value.”
- It is limited by too much specialisation (Stubbs 2004:63).

³ Siamese refers to the connection of two or more hoses or pipes into a Y-shape adapter that permits a discharge in a single stream.

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All the above points refer to a church that emphasises a false spirituality, because it keeps people in bondage. Therefore, Biko concluded that there was a need to deal with the problem of control in churches, and thus greater attention to Black Christian Communities theology was needed. A basic problem was the church's way of dichotomising everything, particularly in politics and religion. Black Christian Communities theology must focus on reaching out to the black community while at the same time emphasising unity among them.

The role of the African Indigenous Churches (AICs)

Presently the AICs form an important perspective of a possible African Indigenous Christianity, although not totally so⁴ since they also theologically rely on the mainline theological tutelage and sometimes financial support. No one can deny that although AICs have partially adopted the Western style of Christianity, that very adoption was merely blended into African culture by the AIC exponents: it was not necessarily a duplicate of the foreign faith. Mosala (in Pato 1990:24–35) indicates that unless the AICs are seen primarily in terms of the historical, cultural and socio-political conflicts between the missionaries and their successors, on the one hand, and blacks and whites on the other, their character and worth will not be adequately appreciated and understood. This role was not going to be played by the Black Theologians themselves, but by the entire black community.

Earlier Khoapa (1973) edited a book entitled *Black Review* in which Biko's views on engaging black communities were extensively discussed. That book lays a foundation for how the Black Churches and organisations could be reorganised and engaged in developing black society. That story and the contributions from other church organisations will need to be evaluated in the light of Khoapa's effort to see if there was any trace of a developing consciousness in line with Biko's view of Black Christian Communities theology. It is also necessary to look into the position of the AICs and other black theological interest groups.

A recent development was raised by Pityana (2008:8) when reflecting on 30 years since the death of Steve Biko. According to him "it is not enough to talk about raising consciousness without envisaging the future and the kind of social relations planned to set up how the future of humanity is prepared". It is likewise necessary to concentrate on religion, which I think takes the new patterns of a contextualised Christianity that serves the real demands of the masses.

⁴ In terms of TEE, it was a ready-made type of contextualised theological programme.

Contextual planning for recognition and spiritual growth

It is crucial to find out about the role of the Black Churches' structures in reaching out to the grassroots communities. But that will have to be properly planned. For instance, Goba's (1988) book *Agenda for Black Christian Communities: theology and hermeneutics for social change* may be relevant to giving guidance to what blacks should do to be empowered. Few of his hints included a definition of what Black Christian Communities theology was all about. "The structural forms of black experience had to be uncovered, and the categories of interpretation had to arise from the very structures" (Cone, in Goba 1988:2). According to Goba (1988:30), the Black Church was to position itself to teach that "God and his word could not be separated." His view was that theological reflection outside the context of Christian community in the world was purely academic and extremely fashionable in the West. It should as a result be discouraged in the African context.

To be part of the Christian church in South Africa during apartheid was indeed to be captive to an institution that reflects the nature of our society with all its problems (Goba 1988:46). The Black Church, representing the black oppressed community, continued to be plagued by lack of theological existence apart from the dominant oppressive debating forces of the white theological establishment (Goba 1988:58). Goizueta (1992) in his book titled *We are a people: initiative in Hispanic American Theology*, indicated that besides being children of contradiction, they were also the progenitors of reconciliation "... To be Hispanic living in the United States is to be a hell of conflict, and at the same time, a prophet of reconciliation" (Goizueta 1992:viii).

Black Christian Communities theology wanted to conscientise people about their rights to land and resource ownership without discrediting others. And the message was to be disseminated through the Black Churches' corridors not only in a simple way, but also in a complex manner, to provoke debate with the international community. That is why Cone (1990:111) feels that every generation of Christians should find out what constitutes its identity and seek to be empowered to live it out in the world. The focus must be on institutional and ethical activity that validates black people's ecclesiological confession.

Disseminating information to empower the Black Churches

Mofokeng (1989) mentions that the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in South Africa (ABRECSA) took a bold stand to declare apartheid a heresy in 1981. "Heresy" is the use of the word of God in such a way that it becomes divisive and separates human beings from God and one another. Heresy

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creates distrust, confusion and isolation. The Belhar Confession of Faith⁵ in the NG Sendingkerk was committed to making the church understand its role in unity as a gift and obligation in all areas of the church of Jesus Christ. The Kairos Document “moment of truth” exposed apartheid not only as heresy but also as sin. The 1976 Soweto uprising formed a watershed in the modern history of the black struggle for liberation in South Africa.

Mofokeng (1989) refers to theological anthropology during the time of apartheid as an insurrection of the cross-bearers, referring to anyone deprived. It could be by political domination, social discrimination, denial of education, cultural facilities and exclusion from white churches, confirming that blacks alone were indeed born in sin and were not worthy of the love and grace of God; this was unacceptable. Mofokeng called this the crucifixion of the black people of South Africa, which should be viewed as a window through which we can see what is happening to God and to Jesus Christ. During apartheid Jesus was abused, tortured, humiliated and crucified with blacks in the country. As a result, blacks suffered on Good Friday along with their Lord. It was through this experience that Mofokeng (1989:48) maintains that God was on the side of the oppressed, referring to the Kairos Document.⁶ According to him the oppressed were chosen by God unconditionally, because they suffer. Mofokeng has highlighted an important sediment creating a crust for wanting to develop the base for the Black Christian Communities theology of empowerment.

Mofokeng also used the 1976 uprisings and the response from the churches as the basis of a new salvation derived from the new interpretation of the sections of the Bible dealing specifically with the suffering of blacks. He does not encourage black experience to reinvent racism like the Afrikaner did during apartheid. The fact that he did not resign from his NG Sendingkerk proves his eagerness to establish a reconciliatory context. But why did the approach that Black Christian Communities theology followed not last in terms of becoming the voice of the voiceless?

The intellectual debate, losing connection with the grassroots

The general belief is that racism has weakened the respect and the integrity of black society in South Africa. The spirit of well-balanced family life that black Africans used to know before apartheid has been shattered and thus weaker units and social disaster have been created. The blame should be

⁵ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belhar_Confession.

⁶ The Kairos Document is a theological statement issued in 1985 by a group of black South African theologians based predominantly in the black townships of Soweto, South Africa. The statement challenged the churches' response to the vicious policies of the Apartheid state under the State of Emergency declared on 21 July 1985. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kairos_Document.

placed partially upon blacks themselves. For example, black intellectuals and the type of institutions of learning they have attended have perpetuated and supported Western thinking above their average traditional Christianising capacity. This is where they could have planned to answer strategically why they studied under the colonised missionaries and apartheid-influenced institutions.

Lack of consistency and determination to be innovative also failed to help in transforming themselves. The Christian educational gaps created by the colonial mode of thinking have resulted into the social and moral “malnutrition constraints” which are perpetual and growing. The real problems, such as unemployment, homelessness and forced removals, are the result of lack of challenging creativity combined with determination among the blacks in South Africa and have caused these communities to be continually undermined.

Education in the Church is vital to lay the foundations for good communal moral enforcement. God is in control; the Christian Church need not flee from accurately explaining historical conflicts by merely clinging to what they define as truth. Both aspects need support for a better life. As Costas (1979:89) indicates, the church, including the Black Church, should not be afraid of human lords and emperors. It should not give way to the temptation of wanting to escape from the tribulations that come with the fulfilment of its mission. It should rather see itself as a community called to engagement in the crossroads of life.

These days it may be difficult to explain the interface between the Black Church, African Theology and Black Christian Communities theology, among others. The reason is that post-missionary churches have made the theological debate very complex. The wish is to build a church that is African, and blacks need to be grounded in the understanding of the African mind and what it means to be a church in the African context. History has proved that the wish of blacks to create a pure Black Church has remained a dream to be realised in the distant future. The realisation is that the black majority have not been materially resourceful in establishing their own viable churches. If this statement is an exaggeration because AICs, Black Christian Communities theology and African Theology have discarded their self-identity in South Africa, then the process of establishing an African Church was bound to suffer a setback.

The Black Church in the heart of the black communities

At least the church is one of the institutions that have the power and the ability to reconstruct and revive the morale of blacks and to strengthen the image of black family units. African-Americans adopted Christianity as their last hope and new religion during slavery; hence Moses’s deliverance of the

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Israelites from Egypt was the centre of their belief. Martin Luther King Junior became their saviour and the one to lead them out of slavery. Their theology grew out of the pain of torture and deprivation arising from slavery.

There is a base for empowering the black family units as that empowerment is also found in their personality, and can only reveal when given a space to show. It is therefore correct as Mulago (1969) says that "the Bantu community is a vital circuit in which members live independently from one another", and for each other's good. To live outside the circuit of this understanding may mean the withdrawal from life and the influence of the superior members, suggesting that one is tired of life.

In the difficult times of apartheid the Black Church made its mark in the struggle for the liberation of blacks in South Africa. Churches and families suffered great loss of life at the hands of those who were the agents of the political circumstances during apartheid. Watley (1993:16) cites Martin Luther King Junior when he states that:

... It is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of the segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim, when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters ... when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodies" then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.

Watley (1993) recalls the memories and the reality that has surpassed even the Transformation and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) initiative after apartheid. In short, the TRC is called the "organisation for the healing of the wounds". The most significant way of healing the political affliction was by confessing the truth of what took place in the past, when many people lost their lives. Watley is also referring to the personal pain that was experienced, and wonders how one can remain silent after all that experience.

Healthy living

Churches and families should strive to develop where they are and within the communities they belong to. At the same time, those communities need to be informed by a sound theology that is understandable in their context. According to Jenkins (1976:6), the insight of the Christian religion was almost exclusively the possession of the more comfortable and privileged classes. He concurs that life has both spiritual and brutal elements. The perennial tragedy of human history is that those who cultivate the spiritual elements usually do so by divorcing themselves from or misunderstanding the pro-

blems of collective man, where the brutal elements are most obvious. These problems therefore remain unsolved, and fierce clashes with force occur, with nothing to mitigate the brutalities or eliminate the futilities of the social struggle.

In this Jenkins (1976:8) challenges the contradictions in his Christian belief voluntarily. He mentions that the appropriate ways of following Jesus, of receiving the truth as it is in Jesus Christ and being found in him, will lead to God and into all things. Thus, the challenge of inferring the existence of Christian faith represented by the increasing awareness to the church doctrine does not practise the religious philosophical system. Rather, it shares in the practice of exploitation, dominance and indifference, which are common in those societies where the church has largely lived and preached.

In his "theology of change" Lee (1979:23) sees the task of theology as primarily to interpret the ultimate reality of the people of its time. Such interpretation will perforce be expressed in images taken from the world and understanding of our ultimate reality. It means experiences of people's reality will determine their behaviour, and that is the situation where theologising must take place, according to Jenkins (Lee 1979:9). It was therefore not wrong for Black Christian Communities theology to manifest as a theology of protest against racism in South Africa and slavery in America. Healthy living will create awareness and control over the conditions affecting a person or community.

Major weakness of the Black Church and family units

Social groups are people who associate with each other. "Association" includes friendships, families, congregations, neighbourhoods, clans and classrooms (Dayton & Fraser 1986:134–135). The church is included in the list of social groups. At the same time the church is responsible for all other groups that are classified together with it. Dayton is distinguishing between social and societal groups (Dayton & Fraser 1986). Our discussion focuses on Black families and the Black Church from a particular social perspective. The reason for this is the moral and ethical decline that can be seen all over the urban areas where black people are congregated for settlement.

Unemployment, for instance, should not only be seen as a mere social problem based on hunger, but also as a social weakness because it undermines black people's integrity and social strength. Unemployment and its impact, such as loss of savings, loss of home, loss of medical insurance and increase in health problems, has helped to increase the stress and mental difficulties among family units. Sunley and Sheek (1986) discovered that unemployment underlined the gravity of the problem. The consequences are particularly burdensome to certain population groupings, notably blacks and other minorities and single women maintaining households (Sunley & Sheek

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1986:12). From the time of apartheid these challenges needed to be addressed by a change of state policies. The social environment of the time could not allow black space to freely develop. That was addressed by the pressures resulting from political organisations and religious movements speaking against such negative social practices.

There are other common clinical problems that are personal (such as stress, depression and anxiety), family tensions, role adjustment and alcohol abuse (Sunley & Shreek 1986:18–21). All these problems are at the core of the teachings of the churches against inhuman social problems. However the clinical problems are always accompanied by non-clinical problems that should be regarded as the keys to material constraints and commodities, such as food shortages and lack of money and accommodation. Financial counselling, financial assistance, job referral and placement, stress management, job research skills, community resource assistance, redefining vocational goals, retraining assistance and assistance in securing entitlements and benefits fit well into the schedule of the churches' "Christian life" both in homes and in the churches themselves.

Black theologians failed to be creative enough to generate ideas that the Black Church could boast about as its own initiative towards empowerment. The Bible speaks about silver, diamond and gold in many ways. Science and technology have an origin in religions, including Christianity. Mofokeng asks a very interesting question: he wants to know where God was when people were suffering under apartheid. His answer is that people should have started with confession for those who were dead as the subject of their history and now are alive, emerging from the dark tomb of Crossroads, Soweto, Winterveld and other ghettos of our country. Mofokeng (1989:48) suggests that the struggle is not yet over, as the same ghettos are still clearly visible and still more needs to be done to curb poverty and homelessness.

The power of marriage and family relationship

God has entrusted tremendous power to human relationships. A person finds identity, power, esteem, faith, worth, a place in history and a future in relationships. Through human relationships one is comforted in sorrow, sustained in despair, encouraged in failure or defeat, and doubly enriched in sharing victories and triumphs (Olsen & Leonard 1990). The presence of God's love and forgiveness is realised through human relationships; however, we are warned that relationships can cause grief or despair, and can lead one to question one's own self-worth or significance.

The book of Genesis indicates that God created male and female and told them to be fruitful and multiply. In Genesis 2, the man rejoices in the woman and calls her "bones of my bones and flesh of my flesh". A man

leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh: “and man and his wife were naked and were not ashamed” (Gen.2: 23–25). In Mark 10:2–12 Jesus spoke of these passages. He affirmed that in the light of God’s intent, marriage is a significant institution which must never be taken lightly.

In order to ensure that marriage and family will fulfil God’s intention, these relationships are convenient; they are based on the vow, open to renegotiation, concerned with life and death issues and subject to various internal and external sanctions (Olsen & Leonard 1990:4). The family relationship holds a vital significance in biblical teaching. Walter Brueggemann (1977:18) notes that in the biblical faith “the family is the primary unit of the meaning which shapes and defines reality. It is the family that provided deep secure roots in the past, holds visions for the future, a sense of purpose and a set of priorities for the present”.

The Bible never speaks of the family in isolation: it exists in the larger context. The Old Testament refers to Israel as a model, as the extended family. The New Testament reveals the family as the Church, the new Israel, and one household of faith. Recovery of the historical model is critical to meeting the risks many black families face today (Walker 1996: 52). This aspect was not directly discussed by the Black Christian Communities theology in South Africa and is a field still to be explored. How?

Reclaim the church in a meaningful way

A subheading of this nature has to be used, since in reality the use of the term “Church” in the case of our discussion is too general. The denominational schisms are the main reason for reclaiming the Black Church in a meaningful way. We cannot escape the demand to answer questions like “What is the real Church? Which Churches are in line with what God expects the Church to be? What is the format of the family units portrayed? And is the relationship between these units a reconciliatory one or not?”

Having posed these questions, I will provide no ready answers besides provoking peoples’ thoughts in attempting to find answers. Casteel (1968:30) is aware of the basic interests in modern society and this fits well within the frame of our discussion when he indicates: “Modern participative man will no longer be content with options now offered him in many of his social relationships, whether in educational institutions, Business Corporations, political parties, or religious bodies ... He will seek those relationships, groupings, and arenas where participative, in-depth interaction, is open to him at every level of his need and aspiration as a complete human being.”

Indeed the problem in the churches is not Jesus Christ, but particular current issues (Cobb 1997:77). One other issue adds to what Casteel has already outlined as the reduction of Christianity to “Churchianity”, which is

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an issue in Central America (Spykman 1988:236). He says that the institutional church, epitomised in the hierarchy, was seen as representing the fullness of Christian living. The biblical reality of the kingdom suffered near total eclipse. With a rediscovery of "the church as the people of God", localised in "the church of the poor", and with "the conversion of the church to the world", liberation theology is helping to open up a more full-orbed vision of kingdom living.

Khoapa (1972) supports the views on participation. He outlines clearly the black community programmes. Some goals of the programmes were to create awareness of black identity, to encourage black communities to create a sense of their own power and to create leadership that would be able to guide the development of black communities. Interesting in this book is the way in which Biko is displayed to engage the total black person, from politics, education, religious groups, consciousness, work force, sports and entertainment (Khoapa 1972: 5, 16, 30, 40, 103, 190).

Conclusion

Black Christian Communities theology must interpret the elements of black self-respect, pride and awareness, self-worth, dignity and identity inherent in the slogan "Black Power" (Deotis Roberts 1983:158). Although the contribution made by other Black Theology scholars was appreciated, Biko's methods of including all black people were more meaningful. The method was always going to be effective because, if he had lived, such a model could have given black South Africans a different perspective of empowerment.

We have tried to show how Black Churches and theological self-understanding could form a new agenda for the ministries of black families. Black families indeed need healing beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) initiative.

Thus, the support of the Black Church families and the masses through the Black Christian Community theology projects, the priestly ministry of Biko and others is still necessary today. Jenkins (1976) puts it clearly when he states that real Christianity is what Christians do together with the institutions they have. When the Black Churches have fought against racism, they need to move on to their mission to increase the love of God among neighbours (Deotis Roberts 1983).

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