

POVERTY AND A PRACTICAL MINISTRY OF LIBERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE TRADITIONAL VENDA CONCEPT OF MAN

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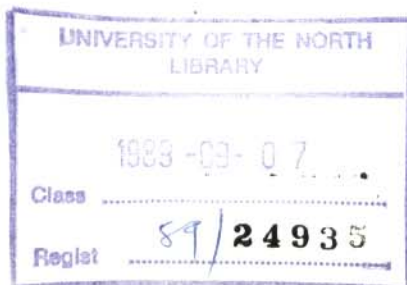
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PREFACE

I grew up in a typical middle class Afrikaner context in the towns of Swellendam, Belville and Worcester. Thereafter I proceeded to the University of Stellenbosch with its elitist accentuation on academic progress and success as well as its underlying luxurious "verligtheid".

My first encounter with real poverty came through doing mission work in what was then called Modderdam squatter camp and Kasselsvlei, both situated near Cape Town. The period of contact with the people concerned was very short and the insight very superficial. It was only when I took on my first official office as minister of religion in the East London area that I was confronted with the reality of poverty. Between July 1980 and November 1982 I had daily contact with people living in Mdantsane (a typical large scale black urban area with its rows of "little boxes"), Duncan Village (a dilapidated and impoverished township) as well as a wide range of rural areas in the Ciskei and Transkei.

It was however when we moved to Venda at the end of 1982 that the poor and their related problems really touched my heart and mind. The more I got involved in the work, the more the relations and relationships between the congregation and myself grew, and the deeper I became engrossed in the daily lives of the people I had come to serve the greater the awareness became of the importance of in-depth participation and observation with the aim of a better knowledge and understanding of the views and values of specifically the traditional Venda people.

In this regard I owe a great deal of gratitude to the Church councillors, members, youth and children of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa's Congregation of Tshilidzini who have called me to and confirmed me in their service and who have allowed me to make myself at home amongst them to the extent of becoming part of them and of them becoming part of me (to whatever extent it is possible for people to really become part of each other). But it is through these people that I could

participate and observe the traditional Venda way of thinking, speaking and doing. And this all came about through six years of congregational activities such as church services, Sunday schools, youth gatherings, women's conferences, weddings, funerals, council meetings and especially through house visiting. The latter was done at least once, but in most cases three to four times, at the homes of the people mentioned in paragraphs 1.1.1 and 1.1.2.

Apart from my own participation and observation I also regard the guidance, advice, criticism, care and sharing support of the people mentioned above very highly. At the same time it is impossible to assess the great value of my wife's and children's presence, love, understanding and patience in having to share in my experiences. Especially my wife's own involvement in the congregation and as medical doctor at Tshilidzini Hospital, her love for and interest in the people concerned and her knowledge of people and Biblical studies contributed immensely towards the progress of this thesis. The many conversations, hardships, humour, thoughts and prayers that we shared and still share together were and still are tremendously stimulating.

And then there are so many family members and friends to thank for their input, especially those who served in a variety of fields and for many years here in Venda. They would understand that it is impossible to mention them all by name, but I have to make one exception in order to show my deep gratitude to my close colleague and friend, Attie van Niekerk. The many hours of thinking and talking together are uncountable, while the insights of his book "Dominee, are you listening to the drums?" brought many new perspectives which I could integrate into my thoughts concerning the problem of poverty.

The late prof Lex van Wyk also needs mentioning. It was under his guidance that I started this study and thesis. His sudden death came as a shock to all who knew him, but the inspiration which I received from him remained alive and played a major role in the eventual completion of this thesis.

It was however prof Hennie van der Merwe who assisted me all the way through this endeavour. His attitude and approach allowed me a great amount of freedom and yet he was always available when I was in need of guidance, knowledge and a better and deeper understanding of theological concepts and trends.

To the typist, Mrs Elna Pienaar, I wish to express a special word of appreciation. I have gained great respect for the way in which she handled the thesis as if it was her own.

But in the first and the last instance the glory is God's, because it was through His grace in Christ and the work of His Spirit that I was enabled to start, pursue and complete this work. It is therefore also my prayer that this humble contribution might form part of the chain of efforts to understand the biblical and theological responsibility of the church towards the poor.

1. A CONGREGATION IN A WORLD OF POVERTY

1.1 Introduction

During the past six years I have had the privilege of serving the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) Congregation of Tshilidzini in Venda. Not only did this imply living and working amongst and together with the people concerned, but it also gave me the opportunity to participate and observe in a very intense way the nature of their lifestyles and the thought patterns which form the basic and underlying motivation in the determination of their way of living.

Before my departure to Venda five years ago my brother-in-law made a remark to the effect that "Venda is a very poor nation". For some years I had forgotten his words, but the longer I live and work here the more I seem to understand his observation and to a growing extent I am therefore forced to try and understand the dynamics of this overwhelming problem which determines the lives of the majority of Venda people. Poverty is obviously not the only problem that one observes by means of one's participation in the daily lives of the people of Venda, but although one would be able to write books on other existing problems, it is my humble contention that the problem of poverty plays such a forceful role that it is of the greatest (and of determining) importance to study this problem in the totality of its nature.

Through participation-observation and statistical research over the past few years the following has become apparent as far as the Tshilidzini Congregation is concerned:

- 1.1.1 The Tshilidzini Congregation consists of 5 076 members of which 1 790 are adult members over the age of sixteen and the rest (3 286) are infant members under the age of sixteen¹⁾.
- 1.1.2 The above-mentioned number of 5 076 members represents a total of approximately 686 families²⁾.
- 1.1.3 Of this number of nuclear families approximately 17 % earn their living from fixed salaries and wages for employment in mainly the public, industrial and agricultural sectors. This group constitutes the middle to upper class³⁾ in the Tshilidzini Congregation.
- 1.1.4 Another group is formed by those nuclear families who earn their living by means of a subsistence economy⁴⁾. They constitute approximately 21 % of the total number of members of the Tshilidzini Congregation and can be categorized as being relatively poor⁵⁾.
- 1.1.5 The remaining group of 62 % are people who live in absolute poverty⁶⁾.

Statistically one can thus conclude that the Tshilidzini Congregation consists of 83 % poor people. In terms of the majority of its members this Congregation can be described as a poor congregation or a congregation of the poor. And then one should also bear in mind that the remaining 17 % which forms the middle to upper class in the Tshilidzini Congregation does not of necessity imply that all people belonging to this group are not poor.

These statistics reveal a severe problem of poverty and therefore sensitize the Tshilidzini Congregation to the fact that it consists of and exists within a world of poverty. But although the statistics

identify the problem, the problem itself is clearly not merely of a statistical nature. We have for instance thus far used concepts like congregation, world and poverty very freely. The true meaning of these concepts goes far beyond superficial statistics and it is therefore the purpose of this thesis to investigate these concepts and their interrelatedness in order to move towards a practical ministry of liberation and development, with the specific focus of such a ministry being within the context of the traditional Venda concept of man.

In this first chapter we shall deal with some general theological remarks on the above-mentioned concepts. Within this theological framework we shall then proceed in chapter 2 with a reflection on the traditional Venda concept of man as seen from an ethno-cultural as well as psycho-cultural point of view: While this first chapter will primarily be theoretical in nature, the second chapter will be based on research by means of participation-observation, interviews and conclusions drawn from the Venda language and Venda writings.

In the third chapter the traditional Venda concept of man will be viewed from a theological-anthropological point of view and the fourth chapter will draw all the perspectives of the first three chapters together in order to try and formulate some guidelines towards a practical ministry of liberation and development within the context of the traditional Venda concept of man and with a congregation like the DRCA Congregation Tshilidzini in mind.

1.2 A Theological Framework

In order to determine and describe the involvement, responsibility and ministry of a congregation towards people who are caught up in the

problem of poverty it is of vital importance to formulate a correct theological framework within which such involvement, responsibility and ministry can be defined. Due to a lack and/or attenuation of such a framework many honest congregational efforts have come and gone without addressing the problem of poverty effectively. In the following paragraphs we shall therefore focus our attention on a few theological remarks concerning the concepts of congregation, world and poverty.

1.2.1 Congregation and World

1.2.1.1 From the New Testament (eg Rom 16:5, 1 Cor 1:2, 10:32, 11:18 and 22, 12:28, 14:19-34, 15:9, 16:19, 2 Cor 1:1, Gal 1:13, Col 4:15, Phil 2 and 3:6) it is clear that the emphasis regarding the concept ekklesia, falls on its local character (Ridderbos 1977:328-330). Due to this, for instance Luther and Barth prefer the concept congregation to that of church (Barth 1949:141) - a choice and an emphasis which is not only biblically correct but which contains for the purposes of the subject under discussion important practical implications.

As a group believing in Jesus Christ through God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit, the congregation always exists as local people who, within the framework of their own and their unique local circumstances, direct their lives upon God, the congregation and the world. There is thus no one, and least of all bureaucratic church officials and structures who is better qualified to grapple with the understanding and solving of particular local problems such as for example poverty, than the local congregation itself. And yet it is precisely this local nature of the ekklesia which constitutes major problems for a poor congregation (a congregation of the poor) concerning their involvement,

responsibility and ministry towards poverty, because such a congregation is itself caught up in the dynamics of the problem of poverty. This aspect will receive greater attention in chapter 4. We will now first continue to investigate the relationship between the congregation and the world in trying to determine the congregation's involvement, responsibility and ministry towards its own people living in a world of poverty.

1.2.1.2 When using the concept world (kosmos), the total created reality (creatura) is meant (eg Gen 1 and 2). This world which came into existence through the creative act (creatio) of the Trinity (eg Gen 1:1) is however affected and disturbed in its totality by sin (eg Gen 3-11, Job 1-3, Isaiah 13-24 and 34, Jer 13 and 46-52, Rom 8:18-23). These are merely a few references to indicate the state of the corruptio totalis which was brought about by the Fall. The whole of Scripture teaches that the Fall adversely changed the direction of God's good creation to the point of retrogression. However the fact of sin and the Fall does not negate the fact of creation and the world thus continues to exist due to the fidelity of its creator (eg Ps 146:6).

From this perspective Noordmans declares the creation to be a place existing around the cross (Noordmans 1934:83), because when the world is discussed in terms of creation and Fall, then it should be accompanied by an emphasis on the recreation in Christ (eg Col 1:15-20). In Him, God's fidelity with regard to the total created reality is fulfilled regarding the renewal of creation as a whole.

In connection with the above-mentioned theological and christological aspects dealing with the world as total created reality (Theron

1978:3-12), the mention of the pneumatological dimension is also of importance (Theron 1978:12-13).

Regarding this, Calvin has already pointed out the relation between the Holy Spirit and creation (eg Ps 33:6 and 104:30), while he also emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit as regards the sustenance of creation (eg Job 34:14ff). And Kuyper, concurring with this, goes a step further by underlining the recreational work of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8) (Theron 1978:12-13).

"Theologically, christologically and pneumatologically, we thus achieve the same result every time: from the ruins of the old creation God builds his (and our) new heaven and earth" (Theron 1978:14).

"Therefore we can rejoice with Kohlbrugge when he says: Therefore, when I die - I however no longer die - and someone finds my skull, then this skull will still preach to him; I have no eyes, yet I behold Him; I have neither brain nor understanding, yet I embrace Him; I have no lips, yet I kiss Him; I have no tongue, yet I sing praises to Him together with all of you who proclaim His name in His love; I lie out here in the graveyard, yet I am inside Paradise!" (Theron 1978:14). From the ruins of the old creation God builds his (and our) new heaven and earth" (Theron 1978:14).

These remarks by Kohlbrugge emphasize amongst others the eschatological dimension of a discussion of the world.

König refers to the creation as a good beginning - a good beginning and a good beginning (König 1980-78) and it is from this viewpoint that the relation between creation and fulfilment (eschaton) should be understood.

"Creation was a starting point and not an end. The Lutherans are wrong if they consider Creation as an end and Adam as already perfect and glorified. God made a start at creation. The earth was created as a place where the covenant history could begin. In this history there was the opportunity for God and man to live in a covenant relationship and to share in one another's joy. It is not to be doubted that man could have become much more in this history..."

was. He would learn to know and understand God and his will better, and he would learn to know and understand God's joy and peace better. In this regard the fulfilment must be seen as a large plus on creation - in spite of sin" (König 1980:78).

As good beginning it should be born in mind that the whole of creation was totally corrupted because of the Fall. The goodness of creation was thus entirely distorted. But through the fidelity of the Father and the recreational work of the Son and the Spirit creation is directed towards the fulfilment which holds the promise of the total restoration of creation and even much more than mere restoration of the initial creation.

"It should be emphasized that the fulfilment is much more than the creation. Creation was the beginning, the decor necessary so that history could begin in terms of what God intended with his created beings, and particularly with man. This history is a long winding road of genuine new, surprising unexpected occurrences. Although the direction (purpose) of God's work was known from the beginning (the covenant), every time the reactions of man were unexpected, unbelievable, guilty, sinful. Exactly this course of history highlighted facets of the character of God which let him glitter even more abundantly and gloriously against the background of Israel and our history of sin and unfaithfulness, than the life in the garden of Eden would ever have brought to the fore. And the abundance of God's grace which became ever richer as our sin became more, eventually brought the resurrection, the glorification and the new earth - much more than we could think of or pray for or expect. Therefore we read in Revelations 21-22 not only about the restoration of the original creation, but of a new creation which exceeds the original creation. In Gen 3:8 and following verses, God only visits Adam, but according to Rev 21:3 God dwells on the new earth with men. According to Gen 2 He builds a lovely garden for Adam to live and work in, but for the new humanity He builds a new city on the new earth. And in biblical terms a city is far greater than a garden. Just think about the safety and the ordered and comfortable life that a city of that time offered against the unprotected, cruel life in the veld. We further read about the tree of life in the garden (Gen 2), but this tree becomes an orchard and the trees don't bear fruit only once a year, but twelve times! And while the ancient man was so dependant on the sun (Gen 1:14 and further), even the sun is not necessary any more, because the glory of God enlightens the human race, and the Lamb is their lamp (Rev 21:23)". (König 1980:80-81).

But the most unique feature of the relation between creation and fulfilment lies in the Person of Jesus Christ.

"However the deepest connection between creation and fulfilment lies in Jesus Christ Himself, who is the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the Creator and Fulfiller. He combines creation and fulfilment in His Person. In Him creation and fulfilment are not two experiences, which lie extremely far from each other in time, but one reality which binds them to each other through Him as living Lord, so that through His power the creation proceeds to fulfilment and the fulfilment proceeds from creation. Everything is created by Him and everything is renewed by Him" (König 1980:81).

1.2.1.3 These theological, christological, pneumatological and eschatological dimensions of the world as total created reality which came into being through the creative act of Trinity and is being sustained by and recreated by the Trinity, place the reflection as a matter of course within the framework of the covenant (Theron 1978:17-26).

God's act of creation is focused on Christ (eg Col 1:16) and taking into consideration that Christ is the fulfilment of the covenant (eg Gal 3:17), we can freely conclude that the covenant is the purpose of the world (Barth 1947:44-107). In other words, God created (creatio) the world with the purpose of directing it upon the covenant (as it is fulfilled in Christ) and with the aim of recreating the total created reality.

However if one considers the world from the view point of the total created reality (creatura) then one concludes that not only is the covenant the purpose of the world but that the world is also the purpose of the covenant (Col 1:20). The covenant, as it is fulfilled in Christ, is directed upon the world (Theron 1978:26). This has far-reaching implications for the relation between the congregation and the world. If one speaks of the covenant, then one speaks of Qehal

Yahweh (Israel as people of God), and if one speaks of the latter, then one speaks of ekklesia (the congregation as people of God) (Theron 1978:18).

"From the former it follows that the church, as the New Testament people of the covenant, is placed in the widest century-spanning and total creation-inclusive perspective. The creation points the way to the church and the church to God's eschatological purpose with the creation" (Theron 1978:26).

1.2.1.4 Therefore the congregation and the world are indissolubly bound to and directed upon one another.

Even so we have to support Bosch when he speaks of a "creative tension" regarding this relation (Bosch 1979:221-222), because the congregation is "too early for heaven and too late for the earth" (Noordmans). As such the congregation is a strange phenomenon which fits in nowhere (eg 1 Peter 2:11).

On the one hand, the congregation is part of the world, because most of its time is spent in the world (Bosch 1979:221). Yet, on the other hand, the congregation is distinguished from the world (eg 1 Cor 7:29-31).

"The correct relationship between the church and the world is of the utmost importance. Christ is the Head of the Church and the cosmos, but His message is only recognized and confessed by the church. The world cannot confess. It cannot pray and believe. It cannot approach God in a personal relationship. The church is that segment of the world which consciously subjects itself to Christ, obeys and serves Him - in a stammer and with a stumble, but still! The church is not in the world, seeing that the Kingdom has already begun to take form in the church. But yet, the church is not the Kingdom, because the Kingdom is only partly and imperfectly recognized and realized in it" (Bosch 1979:221-222).

When the Lund convention met during 1952 to discuss the then "Faith and Church Order", it concluded that the church is always both "called out of the world and sent into the world" (Bosch 1979:225). And Bonhoeffer writes to Bethge from prison: "The church is only truly church when it is there for others". With this Bonhoeffer emphasizes the "this-worldliness" of the church and he emphasizes from this perspective the importance of the church's "involvement in the worldly tasks of community life" (Bonhoeffer 1979:269-270).

In his *Kirchliche Dogmatik* Barth writes a whole paragraph with the theme "The congregation for the world" which exists as an example in the world (Barth 1959:655-660). He points out that the personal enjoyment of salvation is never the theme of narratives of calling and conversion - not by those who listened to John the Baptist's preaching (Luke 3: 10-14), also not by Zaccheus or Paul or the gaoler of Philippi. The enjoyment of salvation is however a biblical element (eg Col 3:15, 1 Tim 6:12, Hebr 9:15, 1 Pet 5:10, Rev 19:9) and is therefore not unimportant. But the Bible makes of it almost something "by the way", people in truth receive it without having had it as an aim. What makes a Christian a Christian, is not his personal experience of grace and salvation, but his service. Conversion and calling in the Bible means to receive a commission to serve the world. The congregation is therefore in the world, and although not of the world, yet for the world.

1.2.1.5 It is interesting that the sacraments underline the importance of the congregation's relation to the world. Regarding baptism, Newbegin says:

"The baptism which the church gives is the act by which we are incorporated into the baptism of Christ with its focus on the cross. It is not baptism only for our salvation

Rather, it is our incorporation into the one baptism which is for the salvation of the world. To accept baptism, therefore, is to be committed to be with Christ in his ministry for all men" (Newbegin 1977:217).

As regards Holy Communion, we are united as a congregation in communion with His broken body to be the body of Christ (eg John 11:51 and 52, Rom 12:4-31, Col 1:18, Col 3:12-17) in order to be directed upon the whole world through our participation in Him and His crucifixion (eg Col 1:20).

1.2.1.6 From paragraph 1.2.1.2 to 1.2.1.5 it is therefore clear that the congregation is called out of the world to be a new and unique community with the aim of serving the world in its totality with the message and example of a new life in the world (eg John 17), in anticipation of the complete renewal of which Rev 21 speaks.

For the purposes of our discussion, this relation between congregation and world is of the utmost importance. This places before every congregation which finds itself in a world of poverty the exceptional responsibility and challenge of taking this context seriously, studying it and trying to understand it and to serve the context and specifically the people involved, with loving empathy (eg Matt 25:31-46, Jam 2:14-26), trying to alleviate some of the misery involved in it, to eliminate some of the causes responsible for it and to bring about something of the renewal which is present in Christ and the Spirit.

However the unique (even strange) character of this involvement and service has already been pointed out. Even though the congregation exists in and for the world, it is not of the world and in one or another way the congregation's involvement and service must reflect an

inherent "otherness" regarding poverty. Authorities and other institutions (eg state departments, development cooperatives, organized agriculture etc), individuals, and in many cases even unbelievers are busy in many spheres paying attention to the problem of poverty. It is certain and praiseworthy that these structures contribute meaningfully to the solution of the problems and there cannot be enough emphasis on the importance of coordinated collaboration with them. But, taking this into account, the role of the congregation regarding the world and more specifically the world of poverty, is unique, predominantly because of its unique nature, purpose and service.

1.2.1.7 From all the previous paragraphs it is now clear that the congregation is "the fellowship of believers who meet in the process of predestination, calling, rebirth and conversion, living in fellowship with the Trinity, having been granted forgiveness of sins, and in solidarity with the whole human race serve the world and it thus implies conscious choices, a new life under a new Lord, in transit to a new future" (Bosch 1979:222-223).

However the congregation is not only a sign of the Kingdom, but is at the same time also a sign for the total created reality. This however does not mean that the congregation exists only as a functionary of the world. The congregation does have, within the framework of the covenant, part in the salvation in Christ and is thus in its nature congregation - the indicative and intensive character of the congregation. Within the same framework (covenant), the congregation carries at the same time an imperative and extensive character. This latter characteristic gives to the congregation a function in and for the world, a function which is part of the nature of the congregation.

As a sign of the Kingdom of God, the congregation is truly congregation and it aims to be a congregation as well as to serve the world at the same time.

"From the sign-concept I consider that the question whether the apostolate is nature or function of the church be rejected as invalid. It will be too little to label the apostolate a function of the church because as a sign the whole existence of the church is directed upon the Kingdom and therefore upon the world. The apostolate therefore belongs to the essence of the church. However to maintain that the apostolate is the essence of the church, is again too much. As a sign, the church is already part of that to which it refers The church itself is not the mediator - Christ alone is; the church itself is also not the means of salvation - the word and sacraments alone are. But as servant and fruit of the Spirit of Christ through the means of salvation, the church also has a mediating function namely to serve as bridgehead (Durand 1964:90) of the coming Kingdom To the degree that the church really "is", the church also truly "functions" (Blei 1972:391). There is therefore no sharp separation in the New Testament between the upbuilding of an own congregational life and the missionary call of the church in the world (Van Swigchem 1955:107)" (Theron 1978:111).

It follows from this that already as a result of its existence as congregation of Christ, the congregation is a sign of and for the Kingdom and as such fulfils an active and dynamic missionary function (eg Matt 5:13-16, 2 Cor 3:2-3, Phil 2:15, 1 Pet 3:1). "Not the whiplash incentive to missionary activity but ... a consequent christian life - taking into consideration the outsiders - is the primary expression of missionary awareness" (Kritzinger 1974:305). And this fact is thoroughly underlined by Pop when he declares that the apostolate of the congregation could hardly survive without the new manner of living and thinking of believers and that this is precisely the most dynamic sign of the apostolate of the congregation (Pop 1967:69).

It is precisely this sign existence which presents a unique character

regarding the congregation's responsibility and involvement with poverty in the form of a practical ministry of liberation and development. We will return later to the nature and content of this practical ministry. It is now important to make a number of theological remarks about the concept poverty.

1.2.2 Poverty

1.2.2.1 It is understandable that the problem of poverty is generally described statistically and more specifically in economic terms, as these express the most obvious dimensions of the problem. However in one's assessment of this problem it is of the utmost importance that careful consideration should be paid to the basic underlying factor or factors which determine the framework within which all the perspectives on the problem of poverty, including the economic perspective, should be understood.

It is within this context that the understanding of a theological perspective is vitally important.

1.2.2.2 In broad theological terms, poverty can be described as having a direct association with the power of sin, which has affected and distorted the total creation (corruptio totalis).

Man who has been created in the image of God, with the purpose of living in the right relationship to God, to himself, toward others and towards creation (eg Gen 1:26-31) has been wrested from all these relationships by the power of sin. The result is an existence with very little sense and meaning (eg Job). This does not mean that poverty is the result of individual, personal sin in every case or that

poverty is the only result of the power of sin in the comprehensive meaning of the word. Poverty, however, can be considered as one of the symptoms of the corruptio totalis. But it is precisely with regard to this that the concept poverty should be explained in its widest sense and that the association with the corruptio totalis should be maintained.

1.2.2.3 Looking at the problem of poverty from a more specific theological exegetical angle it is necessary to investigate the Biblical understanding of this concept.

1.2.2.3.1 In the Old Testament the concept "poor" and associated concepts (eg "poverty", "a poor person", "poor people") occurs about 245 times in the form of a variety of Hebrew words (Holaday 1980:2, 70, 71, 203, 278, 336): 'ebyon (needy, poor - eg Deut, 15:4, 7, oppressed - eg Amos 4:1, in religious sense - eg Psalm 40:15), dal (mean, scanty - eg Gen 41:19; unimportant - eg Judges 6:15; helpless - eg Ex 30:15; powerless - eg Ex 23:3; insignificant - eg Jer 5:4; poor - eg Lev 14:21; oppressed, dejected - eg 2 Sam 13:4), 'oni (overwhelmed by want, poor, wretched - eg Deut 24:15; Psalm 10:2; humble - eg I2 49:13; Is 51:21) 'anāw, 'anāwim (low, humble, gentle - eg Num 12:3), rā'sh (to be poor - eg 1 Sam 18:23) and miskēn (poor - eg Eccl 4:13, 9:15). Nissen studied these various terms in great detail and concludes as follows:

"The two terms 'oni and 'anāw appear most frequently, 'oni about 80 and 'anāw about 25 times. The two terms refer back to the same root. But the meaning of this root is the subject of discussion. Most scholars, however, would agree that the term originally describes a situation of social inferiority, without it being quite clear how far the two derivatives are to be distinguished from each other.

There seems to be a tendency in later Hebrew to make the distinction more clear so that 'oni refers to "the poor", while 'anāw takes on the meaning of "the meek and humble". There may also have been attempts to press this later

of 'oni is "humbled", "oppressed", and so "poor", whereas 'anaw seems to mean "poor", "humble", "meek". The question is, whether it refers to a humble attitude or humble status. Mealand rightly notes that the 'anawim are the humble and meek because they patiently endure their reduced status and look to God for justice. He also warns against differentiating too sharply between the two terms and his conclusion is that 'oni refers to the oppressed poor, and 'anaw to the humble and meek. But the former possess a sense of righteousness; and the genuinely humble status of the latter needs to be recognized.

Four other words can be used to designate poverty. The word 'ebyon (Botterbeck and Ringgren 1974:27-41) appears about 61 times. It is employed as a reference to a person who desires, the beggar, the one who is lacking something and who awaits it from another. Then, we have the word dal (Botterbeck and Ringgren 1978:208-230) found about 48 times in the Hebrew text. It means "without importance", "weak". The two terms which are used least to speak of the poor are ra'sh ("to be destitute" or "needy") and misken ("the one who depends" or "the one who is subjected"). These terms are found respectively 21 and 4 times.

While the basic meaning of the Old Testament terminology is fairly well established, there are various interpretations of where to put the emphasis. Thus, some scholars argue that in the post-exilic period the term 'anawim began to acquire a religious connotation and was used to describe the pious and faithful of Israel. Furthermore, it is maintained that it is this fact which has the greatest implication for the New Testament understanding. Consequently, the poor in the time of Jesus are those who are spiritually destitute and not those who are socially and economically oppressed.

It is true that, with the passage of time, a new line of thinking took shape in Israel concerning poverty. An attitude of "spiritual childhood" developed. The poor were those who were open to receive everything from God, in complete humility before the Lord. The concept of the "poor of Yahweh", that is those who are ready to suffer and be persecuted because of their faithfulness to the Lord, was born (see esp Zeph 2:3 and 3:12-13).

But this new concept does not mean that the social dimension of poverty is neglected. On the contrary; the two aspects are intimately related. We could well say that in the Old Testament poverty is considered as an evil, as a consistently painful fact, issuing in the establishment of relationships of dependence and oppression which lead to the false elevation of the powerful (...) and to the humiliation of the helpless.

As those who have become objects of exploitation with no power and no one to help them, the poor have no one but God to turn to for help. Therefore they are totally dependent on him. They have learned to become open to God's compassionate acts and to hope in God, for God is understood to be the God of the poor, the orphans and the widows. Because they have nothing, the poor depend on God for everything. It is in this sense, that poverty gains a religious significance. In

fact, in almost every passage where one of the various words for poverty is used the literal aspect is maintained. The spiritual aspect is present "only" in so far as those who are afflicted and miserable have learned to rely exclusively on God. Therefore it is misleading to speak of a "spiritualization" or "idealization". Instead there is a "growth of a certain type of piety where dependence on God and poverty are related".

Just as the rich are self-sufficient and proud because they accumulate wealth in such a way that they no longer need to fear God, the poor are pious, because they in their miserable situation look to God as the only source of salvation" (Nissen 1984:6-8).

1.2.2.3.2 Against this background, the New Testament understanding of the concepts pénēs, penichrōs (poor, needy - eg Luke 22:2; 2 Cor 9:9), ptōchōs, (poor, destitute), ptōcheía and ptōcheiō (poor, destitute, poverty, destitution, to become poor - eg Matt 5:3, Matt 11:5, Matt 19:21, Matt 26:11, Mark 14:5, 7, Luke 4:18, Luke 6:20, Luke 14:13, 21, John 12:5-6, John 13:9, Rom 15:26, Gal 2:10, James 2:5, Rev 2:9, Rev 3:17) should be viewed (Bromley 1985:824-825, 969-973). Already from the beginning of Jesus' ministry it is clear that poverty cannot be reduced to the spiritual realm only.

After he has considered all the exegetical points of view, Nissen concludes with the following comments regarding Jesus' Beatitudes in Matt 5:3 and Luke 6:20.

"Does this mean that Matthew has spiritualized poverty? Some think so, but others assert that the way Matthew interpreted the first blessing need not be a contradiction of Luke. He simply captured another aspect of Jesus' original meaning. As has been mentioned above, the word "poor" can be extended to cover all the oppressed, all those who are dependent upon the mercy of others. And this is the reason why the term can even be extended to all those who rely entirely upon the mercy of God - the "poor in spirit".

In other words, Matthew intended to show that those who are needy and downtrodden, whose wants are not supplied by earthly helpers, are clients of the Lord because they have no other patron. Their only hope is to seek righteousness from the God whose justice will put an end to the unjust suffering they are undergoing. This is the "spirituality of the 'anawim'" (Nissen 1984:58).

"In Matthew's gospel, the term "poor in spirit" probably refers to those who have the sort of praxis upon which the promise of God's Kingdom rests. That is why it is misleading to speak of a "spiritualizing" tendency in Matthew (insofar as "spiritualizing" means a weakening of the reality of poverty). It is more to the point to say that Matthew displays a moralizing interest. He modified the original Beatitudes because he wanted to describe the new life of those who had accepted the good news" (Nissen 1984:59).

"Luke is sometimes quoted as if he were saying "Blessed are the poor....". Actually he said: "Blessed are you poor ...". In this way he adapted the words of Jesus to meet the needs of his readership.

Nevertheless, it is likely that Luke's wording is closer to the original wording of the Beatitude. We cannot assume that he has spiritualized the concept of poverty. Both the original form of the message and Luke's reinterpretation of it are directed to people who are living under bad conditions" (Nissen 1984:70).

These poor are called "blessed", because they enjoy this particular status in Christ who Himself is the poor One (cf Paragraph 1.2.3.7). In Him the poor are blessed and in communion with Him they live by His Spirit alone. As such the poor are enabled to transcend their natural state of poverty (2 Cor 8:9) and share in His abundant wealth which provided in every need (Phil 4:19).

Ridderbos pays extensive attention to the concepts "poor" and "poor in spirit" and because of his excellent exposition of the relevant verses it is worthwhile to quote him here in full.

"This will become clear when we consider the Old Testament background both to the notion "poor" (ptoochos) and "poor in spirit" (ptoochos tooi pneumati). The former agrees with the Hebrew ani, the latter rather approaches the meaning of anaw. Both words mention an external kind of distress or oppression. The latter (anaw, poor in spirit) refers in particular to the humility of the sufferer in his distress. Its meaning is approximately the same as that of the word: "meek" (in suffering), the "praüs" of Matthew 5:5, which is used also there as a synonym of "poor in spirit". Meanwhile we shall also have to understand the single word "poor" (Luke 4:18; 6:20; 7:22) in this sense as the equivalent of "poor in spirit". Moreover, the Hebrew ani has this connotation (cf Ps 18:28; 72:2; 74:19). We also point to Luke 4:18; 7:22 (agreeing with the Septuagint) which renders the Hebrew

anawim of Isaiah 61:1 "the meek". And in Matthew "poor" and "poor in spirit" evidently have the same meaning (cf 5:5 with 11:5)" (Ridderbos 1976:188).

With reference to the Old Testament Ridderbos continues as follows:

"These "poor" or "poor in spirit" (meek) occur again and again in the Old Testament, particularly in the Psalms and in the prophets. They represent the socially oppressed those who suffer from the power of injustice and are harassed by those who only consider their own advantage and influence. They are, however, at the same time those who remain faithful to God and expect their salvation from his kingdom alone.

They do not answer evil with evil, nor oppose injustice with injustice. That is why in the midst of the ungodliness and worldlimindedness of others, they form the true people of God. As such they are again and again comforted with the promise of the coming salvation of the Lord and the manifestation of his kingly redemption (cf Ps 22:27; 25:9; 34:3; 37:11; 72:12, 13; 147:6; Isaiah 11:4; 29:19, etc).

The concept "poor" occurs more than once in this sense also in the later, pre-Christian scriptures of the Jews. At the moment - this is the thought that is entertained there, too - God's people are scattered amid the heathen; the pious and the wicked are intermingled in what had from olden times been God's people. But one day the true Israel will be assembled by God and become manifest. This nucleus of God's people is then called the ptoochoi, the penetes, in imitation of Old Testament texts, especially in the Psalms of Solomon. To these, all was related that had been promised by the prophets and that was eagerly awaited in the circles of those whose hopes were on God as regards the salvation of Israel as God's people" (Ridderbos 1976:188-189).

Turning to the New Testament Ridderbos writes:

"Against this background we shall have to consider " the poor" to whom the gospel is preached, as well as " the poor in spirit" and "the meek" of the beatitudes. We are not concerned here with a new ethical ideal, nor merely with the indication of some social injustice that will be redressed. Neither are we confronted with some general religious notion of the knowledge of personal imperfections and sin if such knowledge could make one fit for the kingdom of God. It may be said that the concept "poor" is determined both socially and in a religious-ethical sense. But above all, this word derives its meaning from the fact that such "poor" and "meek persons" have been the bearers of the promise of salvation from olden times in a special sense, because they are the true people of God. And, in contrast to those who have fastened their hope upon this world they expect the salvation

God has held out to his people as "the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:35, cf 6:24; 16:25; Matt 5:4).

All this is confirmed by the further qualifications of these "poor in spirit" that Jesus gives in the beatitudes, especially in the words: "they that mourn" and "they which hunger and thirst after righteousness" as a subjective agreement with God's demand, and explain "hunger" and "mourn" as sorrow about moral imperfection. To our mind such a view must be decisively rejected. For, in the first place Luke 6:21 does not mention "righteousness" at all, but only speaks of "ye that weep" and "ye that hunger." In the following text in Luke, "But woe unto you," the opposite to "those that weep and hunger" is "those that are full" and "that laugh now." In our opinion it is clear that these words refer to the social position of "the laughers" etc. in the world (cf John 16:22, 20) and to their overboldness based on their position (and not on their moral qualities). In contrast to them are the "poor" that "hunger now" and "that weep now," ie, who look forward to God's redemption of his people from the power of oppression and injustice that is continued for the present. And it is this longing for deliverance which is indicated as "hunger and thirst after righteousness" in the beatitudes in Matthew" (Ridderbos 1976:189-190).

Referring to the poor in terms of their relation to righteousness and justice Ridderbos explains:

"This is also in agreement with what is said elsewhere about "righteousness" in connection with the poor and the meek. The Greek definite article already suggests that the expression refers to something supra-personal, to righteousness. And it is precisely this divine righteousness which is again and again represented in the Old Testament as the hope and the consolation of the poor and the oppressed. It must not be understood in the Pauline sense of imputed forensic righteousness, but as the kingly justice which will be brought to light one day for the salvation of the oppressed and the outcasts, and which will be executed especially by the Messiah (for this complex of thoughts cf, eg, 2 Sam 14:5ff; Kings 6:26ff; Jer 23:6; 33:6, etc). It is to this justice to which "the poor in spirit" and "the meek" look forward in the Sermon on the Mount. And to them it is promised. It follows in every way from the idea of the kingdom of God. When God starts his kingly dominion his oppressed people who look to him for everything will be filled with his justice, and those who are full now will have reason to weep.

Jesus' own teaching also contains a very clear confirmation and illustration of this thought, viz, in the parable of the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8). This parable is dominated by the thought of the rights of the poor. In this light the figure of the widow must be viewed when she prays for justice against her adversary (vs 3) in words that remind of Psalm 43:1.

Here, too, the metaphor is one of a life hungering for justice. But not only in the parable itself, but also in its application the thought of redeeming justice recurs twice: "Shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him?" And again "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily" (Luke 18:7, 8).

The justice mentioned here is nothing but the deliverance (from oppression) to which God's people (his elect) may lay claim as the salvation promised them by their king. And it is this salvation which is proclaimed as "the gospel of the poor" in Jesus' preaching of the kingdom" (Ridderbos 1976:190-191).

In conclusion Ridderbos discusses Luke 1:46-55 in order to illustrate the close connection between the concepts "kingdom of God" and "the poor":

"Nowhere is the nature in the specific significance of the connection between the "kingdom of God" and "the poor" brought home to us in a clearer way than in Mary's hymn (Luke 1:46-55). It is dominated by the same thought of "the gospel of the poor" and its contents are very closely related to those of the Beatitudes. Here, too, is the contrast between the "mighty" and "the humble". of "those that hunger" and "the rich", and the mention of the redemptive intercession of "the Mighty One", and of the "strength he has shown with his arm". Here also is the beatitude, because of the salvation, that God's handmaiden receives in her "low estate".

The ground of all this is explicitly mentioned in this hymn. It is the fact that the Lord "hath holpen his servant Israel" "in remembrance of his mercy; as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever". It is this relationship which also forms the basis of the salvation of the poor that is proclaimed in the Beatitudes, and which sets forth the first definition of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven" (Ridderbos 1976: 199-192).

Nissen continues with an intensive study of the four Gospels (especially Matthew and Luke), the Acts of the Apostles, the Pauline letters (especially 1 Corinthians) and the letter of James and he then concludes that "there are different ways of identifying poverty in today's world. Some would place the emphasis on poverty as deprivation of material riches while others would pay more attention to poverty among those who already have enough ("spiritual poverty of the rich").

This difficulty in defining poverty is by no means surprising because the world of today is marked not only by an increasing number of people who lack the most fundamental things: food, clothing and shelter - but also by a great number of people in the affluent societies who feel themselves alienated and lacking identity" (Nissen 1984:132). It is within this context that it was stated in paragraph 1.1.5 that it is not only the 83 % economically poor people of the DRCA Congregation Tshilidzini who are poor, but that the remaining 17 %, who find themselves in a better economical situation than the group of 83 %, are not of necessity not poor. There is more to poverty than mere statistics and/or economics.

1.2.2.4 In Old and New Testament theological-exegetical terms poverty can thus be defined as essentially a theological problem, because it is the image of God in man which is totally corrupted by the power of sin (cf paragraph 1.2.2.2) - to such an extent that all the dimensions of a person's being are distorted and reduced to the level of a pathetic and apathetic style of life.

"Poverty can be so devastating that it denotes not only a physical condition but an attitude to life, an outlook. As Banana has pointed out "They (ie the poor) are powerless, voiceless and at the mercy of the powerful The dynamics of being poor are such that the oppressed poor finally accept the inhumanity and humiliation of their situation; they accept the status quo as the normal course of life". The poor, then, are the apathetic, oppressed and manipulated human beings at the bottom of the social scale. Poverty and apathy go together" (Nissen 1984:132).

Theologically we are thus concerned with a spirit of poverty which is the result of the corruptio totalis and which implies that the fundamental and total existence of the individual, group (eg family) and society is disturbed - described in the preceding paragraphs with wide ranging terms like "poor", "the poor", "poor people", "poverty",

"an existence with very little sense and meaning", "social inferiority", "the meek and humble", "oppressed", "weak", "destitute", "needy", "the one who depends", "the one who is subjected", "spiritual childhood", "the helpless", "afflicted", "miserable", "downtrodden", "you poor", "people living under bad conditions", "deprivation of material riches", "spiritual poverty of the rich", "an increasing number of people who lack the most fundamental things - food, clothing and shelter", "alienated and lack identity", "an attitude to life", "an outlook", "powerless", "voiceless", "at the mercy of the powerful", "apathetic", etc. Poverty is therefore much more than that which can be observed on the surface and than that which can be expressed statistically and/or economically. It entails all internal and external aspects of man's life in terms of his relationships to God, to himself, towards others and towards creation and from the perspective of the corruptio totalis poverty deals with the entire disruption of these aspects and relationships, resulting in a poor spirit and poor style of existence and affecting the individual, group and society as a whole, simultaneously and continuously.

1.2.3 Congregation and poverty

The whole of paragraph 1.2.1 was devoted to a discussion about the relationship between the congregation and the world, with specific reference to the responsibilities and dilemmas facing a congregation which exists within the context of a world of poverty (1.2.1.6). Within the context of our understanding of the concepts poor and poverty as described in paragraph 1.2.2 it is now necessary to investigate the relationship between the congregation and the world of poverty more closely.

1.2.3.1 Throughout the history of the people of God their responsibility towards the poor and towards the problem of poverty is evident. As long ago as the earliest periods of Israel's history it is clear how provision was made in order to prevent and/or to alleviate poverty amongst the people (Pop 1984:17-18).

After the exodus from Egypt and the entry into Canaan the land was subdivided amongst the various tribes (Joshua 13-21). This subdivision had, amongst other, the purpose of providing each different tribe with enough land in order to supply every community, family and individual with sufficient soil to cultivate. Such soil could then be utilized for breeding live stock and growing crops which could then in turn secure a good and healthy way of life (Oberholzer 1972:119-131, 190-206). A piece of land was thus considered as the basis of a proper existence and therefore acted as a precautionary measure against poverty.

Against this background strict land ownership rights were imposed during the time when the people settled in Canaan and especially at the time of the judges. These rights remained protected throughout the whole history of Israel. They were however not always adhered to and in such cases where needs (eg poverty) did arise it was the task of the kinsman redeemer to intervene in order to try and alleviate the problem (eg Ruth 4:1-6; Jer 32:6-15).

The situation worsened dramatically during the time of the monarchs. Rich landowners emerged to the detriment of the poor (eg 1 Sam 8:11ff, 2 Sam 12:1ff; Is 5:8; Jer 39:10; Micha 2:2). The story of Naboth is a very relevant example in this regard (1 Kings 21).

Concerning the exilic period Bammel writes that "the tragedy of the exile leads to a general collective use of the terms (ie poor, destitute, poverty, destitution, to become poor), although more in connection with God's promises, and with no suggestion that God will help because the people are now in some ideal state of poverty. A material reference is still present, and the final solution will be a semi-eschatological balancing of accounts" (Bromley 1985:970).

After the return from exile the social injustice increased (eg Neh 5). A cry of despair came from the people (Neh 5:1) and Nehemia investigated the facts of the situation (Neh 5:6). He discovered that many were maltreated by the landlords and leaders (Neh 5:7) and ordered the restoration of social justice (Neh 5:11ff). However, this restored situation within which a true sense of social justice prevailed only lasted for a short while. Soon after the introduction of Nehemia's reforms the poor were again exploited to the advantage of the rich. The latter soothed their consciences by means of superficial handouts to the poor and in so doing dodged the essence of taking personal and communal responsibility for those in need. Unfortunately this state of affairs continued to exist even until the time of Jesus Christ.

- 1.2.3.2 Within the context of the covenant the law reflects many prescriptions pertaining to the poor (Pop 1985:18-21). These measures are aimed at expressing honour, glory and thanksgiving towards God; to urge those who have to care for the others who do not have and to protect the poor against exploitation, eg Ex 20, 22 and 23) (Fensham 1977:135-137, 171-176), Lev 1, 12, 14, 23, 25 and 27 (Marsingh 1974:49, 105; Noth 1962:24-25, 97-98, 110, 172, 186-193, 204-205) and Deut 5, 12, 14, 15 and 24 (Ridderbos 1963:103-118, 167-168, 191-197, Ridderbos 1964:53).

God's covenant relationship with man also secures responsibility towards the poor in the form of a variety of legal regulations concerning every day life, eg lending and interest (Ex 22:25; Deut 15:7ff), judicial rights (Ex 23:6), sabbath and sabbath year (Ex 20:8-11; Ex 23:10ff; Lev 19:10; Lev 23:1-7; Lev 23:22; Deut 5:12ff; Deut 15:1ff; Deut 24:14ff), jubilee year (Lev 25:8ff, Lev 25:39ff), redeeming of land (Lev 25:23ff) housing (Lev 25:29ff), slavery (Lev 25:47ff; Deut 15:12-15), pawn rights (Ex 22:26; Deut 24:10-17), sacrificial meals (Deut 12:18; Deut 14:27) and the sacrificial laws (Lev 1:14-17; Lev 12:8; Lev 14:21; Lev 27:8).

1.2.3.3 Israel's poetic and wisdom literature speaks about the poor in such a way that it becomes clear that the stipulations of the law concerning the unprivileged people were not merely incidental but in fact an integral part of daily religious and secular life (Pop 1985:19). Passages such as Job 24:2-11; Psalm 22:27; Prov 14:20; Prov 18:13; Prov 19:4; Prov 19:17; Prov 22:22ff; Prov 28:27; Eccl 4:1 and Eccl 5:7 are good examples in this regard. Against this background of obvious responsibility towards the poor Psalm 83:2ff calls for the salvation and liberation of the humble, the orphans, the destitute and the poor so that justice may prevail. Psalm 72:12ff even rejoices about the king who acts mercifully towards the poor.

In a discussion by Von Rad on the trials and consolation of Israel he makes some interesting observations concerning the prayers in the Psalms of lamentation which are specifically related to the poor and the wretched.

"What is predicated of suffering in the psalms of lamentations is in fact only another form of man's presentation of himself before God in which he confesses that he is one who awaits the help of Jahweh. So too similar state of affairs exists when the men praying designate

themselves as "poor" and "wretched". The conviction that those whose legal standing was weak and who were less privileged in the struggle of life were the objects of Jahweh's particular interest reaches far back into history of the people of Jahweh. This conception of the poor practically contains a legal claim upon Jahweh; and it was precisely this which later made it a self-designation of the pious before Jahweh. In fact, a great number of references understand these poor quite frankly and directly as those who can justifiably expect the divine protection. This state of being poor also includes a defenselessness and helplessness, as a result of which these men who pray designate themselves as cast upon Jahweh alone, as those who seek Jahweh and him alone (Pss XXII, 27 (26) lxix. 33(32)). They reach out to this existence before God and picture themselves as in it. Their negative counterpart is the violent, who infringe upon the rights of others, especially those of the poor man, and even seek his life (Pss x,xxxv.10,xxxvii.14). In contrast, the "poor man" who commits his affairs to God is the meek one who renounces all claims to conduct his own cause. As distinct from the violent man, his proud ego is broken in pieces - he is a broken spirit (Is.LVII.15, LXI.1f; Ps LI.19(17)). Thus as self-designations the pious and the wretched became in the end of great importance for interpreting and filling out the concept of the 'righteous' (Von Rad 1975:400-401).

1.2.3.4 The message of the prophets reflects a very special concern for all disadvantaged people. They for instance constantly warned against man's disobedience towards God and His will for human relationships and responsibilities regarding the poor (Pop 1985:20).

Amos is sharp in his condemnation of the greed of the big landowners (Amos 2:6ff, Amos 4:1, Amos 5:11, Amos 8:6) as well as of the superior and uncaring attitudes of the rich (eg Amos 3:16, Amos 4:1, Amos 5:11, Amos 6:1, Amos 6:4ff). In similar fashion Isaiah preaches God's wrath upon the Jerusalem rich who robbed orphans (eg Is 10:2) and who trampled upon the needy (eg Is 3:14ff). Micha says that the "haves" do to the "have-nots" what is done to cattle when they are slaughtered, namely to take from them as much as can possibly be taken (eg Micha 3:2ff). He also criticizes them for falsifying measurements and weights to the detriment of the poor (eg Micha 6:10ff).

About a century later Zephaniah confronts the very same issues (eg Zeph 1:11-18), while Jeremia announces the wrath of God (eg Jer 5:26ff). Noteworthy is the following:

This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place - Jer 22:3.

And shortly after the fall of Jerusalem Ezekiel addresses sins such as violence against strangers, oppression of orphans and widows (eg Ez 22:7), the illegal taking of interest as well as gambling (eg Ez 22:12ff) and selfishness (eg Ez 34:1ff). Even during the exile and after the return from Babylon the same complaints and calls for justice had to be repeated (eg Dan 4:27ff, Is 56:10ff, Zech 11:4ff). From these few examples it is clear that the message of the prophets of the eighth, seventh and sixth centuries showed a continuous line of concern for and responsibility towards the poor and other disadvantaged people. The people of the pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic periods were therefore constantly reminded by God through the prophetic activity either to remain obedient or to return to obedience to Him and His covenant and the laws thereof pertaining to the poor.

1.2.3.5 The responsibilities towards as well as the care and protection of the poor as seen thus far from the perspective of history, the law, poetic and wisdom literature and the message of the prophets all emanate from and are centered around as well as directed upon the covenant relationship with Jahweh (Pop 1985:21). Ex 22:27 (cf also Deut 24:15 and Psalm 146:9) is the point of departure in this regard.

When he (the poor, the needy) cries out to me, I will help, because I am compassionate (merciful) - Ex 22:27.

Jahweh himself therefore constitutes the responsibility towards the poor. It is not merely the fact of them being poor which earns the right of care and protection but an attitude which stands within the framework of the covenant (Deut 15:4).

However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, he will richly bless you. Deut 15:4.

In terms of His covenant God therefore promises the very best to the people whom He had chosen to live in the land of milk and honey. Similarly Jahweh does not want poverty to exist amongst the people (Job 36:31) and the Old Testament thus finds it quite normal that the patriarchs were well off, primarily because they were faithful to God and His covenant and consequently lived according to His will (Gen 24:35, Gen 26:12, Gen 27:28).

Disobedience towards God and His covenant, with the implication of unbelief, can this be considered the essence from which poverty stems. In view of this it is also understandable that Deut 15:11 states that there will always be poor people in the land because of the attitude of both rich and poor towards God and His covenant, resulting in an ever growing problem of poverty.

Against the background of his covenant theology Eichrodt explains how religion, sacred law, secular law, liturgy, festivals and the general office and functions of the priesthood formed the framework within which the covenant responsibility and administration of justice took place (Eichrodt 1961:84-88). This justice which emanates from God's lovingkindness (Eichrodt 1961:241) is therefore actualized within the context of His covenant relationship with man and secured through

covenant obedience by God's people. Apart from the cultic and communal activities which involved the people as a whole, particular responsibility rested with the priest (cf above) and the kings (Von Rad 1975:322).

Covenant disobedience would therefore inavoidably lead to injustice and it is precisely in this regard where, amongst others, poverty results. It is also within this framework that the message of the prophets concerning the poor should be viewed (cf paragraph 1.2.3.4).

As was mentioned earlier in this paragraph, covenant disobedience pertains to both rich and poor. The disobedience of the rich towards God and His covenant results in a lack of responsibility and care towards others and therefore either assists in the creation of poverty or the increase in an already existing problem of such a nature. The disobedience of the poor towards God and His covenant could for instance result in laziness (Prov 6:9-11), drunkenness, gluttony, drowsiness (Prov 23:21), a lack of wisdom and judgement (Prov 24:30-34) and unfulfilled fantasies (Prov 28:19) and as such contribute to a condition of poverty.

Jahweh's relationship towards the rich and the poor is not determined by their conditions of wealth and poverty, but by His covenant righteousness and their attitude towards Him and the covenant as well as the religion, laws, liturgy, festivals and other cultic and communal activities which form part of the covenant relationship. The words of 1 Sam 2:7-8 are relevant in this regard.

The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour. For the foundations of the earth is the Lord's; upon them he has set the world - 1 Sam 2:7-8.

Within this covenant context the Old Testament often speaks of "the righteous" and "the poor" in synonymous terms, especially in the Psalms and the prophets (Pop 1985:22-24). This points to the fact that the Old Testament does not merely consider poverty as a social problem but also as a religious phenomenon, which again stresses the relation between covenant and poverty.

Mainly two factors led to the synonymous understanding of the concepts righteous and poor. Firstly, the rich were mainly those who put their trust in their own wealth and as such broke the covenant of God which demands entire faith in the one and only God of grace. This resulted in disobedience to Jahweh and His commandments (cf Naboth). The poor on the other hand had nobody and nothing to rely upon and therefore had no alternative but to live by the grace of God alone (cf Jezebel - 1 Kings 18:4) and also Psalm 1, Psalm 10, Psalm 34:14 and Psalm 34:17ff.

Secondly, the synonymous understanding of the concepts of righteousness and poverty lies in the attitude of Jahweh towards the poor (Psalm 37:22-29, Is 4:15, Is 14:32, Zeph 2:3, Zeph 3:12). The poor are called the blessed of the land because they stand in Jahweh's favour and He will not forsake them but give them justice and the right to inherit the land so that they may be called His people and enjoy His protection. Therefore the poor and the weak find their refuge in God (Zeph 3:12) and bring their troubles and hardships before Him (Psalm 10:14). Their entire salvation, liberation and help lies beyond themselves, their possessions or other people - it lies with Jahweh and His favour alone (Psalm 40:18). To these poor, meek and destitute people the promise, comfort, strength and hope is given:

For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the

needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight - Psalm 72:12-14.

The Lord hears the needy and does not despise his captive people - Psalm 69:33.

For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save his life from those who condemn him - Psalm 109:31.

But the needy will not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the afflicted ever perish - Psalm 9:18.

Jahweh's relationship towards the poor is thus determined by the covenant and it is within this very same framework of the covenant that God's people are called to responsibility towards the poor (cf paragraph 1.2.1.3).

Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked - Psalm 82:3-4.

1.2.3.6 From the perspective of Jahweh's covenant relationship towards the poor and their total dependence upon Him it is interesting to note that even the prophecies concerning the Lord of the new covenant (the Messiah) reflect upon His role in terms of the poor (eg Is 29:17ff, Is 61:1, Zeph 3:11ff).

Once more the humble will rejoice in the Lord; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel - Is' 29:19.

In Zech 9:9-10 the coming Messiah is even described as the righteous, saving and peaceful King who will appear in gentleness and humility. God's covenant would therefore be fulfilled in poverty with the advent of Jesus Christ.

1.2.3.7 The New Testament emphasizes both the religious and social dimensions of poverty (cf paragraphs 1.2.2.3.2 and Pop 1984:26-34). The New Testament also pays particular attention to the concept of the "gospel of the poor" which actually forms a central theme in the life and work of Jesus, the early christian communities, and the writings of for instance Paul and James.

In view of the prophecy in Zech 9:9 the historical Jesus is proclaimed by the New Testament as a poor Messiah (Pop 1985:31). Compare in this regard Matt 8:20, 2 Cor 8:9 and Phil 2:5-8. It should however be born in mind that as Messiah, though poor by His human nature, He remained the Son of God and was as Christ the Mediator and Redeemer not only humiliated to the point of poverty, suffering, death and burial, but also glorified through His resurrection and ascension (eg Acts 2:36, Phil 2:9).

From the perspective of the "poor Messiah" it is therefore evident that the preaching of the gospel by Jesus would bear the theme of the gospel of the poor. In paragraph 1.2.2.3.2 the reference to the poor in the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3 and Luke 6:20) was discussed, while attention was also paid to Matt 11:5, Luke 4:18 and Luke 7:22. Ridderbos explains these verses from the perspective of his kingdom theology and more specifically within the context of the indicative and imperative nature of the preaching of the kingdom. He concludes:

"It is clear that from the outset the salvation of the kingdom of heaven proclaimed by Jesus must be viewed against this background of its own historical determination. Above all Jesus addresses "the poor" or "the poor in spirit", and the whole gospel of the kingdom of heaven can be characterized as "the gospel of the poor." But this does not mean, as is often assumed, that the gospel is thereby universalized, this to exceed the bounds of its particularistic scope. The message of salvation is not placed on a common level of humanity in general. On the

contrary, this message is purposely adapted to the special relationship which God has established from olden times between himself and his people. No doubt the spiritual character of this relationship is very strongly emphasized, as also appears from the announcement of disaster that follows the beatitudes in Luke. Nevertheless, it is clear that the assignment of salvation to the poor is above all founded upon the special redemptive-historical relationship between God and his people.

It is reality of God's covenant and of his theocratic relationship to Israel as his people which is the basis of the description of the gospel of the poor. It is this true people of God which is addressed in the beatitudes and to whom the salvation of the kingdom is granted as their lawful right. And it is this special relationship which from the outset co-determined the contents and the structure of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven" (Ridderbos 1976:192).

It is of specific importance for the congregation which exists within the context of a world of poverty to take note of the significant core of the preaching and teaching of the gospel of the poor which runs through the proclamation of the kingdom of God within the framework of His covenant relationship with His people. This aspect of Jesus' life and work on earth should act as a great consolation to a congregation which seeks for relevant and practical approach as well as a sound ministry towards the poor, mainly because of the potential within the gospel itself for such a relevant, practical and sound approach and ministry. On the other hand, it is precisely this immense potential within the gospel itself which calls the congregation to great responsibility in preaching and teaching the gospel of the poor within the correct context of God's covenant relationship with His people as fulfilled in Jesus Christ and as directed upon His kingdom.

In assessing the responsibility of the congregation towards the poor it is necessary to pay further attention to Matt 6:8, Matt 19:21, Matt 26:9, Matt 26:11, Mark 12:42ff, Luke 14:13ff, Luke 14:21ff, Luke 19:8, John 12:5ff, John 13:29, Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:35, Acts 20:34, Rom

12:13, Rom 15:26, 1 Cor 13:3, 1 Cor 16:1ff, 2 Cor 6:10, 2 Cor 8, 2 Cor 9, Gal 2:10, Eph 8, Phil 2:25, James 2, Rev 13:16, etc.

From these references it becomes clear that the gospel of the poor does not only find its proclamation in the preaching and teaching (kerugma) thereof, but also in the fellowship of the believers (koinonia) and the rendering of practical assistance (diakonia).

God constitutes the koinonia, because it is in union with Christ and through the work of His Spirit that the congregation is brought together in unity in order to exist as the people of God, the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit (cf paragraph 1.2.1.1). This koinonia exists first and foremost within the context of the local congregation, but because of the catholic (general) nature of the ekklesia the koinonia also implies unity amongst various congregations and churches.

The local and general nature of the koinonia is of particular importance for our subject, because it is within the context of the koinonia where the kerugmatic nature of the gospel of the poor finds its practical relevance and it is within this same context (the koinonia) where the various members depend upon each other and care for each other in the form of the diakonia. In the context of the ekklesia, the kerugma, and diakonia thus form an integrated whole in terms of the proclamation of the gospel of the poor (eg Acts 2). This holistic approach which the New Testament teaches is of vital importance for a congregation which is in search of a relevant, practical and sound ministry. In paragraph 1.2.2.3 the holistic nature of the problem of poverty was summarized. It therefore speaks for itself that only an integrated proclamation of the gospel of the poor would effectively reach the poor.

The practical content of this integrated ministry of liberation from a spirit of poverty (cf paragraph 1.2.2.4) and development towards the total restoration of the individual, group and community in Christ will be further discussed in chapter four.

1.3 Congregation, World, Poverty and Man

The whole discussion has thus far implicitly referred to man. It is man, who by grace of God is chosen in Christ and by means of the Holy Spirit, who constitutes the congregation. But it is the very same man who lives within the world and in terms of the DRCA Congregation Tshilidzini, this very same man is caught up in a world of poverty.

It seems necessary therefore to understand who and what man is. This will be the topic of discussion in the following two chapters.

Notes:

1. Official congregational statistics for 1988.
2. Family

"The nuclear family comprises persons of different sexes and generations and normally consists of the man, his wife, and their own or adopted children. Among most peoples the nuclear family is the smallest unit of kinship and forms an independent group in the community. The nuclear family is the basic kin-group among nearly all peoples and is the basis for the formation of other kin-groups.

The nuclear family is not a unilineal kin-group because father and mother belong to different descent-groups. In most cases the father and children in a patrilineal system belong to one descent-group and the mother to another; in a matrilineal system the mother and children as a rule belong to a descent-group that differs from that of the father.

Every man that marries and becomes a parent belongs to a family of origin and a family of procreation.

In the first family Ego stands towards others in relationships of child to parent and of brother to brothers and sisters. When he marries, he stands towards others in relationships of spouse to spouse and of parent to children. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* in the case of a woman. The position occupied by an individual in each of the two families differs largely from that in the other.

The nuclear family accomplishes certain universal activities. It firstly serves the purpose of procreation, for it is in the context of the family that both the growth of the people and the care and protection of progeny are ensured.

The nuclear family also has economic significance. Among most peoples, the nuclear family is an economic unit. Within the context of the family there is division of labour between man, woman, and children. Members of the family contribute individually and jointly to the maintenance of the family.

The nuclear family is also of importance to education of the young since enculturation begins within the family. Here children acquire the accepted ways and are prepared for their places as members of the people. Among many peoples the nuclear family is supplemented by institutions such as the school, but amongst all peoples initial education is achieved in the context of the family.

The nuclear family has religious importance. Children become acquainted with religious concepts and activities by participation in or observation of rites such as those performed at birth or puberty, as well as through the fables and other tales they hear from older members of the family. The family-head officiates on religious occasions within the family.

The nuclear family can be expanded into larger units in various ways. Each nuclear family within such a larger unit forms a separate unit but is closely connected with the common interests of the larger group. Among some peoples it is the nuclear family that is the independent household unit while among others it is the "family-group" (Vorster 1981:105-106).

In Venda each of these families consists of an average of 7,4 people (Kruger⁷⁾). This figure reflects one of the major problems concerning poverty in African and in Venda, namely the problem of overpopulation (cf also paragraph 3.3.2.4). The picture for Venda becomes even more disturbing if one takes into account that the Venda population grew with 33 % from 1980 to 1985 and that the percentage of teenage pregnancies in relation to all pregnancies is 32 % in Venda compared to the international figure of 10 % (Van der Merwe⁸⁾).

Population and population growth in African and in Venda should however always be seen against the background of ethno-cultural, psycho-cultural and political backgrounds, eg

- the presence of the ancestral gods and spirits at the time of the sexual act and conception;

- the traditional belief that death can be overseen

through descendants by whom the continuing communalistic life cycle is ensured (cf paragraph 2.3.1.3);

- the high priority which the collecting of people enjoys within the traditional African and Venda communalistic life and world view (cf paragraph 2.3.2);
 - problems relating to morality (cf paragraph 2.3.2);
 - the notion that family planning is a white political mechanism to maintain power over blacks by reducing the latter's numbers.
3. Families earning a minimum of R500 per household per month (Thovhogi⁹).
4. Subsistence economy

"In a subsistence economy provision is primarily direct: the producers themselves consume what is produced. People with subsistence economies have simple technologies that provide for necessities only. Trade is either absent or of secondary importance, usually taking the form of barter" (Seyfarth, Van Rensburg 1981:53).

One hardly finds a pure form of the subsistence economy anywhere in Venda, mainly because of the presence of the money economy which prevails everywhere amongst the Venda people, but which varies from an extremely small to an exceptionally large extent. The group referred to in this note consists of people in whose case the money economy plays a very minor role. The little money they do have is mostly made up of small contributions which are received from male members of families who are working as migrant labourers in the urban areas of South Africa. It is estimated that approximately 71 % of the economically active males of families belonging to the DRCA Tshilidzini Congregation are migrant labourers.

5. Relative poverty

"When your needs are greater than your means you are poor. When your means are greater than your needs you are well-off. This sounds very simple. But once we try to apply this definition we will notice that it is not as easy as all that. The first complication is that poverty and wealth seem to be very relative terms. An old man who lives from a few goats and a pension of R10, - in a rural area is poor compared with the young man who found work on the roads for R40 a month. But the latter is again poor compared with his cousin who earns R90 per month in a factory as an unskilled labourer. Others with more experience and responsibility earn R180 on the same plant. But the artisan in charge of it may earn R300 a month. Still he is fed-up and feels that he is being exploited when he hears that the branch manager gets R700 a month. The latter is envious of the top executive of the firm who carries away R1 500 each month. Now the pastor who ministers to all these people and who receives R150 a month: is he rich or poor? If he serves a congregation in a black rural area he might be considered very privileged by his parishioners. But if he serves in a white suburb in which the financial elite has settled, he will be considered poor."

neighbours because of his poverty. The same pattern which we find inside our country we also find on the international scene. In the USA a family of four earning R200 a month is considered to be poverty-stricken. In India the same income for a family of four would place it into the highly privileged group of people. The examples show that whether you are rich or poor in one way depends on the standard of living of the people around you. But it also depends on the standard of living of the group of people with whom you compare yourself, or with whom you would like to identify. We call this group a "reference group". Again a little exercise would do us no harm: Let us ask ourselves whether we are inclined to compare our income with the income of those people who have less than we have or of those who have more. We may discover a great and important secret in connection with our problem if we do that" (Nürnberg 1978:28-29).

6. Absolute poverty

"Poverty and affluence are relative terms. There are people, however, who can be said to be poor in absolute terms. The income of these people is below what we call the "bread line". Of course the poorest of the poor are those who do not even know whether there will be any food for them tonight and tomorrow, who are scarcely able to cover their body with a few torn rags and who have no place to sleep. There are such people also! But we do not confine poverty to these. It is possible to work out a figure for an income which a family of a certain size in a certain locality with given prices needs in order to cover the basic essentials of life: a daily balanced ration, a minimum of decent clothing, rent for their accommodation, transport to work and to school, fuel, light and water, washing and cleaning utensils, school fees, taxation, medical costs. If you want to be generous add a sum for the replacement of broken furniture and crockery and something for church contributions. Some experts call this figure the "Poverty Datum Line". Depending on their method of research and definitions other experts call it "Minimum Subsistence Level" or "Household Subsistence Level" etc. This figure makes no provision for any type of luxuries such as cigarettes, sweets for the children or a transistor radio. It also assumes that the family budget is drawn up carefully and that mother always buys at the cheapest prices available. In fact these assumptions are unrealistic. Poor people often do not know how to draw up and stick to a budget, they also need some joy and recreation and there are many unforeseen expenses like a visitor or a wedding in the family. This is why scholars add a certain percentage or an extra series of items to get a more realistic picture. Again depending on their respective approaches they call this higher figure "Effective Minimum Level", "Human Standard of Living", "Household Effective Level" or the like. We do not need to go into research details here. The point is that it is possible to define poverty in absolute terms with a reasonable degree of precision and objectivity. When we come to a definition of affluence it is not so easy, as we will presently see. But again let me suggest we do a little exercise: Let us jot down the items we think we need for our survival as a healthy and happy family, excluding all luxuries. Are we then above or below the "bread line" and how far above or below?"

7. Kruger H: Managing Director of the Venda Development Corporation.
8. Van der Merwe T: Assistant Director of the Department of Community Development in Venda.
9. Thovhogi NJ: A Venda person and insurance broker.

2. POVERTY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE TRADITIONAL VENDA CONCEPT OF MAN

2.1 Introduction

An investigation into the traditional Venda concept of man places our discussion within the context of anthropology. In the following paragraphs anthropology will be viewed from the angle of an ethno-cultural and psycho-cultural perspective on Venda communalism. In the process of this investigation we shall try to establish whether these ethno-cultural and psycho-cultural dimensions have any bearing on the problem of poverty or not.

2.2 Venda Communalism: an ethno-cultural perspective

2.2.1 An integrated whole

To do justice to the investigation into the traditional Venda concept of man it is obviously necessary to examine such a concept against the background of the Venda life and world view. The latter shows a great similarity with an African life and world view in general. For this reason our discussion of the Venda ethno-cultural structure will be preceded by some broad remarks on the general African ethno-cultural structure.

"The unity, harmony and continuity of the African cosmos, a unity which embraces God, man and nature, has also been described by the Black South Africa theologian G Setiloane: "Bantu life is essentially religious Religion so pervades the life of the people that it regulates their doing and governs their leisure to an extent that is hard for Europeans to imagine ... the Bantu are hardly likely to be secularized, for they will never be content with a religion that is not able to touch every phase of life and interpret the divine in terms of humanity. Setiloane says his research has shown "the extent to which traditional spirituality still moulds the basic character of Sotho-Tswana life, and has been called in aid to supplement the felt deficiencies of a Western form of Christianity already secularized at the

coming of the first missionaries. Moreover, the overt religious element - the conviction that all life is life in a community of vital relationship, not only among the living and the dead - derives from a numinous awareness of Modimo, the dynamic force behind all being". Later he (Setiloane) writes that it would not ... be possible for them (ie the Sotho-Tswana) so to misunderstand them - as to make man the unconditional lord of nature. For behind and before both nature and man, permeating everything, is the one Lord, Mong - the source, Motlhodi, Being Itself. In Africa, life is One: "... man is not merely a psychosomatic, or even a sociomatic unit. He is himself numinous" (Setiloane).

The principle of continuity is also expressed by the cyclic concept of time. There are changes and there is discontinuity, but nothing is really new because things move in a cycle. There is also an ontological continuity, and a continuity of forces: the same power that is in God acts in man and in nature.

The Nigerian poet and dramatist Wole Soyinka described this principle when he spoke about the "needs of humans to swill, gorge and copulate on a scale such as Nature's on her monstrous cycle of regeneration Man reaffirms his indebtedness to earth, dedicates himself to the demands of continuity and invokes the energies of productivity. Reabsorbed within the communal psyche he provokes the resources of Nature; he is in turn replenished for the cyclic drain in his fragile individual potency".

As long ago as 1912, John L Dube wrote about the unity of the African world view as illustrated in a Zulu village: "A cursory survey of this queer village reveals circles everywhere. The houses with their little arched doorways are round, and they stand in a ring facing a circular cattlefold in the center. The whole is enclosed within a circular outer fence of round palisades. As we learn later, even the graves are rounded holes, and the corpses laid therein are curled up and bound into a rounded bundle".

The meaning of the circle was explained by Theo Sundermeier, the Lutheran missiologist: "The circle is the most telling symbol of the African world view. To comprehend it is to come close to the African feeling of unity and harmony. The area circumscribed by the circle is unbroken and whole. It has no top or bottom, no more or less. All the dynamics in this area combine to form a balanced harmony. Sunrise, sunset, noon and midnight is inside. Within life is a unity, held together by a hidden center. Should the circle be ruptured, the unity will disintegrate and life will be extinguished. Within there is shelter, outside there is defenselessness. The circle circumscribes order, anyone outside of it has no place to live. "The right and left hand sides, the side of strength and that of weakness, stand next to each other in equilibrium. Life and death balance each other; harmony of forces prevails.

"The African derives his confidence to face life from the unity of this world, through which he experiences what European existentialism wants to achieve, the uncleft unity of subject and object, the interchangeability of inside and outside, the relation to one's surroundings and the individual

of the individual in the community. Thought and feeling, which exist side by side in the West, form a unity here".

Perhaps the most overriding thrust of the poetry from a Black world disrupted by the West is a search for that unity, wholeness, harmony. The West has so upset the traditional African continuity - in the process divorcing God from nature, God from man, man from nature, man from man - that the search for the whole is one of Africa's most urgent needs. That need and that challenge has, as Mphahlele showed, been the stimulus behind contemporary African literature. The very sense of discontinuity and the alienation arising from it has become a source of creative inspiration. Nigeria's Chinua Achebe illustrated this from his own history: "My father had been a missionary, he was retired when I was growing up; and we were Christians and in our village you had two sides - the "people of the Church", as we were called, and "the people of the World", the others. And there was a certain amount of distance, which I think made it possible for me not to take things for granted, you see. I say this because as for some of the people who grew up with me, whose parents were heathen, as we called them, these things did not strike them. This is what they tell me today: they took things for granted. Whereas I went to church on Sunday, we prayed every morning and so on, and the rest of the village I could see from a slight distance".

It is the new and strange things that bring questions. According to Setiloane, God in African tradition is here, He is the numinous presence. An all embracing unity prevails". (Van Niekerk 1982:16-18).

Complementing the perspective presented by Setiloane concerning an understanding of God, Bosch writes the following:

"There is an additional problem in the question of whether it is indeed possible to isolate the consideration of God from the rest of the religious convictions of a people and then to take it as a separate subject of investigation. The answer to this, especially in the case of Africa can only be negative. When we attempt this impossible task, the only justification lies in our human limitations. We cannot globally understand and process the wealth of the religious heritage of Africa. We are thus compelled to approach this wealth by making use of certain key ideas in order to look at the multicoloured crystal from another angle. The angle from which we consider the crystal, is the one concerning the concept of God. Our task seems to be to ascertain the importance of this aspect for the whole of religion in Africa and the way in which it could affect our preaching. Notice that we concentrate on the actual importance of God, not the apparent prominence of this concept in an African community. This is then the problem with which we are confronted in our further investigation of the subject. With individual exceptions faith in God does not come prominently to the fore in Africa. This is especially true of the Bantu where the traditional God seems distant, vague and inactive. But does

this lack of prominence also mean He is unimportant in Africa? More and more results delivered by concise research show that from every corner of the African continent the opposite seems to be true. Even though the traditional African God seems to be lurking in the background and even though this God seems to be totally superfluous to the superficial observer, He is extremely important and the African cannot imagine a single moment of life without God. God in a certain sense is the assurance of the existing order, the "support" upon which everything rests. With one reservation we feel able to agree with what Swaillem Sidhom said, namely that God is; hence man is - that is the core of African belief!

It is doubtful however whether we can unreservedly embrace the concept of Edwin Smith, Ernst Damman, Noel King, John Mbiti and others who present the traditional religions of Africa as a pyramid with God at the top, and in hierarchical order the gods, ancestral spirits, people, plants and animals and lifeless objects. A circle might be a more relevant model upon which all religious elements are arranged around the center of the religious life, namely community. We could also adjust the image so that faith in God would be represented as the base on which the whole circle and its center rests. For all practical purposes the center remains the safety and the continuing existence of the community. In religion, the stress is placed on the management of the existential problems of suffering and adversity, in the combat against phenomena like disease, death and infertility and other catastrophes which threaten the continuation of the community. This can only occur if God, the spirits, people, animals and objects are kept within their rightful places. The preservation of the current existing order is of importance here. The disturbance of this order is regarded as sin, and the concept of sin also contains this meaning. Here it is the interaction of everything, the participation in group activities and the continuation of the linear structure as Vincent Mulago and Alexis Kagame so clearly show". (Bosch 1974:39-40).

The African life and world view can thus be described as an integrated whole which binds together all aspects of life and world into a circle of unity, harmony, continuity and equilibrium. Man's being is thus determined by this concept of totality by means of which all internal and external dimensions of his existence (spirituality, religion, economy, jural systems, politics, kinship, language, education, play, art, etc.) are fused into "purpose relations" and "purpose relationships" (Myburgh 1981:51)¹⁾ between God, man and nature - God and man, God and nature, man and God, man and man, man and nature, nature and God, nature and man, nature and nature, etc. - and which

results in the entirety and fullness of being a "somebody" (Magwabeni)²).

When Van Rooy examines the Venda life and world view against this background he emphasizes the fact that we are not merely dealing with the stringing together of a number of strange superstitious customs, but that this life and world view consists of a logical system by means of which each component forms an integral part of the whole and also emanates from it (Van Rooy 1975:20-22). Again the main theme is the concept of totality.

Within the context of this totality the cosmos is seen as an integral whole consisting of a hierarchy of forces, each with a specific place and function but also influencing each other in a continuing process of interaction. God is the highest of these forces and as such an inherent component of the totality. And somewhere in this cosmic hierarchy, with the spirits above him and the animals and plants below him, man fits into his own very special place, but as a part of the whole and with a tremendously strong sense of belonging to the totality.

In an unpublished, postgraduate study, Dederen accentuates this ethno-cultural totality in his use of the concept "communalism".

He explains this concept, from a Venda perspective as collective ownership, production, consumption, decision making, control, responsibility and even language use and architecture. According to Dederen however, this collectivity is not a substitute for individuality and individualism and he therefore defines communalism in terms of "one for all and all for one". Communalism is nevertheless the basic and therefore the most influential and positive value in the

ethno-cultural structure of the Venda people.

This communalistic attitude towards life and towards the universe assures salvation, security, strength, success, peace and happiness. Therefore group unity and group identity enjoys the highest priority, as the Venda poet RF Ratshitanga clearly implies in the following poem (translation : OK Rambau).

UNITY

Like water breaking mountains apart
Forming crevices through hills
Till the river reaches the sea
Unity was like that even before.

Like the tongue assisting the teeth
While the intestines do the final digestion
Through unity we can move mountains
And promote development.

Unity is our priority
Together we preserve it
Just like ornaments
Which protect our country.

Like spiced gravy
Delicious to the cook himself
Forward we go
With unity our spear.

Unity and love are related
They cater for each other
Together they create peace
Within which we stay in harmony.

Unity is education!
Unity at work!
Unity on the roads!
If we unite, success is ours.

2.2.2 A disintegration of the whole

Although communalism definitely represents the basic and therefore most influential and positive value in the ethno-cultural structure of the Venda population it is precisely the dynamics of this value which constitute serious problems. Van Wyk describes both the positive value and the problematics in the following extract:

"The profound sense of unity and equilibrium has often been described as one of the outstanding characteristics of African culture. Poets like Leopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire have described it. It is a deep sense of unity with people and with nature. "There is in African custom an essential harmony, and equilibrium with the land..." (Watson 1982:38). All of life is seen as a continuum of interrelated beings with man taking a special place. Life itself as life-power is present throughout the continuum and can be transmitted back and forth. To endanger the equilibrium is to endanger life and survival itself" (Van Wyk 1984:186).

With "to endanger the equilibrium is to endanger life and survival itself" he means that if one aspect of the ethno-cultural whole is disturbed, then, of necessity the whole of life would be disturbed, as the following indicates:

"We shall now briefly discuss a phase in the transition from a subsistence economy to a money economy..."

institution of family headship among the Tswana, which is affected when the family head is separated from his agnatic group because he works away from home in a mine or factory.

We begin by referring to the cultural structure. The economic system is deprived of important economic activities such as the allocation of cattle or arable land to families, since this rests with the agnatic head; the religious system, or much of the ritual that has to be performed on behalf of the agnatic group since it is the head who has to invoke the ancestors; the educational system, of components expressing matters with which the agnatic head is concerned, such as ear-piercing and puberty ceremonies (Krige 1936:81, 82, 89); the kinship system, of the decisive action of a senior patrilineal member who should be concerned with matters such as marriage negotiations or disputes concerning the agnatic group, the political system and the jural system, of components with which the head of an agnatic group is concerned, for example death-notices and lawsuits.

In the ethnic structure there is a decrease in the number of religious relationships since the ancestral spirits are frequently no longer invoked, as well as a suspension of kinship relationships during the absence of the agnatic head. The nature of economic relationships tends to change because economic activities are no longer restricted to agnatic groups" (Seyfath and Van Rensburg 1981:64-65).

The example above explains the association between the disturbance of one aspect of the ethno-cultural whole (in this case the economic aspect) and the simultaneous disturbance of the whole. It was stated earlier that this whole assures salvation, security, strength, success, peace, happiness as well as development, a future, harmony, education and work (cf Ratshitanga's poem). But when the whole disintegrates, the virtues which it brings about are obviously also affected negatively, and this in turn disrupts the whole. The vicious circle continues and man's whole life and world falls apart until this corruptive process becomes his style of existence - wrested from salvation, security, strength, success, peace, happiness, development, a future, harmony, education, work, etc. And this, to my mind, is what poverty is largely all about.

2.2.3 An ethno-cultural corruptio totalis

From an ethno-cultural point of view we are thus also concerned with a corruptio totalis and this confirms the notion which was explained in theological terms (cf paragraphs 1.2.2 - 1.2.2.4). The understanding of the theological and ethno-cultural corruptio totalis is therefore of the utmost importance because this corruptio totalis constitutes the basic underlying factor which determines the concept and the problem of poverty. From this perspective, poverty is an all-embracing and inclusive problem which an external visibility is found in predominantly one aspect of the whole, namely the economic aspect (an under-supply of basic provisions for survival) but which at the same time disturbs the fundamental and total existence of the individual, group (eg family) and society. As such, poverty becomes a self-perpetuating style of living which is determined by a disintegrated life and world view and by means of which all the internal and external dimensions of man's relations and relationships within the totality of his existence are distorted and lose their purpose. This implies that poverty cannot be solely described statistically and in economic terms but that thorough attention should also be paid to the theological, anthropological, psychological, political, demographic, ecological, social, medical, educational, jurisdicitive and all other perspectives. These perspectives, as coherent parts of the greater internal and external whole of the comprehensive problem of poverty require increasing interdisciplinary attention in the on-going study of poverty.

Although it is not the intention of this thesis to outline the interdisciplinary approach to the problem of poverty or to study each separate facet thereof, the multi-factorial and inter-factorial nature of the problem of poverty should continuously be kept in mind or else

each separate part of the whole could lose its relation to the whole. This also applies to the psycho-cultural dimension of the problem of poverty which we will now discuss. This dimension is in itself directly related to the problem of poverty, but at the same time also interrelated to all the other dimensions of this problem.

2.3 Venda communalism: a Psycho-cultural perspective

The psycho-cultural dimension of the traditional African and Venda life and world view is directly related to the ethno-cultural structure. In fact, to make a distinction between the ethno-cultural and psycho-cultural perspective is a contradiction in terms which does not exist in the thought patterns of traditional African and Venda man. Both the ethno-cultural structure and the psycho-cultural dimension form part of the one holistic existence in African and Venda tradition. If one should distinguish between the ethno-cultural structure and the psycho-cultural dimension for the purposes of a thesis of this nature, one would have to maintain the holistic character of the psycho-cultural dimension as well as to keep in mind that it remains part and parcel of the greater whole.

To indulge in the field of cultural and transcultural research, interpretation and formulation is by no means an easy task. On the one hand one is intensely aware of the complexities of the psyche and one's own lack of knowledge and insight concerning psychology, especially cultural and transcultural psychology³⁾. On the other hand one remains aware and sensitive towards the attitudes and presuppositions which are brought about by one's own christian and modern Western life and world view in relation and comparison to the non-christian and traditional African thought patterns, symbols and values of the Venda people. Add to this the fact that one is not merely dealing with two separate

systems of ethno-culture, but that within each of these lives and worlds a large extent of variables are also present, as well as a very valuable creative tension and reciprocal interaction between the two views of life and of the world mentioned above. Evolutionary changes therefore constantly take place within and between ethno-cultures. This process of acculturation⁴⁾ does however not merely occur within and between the two life and world views present in me and amongst the Venda people but the very same dynamics of ever changing thought patterns, symbols and values, creative tension, reciprocal interaction, disintegration, reintegration, enrichment and growth also take place in the whole of one's own self⁵⁾.

The psycho-cultural perspective which will be discussed in the following paragraphs is therefore a reflection on my own experience within the framework of the extent to which I was allowed to participate and could involve myself in the daily lives of the people of the DRCA Congregation of Tshilidzini and of the broader Venda community. Admittedly this involvement, participation, experience and reflection was and is still limited and the conclusions drawn are therefore by no means the last words to be spoken on the subject.

2.3.1 Man and God

Within the context of the holistic life and world view of the traditional African (and Venda) man there exists a close and integrated relationship between man and God (cf paragraph 2.2.1). It is therefore obvious that this relationship between man and God would have important psycho-cultural consequences in terms of man's religion, lifestyle, time orientation, approach to problems etc.

2.3.1.1 Religion and poverty

From paragraph 2.2.1 it is already clear that religion is an essential and integral part of the totality of traditional African (and Venda) existence and this fact is further illustrated by Hambrock who discusses religion in terms of its position and role in the entire ethno-cultural structure:

Religion, art, and economy are indirectly linked through different cultural components. The rock-paintings of animals produced by Palaeolithic man were probably expressions of his ideas about the supernatural. There is a surmise that these paintings were magical images designed to assist the hunter.

Magico-religious aids frequently play a part in the economic activities of peoples with non-specialized cultures as a precaution against failure. Among the Zulu, for instance, seeds are magically treated to secure an abundant harvest (Kriger 1936:192-194).

The ancestor cult helps to maintain kinship by linking it with religion. The agricultural ritual conducted by the ruler among indigenous peoples of Southern Africa serves the purposes of political organization, economy, and kinship as well as the purpose of religion, the ancestral spirits of his kin being believed to guard the welfare of the people through his mediation. In serving the purposes of politics, religion, economy, and kinship the institutions of rule, priesthood, and ritual link these cultural aspects indirectly in purpose-relationships and are themselves directly linked in purpose-relations.

It is clear that the belief in ancestral spirits links religion with kinship. Sacrifice as an institution links the religious system with economy, since cattle and beer are used in its performance.

Because religion provides an outlet for emotional tensions it contributes to the stability of the group. Among the !Kung, who belong to the San, a ritual healing dance brings about a sense of security, renewal, and solidarity, and releases pent-up feelings of fear and despair (Marshall 1965:272-273). In structural terms one would say that the ritual is an institution serving, first, to bring the people together in religious relationships and, second, to renew and strengthen a complex of beliefs through which the people are held together in religious relationships.

Rituals in connection with ancestor cults are restricted to certain individuals and groups. Persons who participate in a ritual have relationships of religion and kinship with the officiator and one another. Besides relationships of religion and kinship there are economic relationships (through the sacrificial meals) and political relationships

(when the chief presides), and lingual relationships (through prayer), all forming part of the ethnic structure. (Myburgh 1981:137-138).

The example above clearly shows the close connection between traditional religion and all other relations and relationships within the context of the integrated whole. The question is however whether traditional religion is merely a part of the totality or perhaps the essential core of the holistic African (and Venda) style of life and view of the world?

Smuts also emphasized the importance of the whole and maintained that one could never argue from the point of view of the parts of the whole towards the whole as the whole is always transcendent to the parts and that neither the parts nor their characters could therefore be transferred upon the whole and its character (Schoeman 1987:24). In terms of religion, whether it be a or the part of the whole, this approach of Smuts would imply that religion could never be regarded as the determining factor concerning the whole, but rather vice versa. And yet the very same Smuts argued that because the whole is not merely the sum of the parts, it (the whole) has something internal, some inwardness of structure and function, some specific inner relations, some internality of character or nature, which constitutes that more (Schoeman 1987:23). In other words, there is a core within the whole which binds together and holds together the parts of the whole as well as the whole itself, resulting in the whole being more than the sum of the parts and therefore uniting the whole from within (inherently) in order to transcend itself, its parts as well as time and space. And I am of the opinion that this core, this "something internal", this "some inwardness of structure and function", this "internality of character or nature" is directly related to traditional religion.

In this regard it is necessary to take serious notice of Mbiti's remark that "to be, is to be religious in a religious universe" (Schoeman 1987:23). Also Setiloane states that African life is essentially religious and that religion so pervades the life of the people that it regulates their doing and governs their leisure to such an extent that there exists an intimate continuity between the godhead and man with the result that man himself is numinous (cf paragraph 2.2.1). In this latter paragraph we have dealt with Mulago's and Kagame's description of the interrelatedness of religion and the interaction of everything, the participation in group activities and the continuation in the linear structure in African tradition. On account of their (Mulago and Kagame) viewpoints Bosch says that a circle might be a more relevant model upon which all traditional religious life is based, with faith in God as the base on which the whole circle and its centre rests. "One can therefore not understand Black existence if one does not grasp the essential importance of daily life" (Schoeman 1987:23). He (Schoeman) then goes further to explain the continuity between the godhead and man and how this continuity constitutes the whole with the implication that existence as a whole, with all its modes of realization should always be interpreted against the background of religious constructs (Schoeman 1987:23).

In Venda tradition "religion is that essential part of the holistic life and world view which one could call the axle around which the totality of existence rotates but it should be remembered that the axle and the wheel are entirely interrelated and interdependent the axle can only be axle because of the wheel and the wheel can only be wheel because of the axle and only through their reciprocal interaction can life exist" (Ralushai)⁶⁾. Although the traditional Venda godhead (Mudzimu) is far and vague, there is a continuity between him and man via the midzimu⁷⁾ (ancestral gods, spirits). This

continuation takes place in the form of dreams, appearances of snakes, fortune telling, illness, death and even by means of the ancestral spirits who would host themselves in the body of a person and in so doing supplant the person's own spirit. Man on the other hand is responsible for keeping in touch with the midzimu through the sprinkling of water, blood and beer. A reciprocal religious relationship therefore exists which is kept in balance by means of magical rituals (Van Rooy 975:24-26). Taking into account the hierarchy of powers in traditional Venda religion and that Mudzimu is the highest of these hierarchical powers (cf paragraph 2.2.1) the great role of religion in traditional Venda life is evident in terms of the above-mentioned continuation between Mudzimu and man. From these remarks as well as from the point of view of the broader context of African tradition it therefore seems as if traditional religion is neither merely an essential part of the whole nor the essential part of the whole, but in fact a vitally important and influential part of the whole.

In view of the conclusion above an important deduction can be made in terms of the relation between traditional religion and poverty. If traditional religion (the axle) disintegrates for whatever reason it will inevitably have an adverse effect on the whole (the wheel). This aspect of poverty has already been explained in paragraphs 2.2.2 and 2.2.3. In traditional Venda religion, and therefore also in the total life and world of existence, the religious core was and is still largely disrupted by christianity and secularism, distinctively but also in combination with each other as well as in relation to Venda tradition.

The predominantly Western approach of the mainline churches (eg Lutheran, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, Anglican, Roman Catholic, etc),

Mission) and the syncretistic content of the African Independent Churches (eg the great variety of Zion Christian Churches) all played and still play a distorting role concerning religion in Venda and therefore contribute to the disintegration of the whole. But secularism also has its part in the disrupting process. It is understandable that secularism is inherently in conflict with religion, but the nature of development in Venda is, together with all its positive elements and advantages, resulting in a specific kind of secularism which brings about immense problems with grave consequences. Van Wyk writes that "reality is seen as a whole. The sharp distinction made in Western thought between 'personal' and 'material' causes, between the 'spiritual' realm and the 'material' is absent. Natural phenomena are often believed to result from personal causes. Even machines are seen to be alive with 'souls' like all inanimate objects (Marnham 1980:131). This view has often been criticized by relief workers from Europe and North America. But one may well ask as Marnham does, whether their uncritical belief in modern technology is any better (1980:126-30).

A feature of this great sense of unity and equilibrium is the African tendency toward analogical thinking (Sundermeier 1973:112-35). In this way of thinking relationships are more important than sequences. The 'personal' factor in reality is more important than the digital or 'thing' factor.

Tension arises however whenever the requirements of modern life force one into a digital and sequential type of thinking. Machines may be felt to have 'souls' but they require handling according to a strict set of sequences. Moreover, mechanical operations require the operator to think ahead and to act according to a presumed series of future sequences. This type of thinking may quite easily be learnt

superficially but it is more difficult to internalize and to adopt it in such a way that it becomes 'second nature'.

Tension arises at this point also because of the need to 'objectify' nature in order to harness its resources. Agricultural, technological and industrial progress requires an 'impersonal' approach to nature and a certain freedom of action over against nature. Science requires a certain distance between the observer and the world and a measure of 'objectivation'. Much can be said in criticism of modern technology and industry but if it makes the difference between poverty and hunger on the one hand and better material circumstances on the other, the choice for technology is unavoidable. Some recognition of the 'rightful autonomy of earthly affairs' seems essential (Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes par 36).

A model for these distinctions may be found in the religious psychology of H Faber and the cultural philosophy of CA van Peursen. Both distinguish between phases or types of cultures. Van Peursen distinguishes between a mythical phase of culture and an ontological phase. These phases coincide with Faber's distinction between a mother-directed phase and a father-directed phase. The mother-directed type of culture is characterized by the great sense of unity of participation. The sense of reality is mystical, says Van Peursen. There is an experience of being immersed in the ocean of Being. To be separated from this unity is to be separated from life itself. Often nature is seen as the great Mother. Man's aim is to experience, protect, restore and enjoy this harmony.

The form of religion that goes with this type of culture is a nature-directed religion. The emotional experience is prominent as are the symbols and rituals of participation.

The ontological or father-directed phase or type of culture is different. A confrontation has taken place as if between a child and its father. There is great danger here but also the possibility of individual growth. The I-Thou relationship becomes a part of the culture. Words and laws have a prominent function. Prophetic and history-directed religions are typical. The sense of history is strong and the awareness of the sequence of occurrences. Dialectical thinking is suited to this experience as is a 'thing'-oriented view of reality (Faber 1976; Van Peursen 1976).

This model of phases or types of culture is most probably applicable to a great variety of peoples. But it may be of help to understand the tensions that exist in Africa today as well as the reasons for these tensions (Van Wyk 1984:186-187).

The developmental approach and process described above is also applicable to Venda and the specific kind of secularism that it brings about results in the same religious tensions which Van Wyk speaks about and which in turn create tensions within the whole.

Furthermore, the combination of christianity and secularism forms a dynamic force over and against the traditional life and world view of the Venda people and thus adversely effects the traditional religion and all the purpose relations and purpose relationships by means of which the whole of the ethno-cultural structure is interconnected. Traditional religion is further disintegrated as a result of the existence of a syncretism between christianity and traditional religion on the one hand and secularism and traditional religion on the other hand. One even finds traces of a mixture of christianity, secularism and traditional religion all together.

From all angles there is thus an onslaught against religion amongst the traditional Venda people. In this context religion disintegrates as well as the whole, because of the vital importance and influence that religion has upon the whole. In ethno-cultural terms this implies poverty (cf paragraphs 2.2.2 and 2.2.3). But this is also of great significance for the psycho-cultural dimension of human existence within the context of poverty.

The psycho-cultural dimension of the traditional African and Venda life and world view is directly related to the ethno-cultural structure. In fact, to make a distinction between the ethno-cultural and psycho-cultural perspective is a contradiction in terms which does not exist in the thought patterns of traditional African and Venda man. Both the ethno-cultural structure and the psycho-cultural dimension form part of the one holistic existence in African and Venda tradition. If one should distinguish between the ethno-cultural structure and the psycho-cultural dimension for the purposes of a thesis of this nature, one would have to maintain the holistic character of the psycho-cultural dimension as well as to keep in mind that it remains part and parcel of the greater whole.

Disintegration of one aspect of the psycho-cultural dimension would therefore also imply the simultaneous disintegration of the whole human psyche (Whether it be in terms of the individual, the group (eg family) or the community at large). But because of the interaction between the psycho-cultural dimension and all other dimensions of the whole the totality of life and of the world disintegrates together with the human psyche. Psycho-culturally we are thus also dealing with a corruptio totalis which was already described in theological (cf paragraphs 1.2.2 - 1.2.2.4) and ethno-cultural (cf paragraph 2.2.3) terms. And the relation between the corruptio totalis and poverty which was explained

in terms of theological and ethno-cultural constructs is also applicable here in terms of psycho-cultural constructs.

It is a universal fact that religion plays an important part in the human psyche. Taking into account the vital influence which traditional religion has on the whole of African and Venda tradition it speaks for itself that traditional religion would therefore also have a great impact on the psycho-cultural aspect of traditional life in Africa and Venda. The relation between the disruption of religion and the disintegration of the whole need not be repeated here. The question which does however remain is that concerning the inherent significance of traditional religion on the psycho-cultural dimension of traditional Venda man.

Firstly one would have to point out the positive role of traditional religion in this regard. Traditional religion provides a framework for important emotional experience and also stimulates balance and stability between the godhead, the ancestral spirits and man, as well as between man and man and man and nature (cf the reciprocal purpose and relationships in this regard).

Secondly it is the very same traditional religion which, within itself, produces immense psychological problems, ie intrigue, conflict, tension and fear. In traditional Venda religion this is mainly due to the fact that a continuous "game" of balance is prevalent between the godhead (Mudzimu) via the ancestral gods and spirits (midzimu) and man. In terms of the hierarchy of powers the midzimu are more powerful than man but they are considered as less fortunate and not so happy as man. For this latter reason the midzimu are in a constant state of jealousy towards man, with the result that man always lives in fear in relation towards them. It is within this context that magical rituals also play

such an important role in traditional Venda religion and life. In other words the reciprocal religious relations and relationships also create a negative framework which stimulates a lifestyle of intrigue, conflict and tension.

Man is therefore inhibited by his religious relations and relationships which in turn brings about destructive psychological trends. This results in a state of mind which constitutes a spirit of poverty and which is the essence of the problem of poverty (cf paragraph 1.2.2.4).

2.3.1.2 Religion, time and poverty

In paragraph 2.2.1 the concept of cyclical time was mentioned. The symbol of the circle is again prevalent here and in the traditional Venda context the idea of cyclical time is directly related to the traditional religion.

Time emanates from the traditional godhead via the ancestral gods and spirits and forms a life cycle which starts with conception (where the ancestral godhead via the gods and spirits is present and responsible for conception). From this point onwards life proceeds through the circle of birth, name-giving and protective rituals, initiation, marriage, parenthood and death. At the point of death man rejoins the ancestral gods and the spirits and is set forth in the eternal circle of conception, birth, etc. Cyclical time is thus a never ending circle which always emanates from and returns to the very same point, namely the traditional religious sphere of the ancestral gods and spirits. Within this sphere the point of death is therefore simultaneously the source of life (cf paragraph 2.3.1.3).

The positive aspect of such a concept of time is that time is directly

related to the human element. Time is as such serving the being of a person, group and community. But this very same concept of time has mainly two problematic consequences which both relate directly to the psycho-cultural dimension of the problem of poverty.

Firstly, the linear concept of time in the modern Western life and world view has a disintegrating effect on the traditional African concept of cyclical time.

"The traditional African experience of time was of a stream flowing from the present into the past. The emphasis was on the past where the ancestors were. The sense of the future was brief, the awareness of the present and the past was predominant (Mbiti 1969:23).

Another way of describing this would be to say that the African concept of time has been - and still is - personal. Time is for living, for experiencing communion with others, for being. Africans would not agree with Benjamin Franklin's statement that 'time is money'. Time is for people, not for things, for events not for calendars (Mbiti 1971:29).

The tension arises when the measure of truth in Franklin's statement asserts itself. In modern life there is an unavoidable need for forward planning. Time must sometimes be measured according to productivity. Clocks and calendars must unavoidably dominate our lives. We must of necessity learn to think more extensively in terms of possible future events.

Tension comes when people have to combine both directions of time: the backward-moving traditional direction and the forward-moving 'modern' direction. Mbiti has signalled this tension in African society and suggests that it 'may well be the root of, amongst other thing, the political instability of our nations' (1969:28)" (Van Wyk 1984:183).

This psycho-cultural problem of tension is however not only related to political instability but also and perhaps even more specifically influences economical instability, resulting in large scale poverty.

Secondly, the cyclical concept of time emphasizes the past, the old. In recent times it is clear how this concept of time has brought forth a revival of the "old religion of the past" (Neluheni)⁸). This trend

is even present amongst the younger generation. A favourite song which is widely acclaimed and sung with timeless repetition during a variety of youth activities here in Venda is "Give me that old-time religion". And so one could mention various examples relating to health, illness, death, dedication of property, weddings, funerals etc which reflect a renewed interest in the traditional Venda religion. The past and the old is alive and well again.

One should understand that this return to the past and the old has political undertones of a consciousness of the self (black consciousness). It would have been possible to view this "new" consciousness positively if it resulted in a new spirit of being which brings about human development as a basis for liberation from poverty and a thrust towards a new and better way of life, also economically. The problem is however that the return to the past and the old does bring about changes, but that nothing is really new and nothing is directed upon a brighter future (cf paragraph 2.2.1).

The concept of cyclical time therefore brings about the belief that the return to the past and the old would bring about liberation from whatever problem exists, including poverty. The return to the past and the old implies a return to the traditional religious sphere of the ancestral godhead, gods and spirits from whom conception emanates which in turn sets the circle rolling again. But in actual fact, this return to the past and the old constitutes a return to a greater emphasis on the state of mind which is brought about by the traditional religion and which results in a spirit of poverty (cf paragraphs 1.2.2.4 and 2.3.1.1).

The concept of cyclical time therefore actually entrenches a concept of cyclical poverty with a spirit of poverty prevailing from generation to

generation as they continuously turn along in the circle of time.

2.3.1.3 Religion, death and poverty

"Death is the core of life" (Nehuleni)⁹). In the totality of man's existence in Venda tradition and in the whole of the life cycle described above in paragraph 2.3.1.2 death plays an integral part. In fact, in the communal structure of the traditional Venda relations and relationships the unborn, the living and the dead all form part of the united circle. The dead, in this case, are present and represented by the gods and spirits of the ancestors.

The concept of death is thus ever present in traditional Venda life. Death is the cause of great fear, mainly because it is so directly related to the ancestral gods and spirits (cf paragraph 2.3.1.1). And when death does occur everything comes to a standstill, eg the ploughing of the land of the deceased. During and after the funeral a variety of rituals also take place which point to the real presence of death amongst the living, eg the passing to and fro below the uplifted coffin and the washing of hands "in order to cleanse ourselves from the death of the buried person" (Magidi)¹⁰).

The Venda idiom "ipfi la mufundi tshiambaro" (the word of the deceased is a garment) expresses the reality of death as part of daily traditional Venda life very clearly. This idiom actually means that one should always be aware of the presence of a dead man, especially during the times of disagreement in a particular family or when such a family is not executing the desires of the deceased.

The dead, their ancestral gods and spirits and death are thus present in every aspect of the day to day existence of the traditional Venda

people. A spirit of death prevails throughout life and is as such not merely present, but should also be considered as a dynamic force which influences traditional Venda existence, even to the extent of having a controlling power over the people and their lives as a whole (cf the relations and relationships between the ancestral gods and spirits and people as explained by Van Rooy in paragraph 2.3.1.1). Such an influential force and spirit of death can only inhibit one's outlook on and approach to life and to the world and in so doing enhance the cyclical spirit of poverty (cf paragraphs 1.2.2.4, 2.3.1.1 and 2.3.1.2). Caught up in such a vicious circle, liberation from poverty and development towards a new and meaningful identity and way of life is hardly possible because of the state of mind in which the individual, group and community find themselves.

Death is however not only regarded as a source of a particular state of mind or of fear. It is in fact, as was stated in paragraph 2.3.1.2, believed to be the source of life itself.

It was explained in paragraph 2.3.1.2 that within the context of the traditional religious sphere the point of death is also viewed as the source of life. When the deceased rejoins the ancestral gods and spirits the life cycle is set forth via conception, the unborn, birth, the living, etc. As such death seems to be a precondition for change - change which does not of necessity imply renewal, progress or development, because although there are changes, nothing is really new (cf paragraph 2.2.1 and 2.3.1.2).

This positive (fatalistic?) appreciation of death could be regarded as a way of coping with the force and fear thereof or a means of overcoming it. Whatever the reasons or objectives may be, the fact of the matter is that the very strong coalescence between death and life

constitutes an underlying pattern of thought which is directly related to the traditional African and Venda concept of cyclical time (cf paragraph 2.3.1.2) and which results in a belief that the bad bears the good, the worse the better, the worst the best, that intrigue brings harmony and stability, that conflict is necessary for peace, that problems create solutions, that regression implies progress, that destruction forces reformation and that even from poverty wealth can emanate, etc.

I am in possession of a painting by a local Venda artist, Mainganye. The painting is called "destruction" and it reflects traditional Venda houses which are burning, with the thatched roofs which are on fire and the walls which are crumbling and tumbling down. People are also seen running away from the danger. Mainganye explains that the painting portrays a traditional Venda characteristic, hence the title thereof. Looking at the painting from a symbolic perspective, Mainganye says that one could imagine a woman's womb from which the fleeing people are coming forth or being born from the ruins. At the same time when I bought this particular painting I saw another one at a local art exhibition entitled "destructive feeling" and also by a local Venda artist, Thabo. His painting consisted of a pile of dilapidated blocks, beams and stones.

I am of the opinion that this "characteristic" and "feeling" reflects an attitude to life which can be observed in all man's relations and relationships, particularly regarding nature (cf paragraph 2.3.3). And this nihilistic attitude forms part of the already mentioned spirit of poverty.

All the above-mentioned death-related thought patterns which are part and parcel of the traditional African and Venda beliefs and values and

which form an integral part of the whole of the traditional African and Venda life and world view can be observed simultaneously at any current Venda funeral. The influence of death on life, the fear of death and the strong connection between death and life where death is regarded as a source of continued life are all prevalent in the preaching, speeches, songs and rituals during burial ceremonies.

Death is so much part of life that funerals have become social activities which one simply does not miss. Everything would come to a standstill for the sake of the arrangements, evening prayer meetings and burial itself. Many hours and even days are spent on these activities, while lots of money is also spent to ensure a good and successful funeral. Distance is also not considered a problem. Family and friends will travel from far and even sacrifice many days of their holidays to be present at the arrangements, prayer meetings and burial.

On the day of the funeral everybody turns up for the long and exhausting programme consisting of sermons, speeches, rituals, eating, drinking, etc. The content of by far the majority of the sermons and speeches is focused on the theme of death and the fear thereof. I can hardly recall how great the number of sermons was which all started with the phrase "death is part of life". Such sermons would then normally continue to console those who are present, with specific reference to "this occasion of fear". The speeches follow more or less the same pattern. Representatives from the family, the church, the community, the government, etc are all given an opportunity to convey their messages. Keeping in mind that the deceased had, through his death rejoined the ancestral gods and spirits, the messages contain praises and high appreciation for "the good person who had passed on to the better life".

The speeches of the representative of the burial societies are of special significance. Such a representative would latch on to the fear of death as well as the fear of dying alone or being buried alone. It was already explained in paragraph 2.3.1.2 as well as earlier in this paragraph that the life cycle continues after death and is in fact given a regenerating impetus through death. It is therefore of the utmost importance for every person to live in unity and harmony with the communalistic group and community, but also to die and to be buried as such in order to ensure a peaceful return to the ancestral gods and spirits through whom their own life cycle in relation to and in relationship with all and everything will be set forth in harmony. A well organized and successful funeral which is attended by many and thoroughly enjoyed by all is within the above-mentioned context extremely vital. And "membership of a burial society ensures that nobody would die or be buried in shame"¹¹⁾. A song which is regularly sung at every funeral has the refrain of "the person who lives alone and is bad will be alone in death". Loneliness in death is as bad as loneliness in life - specifically within the context of the traditional African and Venda communalistic life and world view which concerns life in life as well as life in death.

The closing rituals of burial ceremonies reflect very clearly the belief in life in and after death. Wreaths are presented and the corresponding cards read, with the emphasis on "we will miss you until we see you again" and "good-bye, we will join you soon". When the coffin is put into the grave it is wrapped in a cattle skin so that "the deceased can continue to live amongst his cattle" (Matshaya)¹²⁾. After the coffin has been lowered into the grave, the family and friends all join in to fill the grave "with every grain and stone which was taken out when the grave was dug, because the deceased should leave nothing behind when he continues his journey" (Ramatikiti)¹³⁾.

Eventually one of the old ladies would strew mealies on the grave and sprinkle water on it "for the deceased to have a crop to live from as a sign of new life" (Netshilindi)¹⁴).

The rituals mentioned above illustrate how a person continues with his communalistic life in relation to and in relationship with people (cf the contents of the cards), as well as nature (cf the cattle, the soil and the mealies). Life in terms of all its relations and relationships is thus carried forth in a very real sense in, through and after death, thus affecting the cyclical existence of the dead, the unborn and particularly the living as a whole.

2.3.1.4 Religion, responsibility and poverty

"Bomepome shata muzwala wau" (an extract from a Venda Domba dance song). It means that one is blaming others in order to escape the retribution which one deserved for one's own guilt.

When a traditional Venda family faces a crisis (eg poverty) the family will gather and discuss the problem in order to try and find an external cause to their dilemma. The witch-doctor will then be visited and the end result is usually the appointment of a specific person as the culprit. Many options can then be exercised. One option is to negotiate with the appointed culprit in order to gain compensation from him in the form of for instance cattle or money. Another option, and one which is gaining ground in Venda during recent years, is to commit a ritual murder on the suspected culprit or to burn his possessions. In the first case the issue is resolved by restoring the balance, while in the latter cases the matter is settled by eliminating the destructive power¹⁵) which the culprit had over the family. But what it all points to is a shift in responsibility.

This shift in responsibility takes place via the group (cf above, the family) who then enters the religious sphere by seeking mediation from the witch-doctor who in turn communicates with the ancestral gods and spirits who in turn enable the witch-doctor to point out the external cause of the problem, mostly a guilty individual. The traditional religion thus creates a framework by means of which responsibility can be avoided. Even sin is in this way externalized (Bosch 1974:62-89).

Not only is one in this context not responsible for one's crisis or problem but one is therefore also not responsible for facing and alleviating such a crisis or problem¹⁶⁾. The dilemma will thus remain unresolved unless there is assistance from outside. With regard to a problem like poverty this attitude results in a fatalistic acceptance of one's fate - something which can easily be mistaken as perseverance if viewed superficially. What is in actual fact prevailing is a spirit of apathy (cf Nissen in paragraph 1.2.2.4).

2.3.1.5 Man, God and poverty

In summarizing paragraphs 2.3.1.1 - 2.3.1.4 one would have to conclude that religiously speaking poverty is concerned with a state of mind which constitutes a cyclical spirit of poverty which is enhanced by an ever present power of death and entrenched by a fatalistic and apathetic attitude caused by a near absence of responsibility. This is the psycho-cultural dilemma which traditional Venda religion brings about in relation to the problem of poverty, but this is also a confirmation of what has already been concluded theologically (cf paragraph 1.2.2.4) and ethno-culturally (cf paragraph 2.2.3). And seen from and placed within the context of the holistic life and world view of traditional African and Venda man this spirit of poverty simultaneously, continuously and adversely affects all dimensions of

the individual's, group's and community's existence as a whole.

2.3.2 Man and man

The collective nature of human relations and relationships was described briefly earlier in this chapter (cf Dederen in paragraph 2.2.1). Dederen's remarks on Venda communalism are confirmed by Booi's frequent expression, namely that "in Venda we do things together"¹⁷⁾ as well as by means of what is probably the most well known idiom in Venda, namely "muthu ndi muthu nga vhanwe vhathu" (a person is a person through other persons). Van Rooy also emphasizes the priority which reciprocal human relations and relationships enjoy in Venda (Van Rooy 1975:24) and Schoeman says:

"Furthermore, a person can never be disengaged from his interpersonal world. A person exists in terms of his relationships with other people. Existence actualizes in and through the Mitwelt. Life outside an interpersonal matrix is impossible. Mbiti (1969, pp 108-9) refers to the essentially communalistic African view of man and says "Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and other people.

Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and what happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: "I am because we are; and since we are therefore I am". This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man." In a similar view, Kaunda (quoted by Hanekom, 1979) refers to the "mutual society" of Blacks. Manganyi (1973, p 30) expresses a similar view when he says Blacks have a "communalistic" orientation towards life and have a "corporate personality". This contrasts with the solipsistic Western view of man, which accepts the individual and not the group as the basic unit of psychic reality" (Schoeman 1987:21).

In Venda these communalistic relations and relationships are controlled internally by means of primarily four stabilizing systems, namely status (royalty over general public), sex (men over women), age (the elder over the youth) and kinship (eg an older brother over his sister's children). Traditionally this system of controlling

mechanisms is supposed to ensure order and peace within the group and community and is executed by means of authority. But in recent times such authority finds itself in a predicament, either by means of the misuse of the authority mechanisms (eg the dictatorial domination of some chiefs, government officials and men), or through the disintegration of these mechanisms (eg because of the high percentage of economically active males working as migrant labourers elsewhere, resulting in the creation of a vacuum as far as the father-figure is concerned - cf also chapter 1, note 4), resulting in the exploitation of the public and tension amongst the different groupings within the system of control.

"The tension that arises between authority and criticism is clearly visible in newly independent states. The authority of the leadership is based upon an interpretation of the common good, the people's will. This base of authority is exclusive. Criticism and opposition are experienced as a threat to authority itself. In the course of a survey of present day African leadership David Lamb quotes a statement by Samora Machel: "When a class imposes its will, those who refuse to accept this imposition must be forced to conform. Those who oppose this will be repressed" (1982:72). This, Machel insists, is the only way.

Africa has a great tradition of consensus-politics. Consensus is reached through long deliberation by elders and wise men in tribal and other courts. But this is difficult to apply in a large and diverse community like a modern state. Modern political debate calls for a dialectical relationship between opposing persons and groups who act within a larger loyalty and who offer criticism and debate with a view to achieving more clarity and insight for the benefit of all. In Africa today the problem of how to handle and how to accommodate dissent and dissidence is often acute.

It is difficult to conceive of a large modern state without opposing groups who vie for political power. Tension often arises in this area. Stability is sometimes ensured by enforcing a one-party system and by strict control over the media. This tends to stifle criticism and to reduce the participation in political life to a small group. If however the flow and availability of information is a feature of the modern world, Africa is experiencing a crisis at this point which endangers its freedom and growth (Lamb 1982:243-57)" (Van Wyk 1984:184).

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Tension within the authority structure implies disintegration of the group and community as a whole which in turn brings about tension to

the individual members of the group and community but also tension amongst the various groups within the community at large.

All of this has grave consequences for the individual because "a person without other persons is a poor person" (Ntoyanto)¹⁸). Quoting Mbiti Setiloane once wrote: "I am because I belong" (Setiloane 1986:48)¹⁹). In other words, if the individual does not belong any more, he is not any more. His very existence disintegrates into a life with very little meaning and purpose. Such a man, says Ntoyanto (cf above), is a poor man.

There is however another area where the traditional African and Venda view of man as a communalistic being causes problems relating to poverty and development.

"The communal African view of society is well known and has often been praised. It's value for a Black ecclesiology has been emphasized (Goba 1981:56). This concept with its strong sense of solidarity and mutual responsibility has been a major factor in the survival of the race on a hard continent like Africa.

The communal view of man has also led to the great emphasis on conformity (Gelfand 1965:114). Conformity is considered necessary for the survival of the community. Deviations from the norm are highly dangerous. Peace and happiness are ensured by conformity to the customs and folkways of the community (Gelfand 1965:117-8). Individual ability is recognized but beyond a certain point it may threaten stability and even survival itself.

The communal emphasis has caused many Africans to feel the centre of their identity as being outside themselves, in the community. This has diminished the amount of inner individual awareness and has hampered individual initiative.

In a time of much selfish individualism the great sense of community and coherence in African society is certainly impressive. At the same time there is great need in modern society for individual responsibility and initiative. A high degree of individual inwardness is required. In order for society to advance and improve its quality of life - even to survive in today's world - individuals are needed who can improvise, who can 'separate' themselves from the community and who can take personal responsibility on behalf of others.

At this point tension arises. This happens in education, at

the work place and in political life. The community needs innovators, leaders who can stand at some distance from the people. At the same time the pressure of communal obligation is very great and may be experienced as stifling or inhibiting" (Van Wyk 1984:183-184).

Individual human development is thus constrained within the context of the whole of the group. It is therefore not merely a case of the individual who disintegrates when the whole group disintegrates, but the individual also disintegrates within himself because of the pressure of the group dynamics. As such one has to conclude that communalism has a determining influence on the human psyche.

Dederen mentions a few aspects concerning the communalistic psyche which puts his reference to "one for all and all for one" (cf paragraph 2.2.1) in a better perspective. It then becomes clear that communalism is not merely a series of superficial collective activities, but in fact a deep psychological phenomenon.

Dederen, a very individualistically orientated person, explains that in his experience his lonely image is not highly appreciated amongst the Venda people. To be alone is to be suspect, asocial and anti-social. And all of these are interpreted as anti-communal which in turn is seen as being in conflict with the group and community. This suspicion and conflict can even sometimes be understood in supernatural terms, with the single person being viewed as being bewitched or having magical powers.

It is therefore to be understood that the Venda people enjoy collecting people in the sense of large families and big circles of friends. The emphasis is on quantity to the detriment of depth and quality in terms of human relations and relationships.

In view of the strong communalistic psyche Dederen also notes that such group and community orientated relations and relationships result in conformation and conservation. To be different, to be better and to strive for or promote change is to be guilty of not conforming to the group and community and to be anti-conservative. As Van Wyk has pointed out, this conformation and conservatism which is brought about by the communalistic dynamics inhibits the growth and development of the individual, to such an extent that he can hardly ever reach the point of utilizing his full potential as a human being. The end result is that the whole group and community does not grow or develop to its fullest potential, including a lack of individual initiative, entrepreneurship and leadership. In order to survive the respective members of the group and community become dependent upon one another. A fatalistic attitude of waiting for assistance from outside (especially from a superior) prevails (cf paragraph 2.3.1.4)²⁰⁾ and this whole process leads to what Dederen calls "a poverty culture".

Dederen makes one more observation concerning the communalistic psyche which is relevant to our discussion. He notes that the control systems of Venda communalism (ie status, sex, age and kinship) also form the supporting structures which determine morality. The disintegration of the control systems cause the support structures to give way with an obvious detrimental effect on communalism as a whole but in particular on morality. Within the context of our discussion on "man and man" in the whole of this paragraph 2.3.2 one would therefore have to conclude that the problems which currently exist in Venda concerning morality (eg promiscuity) are directly related to the prevailing spirit of poverty.

But from the perspective of the role of the control systems and support structures one finds a more fundamental problem resulting from the

disintegration of these systems and structures. The control systems and support structures used to play an important role regarding the prevention and alleviation of problems. Such problems were viewed and handled communalistically, but with the disintegration of the control system and support structures and the simultaneous disintegration of communalistic relations and relationships amongst people, a major force in preventing and alleviating problems (eg poverty) also disappears. The result is that a continuous state of intrigue and unresolved problems exists within the group and the community (cf paragraphs 2.3.1.1, 2.3.1.2 and 2.3.1.4)²¹). "Problems constitute the dynamics of life" (Tshikovhi)²¹).

In conclusion of this paragraph on "man and man" one finds a clear continuation of what has already been explained in the paragraphs on "man and God", namely that the disintegration of the reciprocal relations and relationships between the ancestral godhead via the gods and the spirits with man as well as the disintegration of the reciprocal relations and relationships between man and man results in a condition of poverty. But at the same time all these reciprocal relations and relationships within themselves also constitute a particular state of mind, a spirit of poverty which affects the whole of the group and the community in the totality of their existence. In view of paragraphs 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 one can therefore at this point speak of a spirit of communal poverty, or even better, a continuous communal spirit of poverty.

2.3.3 Man and nature

The same sense of continuity is encountered in man's relationship with the material world. His relationship with the divine and with other people is modulated through his dialogue with the material things of his world.

It is also through anal...

and the physical environment are encountered. In accordance with this, mind and body are not separate entities. The psyche and the body form an indivisible unity.

In summary: The subjective does not stand in opposition to the objective. The natural is not a separate domain from the supernatural. Man is intrinsically related to the divine, which actualizes through man's dialogue with his world. The part implies the whole, in the same manner as the whole exists in terms of its parts. Everything is essentially, fundamentally, interconnected" (Schoeman 1987:21-22).

In the title of a poem on nature the close relation between the divine and nature is clearly illustrated - the title being "God stands as the sun" (Ratshitanga 1976:46), while the Venda expression "shango a li ambi tshalo" (the land, earth does not say what is in its heart) points to the mythical secrecy which is concealed in nature. But because of the continuity in the relations and relationships between man and God, man and man and man and nature man is also imminently present in relation to the divine nature, the religious universe (cf Mbiti in paragraph 2.3.1.1).

Man's relation towards nature is visible in for instance the majority of Venda houses which are built from things of the earth (mud, clay, wooden poles, grass, cow dung, etc), large scale activities in cultivating the soil, the eating of natural crops from the veld as well as lousts, ants, mopaniworms etc, utilization of natural resources for energy (eg trees), enjoying sitting or lying on the ground and relating nature to a wide variety of rituals. For the sake of further clarity some of these rituals are worthwhile mentioning.

Names such as Mvula (rain), Gomelelo (drought) and Tshimange (cat) are found to be general during name-giving ceremonies. Also the initiation rituals reflect something of the intimate interaction between man and nature. The "Murundu" (the traditional initiation school for young Venda men) is amongst others directed at coping with and relating to

nature (eg building shelters from branches and leaves, hunting, eating natural crops, finding water etc). The Domba dance takes the shape of a snake. Cleansing rituals to for instance resolve family conflicts are carried out by means of the women of such a family submerging themselves in a river, while babies who might die under the age of about a year are also buried on the bank of a river "where the gods and spirits dwell" (Davhana)²²). Totem animals are still in some areas regarded as holy and are therefore not allowed to be slaughtered because they are worshipped during traditional Venda religious activities (eg the baboon in the Lwamondo area).

Of particular interest are Venda poems and traditional Venda legends where the interchange between man and nature is so intense that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the difference. In a poem by Ratshitanga ("A moribund father's last breath") he describes a person(s) as follows (Ratshitanga 1976:7-8):

"You are honey"

"You are wine"

"You are fire"

"You are a river"

"You are the dew"

"You are a flower"

"You are a host to singing bees"

"You are the mountains"

"You are a breeze"

"You are a Tornado"

"You are the grass"

"You are the dwelling of ticks"

"You are the weed"

"You are the white-ants"

"You are an ordinary stone of creation"

"You are a night"

"You are a monster"

"You are a summer"

"You are a suffocating heat"

"You are a winter"

"You are a dreaded lion"

"You are a kaross"

"You are a natural water crocodile"

"You are a sky"

"You are a wise owl"

Admittedly we are dealing in this poem with a symbolic comparison, but note the "You are". Some traditional Venda legends do however shed better light on the sometimes indistinguishable difference in the relation between man and nature, with the divine element of the relations and relationships either implicit or explicit, but always present.

"Long long ago there was a chief who ruled for many years. When he was about a hundred years old he became very ill and passed away. The people took his corpse to the edge of a big forest. They laid him on a bed of branches and leaves. Underneath the branches and leaves they put a huge clay pot. After a few days the corpse started to disintegrate. The flesh came loose from the bones and fell into the clay pot. Lots of worms were then bred from the flesh in the clay pot. They became so many that the whole pot was filled with worms. The strongest worm managed to escape from the clay pot and sailed away deep into the forest where it changed into a lion.

Today, when there are many dark clouds in the sky, one can still hear the roar of the lion. His roar is so loud that it makes a bright light shine from heaven so that everybody may be able to see that the chief of that area is the king of all the people, who should therefore respect and worship the lion, even until this very day"²³⁾.

A particularly significant illustration of the coalescence between man

and nature is found in the term "muta". This Venda word means family as well as courtyard. And not only does the word have these two simultaneous meanings, but it is also in the circle of the courtyard of traditional Venda homes where the circle of family (and friends) frequently meet for social gatherings, weddings, funerals, etc. In the majority of cases these courtyards take a circular shape (cf Sundermeier in paragraph 2.2.1) and the walls and floor thereof are built from mud, clay and cow dung, while some of the walls are decorated with drawings which consist of traditional patterns and symbols reflecting animals, reptiles, flowers, etc. Most of the courtyards have a small circle in the middle which is used as a fire place, serving the purpose of providing light and heat, while cooking is sometimes done on the fire in the middle of the courtyard. Domestic animals such as dogs, cats, chickens and goats also make themselves at home in the muta.

The examples above clearly indicate the close relation between man and nature, with the divine implicitly present. This relation between man and nature is one of the most positive features prevailing in Venda today and forms a framework for creative agricultural activity. The Venda people are in fact generally acclaimed as "people of the earth" and this is perhaps the reason why the development schemes of the Department of Agriculture here in Venda as well as the Agricultural Development Corporation (Agriven) can achieve a considerable amount of success via their projects (eg large scale extensive farming and small scale intensive gardening). It is obvious that such projects can contribute much to prevent and alleviate certain aspects of poverty, eg a lack of food.

The close relation between man and nature in Venda is however slowly but surely disintegrating, mainly because of two factors. First there

is the problem of ecological degeneration. In some areas nature conservation enjoys a very high priority (eg Ha-Davhana), while in other areas one can actually notice how the environment is rapidly changing into a desert area (eg Ha-Tshimbupfe).

In view of what was explained in paragraphs 2.3.1.2 and 2.3.1.3 concerning the nihilistic appreciation of for instance cyclical time, death, the bad, intrigue, conflict, problems, etc, it is important to understand that one finds a similar nihilistic pattern of thought regarding nature. Environmental problems such as erosion, deforestation, the extirpation of natural crops, etc (eg Ha-Tshimbupfe) are all regarded as being part of the process of the original point where life (also nature) will again be revived through death (Magatshavha)²⁴). Within this framework of belief it is understandable that nature conservation and nature development would not enjoy such a high priority in traditional African and Venda life.

In the second place the development of the government service, industrialization, health services, education, etc are all geared to drawing the people away from nature. Young men with long finger nails and bright and shiny multi-coloured shoes are symbols of the anti-nature direction in which a large part of Venda society is currently moving. And yet there is a deep sense of longing for the close contact with nature as it used to be in the past. Ratshitanga expresses this longing beautifully in his poem "ode to the past" (Ratshitanga 1976:27)²⁵).

Gone and dead are the august days
Of big elephants and roaming lions.
Where beautiful nature openly could graze,
Giraffes, kudus, impalas and big bushy lions.

Dead are these days to an eye,
An eye made rightly to see.
That time before our clean sky
Was zoomed black by metal birds.

Gone are the days of purity,
Of girls untouched and clean.
A legend to our posterity,
That bathes and shall in pools of gin.

Where are the African sacred drums
That sounded from the deep Congo,
To the last point of the Cape,
The Ngoma Lungundu of the great Congo?

Where are the big hairy African kings,
Who enthroned with tufts of bold plumage?
Men that God made kings,
Those days before the present bondage.

Where are you mother Africa hacked to pieces,
To leave behind a nation of beggars!
Hear them waking up with prayer-ditties,
Your prophets rounding them scattered niggers.

Because of the continuity in the relations and relationships between man and God, man and man and man and nature one finds a similar pattern here in paragraph 2.3.3 as was the case in paragraphs 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, namely that is is not only the disintegration of the close relation between man and nature which results in problems, but the relation within itself constitutes complications.

The close relation between man and nature causes a problem concerning objectivity. Man and material things are so inter-connected that hardly any matter can be dealt with objectively and without implicating the people involved and the relations and relationships between them.

Seen from another angle this very same close relation between man and nature results in relativating words, conversations, negotiations and decisions (Maphoto)²⁶). Human relations and relationships are thus primarily determined by actions of a material nature. The implication is that words, conversations, negotiations and decisions can be changed or ruled out again and form no fixed foundation to build upon. Only when something real, something material happens is the human psyche in balance. This all brings about uncertainty, instability and distrust, because "how can you believe a man when you do not know what he does, especially behind your back" (Nyathela)²⁷). Or as the traditional Venda people would say: "Only if we can see the calours, do we know and believe that it is a zebra" (A Venda idiomatic expression).

2.3.4 Man and himself

White maintains that "the African world view begins with a holistic conception of the human condition. There is no mind-body or affective-cognitive dualism. The human organism is conceived as a totality, made up of a series of interlocking systems. This total person is simultaneously a feeling, experiencing, sensualizing, sensing and knowing human being living in a dynamic, vitalizing world where everything is interrelated and endowed with the supreme force of life" (Schoeman 1987:20-21).

Traditional African and Venda man sees himself as a unity within himself as well as in union with the divine, other people and the

material world. But in our psycho-cultural analysis of Venda communalism we have discovered how the disintegration of man's relations and relationships leads to a disintegration of the self and that these relations and relationships within themselves also affect the human psyche. The result of this all is that man is no longer a unity within himself, while the continuity of his relations and relationships towards the divine, people and nature is simultaneously distorted, resulting in a variety of psycho-cultural problems such as continuous intrigue, conflict, tension, fear, suspicion, uncertainty, instability, distrust, etc.

Within himself man therefore develops a particular state of mind which becomes a spirit and a way of life - a life of poverty.

It is also important to note that White says that the African world view begins with a holistic conception of the human condition. It would seem as if White places the human element at the centre of the holistic world view. Sundermeier supports him in this.

"The christian view of man is directed upon God; the Western view of man is directed upon fulfilling a function; the Eastern view of man is holistic in nature but directed upon the universe; the African view of man is also holistic in nature but directed upon man himself. In African holism the whole is drawn together in man" (Sundermeier)²⁸).

Dederen also explains that one of the aspects of Venda communalism is that it is an extension of individual interests and that the group and community is therefore also responsible for serving the needs of the individual but never to the detriment of the communal priority (cf Dederen's description of Venda communalism as "one for all and all for one" in paragraphs 2.2.1 and 2.3.2).

Rather than an individualistic view of man one probably has to do with a kind of holistic anthropocentrism or an anthropocentric holism. This idea does however need further and thorough investigation and is not of determining interest for our discussion on poverty.

2.3.5 Man and limited cosmic means

The above-mentioned relations and relationships (cf paragraphs 2.3.1 - 2.3.4) serve, amongst others, the purpose of bringing about a cosmic balance. This stems from the traditional African and Venda belief in the concept of limited cosmic means. These limited cosmic means, eg life, happiness, influence in the community, etc, should be distributed equally amongst all people in order to create a balance between all man's relations to and relationships with the divine, other people, nature and himself. The interaction between man and the divine (cf paragraph 2.3.1.1), the systems of control (cf paragraph 2.3.2), the interchange between man and nature (cf paragraph 2.3.3) and man's unity within himself (cf paragraph 2.3.4) are all playing a part in setting up the cosmic balance and in so doing ensure that everybody can obtain an equal share of the limited cosmic means. But in paragraphs 2.3.1 - 2.3.4 we have seen how all man's relations and relationships have disintegrated to the detriment of Venda life as a whole. This is also applicable to the concepts of limited cosmic means and of cosmic balance.

If the cosmic balance is disturbed by for instance wealth, poverty, illness, death, etc, it implies that an imbalance in the share of the limited cosmic means exists. This in turn causes tension in man's relations and relationships, resulting in conflict between man and the divine, man and man, man and nature and man within himself. Eventually the whole of the group and the community is also affected and total

disintegration of all the dimensions of existence occurs. A vicious circle erupts and man is caught up in an unbalanced state of mind which exists not only within himself, but in the cosmos as a whole.

Furthermore, this belief in limited cosmic means and the importance of cosmic balance has, within itself, serious effects on man's life as a whole. Firstly, it leads to stagnation. Individual initiative, the strife towards greater things in life, the drive to progress, the urge to achieve higher goals, success, etc are all being inhibited by the very high priority which cosmic balance enjoys amongst the traditional African and Venda people. This concurs with what we have already discussed in paragraph 2.3.2 concerning the inhibition of man's potential, but within this context relating to the belief in the concepts of limited cosmic means and of cosmic balance it is clear that man is not merely inhibited by the group and the community, but by the totality of all his relations and relationships, by the entirety of his divine, human and cosmic existence.

Secondly, the emphasis on limited cosmic means and on cosmic balance constitutes a condition of fear - fear of disturbing the cosmic balance; fear of being disturbed; fear of having to bear the consequences of the disruption of the cosmic balance, eg not obtaining a fair and equal share of the limited cosmic means; fear of the divine, of people and nature and oneself, because these all form part of the relations and relationships which determine either the cosmic balance or the cosmic imbalance; etc. For the participating observer this condition of fear is evident in every aspect of traditional Venda life, but especially within the context of group and community activities, eg meetings of all natures, class situations at school, college or university, youth and labour strikes, funerals, etc. Of specific interest is what Dederen has observed, namely that in traditional Venda

architecture the psycho-cultural phenomenon of communal fear is reflected very clearly, concretely and visibly. The traditional Venda architectural styles are therefore generally known as "paranoic architecture".

In other words, because of the fact that "all the children of a man should share the head of one locust"²⁹), all man's relations and relationships which are supposed to serve the positive purpose of ensuring life, love, peace, unity, harmony, happiness, strength, success, etc, do instead lead to inhibition and fear within the context of the traditional Venda belief in the concepts of limited cosmic means and of cosmic balance. This state of affairs (state of mind) retards human development and aggravates the spirit of poverty.

2.4 "Mushai, mushayi, musiwana, mulili, musingili, mutshinyali"

All these are Venda words meaning "poor, destitute, needy, etc". "Musiwana" is of particular interest because it refers not only to an individual without means, but also to one without relatives (cf Ntoyanto in paragraph 2.3.2). "Musingili" is used in a Venda idiom which reflects the helpless situation in which a poor person finds himself: "mbily khulu ya musingili a tsho latelwa dzembe a doba" (one who works for food must be patient, if or when a hoe is thrown to him he picks it up). This idiom refers to the fatalistic waiting for outside assistance (cf paragraphs 2.3.1.4 and 2.3.2).

2.5 The traditional Venda concept of man and poverty

What was discussed in this chapter concerning the ethno-cultural and psycho-cultural perspectives of the problem of poverty reflects some universal truths which would be just as relevant to other African,

Western and Eastern peoples. These other peoples may also have many other ethno-cultural and psycho-cultural values which can be appreciated and/or criticized. The fact of the matter is that we are dealing in this thesis with the problem of poverty within the context of traditional Venda anthropology and the ethno-cultural and psycho-cultural appreciations, evaluations and criticisms in this chapter should be seen against this specific background.

In conclusion of paragraphs 2.2 - 2.4 of this chapter on poverty within the traditional Venda concept of man we can now state the following:

"From an ethno-cultural point of view we are thus also concerned with a corruptio totalis and this confirms the notion which was explained in theological terms (cf paragraphs 1.2.2-1.2.2.4). The understanding of the theological and ethno-cultural corruptio totalis is therefore of the utmost importance because this corruptio totalis constitutes the basic underlying factor which determines the concept and the problem of poverty. From this perspective, poverty is an all-embracing and inclusive problem in which an external visibility is found in predominantly one aspect of the whole, namely the economic aspect (an under-supply of basic provisions for survival) but which at the same time disturbs the fundamental and total existence of the individual, group (eg family) and society. As such, poverty becomes a self-perpetuating style of living which is determined by a disintegrated life and world view and by means of which all the internal and external dimensions of man's relations and relationships within the totality of his existence are distorted and lose their purpose. This implies that poverty cannot be solely described statistically and in economic terms but that thorough attention should also be paid to the theological, anthropological, psychological, political, demographic, ecological, social, medical, educational,

jurisdictional and all other perspectives. These perspectives, as coherent parts of the greater internal and external whole of the comprehensive problem of poverty require increasing interdisciplinary attention in the on-going study of poverty.

Although it is not the intention of this thesis to outline the interdisciplinary approach to the problem of poverty or to study each separate facet thereof, the multi-factorial and inter-factorial nature of the problem of poverty should continuously be kept in mind or else each separate part of the whole could lose its relation to the whole. This also applies to the psycho-cultural dimension of the problem of poverty which we will now discuss. This dimension is in itself directly related to the problem of poverty, but at the same time also inter-related to all the other dimensions of this problem" (cf paragraph 2.2.3).

Psycho-culturally poverty can be described, not only in terms of the disintegration of the whole, but also in terms of the whole within itself as a continuous communal state of mind. This spirit of poverty constitutes the distortion of the relations and relationships between man and God, man and man, man and nature and man and himself, while these relations and relationships within themselves contribute further towards and in fact entrench poverty. The continuity amongst the above-mentioned relations and relationships causes a psycho-cultural interaction which in turn results in the totality of the individual, group and community being affected simultaneously and adversely. And within this total context of poverty individual, group and communal psychological phenomena occur such as intrigue, conflict, tension, fear, suspicion, uncertainty, instability, distrust, etc, while here in Venda there is also a wide occurrence of suppressed aggression.

Superficially seen, the Venda words for poor, destitute, needy, etc have the meaning of "a lack of money and food" (Matshaya)³⁰, but "musiwana" (a lack of means and relatives) and "musingili" (a human condition of poverty and helplessness) reflect a more comprehensive understanding of the problem of poverty within the Venda language and therefore perhaps amongst Vendas themselves. It also confirms our notion of a theological and ethno-cultural corruptio totalis (cf paragraphs 1.2.2.2, 1.2.2.4 and 2.2.3). But after our psycho-cultural discussion of the problem of poverty within the context of the traditional Venda concept of man it is clear that poverty is not merely a corruptio totalis, but simultaneously a corruptio interna.

We are now at the point where the whole anthropological problem of poverty, be it from a theological, ethno-cultural or psycho-cultural perspective, should be viewed within the context of the theological anthropology.

Notes

1. Purpose relations and purpose relationships

"A structure may be defined as a relation or set of relations between entities or other phenomena. Thus a pair of dividers is not a structure, nor is a house; but each has a structure, meaning, in the case of the dividers, the relation between its legs, and in the case of the house, the relations between the bricks, the walls, the roof, and the other parts, all of which means the connection between the components; in other words, the way in which the components hold together. Relations between persons and between persons and non-persons mean what these have to do with one another (Fowler & Fowler 1976 s.v. 'relation'). We need hardly point out that a structure is not an entity but a concept; in other words, that it is not real but imaginary.

In what follows we shall distinguish direct and indirect connection between phenomena, whether these be material or

taken to be directly connected if there is a relation between them. Indirect connection will be understood to mean connection by a pair of relations involving an intermediary; two phenomena will therefore be taken to be indirectly connected if there is a relation between each of them and a third phenomenon through. The pair of relations connecting the two phenomena the third phenomenon will be referred to as the relationship between the two phenomena. In defining relationship as connection by a pair (or set of two) relations we have restricted the word to but one of the instances covered by its ordinary meaning. We would request the reader to bear this in mind throughout.

Two components of a culture may be connected directly by commonness of universal purpose or indirectly through a cultural component serving different universal purposes. It follows that the connection between cultural aspects is always indirect. When referring to the cohesion between the components of a culture we shall use the term cultural structure. Where connections are direct, we shall speak of purpose-relations; where indirect, of purpose-relationships.

By what we shall term ethnic structure we mean the culturally produced relationships between the individuals of whom a people is composed. Just as the connection between aspects in a cultural structure is effected indirectly through cultural components, so is the connection between members of a people in an ethnic structure. We shall call the concern of these persons with components of their culture cultural relations and their association through such components cultural relationships, distinguishing between the different types in accordance with the various aspects of culture by referring to relations or relationships of kinship or play or to political, jural, economic, religious, educational, lingual, or artistic relations or relationships.

The words friendship, camaraderie, and the like refer to relationships that may be cultural and, as such, represent but a single type identifiable, for example, as economic relationships, or comprise various types identifiable, for example (Mönnig 1967 122, 194), as political and jural relationships and relationships of kinship.

Where there is protected control over components, the concern of the dominant with these objects of their dominance will be designated relations of dominance; the concern of others with such objects, namely the duty to respect these, will be designated relations of duty; and the resulting sets of relations between the dominant and those under duty will be designated deferential relationships.

As a manifestation of deferential relationships seniority in the form of stratification or rank is worthy of mention. This may be attributable to a qualitative factor or to a quantitative factor or to both.

The qualitative factor comprises the people's value-system, a cultural complex consisting of graded cultural elements in the form of values (that is, of valuations) depending on culturally influenced judgment in accordance with the people's notions concerning attributes such as size, might, convenience, beauty, and propriety, and therefore varying in

number from people to people. This complex serves all the universal cultural purposes, as do the component elements, since they designate grades of importance and identify the relative importance attaching to every component of the culture concerned. It therefore also grades the objects of dominance, highly valued among which may, for example, be public office or agnatic position (such as that of family head or great wife) or charms or particular consumers' goods (such as industrial minerals) or personal attributes (such as titles, skill, descent, order of birth, experience, bravery, charity, and piety) or even the favour of the ruler (such as fell to the Zulu king's special friends: Bryant 1949 463-464).

The quantitative factor is the comparative abundance or paucity of relations of dominance and of duty between persons and objects, so that seniority could be due to dominance over a comparative multiplicity of objects besides restriction of the duty of respect to comparatively few objects under the dominance of others. The comparative numerousness or otherwise of objects in question is purely a matter of observation unconnected with judgment and is therefore not influenced by culture (Myburgh 1960 11). Here seniority is the result of multiple dominance requiring multiple respect rather than dominance over objects to which high valuations are attached. A person's or group's ownership may, for example, extend to so many objects in comparison with those owned by the majority, even though the first-named objects are not highly valued, that the very number of relations of duty by which others are bound to these objects may place the vestee or vestees in a position of power culminating in seniority notwithstanding the resistance to economic power in all but the recognized dynasty often met with among peoples with non-specialized cultures.

Stratification and rank may be specified as political, economic, religious, and so on according to the universal cultural purposes served by the objects of dominance, and the associated deferential relationships may be designated stratal relationships or relationships of rank and similarly specified. The hierarchy of strata or ranks may be elaborate (for example, in descending order: political, educational, religious, economic, artistic, etc). A person may, of course, qualify for more than one stratum or rank, and a stratum or rank may have reference to objects of dominance serving the purposes of more than one cultural aspect.

The structures outlined above should not be confused with those falling beyond the scope of anthropology, which include, on the one hand, non-cultural structures constituting the epistemic relatedness between components of knowledge and, on the other hand, non-ethnic structures comprising cognitive relationships between scholars through these components. Structures foreign to our discipline also include those comprising purely natural relations such as those of genetic connection between members of a breed or of physical attraction between the sexes or of fortuitous physical contact between individuals (Myburgh 1981:4-8).

2. Magwabeni B: A Venda person who often uses the term "somebody" to refer to a person who enjoys a considerable amount of human dignity and status.

3. Cultural and transcultural psychology

"The area of psychology which occupies itself with the role of culture in psychological functioning, has diversified into a number of sub-disciplines. These include cultural and transcultural psychology. These two approaches represent different ways of understanding mental processes in their cultural matrix. They are not competitive. One is not better than the other. Both are legitimate. They complement one another. Each emphasizes specific objectives, methods, and theoretical principles. Accordingly, both are excellently suited to inquire into specific areas of mind and behaviour. In practice, they cannot be sharply differentiated. They are closely related, mutually influence one another and in certain respects they overlap. The distinction is thus not very pure and is drawn more for heuristic than empirical reasons" (Schoeman 1987:3).

4. Acculturation

"Acculturation cannot be discussed at length here, but some of its implications should be mentioned by way of introduction since these are bound up with the approach outlined above.

The results of contact between members of peoples having different cultures are, in the main, adoption of cultural components, or reinterpretation, or abandonment of cultural components, or reinterpretative adoption of others, provided that abandonments be not understood to refer to any of the cultural aspects, for this would equate acculturation with deculturation, although, as we have said, the anthropologist could validly study such a process to ascertain the outcome, whether this be disintegration, absorption, or rehabilitation by creation or adoption. The adoption and abandonment referred to involve the number and arrangement of relations and relationships.

In regard to the cultural structure one often hears that change in one aspect of a culture usually brings about change in other aspects. This cannot mean that the purpose of any aspect is altered. It can only mean that a component or components serving the purposes of more than one aspect has or have ceased so to serve by being changed or by abolition with or without replacement. Most aspects would, for example, be affected if lobola were to disappear as an institution. The economic system would be deprived of the principal means of distributing cattle. The jural system would in the main have to do without recognition of the ancestors in the matter of parting with or acquiring cattle. Political organization would have to dispense with the people's part in providing the means of acquiring the mother of the ruler's successor. The system of kinship would lose most of its features associated with agnatic solidarity. The educational system would be relieved of teachings relating to transfer of marriage goods and of marital guardianship as a group-right. Of course, adaptations would normally be made to coincide with the recession of the disappearing component. In our hypothetical case this could take the form of more specialized pastoral and agricultural methods coupled with marketing and the introduction of a money economy; the addition of an acceptable type of purchase and sale to the

law of contract of recognition of guardianship as an institution rather than a right in family law; greater emphasis, in the religious system, on the bride as a worshipper; the adoption of a procedure in the political system for nomination, by the people, of the mother of the successor to the ruler; replacement, in the kinship system, of control with loyalty as the basis of agnatic solidarity by means of new terms and norms of conduct; and the construction of elements and complexes within educational institutions (such as home and formal training) in accordance with the changed system.

Coming now to the ethnic structure, we observe the following. The number of cultural relationships would be reduced unless the cultural components constituting lobola were adequately replaced. Economic relationships would probably shift from selected groups amongst themselves to the people as a whole in more even distribution, especially where preferential marriage was prominent. Jural relationships would, in contract, tend to come about between individuals rather than agnatic groups, and, in the family, to cease being due to dominance derived from guardianship and to become due to the members' common concern with family organization as a jural institution. Religious relationships would be reduced in number by the diminished religious significance of cattle unless a new system of worship were adopted that included unrelated persons in the worship previously confined to the agnatic group. The number of political relationships would also decrease unless an adequate substitute were found for contributory participation of the people in the matter of the ruler's successor's mother. Relationships of kinship would be affected in that with the disappearance of guardianships as a group-right the shared control of the agnatic group over one another would lapse, as well as much of the authority for the linking and grading of a polygamist's nuclear families, the nature of the relationships between kin being changed and their number reduced. The number of educational relationships would be reduced if, as is probable, the nuclear families became spatially separate and home education ceased to be that of a whole village.

In acculturative or deculturated situations the interpersonal relationships capable of anthropological investigation are of different types. Some may be termed part-cultural relationships, and occur where members of a people are involved with non-members through cultural components of common concern. Others, which we may call residual cultural relationships, are met with in communities that have lost some of their culture, such as the part comprising political organization and language, while the members remain concerned with one another through components of what is left, the Hebrews in the Dispersion being illustrative. Yet others may be designated inchoate or incipient cultural relationships and may be exemplified by referring to conditions in the United States of America in the nineteen-thirties when the heterogeneous younger generation, confronted with an ever-increasing stream of invention, found themselves without a common culture and began to seek those among their number that could share their concern with the products of as yet incomplete environmental adaptation (Linton 1936 284, 285)" (Myburgh 1981:8-11).

5. An article which I recently wrote will explain my own experience in this regard more sufficiently.

"A little more than six years ago my family and I left East London to travel to Venda where I would become the minister of religion in the DRCA congregation of Tshilidzini. In more than one respect it was a journey into the unknown.

Everything north of Pretoria lay beyond the context of our experience - no wonder we lost our way in Warmbaths, were approached by an old lady casually driving towards us on the wrong side of the road in Naboomspruit; could not find a café to buy cooldrinks on the hottest of hot days in Louis Trichardt and eventually missed the gate to the church premises at Tshilidzini. With great relief we eventually found the entrance to what would become our new home in a new life and world where hearts and minds and lives would merge in the process of living together, working and sharing all dimensions of existing in a black orientated context.

Amongst others this experience implied living next to black neighbours; working in the service and under the control of a black church and government; worshipping in a black congregation; spending the largest part of our social life with black friends; doing business at black shops; our children being baptized in the local congregation and by my black colleague and also attending a local Venda pre-primary school; etc. But these are the superficial facts and it is in fact the deeper dimensions of these facts which have enriched and still enrich our lives as a family so immensely.

It is not merely a case of people getting together sporadically for the sake of contact. It is a situation in which people are together as people, sharing all possible similarities and differences in a process of creative interaction and with the functional purpose of building a new and better society. This process obviously demands the practical implementation of an attitude of reconciliation, love, acceptance and patience from everybody concerned. In most cases the process involves positive cooperation, in some cases there is conflict, but within the context of open and honest relationships there is always an atmosphere of better understanding and a greater coalescence of views, values, visions and interests. And this all brings about happiness for the present and hope for the future.

However, hope implies hard work. To have hope is one thing and although commendable, to put it into practice is another. Hope does not go unchallenged. Perhaps it is in itself challenging the hopelessness which is brought forth by our evil hearts and minds and which constitutes fear, embitterment and despair amongst people. When the lives and worlds of people who are normally separated by means of abnormal systems, structures, laws, etc merge within the natural situation of simply being together day by day, it is obvious that the new hope which they discover collectively will be born by great effort. But fortunately it is a mutual effort.

During this last year or two my family and I have experienced a considerable amount of this process of hopeful effort. Not ignoring the wonderful grace of God and the help from the

many white family members and friends, I can say with great certainty that if it was not for the prayers, patience, advice, criticism, care and sharing support which we have received from our black christian brothers and sisters we would definitely have succumbed and would probably have left Tshilidzini by now. Instead we are still here and will hopefully be here for many more years, because the hope which was and still is brought about by being together lives on.

And this is precisely what Paul speaks about in Ephesians 2. The Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus were without hope. This hopeless state of affairs was the result of being without God, but also because they were without each other. They lived in separation and enmity because of a variety of prejudices existing between them. But when God changed their lives, they discovered new hope in life. They also discovered each other as people belonging to a new mankind, new family, etc because Christ had already broken down the walls of separation and enmity between them and had therefore brought about an attitude of peace and hope amongst them as the body of Christ.

God is indeed our hope, but as we are His people we are meant to be a source of hope for each other. In separation and enmity this rich and enriching source will remain undiscovered and the hope will elude us. But in union with Christ and His body here on earth there is hope.

My family and I consider ourselves very fortunate to be a part of a christian community of hope - a christian community which is by no means perfect or void of problems, but a christian community in which black and white christians are continuously merging their lives and worlds in the christian hope of creating a new life and new world" (CHRISTIAN FORUM, Christman 1988).

6. Ralushai, E. A Venda persons and renowned anthropologist, currently professor in anthropology at the University of Venda and also vice-rector of the same institution.

The quotation consists of remarks made by Prof Ralushai during a personal conversation in 1988.

7. Note the continuity between the singular Mudzimu and the plural midzimu.
8. Neluheni M: Evangelist of the DRCA Congregation of Tshilidzini.
9. I once complained towards evangelist Neluheni that I find it very difficult to wear a black suit with a white shirt and tie as the official church clothes, because it is not suitable for the climate in Venda and it also reflects a solemn image of the church. Evangelist Neluheni's reply was that it is good to wear such clothes as well as for the women of the church to wear black dresses with only a white collar, because white is the colour of life and black the colour of death and because of death being the core of life it is therefore good that the church official clothes are dominated by black.

10. Maaidi M: Spiritual worker at the DRCA

Tshilidzini. After attending a certain funeral I had to leave immediately to be in time for another appointment. Mrs Magidi then reprimanded me and explained the importance that I should first return to the home of the deceased to wash my hands in order to be cleansed from the death in which we had participated.

11. At every funeral a representative of a burial society would use more or less these words to motivate the people present to join the society.
12. Matshaya T: A Venda friend. At one of the many funerals where the coffin was wrapped in a cattle skin Mr Matshaya explained to me the symbolic meaning and hidden belief thereof.
13. Mr Ramtikiti is an elderly Venda person. While standing at the side of a grave where nearly all the people present partook in filling up the grave with more or less every grain of sand and every stone which was dug from the grave, he asked me whether we as Westerners do the same and whether I understood the reason behind the complete filling of the grave. I have obviously observed this ceremony a great number of times because it occurs at every Venda funeral, but the motivation behind the ritual was unknown to me, until Mr Ramtikiti explained that the relation to and relationship with nature should be continued as the deceased journeys forth from this life into life after death.
14. Netshilindi P: A Venda person who arranges many funerals and always makes provision on the programme for this specific ritual to be performed.
15. These accepted traditional destructive and violent rituals, if understood in conjunction with the traditional Venda concepts of time and death as well as the nihilistic life and world view that is prevalent (cf paragraphs 2.3.1.2, 2.3.1.3 and 2.3.3) have important implications, not only in terms of the problem of poverty, but also with regard to political and economic issues facing Africa and more specifically Southern Africa.
16. "Teachers are not educating our pupils because they are not producing thinkers, problem solvers and leaders who will take us with confidence into the next century with solutions which are human and practical" (THOHOYANDOU NEWS, 28 October 1988, quoting prof Levin of the faculty of Education of the University of Venda).
17. Boo M: An elderly Venda person who enjoys a high standing in the DRCA Congregation of Tshilidzini as well as in the Venda society as a whole (eg as member of parliament) and a person who is thoroughly acquainted with the traditional Venda culture.
18. Ntoyanto M: A church elder quoting a Xhosa idiomatic expression.
19. Setiloane continues in the same article to point out that this communal sense of belonging actually relativates individuality and individualism entirely. Considering Dederen's and Sundermeier's viewpoints, one should...

leave room for some kind of African individuality and individualism. Further study is however necessary in this regard.

20. While doing house visiting in a rural area, Rev Herselman from the DRCA Congregation of Nthume came across a number of women lying on the floor of a courtyard. At his arrival they remained lying down.

Out of concern for the ladies he asked whether they were ill or had encountered any problems leading to this lying down on the ground. Their reply was that they were waiting for him to come and help them. Rev Herselman found this strange because he had no specific appointment with them. He therefore asked what they would have done had he not turned up. To this the ladies replied that they would then have waited for some other assistance to arrive. If no help would have come they said that they would then simply have waited until death.

21. Tshikovhi AN: A Venda person and church councillor of the DRCA Congregation of Tshilidzini.

After the DRCA Tshilidzini church council had spent endless time, energy and money in trying to solve a severe congregational problem, I remarked that we should transcend the problem in order to pay our full attention to the essential work of the congregation. To this Mr Tshikovhi replied that my suggestion was not a viable option because "problems constitute the dynamics of life".

22. Davhana DMK: an elderly Venda person, church council member of the DRCA Congregation of Tshilidzini, headman and chairman of all the headmen in Venda. Mr Davhana has a particularly good knowledge of the Venda history and Venda traditions.

23. Told to me by many Venda people, especially those of the older generation.

24. Magatshavha T: A member of our congregation and health inspector. While driving through the Tshimbupfe area and expressing my concern about the degeneration of nature, Mr Magatshavha said that I need not worry because where nature seems to disappear it will one day revive itself.

25. cf paragraph 2.3.1.2 in connection with the emphasis on the past. In fact, Ratshitanga wrote another poem in which he pays tribute to the wonderful years gone by. The poem therefore has the appropriate title of "Give me back yesterday".

26. Maphoto M: Minister of religion of the DRCA and currently moderator of the DRCA District Synod of Northern Transvaal.

At a meeting of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod at Harari in 1988 Rev Maphoto made the statement that synod decisions have no meaning because they can always be changed.

27. Nyathela EM: Minister of religion of the DRCA.

28. Sundermeier T: Internationally renowned theologian, especially in the field of missiology.

He made these remarks towards me during a Dogmatological conference at Unisa in 1988.

29. A Venda idiomatic expression.
30. Matshaya T: A Venda friend who explains poverty as quoted.

3. ANTHROPOLOGY IN A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the traditional Venda concept of man and its relation to the problem of poverty has been dealt with. For the sake of comparison, some brief remarks about ancient Greek and modern Western concepts of man shall now be made, after which we shall proceed to discuss a theological anthropology which will in turn form the framework from which perspective the traditional Venda concept of man will be viewed.

3.2 Comparative views on the concept of man

3.2.1 Ancient Greek dualism

The ancient Greek dualistic view of man found its roots in the Orphean life and world view in which a sharp distinction is made between substance and spirit and between body and soul. This concept was furthered by Homer and Pythagorus and was eventually adopted in the formulated philosophical thought patterns of Plato (Durand 1982:29-30).

According to Plato the soul stems from the spiritual world as a direct creation of God. The body is therefore merely a weaker reflection of the spiritual world and the unification of the body and the soul is seen as a punishment of the soul. The latter is therefore constantly striving towards true spirituality by means of its separation from the body. This separation is possible because for Plato the soul is immortal in contrast to the mortal body (Durand 1982:30).

Aristotle viewed both body and soul as principles which complement each other and can therefore only exist in unity. He does however distinguish between soul and nous and while the soul would die in unity with the body the nous is immortal. Aristotle could therefore not overcome the dualistic concept of man - a dualism which persisted amongst the Stoics, the Roman philosophy, Gnosticism and also in the christian anthropology, even until the time of the Reformation (Durand 1982:30).

This dualistic view of man is in sharp contrast to the holistic anthropology which prevails in traditional Africa (cf chapter 2). According to this latter anthropological approach man's body and soul unites to such an extent that man himself becomes numinous. And not only is man united within himself, but as numinous unity he is also united with everybody and everything which forms part of the whole creation. In traditional Africa (also in Venda) there is thus no room for a dualistic view of and approach to man.

3.2.2 Modern Western functionalistic-futurism

The current cultural situation within which modern Western man finds himself is the result of a long history of cultural phases which developed over the ages (Louw 1980:9-18). These phases did not necessarily develop chronologically and consecutively and it must be borne in mind that a great amount of overlap and interaction took, and is still taking place amongst the separate phases.

In the mythical period the emphasis fell on participation (cf traditional African holism), while the ontological (metaphysical) period was marked by distantiation (cf ancient Greek dualism). The current focus of the modern Western world is on utility - the

functional value of things, of which man is but one.

It is within this context that Moltmann states that there is a need for a new humanity which should find its place somewhere in the technological ambivalence between a sigh for technological self-realization and the fear for technological self-destruction. Taking a variety of options into account Moltmann concludes that modern man chooses for a futuristic approach in search of a better tomorrow by means of all the intellectual, technological, scientific, organizational and economical powers and resources at his disposal. This utopian optimism is to be distinguished from the future of faith (Moltmann 1974:22-45).

This futuristic approach to life and towards the world is further stimulated by a positivistic humanism which is characterized by faith in the ideas, progress, science and the ability of man (Louw 1980:18-21). There is however also a pessimistic side to this positivistic humanism, mainly because of the current cultural crisis with which modern Western man is confronted and which entails amongst others the following:

- "1. The fear of a nuclear war and epidemics which could largely eradicate the human race.
2. The fear of a population explosion towards the end of the century, and a food shortage.
3. The ecological crisis and the fear of environmental pollution.
4. The fear of a biological approach to man and the breeding of a genetic super race in test tubes.
5. The anti-scientific feeling and fear of the power of science.

"We are aboard a train which is gathering speed, racing down a track on which there are an unknown number of switches leading to unknown destinations. No single scientist is in the engine cab and there may be demons at the switches. Most of society's..."

looking backward." (Os Guinness, p67).

6. The tyranny of technology.
7. The shortage of time. The lack of enough time is a nail in the coffin of humanism. Twenty years ago man was in control of a gradual evolutionary process with hundreds of years at his disposal. Presently we are clinched in a struggle for survival in the 25th hour of the day.
8. The moral vacuum and loss of sufficient values for a meaningful orientation towards life.
9. The problem of established interests and international, economic greed. In this way established and personal interests could be the cause of increased pollution problems.
10. An increasing feeling of boredom and aimlessness, especially amongst the youth. Young people are beginning to doubt a future of hope" (Louw 1980:21-22).

The result of all this is that modern Western man has fallen prey to secularism, business, industry, technology, organization, money, dependency, the present, functionalism, problematicism, fear, conflict, frustration, failure, despair, suppression, aggression, apathy, competition, rationalization, external identification, escapism and estrangement (Louw 1980:53-74).

It is understandable that also traditional African man will suffer under this functionalistic-futurism of the modern Western world. A great amount of tension is created by the huge gap between traditional African (mythical) and modern Western (functionalistic-futuristical) thought patterns and the life and world views which it entails. This tension is further accentuated by means of the inevitable process of acculturation which leads to a merger of the traditional African mythical life and world view with the ontological and functionalistic-futuristic life and world views. The above mentioned cultural gap as well as the acculturation causes immense internal and external human conflict to man in Africa and is for instance reflected in the rapidly increasing number of psychosomatic patients seen by hospitals in Venda.

3.3 Towards a theological anthropology

In view of the comparative anthropological remarks made in the preceding paragraphs it is apparent that an investigation into the theological anthropology is of vital importance in order to discover the Biblical view of man and to relate this to the different anthropologies we have dealt with thus far, especially the traditional Venda concept of man.

3.3.1 Historical trends in theological anthropology (Durand 1981:31-51)

3.3.1.1 The anthropological views of the early church were mainly determined by two factors: a reaction against Gnosticism and an effort to make the christian message understandable for the Hellenistic world. Both these factors resulted in the fact that ancient Greek dualism (cf paragraph 3.2.1) continued to have a great influence on the theological thinking concerning man during the Patristic age and even for many centuries thereafter.

In the gnostic anthropology the emphasis fell on the spirit and the soul which emanates from the lightworld. Both spirit and soul must therefore be freed from their bodily and earthly existence by means of the true knowledge (gnosis) which can be obtained through the mediation of Christ who is the pure Spirit. The ultimate redemption was then also seen as the ascension of the soul contrary to the resurrection of the body. Against this gnostic background the fathers of the early church developed their theological anthropology on Biblical grounds but also took into account and used Hellenistic philosophical ideas and arguments.

Ignatius accentuated the unity of body and soul while Justin Martyr

stated that the body is created by God; that the soul is resurrected together with the body and that the soul is not immortal in itself but that immortality is a gift from God. It is however with Irenaeus and Tertullian that the anti-gnostic standpoint of the fathers reached its climax.

Irenaeus played a prominent role in emphasizing that man was created in the image of God. To Irenaeus, Christ is the original image according to which man was made and as such man possessed the image (eikoon) of God. Irenaeus did however distinguish between image (eikoon) and likeness (homoioosis). While man was given eikoon with his creation, homoioosis is the fulfilment of man through Christ and his Spirit and it seems as if Irenaeus understood the soul to be the mediatory between the body and the spirit in this process of becoming homoioosis.

Tertullian also stressed the unity of body and soul in man, who to him was created in the image of God. He further strongly defended the unity of the soul and thus criticized the gnostic philosopher Valentine for his division of the soul into intellectual and material sub-units. Although Tertullian denied the pre-existence of the soul he nevertheless gave the soul prominence over the body because of the soul's godly qualities of immortality, rationality and freedom. In this latter viewpoint of Tertullian it is clear how ancient Greek dualism still influenced the theological thinking concerning man.

This dualistic view of man was also reflected in the Alexandrian school in the east (eg Clement and Origen) and Augustine in the west. While Clement was fairly refined in his dualistic approach to man Origen was blatant in his return to ancient Greek dualism as was described in paragraph 3.2.1. On his part Augustine formulated his anthropology under great influence of the neo-platonic thought patterns.

For Augustine the soul holds the highest position in God's creation and should even be seen as part of the godly life itself, created by God and therefore the essence of man's being. It therefore follows naturally that Augustine would view the soul as the seat of the image of God in man which further implies that the soul rules over the body and that the unity of body and soul is merely accidental and functional. Augustine did however not see the body as the creation of the devil, but to understand that the body was the result of God's creative act was nothing more than theory to him, with the result that Augustine viewed the body as of lesser value. In spite of this, Augustine however still taught the resurrection.

3.3.1.2 Augustine's anthropology had a great influence on and therefore showed some similarities with the scholastic view of man. Hugo, for instance, held a very strong spiritualistic view concerning man and concluded that the soul determined a person's being and that the relationship between body and soul was merely accidental. This spiritualistic approach to man prevailed for a very long time amongst scholastic exponents and in spite of efforts by people like Gilbert the Platonic and neo-platonic philosophy continued to dominate anthropological thinking during the age of Scholasticism. Much of this was due to the tremendous and long standing influence of Augustine's teaching concerning man.

It was only with the advent of Thomas Aquinas that Scholasticism took another direction. Thomas Aquinas parted with the Platonic philosophy as a framework of reference and imported the views of Aristotle as the new context within which anthropological thinking and formulation could take place. In this way Thomas Aquinas tried to restore the idea of the unity and totality of man and yet he also fell prey to the ancient Greek dualism by emphasizing the immortality of the intellectual soul,

which to him is also the highest human category and therefore houses the image of God. It thus follows that for Thomas Aquinas the remaining dimensions of the soul as well as the body are nothing more than footprints of God's image.

In general Aristotlean terms the scholastic anthropology was based on the idea of the soul as the form within which the material body could actualize its full potential. These scholastic anthropological concepts also found their way into the church, but the Platonic, neo-platonic and Augustinian influences in turn found their way into Scholasticism as well as into the church, mainly via Mysticism. In this latter regard Gerson played a major role and did in fact form the bridge between Scholasticism and Luther.

3.3.1.3 In contrast to the philosophical anthropological approach of the middle ages the Reformation emphasized the religious and theological nature of man's being. This resulted in the fact that man was viewed as a being of God whereby the reformation confession of the sola fide is clearly visible and consequently man was regarded in terms of his relationship to God.

Apart from this discontinuity with Scholasticism one also notes a remarkable continuity with the dualistic anthropology which prevailed up to the time of the Reformation. This discontinuity and continuity is very evident when reading Luther's anthropology.

Luther distinguished three dimensions in man - spirit, soul and body. He considered the spirit as the highest human value and Luther therefore regarded the spirit as the area where faith and the word of God is accommodated (cf Gerson's accentuation of the intellectual soul which is the centre where God can be met through knowledge of the

eternal truth). For Luther the soul was the sensual dimension of man (cf Gerson's reference to the sensual soul as the lowest aspect of man's existence and therefore the only part of the soul which relates to the body). Luther also considered body and soul in conjunction with each other but as such distinguished from the spirit, which does not stand separated from the body and the soul but which does however determine man's whole being because of the spirit's interaction with God. As such the spirit directs all processes of the body and the soul.

The above-mentioned trichotomic approach to man (spirit, soul and body) was less clear in Luther's later views concerning man, particularly in terms of the subject on the image of God in man. Luther stated that the image of God is not confined to one dimension of man's being only but that the image of God in man implies a unique relationship between man and God by means of which man in his totality is directed upon an unbreakable life with God. The Fall ruined this destiny of man but he is again restored in Christ through the justification by faith. As such Luther's anthropology and his soteriology became very closely related and further implied that he viewed man from the perspective of the coram Dei (God-orientated) instead of the coram mundo (world-orientated) angle.

The accentuation of the coram Dei was of vital importance for the theological anthropology. Calvin extended this concept and even to this day it bears weight in an effort to maintain a position over and against an anthropocentric anthropology.

Although Calvin gave prominence to the soul over and above the body he nevertheless maintained that body and soul is one. For Calvin this unity between body and soul was so intimate that he even went as far as

comparing this unity to the unity of Christ's godly and human natures. Also in Calvin's exposition of the image of God in man he emphasized the soul as the reflection of the imago Dei but he still viewed the body as the temple of the Spirit and that it therefore showed some signs of God's image. But Calvin's main focus concerning the image of God in man fell on the imago recreationis in Christ through whom God's image is reflected in man in terms of true knowledge, justice, holiness and purity.

3.3.1.4 Orthodox theologians maintained a large degree of continuity with the Reformation in so far as they accentuated the relationship between man and God and also emphasized the necessity of the restoration of God's image in man through Christ in reaction to the disruptive work of sin in man. But some discontinuities also existed between Orthodoxy and the Reformation.

Traces of Scholasticism can for instance be found in the orthodox view of the soul as the form of the material body. The body was seen to be created from the earth while the soul came forth from nothing to constitute the real being of a person (Bucanus). For this reason Ursinus maintained that the soul could not be part of the physical body, although together they formed one person. This one person came into being because at its birth God created an own soul for it and then linked soul and body together. However, because of the inherent immortality of the soul it would never die with the body. This latter viewpoint was in sharp contrast to Calvin's belief that immortality depended on the grace of God and not on the inherent qualities of the soul itself.

As far as the image of God in man is concerned Orthodoxy distinguished between the substance and the attributes of the imago Dei. Ursinus,

Polanus, Quenstedt and others spoke of the image of God in a wider sense and maintained that this referred to the substance of the imago Dei which is seated in the intellectual soul (cf Thomas Aquinas and Gerson). This part of the image of God in man was not distorted by the Fall, but the attributes of justice and holiness were. This orthodox approach to the concept of the imago Dei would continue to have a great influence on both Lutheran and Reformed theological anthropology and brought the reformatorian views concerning man very close to Roman Catholic anthropology, even till the early part of this century.

3.3.1.5 This brings us to the point of making some remarks about the anthropological controversy between Rome and the Reformation.

Both Rome and the Reformation maintained a distinction between the status integritatis (the state of created man before the Fall) and the status corruptionis (the state of man after the Fall). It was however in the interpretation of the content of these concepts where the controversy existed.

Rome saw the status integritatis in a twofold way. Firstly a natural image (Hebrew : tselem) which could only be disturbed slightly by the Fall but never be ruined or lost. It was stressed that this natural image existed in the form of the personal being of man, his rational nature, a free will, moral responsibility and the immortality of his soul.

Secondly: a meta-natural likeness (Hebrew : demut) which could be lost and which man did in fact lose at the Fall. The demut involved amongst others characteristics such as the ability to fulfil the will of God, the immortality of the body and the power to sustain suffering.

According to Rome the fall did have an effect on man but he continued to be man because of the maintainance of his natural image. The loss of the meta-natural likeness at the Fall implied a loss of grace, but the fact that the tselem remained largely intact after the Fall led to the belief that man could achieve his own salvation and restoration by means of his inherent ability to do good works.

It is exactly at this point where the Reformation parted with Rome - the point concerning the doctrine of grace. The Reformation accentuated man's justification through the grace of God in Christ (sola gratia). The Reformation therefore made no theological distinction between tselem and demut with the further implication that the twofold view of man as natural image and meta-natural likeness was rejected. The image of God in man was destroyed in its totality by the Fall with the result that man remains entirely dependent on the grace of God for the restoration of His image in man through Christ.

This important theoretical stance of the Reformation was unfortunately watered down by their own practical position by means of which they made allowance for the continued existence of "remnants" of God's image in man after the Fall. Hereby the Reformation moved very close to Rome concerning the teaching of the imago Dei. Consequently the twofold approach found its way into Roman Catholic as well as reformation anthropology and continues to exist in some or other form until today.

3.3.1.6 An analysis of these historical trends in the theological anthropological anthropology brings two major conclusions to the fore which are relevant in an attempt to relate the theological view of man to the traditional Venda anthropology.

3.3.1.6.1 It is clear that the ancient Greek dualistic view of man dominated the

theological anthropology throughout all the ages and even until the time of the Reformation, including Luther and Calvin. Such an anthropological approach has very little or no relevance in terms of the traditional holistic view of man in Africa and more specifically in Venda, other than to disrupt the latter negatively (Liphauphau)¹⁾.

3.3.1.6.2 The emphasis which Luther and especially Calvin places on the coram Dei (cf paragraph 3.3.1.3) is of great significance. Firstly it views man from the perspective of God and as such challenges the anthropocentrism which is prevalent even in traditional African and Venda anthropology (cf paragraph 2.3.4). Secondly the concept of coram Dei relates very strongly to another aspect of the traditional African and Venda view of man, namely that there is such an intimate continuity between God and man that man himself is numinous (cf paragraphs 2.2.1 and 2.3.1). This religious interface could be positively explored by a congregation which is in search of a relevant anthropological ministry towards the poor who exist within a traditional African context. The essential and radical discontinuity between the biblical concepts of God and man and the traditional African concepts of God and man should always be maintained at all costs.

3.3.2 Recent trends in theological anthropology

After the preceding historical overview of theological anthropology it is now necessary to pay attention to certain recent trends in theological anthropology, especially to those aspects which are of specific relevance to our discussion concerning the problem of poverty within the context of the traditional Venda view of man (cf chapter 2).

3.3.2.1 Man and God

"Without any fear of objections it can be stated that the twentieth century is par excellence the century in which man and the question who he is has again become the centre of interest. Not only in the characteristic fluctuations in the spirit of our time does a specific image of man form the crux to which is returned repeatedly, but also on a scientific plane, man is becoming more and more an object of theoretical analysis and even of practical experiments. This naturally does not mean that the anthropocentric direction is exclusively an apparition of the twentieth century. It will be closer to the truth to say that the twentieth century lies in the extension of a process which started announcing itself with the enlightenment of the 17 th and 18 th centuries. We in fact could date the anthropocentric tendency even earlier namely in the Renaissance if it hadn't been that the Reformation came between and restrained the flood. However with the enlightenment the check-action fell away and men became in the fullest meaning of the word, the criteria of everything. In this connection two things go hand in hand: the autonomy of the mind and the coming-of-age of man are proclaimed. With this there is distantiation for the recognition of that authority which does not proceed from man himself. Immanuel Kant typifies all this, the enlightenment and its associated things, with the typical establishment of an enlightenment person as the exodus of man from his self-imposed immaturity" (Durand 1982:128).

The developments described in the above quotation obviously influenced the theological discussion concerning the concept of man. The main thrust of this discussion centred and continues to centre upon the relation between theology and anthropology (Durand 1982:128-141).

Calvin explained this relation in terms of a relationship:

"Nearly most of the central content of our wisdom which deserves to be seen as the true, genuine wisdom, comprises two parts, the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. But although these two are bound by many mutual bonds it is not easy to distinguish which of the two precedes and brings forth the other one. Because in the first place no-one can take account of himself without immediately directing himself to the contemplation of God in whom he lives and moves (Acts 17:28). In contrast, it is certain that man cannot ever arrive at pure knowledge of himself unless he had first contemplated the countenance of God, and from that had descended to a contemplation of himself" (Calvin : Instit 1:15.1).

And yet "we cannot know God without knowing ourselves. These two

This last remark which Torrance quotes from Calvin could easily lead to an anthropocentric view concerning the knowledge of God and of man, namely that self-knowledge and self-understanding is the point of departure when dealing with the relation between theology and anthropology, eg Rahner, who maintains that knowledge of God and of man is constituted by means of man's transcendental experience of himself and of the worldly reality within which he exists (Rahner 1978:51-65). Such an anthropocentric approach should be viewed against the background of the philosophical patterns of thought as they developed from rationalism to personalism, eg the Renaissance (with its emphasis on man's creative ability), the Enlightenment (accentuating man's rational powers), Descartes ("I think, therefore I am"), idealism (Kant), the thinking self-consciousness with the focus on the "transcendental I" (Fichte) and the "subjective spirit" (Hegel), the "pietistic self-consciousness" (Schleiermacher), the "eternity of man's value" (Von Harnack and Troeltsch), irrationalism (Kierkegaard and Nietzsche), existentialism (Sartre, Heidegger and Jaspers), personalism (Buber), etc.

"The above-mentioned philosophical shifts did not remain unreported on a theological terrain. It was especially personalism which achieved stature theologically in the first few decades of this century, especially in the thoughts of people like Emil Brunner and Friedrich Gogarten.

The essence of man, the peculiar nature of his humanity is for Brunner not concentrated on the things usually used to give a formal circumscription of man. Man is more than a reasonable or intellectual being. Most profoundly he is a responsible being. The meaning of responsibility is again expressed in love. Love, says Brunner in his well-known book about man as God's rebel, is not just an attribute beside other attributes of man. It is humanity itself. Man is the measure of man to the measure with which he is within love (loves). To the degree to which he alienates himself from love, he expresses his inhumanity - man's freedom, his spiritual creativity, his intellect, all these things do not constitute actual humanity, but are directed upon the realization of his actual essence, love. Man expresses his accountability towards his fellow men through love, but that is not the only thing which constitutes his humanity. Everything in the final instance depends on his accountability before God. Man is not

jackal, says Brunner. We are people when the word which God proclaims, finds an echo in us. To the degree to which it does not occur, are we inhuman. A jackal comes from God's hand complete. Therefore an "unjackal" jackal does not exist. He cannot say yes or no like man to the goal for which God has created him. Man however can. Man is, compared with animals, an answering being.

Just as little as Brunner, can Gogarten circumscribe the peculiarity of men in terms of his intellect. If man is described as an intellectual living being (animal rationale), then man is nothing more than a special sort within the general genus of living things such as plants and animals. The human life is however not life in general, but the once-only and unique life of a particular person. He distinguishes himself in essence from plants and animals in that he questions himself. His isn't "unquestioning" as they are. The personality of man exists in this questioning about himself. In turn, man's personality implies a relationship with God. Because of the fact that he asks about himself, man indicates his need for God. Man needs God in order to truly be man. The proposition that man's personality implies a relationship with God, can therefore also be reversed and one can say that the relationship with God is the basis of man's personality" (Durand 1982:130-131).

We have stated earlier that Calvin's remarks about the relation between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of man could lead to misunderstanding concerning the point of departure when dealing with theological anthropology.

"Knowledge of God and self-knowledge belong together, but then - it is this aspect which was not expressed clearly enough by Calvin, but which was sharply articulated by Karl Barth in his own way - the priority also is on the knowledge of God, namely if what is understood as knowledge of God is what is understood in the Bible of the knowledge of God: the knowledge that God himself in his revelation, in the incarnation, cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit has become a reality for us. The decision falls around the acceptance of this revelation as it is authoritatively witnessed to by the Holy Scripture. Fritz Buri is undoubtedly correct when he maintains that to speak of God and then in conjunction with this to speak of man is only legitimate, if one proceeds from the conviction that God revealed Himself in the history of man in a supernatural way and that he still meets men in his word of revelation" (Durand 1982:145-146).

According to Barth man finds his real humanity in and through Jesus Christ who Himself is man for God and man for other men.

Concerning Jesus as man for God Barth writes:

"The distinctiveness of this creature consists in the fact that it is for God. That it is for God means that it is for the divine deliverance and therefore for God's own glory, for the freedom of God and therefore for the love of God. Man is the being which is for God. It is as such that he surpasses all other creatures. At any rate, we do not know any other creature of which this can be said. This is what makes man, this is man, unique in the whole cosmos. For how does the creature come to be for God? It belongs essentially to its general reality, recognizable in other forms, that God should be for it, that it should owe Him everything. But it is not of the essence of the creature that it should be for God, that it should have significance for Him, that He should expect something from it, that it should have a contribution to make to His being and activity. This reciprocity is the privilege of man, of this man, as we must again add. Nor does it merely belong to the essence, but it is the essence of this man, to be for God. He is not a man for nothing, nor for Himself. He is a man in order that the work of God may take place in Him, the kingdom of God come, and the Word of God be spoken. Thus the purpose of the presence and revelation of God actualized in His life becomes His own purpose. And conversely, the purpose of His own existence is to serve the purpose of the presence and revelation of God actualized in Him. The basis of human life is identical with its telos. Deriving from God, man is in God, and therefore for God. We are not speaking of a predicate which he might have but perhaps might not have. Man is essentially for God because he is essentially from God and in God. When we say this we are speaking of the man Jesus. We cannot say quite the same thing of man generally and as such. But we cannot speak appropriately about man generally and as such until we learn that the essence of man as seen in Jesus, is to be for God" (Barth 1948:81-82).

But Barth also speaks of Jesus as man for other men:

"The inner relationship in this man is a relationship of clear agreement because His humanity, in correspondence and similarity with His determination, for God and therefore with God Himself, as God's image, consists in the fact that, as He is for God, He is also for man, for His fellows. This gives us a valid basis on which to take up our true question - the anthropological question, directed to all men, generally, of this relationship, of the sign given to man in His humanity, of the mystery of faith of the reference to the grace of God in human nature itself" (Barth 1948:264).

Within the context of the covenant partnership in and through Jesus as man for God and man for other men Barth sees man's real and total

humanity, existing himself as man for God and man for other men.

"The Christian doctrine about God and the christic doctrine about man belongs together. Theology after all deals with this God who indicates in his revelation that He wishes to be our God. A theology which keeps this in mind, can allow itself to be apparently "anthropocentric" as Calvin in his catechism of Geneva or as in the Catechism of Heidelberg where it deals with man's distress, salvation and thankfulness. But precisely in the Heidelberger's "anthropocentrism", he is fully theocentric because the questions around man's distress, salvation and thankfulness are the explanation of the first question and answer: the believer's only comfort in life and death is that he belongs to Christ" (Durand 1982:146).

The doctrine concerning God and the doctrine concerning man is thus inextricably connected (eg Jer 9:23-24). The inter-relation is well-known in the traditional African and Venda view of man, whereby man himself is seen to be numinous (cf paragraphs 2.2.1, 2.3.1.1 and 3.3.1.6.2). And yet there is a determining discontinuity at the very root of the relation between man and God, namely in terms of the traditional African and Venda concept of God and the Biblical concept of God - which obviously also constitutes a basic difference in the traditional African and Venda concept of man and the Biblical concept of man.

God is the one and only God (eg Ex 20:1-6, Deut 6:4-7 and the catechism of Heidelberg 94-98) who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ and through His Holy Spirit. Knowledge of this God through grace, faith and scripture alone implies true knowledge of man and therefore also implies a vitally different relation and relationship between man and God as is found in African and Venda tradition (cf paragraph 2.3.1.1).

Who and what man really is, is not determined by traditional Venda communalism (cf chapter 2), ancient Greek dualism (cf paragraph 3.2.1) and modern Western functionalistic-futurism (cf paragraph 3.2.2), but

man's being is constituted by God in Christ and through His Spirit. In relation to and in relationship with God man finds his true existence of meaning and purpose, because it is through the grace of God that man is created, cared for, recreated, justified and sanctified to live a new life in faith and in obedience to scripture.

3.3.2.2 Man and man

In the same way as God constitutes the very being of man by means of His relation to and relationship with man, He also constitutes man's relations and relationships to other people. These relations and relationships find their formation in the unity amongst people. This is in sharp contrast to the modern Western individualistic view of man, but is also essentially different to the traditional Venda communalistic view of man, because the unity which we are concerned with here is not constituted by the natural relations and relationships between man and man (cf paragraph 2.3.2), but by and in God Himself. We are therefore not concerned with a formal and numeric type of unity, but with the unique relations and relationships amongst people which is constituted by the one and only unique God who is united within Himself (eg Deut 6:4, John 17:20-23).

Through God's mercy and great love (eg Ephes 2:4-5) man is wrested from sin, worldly ways, the ruler of the invisible evil powers, a spirit of disobedience, death (eg Ephes 2:1-3), estrangement, despair and a lack of meaning and purpose in life (eg Ephes 2:11-12) and in Christ he is made part of a new mankind (eg Ephes 2:15) where His unity, peace and hope prevails (eg Ephes 2:11-22). This new and united mankind finds its practical application in the ekklesia (primarily the local congregation) for whom Christ died (eg John 11:52) in order to unite them in and with His body and as such constitute them as the body of

It is this image of "the body of Christ" which is of particular relevance to us, especially against the background of the appreciation, evaluation and criticism which was discussed in paragraph 2.3.2 concerning the traditional Venda view of the relations and relationships between man and man as well as against the background of the tremendous emphasis which the modern Western world puts on the individual nature of man. Ridderbos explains the concepts "body" and "body of Christ" as follows:

- "a) The designation of the church as the body of Christ does not intend in the first place to qualify its mutual unity and diversity, but to denote its unity in and with Christ.
- b) This unity of the church with Christ thus qualified has its real ground neither in the spiritual indwelling of Christ in the church, nor in the thought that the Spirit constitutes the communion between Christ and the church, but in the church's belonging to Christ in the redemptive-historical sense, in the inclusion of "the many" in the one.
- c) In virtue of this common belonging to and inclusion of "the many" in Christ, individual believers are qualified as members of Christ and the church as his body. That the church should thereby be identified with the historical and glorified body of Christ is in no way evident in the passages we have examined. Insofar as the church as body is related to the communion with the blood and body of Christ exercised in the Lord's Supper, this rests on its common share in the sacrifice made for it by Christ and in no way on such a communion with the historical and glorified body of Christ as would make it his body. The qualification of the church as the "body of Christ," therefore, clearly has a figurative, metaphorical significance, however real and literal the unity and communion with Christ expressed thereby is.
- d) As the church's being appropriated by Christ and included in Christ is not restricted to the redemptive-historical aspect, but also works itself out sacramentally and pneumatically, so the believer's incorporation into and belonging to the body of Christ is represented by baptism and the Lord's Supper; and so the church can only reveal itself as the one body of Christ in virtue of the gift of the Holy Spirit given by him to his body there need be no doubt as to the essential meaning of the apostle with this double qualification. The basic idea of both lies in the conception, so typical for Paul's doctrine of salvation, of "the many in the One." While in Romans and in 1 Corinthians all attention is concentrated on the revelation of the church as one body, in Colossians and

Ephesians the bond between Christ and his own itself comes into view, especially in its continuing pneumatic and all-embracing significance. Everything is here focused on making the privilege implied in this relationship for the church to be understood in all its fullness, specifically in view of Christ's position as the Head of all things." (Ridderbos 1977:376-377, 387).

In view of these remarks by Ridderbos and the exegetical works of Lekkerkerker and Pop (Lekkerkerker 1971:103-128, Pop 1974:264-298) we are led to make three conclusive points concerning the body of Christ. Firstly, the ekklesia is constituted as body of Christ in and by Christ in union with Himself. Secondly, in union with Christ the ekklesia is as such united to each other in Christ. Every individual member is bound to the rest of the ekklesia by virtue of his being in Christ. Thirdly, there is room for individuality within the framework of the greater whole of the body.

These conclusions are vitally important in determining the relations and relationships between man and man. Human relations and relationships cannot be defined in natural terms, because they are constituted in Christ, while at the same time a one-sided emphasis on either an individualistic view of man or a communalistic view of man is relativated. The concept of the body of Christ leaves room for both individuality as well as group priority, but it must again be emphasized that both the individual and the group reflect a different quality in Christ, instead of being mere individualism and communalism. Within the body of Christ the individual can grow and live out his fullest potential by means of the dynamic inspiring power of the Spirit of Christ (cf the problems mentioned in this regard in paragraph 2.3.2). And yet this individuality ought never to be to the detriment of the body (group) itself. The individual members, with all their God-given potential, abilities, talents, gifts, etc, are bound together in Christ in order to share their unlimited blessings with joy and to

the benefit of all the members (cf the problems concerning limited means as described in paragraph 2.3.5) and in so-doing depend upon and care for each other (cf the catechism of Heidelberg : 55). In this way the individual members as well as the group as a whole take responsibility for each other and for the group with the result that the individual members and the group all grow together in faith and in love (Ephes 4:1-16).

3.3.2.3 Man, responsibility and growth

Brunner notes that the essence of man is to be a responsible being. This responsibility should, according to Brunner, find its application in love towards other people. In other words, Brunner defines man's being in terms of his loving responsibility in relation and in relationship to his fellow men. Brunner does however also maintain that this responsibility of man is dependent upon his responsibility before God (Durand 1982:130).

In paragraph 3.3.2.2 we have touched upon man's responsibility towards others, but first and foremost man is responsible before God. God constitutes man to be a responsible being (eg Gen 1:26-31, Gen 2:15). The understanding of this responsible nature of man is of the utmost importance in view of the problems concerning responsibility which were discussed in paragraph 2.3.1.4. Before God man is a new man with a new life (cf paragraph 3.3.2.1). "This life finds its origin in the death and resurrection of Christ, comes into being through the Holy Spirit, and in its realization in the individual man is new creation, regeneration, etc, that is to say, the fruit of the working of divine power. The farthest thing from the apostle's mind is the notion that this new life is to be explained on the basis of man himself, as an ethical transformation that is realized from the slumbering powers for

good in him and which thus can be denoted as a new birth and can be related to the death and the resurrection of Christ by way of resemblance. On the other hand, it is evident that this new life is not to be understood as a transcendent stream of life that pours into man from the outside and which develops in him eo ipso and whereby there would no longer be any place for human responsibility and decision in the real sense of the word. For Paul also describes the new life in all sorts of ways as the new humanity, the illumination of the nous, the renewal of the heart, and as the body and the members becoming subservient to the will of God. This nature of the new life has become clear to us in particular from the significance of faith in it, as the way in which the new creation of God is effected and communicated in the reality of this earthly life, and is to be characterized as new obedience. From this same point of view we shall now attempt to deal with the moral content of Paul's preaching.

Again it is primarily a matter of the inner relationships and structures of his preaching and doctrine. We face here specifically the phenomenon that in the more recent literature is customarily designated as the relation of the indicative and imperative. What is meant is that the new life in its moral manifestation is at one time proclaimed and posited as the fruit of the redemptive work of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit - the indicative; elsewhere, however, it is put with no less force as a categorical demand - the imperative. And the one as well as the other occurs with such force and consistency that some have indeed spoken of a "dialectical paradox" and of an "antinomy."

This confluence of indicatives and imperatives is so general in the epistles of Paul (as in the whole of the New Testament) that we may confine ourselves to a few characteristic examples. So far, first of

all, as the relationship of Christ's death and resurrection is concerned, the indicative is here fundamental, that those who are in Christ have died to sin (Rom 6:2). This whole pronouncement, however, is directed toward stimulating human responsibility and arousing to activity: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body ... and do not present your members any longer as weapons of unrighteousness in the service of sin ..." (vv. 12, 13). The redemptive indicative of dying and rising with Christ is not to be separated from the imperative of the struggle against sin. No less striking in this respect is Colossians 3:3ff., where in response to: "For you have died, and your life is hid in God," the command at once resounds: "Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness," etc. Having once died with Christ does not render superfluous putting to death the members that are on earth, but is precisely the great urgent reason for it. The same applies to the categorical pronouncements concerning life in and by the Spirit. On the one hand it can be said of that life in the manner of the indicative: "the law of the Spirit of life has made you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death" (Rom 8:2, 9); on the other hand, in the manner of the imperative, which subsequently seems to make the first categorical redemptive pronouncement conditional: "so then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh: for if you live after the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live" (vv. 12, 13). The imperative thus is founded on the indicative ("therefore," v. 12). But the succession of the imperative is also a condition ("if", v. 13) for that which has first been categorically posited with the indicative. In the same way the pronouncements in Galatians 4 and 5 which in a categorical manner attest to the receiving of the Spirit (4:6ff.), being born after the Spirit (4:28ff.), living by the Spirit (5:25), are followed by the summons to walk after the Spirit (5:16,

25), and the warning not to go astray because God will not suffer himself to be mocked and what a man sows he will also reap, whether corruption from the flesh, or eternal life from the Spirit (6:7ff.). And finally, so far as the pronouncements are concerned that have reference to the new life as a creation of God, here again we find the same duality. At one time it is said of the new man that he has been created in Christ "have" (active) put off the old man and "have" put on the new man (Eph 4:21ff; Col 3:9ff) and this "putting on" of the new man now signifies receiving a share in Christ sacramentally through baptism (Gal 3:27); then again a mandate as the daily responsibility of the church: "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 13:14).

Now as regards the relationship to each other of these two different ways of speaking, it is immediately clear that the imperative rests on the indicative and that this order is not reversible. For in each case the imperative follows the indicative by way of conclusion (with "thus", "therefore"; Rom 6:12ff.; 12:1; Col 3:5, et al). In each case following the calling of the new life is set forth as the object of the positive redemptive pronouncements ("so that," "in order to," etc.; cf Rom 7:4; 2 Cor 5:15, et al). The relationship intended here is surely given its clearest expression in Philippians 2:12f.: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

The word "for" in the second clause furnishes the ground for the appeal in the first. It is the same relationship and the same "for" that is met with in Romans 6:14: "sin will not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace." God does not work and has not worked in his good pleasure because man has worked his salvation with fear and trembling. The contrary is true: because God works and has worked, therefore man must and can work. For God works in him what

is necessary for his (human) working. The working of man, therefore, takes place "according to the working of Christ, which works in him in power" (Col 1:29; Eph 3:20), the good works they do have been prepared by God "that they should walk in them" (Eph 2:10), and the good work that God has begun in them He will carry on (Phil 1:6). What the new man manifests in new life, what he works or exhibits in fruit of the Spirit and good works, he works out of and by the strength of God, out of the power of the Spirit and by virtue of his belonging to Christ. There can be no doubt whatever concerning this relationship. Indicative and imperative thus do not represent a certain division of property in the sense that the indicative denotes the divine and the imperative the human share in the new life, or that the imperative arouses the believer to what God has done for him so that from his side, too, he does not fail to give an answer. All this would set next to each other those elements in the gospel reality which lie in each other, and would thus lead to a new legalism. The imperative is grounded on the reality that has been given with the indicative, appeals to it, and is intended to bring it to full development." (Ridderbos 1977:253-255).

Man's responsibility therefore, is God's work in Christ and through His Spirit. In relation to and in relationship with God (cf paragraph 3.3.2.1) man is to be a responsible being before God as well as towards others (cf paragraph 3.3.2.2), towards nature (cf paragraph 3.3.2.4) and towards himself (cf paragraph 3.3.2.5).

As important aspect which Ridderbos merely mentions in passing is the fact that the imperative is, amongst others, intended to bring the indicative to full development. Hereby the relation between responsibility (understood as described above) and growth development) is indicated. Because both the indicative and the imperative is God's

work in Christ and through His Spirit neither the indicative nor the imperative (and therefore also not man's responsibility) can ever be static in nature. Man is a responsible being and therefore simultaneously a growing and developing being.

Man's growth and development is not without struggle and, "as regards this aspect of the faith, too, Paul more than anyone else guides our thinking. All his admonitions to persevere in the faith, to put to death the old man, etc., implicitly presuppose struggle. He speaks explicitly about it especially in Rom 6:12-15; 8:12-14; Gal 5:17-26; Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9. One could conceivably also include Eph 6:10-17. Paul makes considerable use of a dual symbolism: the "old man" versus the "new", our still-being-in-Adam and our already-being-in-Christ; and "flesh" versus "spirit" (sarx versus pneuma). In Paul these terms, directly in contrast to the then current meaning, signify our sinful, alienated-from-God existence versus that which is worked in us by the renewing power of the Spirit. Sometimes Paul uses very triumphant language, and then again the hard struggle comes through clearly; he has "the double viewpoint of battling on the basis of victory and of gaining the victory on the basis of the battle" (H Ridderbos, Paul, p 267). Usually, especially Rom 7 is cited as the most poignant articulation of this struggle. Struggle and progress apparently do not exclude but include each other. The progress happens amid the struggle, and apparently the struggle does not lead to stagnation, but to steady progress. The question arises, how are we to conceive of this progress in this conflict situation? In our opinion, we are to look in four directions. (1) Only in the brokenness of the conflict does the believer really get to know himself in his opposition against God; so long as that opposition remains unchallenged, it may seem to lie dormant and can easily be underestimated; the struggle is thus an

advancing in self-knowledge. (2) Consequently the struggle also implies progress in living from the acquittal; the better we get to know ourselves, the less we expect from ourselves, and the more we fall back on God's grace as the decisive foundation of our life. (3) But precisely this growing relaxation inspires us to fresh and greater efforts, making the struggle more intense. (4) And coupled with that, the conflict spreads to more and more areas of our life; for all the time we discover new areas of conduct and thought which in so far were not yet involved in the process of renewal and where new opportunities await us, for example, in the use of our charismata for the upbuilding of the church, in respect of our political insights, in fresh conciliatory approaches to our enemies, in changes in how we spend our income, in the struggle against discriminatory practices and situations.

Paul speaks about progress in the Christian life in such a way that rightly the question is often being asked whether he may have thought it possible to achieve perfection already in this earthly life; see beside the lengthy passage Rom 6:1-8:17 also 2 Cor 7:1; 9:8; 10:15; Eph 5:27; Phil 1:10; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 1:3. Of particular significance in this respect is Phil 3:9-16, where it is very clear that perfection consists in living radically from imputed righteousness (v 9), and that Paul knows that he has not yet reached this radical limit (v 12), so that his life moves between the poles of having-been-taken-hold-of and taking-hold-of himself (12f., 16). In other writers as well this progress is assumed as a normal aspect of the Christian life (eg John 15:6; 2 Pet 3:18). A special problem is posed by the first epistle of John, which on the one hand speaks of sin as something from which we are never free (1:5-10) and on the other hand of the sinlessness of the believer (3:4-10); see on this M de Jong, *De brieven van Johannes* (1968), pp 155-159, who sees the "logical

contradiction" as "a way to express life 'between the times', life between the two 'revelations' of Jesus Christ" (p 158), determined also by the conflict with Gnosticism. Apparently, according to Paul and John, the possibility of a life completely controlled by Christ is what provides the justification and inspiration for a constant struggle against sin.

The more the believer, prompted by his security in God, ventures the life of new obedience, the more he needs, as he struggles along, the certainty that God's faithfulness and Christ's substitution will carry him through. Justification tells us that we stand on an unshakable foundation on which we can always fall back. But who guarantees that we, as we struggle and stumble along, and even suffer defeats, will not slide off this foundation? The more we fight, the more we sense fearfully how great the resistance in our heart is to surrender ourselves to God and to remain faithful in the struggle. Then the question concerning certainty and security arises anew; this time not as a question regarding the foundation but one that concerns the horizon. The question is not: am I really a sinner received in grace? but: will this adoption be permanent and show its effects in my life? Who can guarantee that? The question is also: who, without such a certainty, can avoid succumbing to despair and keep up the courage to continue to fight?

This confronts us with the doctrine which is known in church history as the perseverance of the saints. It is a doctrine that articulates a fundamental insight. Paul, whose Epistle to the Romans is entirely devoted to the renewal of man, starts with justification (chs 1-5), speaks next about struggle and progress (chs 6-8), and concludes the train of thought of the first half of his epistle by affirming his conviction that believers will persevere and overcome (8:28-39). That

could not be otherwise. Our wavering faithfulness is upheld on all sides by God's unwavering faithfulness. That faithfulness is not dependent on our faith; instead, our faith depends on that faithfulness of God. "For I am sure that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).

The believer may and dares to believe that he will persevere in that faith and that nothing will snatch him out of God's hand. Nevertheless, here again we come across what we have noticed so often in questions about the faith, namely that its systematic reflection poses great intellectual problems. We cannot imagine that a believer would doubt his perseverance, on the mistaken assumption that ultimately it would be dependent on him; in that case ultimately all of salvation would be dependent on him, and that would mean that it is no longer a matter of saving grace freely give. Yet we cannot imagine either that a believer would dare to assert with a quiet and unruffled confidence that he will lifelong persevere in the faith; such an assertion would border on recklessness and be as much at variance with the faith as the fear that one will not make it. The same Paul who wrote Romans 8 issues many exhortations to struggle on, lest we lose the victory and should find ourselves disqualified in the end.

One who intellectually detaches himself from the faith (a danger particularly to the student of theology) feels himself compelled to a choice in which either God guarantees the faith and to that end manipulates man, or man, on account of the decisive character of his cooperation, is totally dependent on the power and permanence of his own faith. God and man are not locked in a competitive struggle, however, and do not so limit each other. Instead, they meet each other in a covenant in which God elicits our responsibility and cooperation

and at the same time helps us in our weaknesses. His faithfulness also consists in the fact that he creates and seeks our faithfulness and so causes it to triumph. We do not persevere, but he perseveres, by constantly calling us, disturbing us, inspiring us. So we learn to persevere and receive the assurance that "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

In the Bible, especially in the NT, we regularly find this witness of certainty and perseverance, not as the manifestation of human steadfastness but of divine faithfulness. In the discussion of the perseverance of the saints, its defenders always pointed to Luke 22:32; John 6:37, 40; 10:27; Rom 8:29f, 34, 39; Phil 1:6; 1 John 2:19 and 3:9, and to the Johannine concept of "remain" (menein). Those who were opposed pointed, however, to all those passages in which believers are warned against a possible falling away or which presuppose such a possibility, such as Ezek 18:24; Rom 11:20; 1 Cor 9:27; 10:12; 2 Cor 13:5ff.; Gal 5:4; Heb 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 2 Pet 2:18-22. Other examples are apostate Christians like Alexander and Hymenaeus, and Demas (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 4:10; cf 1 Tim 4:1). David's and Peter's deep fall also come up in this respect; but their life could also be used as an argument by the supporters of the doctrine of perseverance." (Berkhof 1973:469-470, 471-471, 476-477).

God directs man, through struggle, progress and perseverance, upon and towards the eschaton in which man's renewal will find its completion. As such man is continuously under way in a dynamic process of growth and human development in terms of all the relations and relationships which determine his entire existence. This truth concerning God's programme for man's being, responsibility, growth and development will have to be the focal point of a practical ministry of development

relating to a congregation which finds itself in a situation of poverty within the context of the traditional Venda community (cf paragraphs 1.1 and 4.1).

3.3.2.4 Man and nature

God constitutes the being of both man and creation and in Him the relation between man and creation exists (eg Gen 1:26-31, Gen 2:8, Gen 2:15). In view of these verses and others such as Psalm 8, man's relation towards creation is expressed in terms of a responsibility. God unites man and creation in order that man may rule over creation, may multiply and fill the earth and may protect and cultivate it.

A one-sided emphasis concerning these responsibilities is found in both Africa and the West. Africa seems to over-multiply and saturate the earth, while the West seems to flourish in a lust to rule. In both instances the result is to the detriment of the protection and cultivation of creation. And this all has a negative effect on the relation between man and nature as well as on man himself (cf paragraph 2.3.3). One should therefore seek for a redefinition of the relation, relationship and unity between man and creation.

"it is .. this cosmos, although it may be a lost cosmos, which we rediscover in the fulfilment. The work of the Spirit in this dispensation can be described as the creation of signs (tokens) of the eschaton. This is true of His work in the recreation, but also of His retroactive working in creation and providence. The cross or even better: (the Crucified) joins creation and recreation. Because the reaction to the gospel is twofold, namely acceptance or rejection, faith or hardening, it will be wise not to draw direct relations between the progress in history and the eschaton. The signs (tokens) of the power of the kingdom are indeed visible in the world, but this power can also be utilized negatively As the light of the kingdom which shines in the world, all social, scientific, political, economical and cultural progress should be viewed with gratitude, but to the extent to which this progress does not coincide with faith, it can also result in continuous resistance to grace and therefore as such constitutes

regression What is true about the apostate individual is also true about the apostate world, namely that with the inclusion of the gifts of the kingdom its (the world's) direction is anti-christian. The salvation in Christ brings about sanctification, renewal of the society. But every change or improvement of the society is not necessarily a figure of the salvation. For participation in the salvation of the kingdom faith in Jesus Christ is necessary" (Theron 1978:115-116).

Man's relation to and relationship with creation will therefore be both a relation and relationship of solidarity as well as a relation and relationship of antithesis. From the perspective of God's creation, His providence and His recreation in Christ and through His Spirit man is in solidarity with the world, but from the perspective of the corruptio totalis man is in antithesis to it. Neither the traditional African and Venda nor the modern Western life and world view recognizes this twofold nature of man's relation to and relationship with creation. The first emphasizes total unity between man and creation (primarily by populating creation and using it as a means of survival) while the latter regards creation mainly as an object which should be utilized to the maximum by man (primarily by ruling over creation and developing it to the detriment of people and nature). However, in solidarity with creation man will live in it, protect it and cultivate it and in antithesis to creation man will prevent the detrimental effects which creation could cause him because of its overpopulation, domination and overdevelopment.

It seems therefore that only if man is truly man according to what was discussed in paragraphs 3.3.2.1-3.3.2.3 will man be able to relate responsibly to nature. Man's God-constituted being, his relations and relationships in and with God, towards others (as ekklesia) and his responsibility, growth and development determines his relation, relationship and responsibility towards creation. We are therefore concerned with the restoration of man in relation to and in

relationship with the total created reality - a restoration which is only possible as God's work in Christ and through His Spirit - a restoration which finds its practical application in the context of the ekklesia as the body of Christ and its relation to and relationship with the whole of the cosmos (cf paragraph 1.2.1).

"In the mystery of the church, in the communion of the holy people and the holy things, lies the great reconciliation, whereby the world could be healed. From out of the church the world (in a lesser or greater context), could also come to true communion" (Van Ruler IK geloof 147).

This is to be distinguished from the traditional African and Venda concept of an integrated whole (cf paragraph 2.2.1) which is constituted in terms of natural and supernatural purpose relations and purpose relationships.

3.3.2.5 Man as image of God

Considering the exegetical aspects of Gen 1:26-27 and Gen 9:6 in conjunction with James 3:9 (Van Selms 1973:34-38, Von Rad 1972:57-61, Smelik 1974:67-68) it becomes clear that the Bible itself does not explain the content of the phrase "image of God". The traditional threefold explanation therefore seems to be the best conclusion concerning the phrase "image of God". Firstly, the phrase reflects a relationship between God and man and man and God - a relationship which is constituted by and in God (cf paragraph 3.3.2.1). Secondly, the phrase depicts man as a united being. This unity of man's being is again constituted by and in God, who Himself is one (eg Deut 6:4). Against the background of White's comments concerning man's unity and the problems regarding the disintegration of this unity (cf paragraph 2.3.4) the God-given unity of man's being mentioned here is of particular interest. In view of paragraphs 3.3.2.1-3.3.2.5 we can now

conclude as follows: God is the one and only God and united within Himself. He constitutes, by means of His creative activity (eg Gen 1 and 2), the being of man and the being of creation. Therefore, by virtue of His work and in Him, both man and the total created reality is united within themselves, because God is one. But not only are man and creation united within themselves, but by means of God's relation and relationship with man and creation, God, man and creation are all united in God. This is the Biblical view of the integrated whole, in contrast to the traditional African and Venda holistic life and world view, the ancient Greek dualistic tradition and the modern Western approach of reducing man and everything else to a mere function which should be utilized for the sake of a better future.

The Biblical view of the united totality in God places man in relation to and in relationship with God, his fellowmen, creation and himself. And these united relations and relationships give man a particular dignity. This brings us to the third point in discussing the phrase "image of God", namely that in the above-mentioned context of united relations and relationships man enjoys a position of inviolability. Before and in God man is a dignified being - a truth which is of the utmost importance in a context where people's very being is destroyed by means of a lack of the basic means to survive and whose existence is determined by a spirit of poverty, especially if they are black Vendas who also suffer from the consequences of the humiliating attitude of racism and the discrimination against them.

It should also be borne in mind that the image of God in man (and therefore man's relations, relationships, unity and inviolability) was totally corrupted by the power of sin (cf paragraph 1.2.2.2). But in Christ and through His Spirit man is renewed and as such the distorted image of God in man is restored (eg 2 Cor 4:4, Col 1:15, Rom 8:29,

"When we look at these Pauline pronouncements we notice 2 moments. In the first place renewal and change are discussed. The image of God which is mediated for men by means of Christ, is part of the new creation of which the redeemed has part. In the renewal through Christ, in his clothing with the new man, he becomes again the image of his creator (Col 3:10; Eph 4:24). He becomes something he previously was not because he had lost it through sin. In the second place it is obvious that not static but dynamic categories are spoken of. The renewal and change which is spoken of here, is not considered a completed condition but a continuous process. The uniformity with Christ is no static situation but a bond with Christ which must be renewed and confirmed again and again. The new life has initiated a process, through which the believer who possesses glory because he is part of Christ, now proceeds from glory unto glory (2 Cor 3:18). Every moment he is on the way to a new and greater glory; he is still busy changing in order to become equal with the image of the glory of Christ. In this the New Testament confirms that in the image of God, we are dealing with an eschatological matter. We have the prospect that at the completion "our humiliated body will change form to become one with his resplendent body (Phil 3:21). So we who first carried the image of the world, will carry the image of heaven (1 Cor 15:14). What it all means, we do not yet know, because it has not yet been revealed to us (1 John 3:2). All that the redeemed can be sure of is that he will be equal to Christ. That is his destination. So man is homo viator, on his way to the future with the glorified Christ as his fixed point and purpose." (Durand 1982:167).

The renewal and change which is mentioned in the above quotation is what liberation is all about, while the eschatological process by means of which man is under way towards the completion of renewal and change reflects growth and development (cf paragraph 3.3.2.3). This eschatological nature of God's renewing and changing work in and with man also reflects a totally different concept of time to that which is found in African and Venda tradition as well as the West. The concepts of cyclical and linear time were referred to in paragraph 2.3.1.2. The most unique feature of an eschatological concept of time lies in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Eschatos who encircles the beginning (eg Gen 1:1) and the fulfilment (eg Rev 21 and 22) and in so-doing gives a new meaning and quality to the time in between.

"... the deepest connection between creation and fulfilment lies in Jesus Christ Himself, who is the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the creator and Fulfiller."

creation and fulfilment are not two experiences, which lie extremely far from each other in time, but one reality which binds them to each other through Him as living Lord, so that through His power the creation proceeds to fulfilment and the fulfilment proceeds from creation. Everything is created by Him and everything is renewed by Him" (König 1980:81).

And Barth writes:

"Time, as opposed to eternity, is the form of existence of the created. Eternity is of course on its part not simply the negation of time. It is by no means timeless rather as the place of origin of time it is even the eminent, absolute time, namely the direct unity of present, past and future, of now, past and future, of middle, beginning and end, of movement, origin and destination. So it is God's own nature, so God Himself is eternity. God Himself is therefore temporal, particularly in that He is eternal, insofar as His eternity is the original form of time, insofar as He as the Eternal one is pre-temporal, meta-temporal and post-temporal at the same time" (Barth 1947:72).

It is however Noordmans who formulates an eschatology which gives a very relevant meaning to the concept of time, specifically in relation to the problem of poverty.

Noordmans negates the escapist eschatologies which find their essence in the velocity of modern Western life, the application of power, immediate enjoyment and social deliverance (Noordmans 1979:121). He (Noordmans) therefore pleads for the concept of "another day", a "present" with "rest" as content - the rest which is a gift of God in Christ and thus such a comfort of grace that it (the rest) is too precious to be seen as merely a "last resort" (Noordmans 1979:121-122). This rest is neither only a matter of an eventual fulfilment, nor a mere reference to the initial rest of the seventh day (Hebr 4:3), but this God-given rest is a reality "today", because "it is the rest which Jesus gives to the tired, the heavy laden and the outcasts who died with Him under the cross (Luke 23:26)" (Noordmans 1979:122).

Within the context of the godly rest, time becomes a "divine present" which is under way towards "another day" when the rest will reach its completion. And it is this eschatological concept of time which brings comfort instead of despair (Noordmans 1979:122). The result is a new spirit and way of existence contrary to the spirit of poverty which exists in the traditional Venda life and which is, amongst others, also brought about by the traditional Venda concept of cyclical time. The proclamation of the Gospel is amongst others, an eschatological Gospel of comfort and rest is thus essential in addressing the poor and their problems of poverty.

In other words, eschatologically spoken, man has a promise for the present and a promise for the future. In fact, the promise is the present and the promise is the future, because God Himself is the promise and His promise becomes a reality in and for man in Christ and through His Spirit. And this is what the present and the future is all about - God's promise of comfort and rest as revealed in Christ and made real in man through His Spirit (Noordmans 1979:222).

Time as an eschatological concept of promise, comfort and rest in the "divine present" and under way towards the future of "the other day" is therefore nothing else but a pastoral encounter. In each moment of time man encounters God, ie he encounters promise, comfort and rest. And as such is constantly liberated from his present state of mind, his spirit of poverty, his fatalistic and nihilistic way of life, while God simultaneously generates in men continuous growth and development towards the future.

3.3.2.6 Man, death and immortality

The concept of death and its influence on traditional Venda life was

discussed in paragraph 2.3.1.3. The effect which death has on the minds, words and deeds of the traditional people was found to be of such a nature that it entrenches the spirit of poverty. To overcome the force of death implies participation in certain traditional rituals (eg the washing of hands after a funeral) and to rejoin the ancestral gods and spirits through death itself in order to ensure the continuity of life in the everlasting cycle of unity between the unborn, the living and the dead.

In the West the focus is so much on man's function in life and his role in ensuring a better future that the reality of death is largely ignored and hardly ever spoken about, although feared subconsciously. In ancient Greek thinking death was approached from the angle of man as dualistic being, with primarily an emphasis on the mortal body and the immortal soul.

Neither the modern Western nor the ancient Greek approaches to death serve as an alternative and solution to the traditional Venda concept of death and its role in daily life, especially in relation to the problem of poverty. The concepts of life and death, mortality and immortality will therefore have to be viewed from a Biblical perspective in search of answers to questions surrounding these concepts.

The question of the immortality of man can only be placed in a proper biblical perspective when one pays attention to the manner in which Scripture speaks of life and death. At the same time it must be realized that all these concepts immortality, life and death are not treated as independent themes in themselves by the Bible. Only in the direct context of the central alignment of the Biblical message, God's redemptive act in Jesus Christ, is something of the mystery of life and death unfolded. But this fact means in turn that a dimension is lent to the ideas of mortality and immortality, life and death, which by far exceeds the physio-biological aspect. More than one theological misconception has already occurred, because not enough importance was attached to this fact.

The fact that scripture lends a dimension other than the mere physio-biotic to the concepts: life and death, naturally does not mean that the physio-biotic becomes less important. In fact, a short survey of Old Testament information shows how extremely highly human life is reckoned in Israel. A long, fulfilled life is something good and to be desired (Gen 15:15, Judges 8:32); it is one of the greatest gifts of God, especially if it is maintained in posterity (Ps 127; 128). For this reason there is identity between life and blessing on the one side and death and malediction on the other (Deut 30:19). Against the background of these pronouncements stands the deep conviction that God is the source of all life (Ps 36:10; Jer 2:13), because He Himself is the living one (Deut 5:26; Ps 42:3). Life is not a mythical independent magnitude against God. He controls it. He gives it (Gen 2:7) but also takes it (Ps 104:29; Job 34:14-15). Therefore the lifespan is in his hand (Ps 31:16; 139:16). As a gift of God, life never becomes man's property or an inherent quality which he can control. This all means one thing: only by involvement with God does man live. The fear of the realm of death and of death itself lies in this precise fact that it breaks this involvement: "For Sheol cannot thank thee, death cannot praise thee; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for thy faithfulness. The living, the living, he thanks thee, as I do this day" (Isaiah 38:18-19; cf Ps 6:6; 28:1).

The above-mentioned excerpt from the song of Hezekiah sounds different to Paul's triumphant cry "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Rom 14:8). But this pronouncement of the apostle may not be misunderstood. It does not mean that it is an indifferent situation whether man lives or dies. It also does not mean a relativising of life against death. What it does mean is that life as well as death receives a new dimension from the events around Christ. After Christ has risen, death no more rules over Him (Rom 6:9) but it is He who rules over life and death (Rom 14:9). Therefore the baptized will live with Christ (Rom 6:8) and they can look back at their death as something which has already occurred with Christ (Rom 6:8), although they still must die. At the same time it means that the life which they live is not their own:"and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal 2:20).

Whatever the explanation of these difficult text verses might be, one thing is clear: in Christ, the character of life and death changes. Jüngel says that the life of all people leads to death, while the life of Jesus Christ comes out of death. It is truly so. Through the resurrection, death no more rules over Him (Rom 6:9).

But Paul goes even further: because Christ allows the believer to be part of his life, his (the believer's) life also comes out of death in spite of the fact that he must still die physically. This thought from the apostle is not unique within the New Testament. In the Gospel of John there are various pronouncements where Christ confirms it. Those who believe in Him have passed from death to life (John 5:24); those who believe in Him will never ever die (John 11:25-26); the knowledge of Him and the Father is already eternal life (John 17:3). John himself confirms the

accomplished fact of the passage from death to life, as he says: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren (1 John 3:14)" (Durand 1982:181-183).

From the above quotation and the Biblical references it is clear that God is life and that He therefore constitutes man's life. This life in God pertains to physical and biological life, but in Christ and through His Spirit man's life obtains a different and deeper qualitative dimension - new and eternal life which finds its everlasting continuity in the eternal living God. Within the context of these truths death has lost its power and can the fear of death and in fact death itself be overcome. Death is therefore merely a passage to eternal life in which we already share because of Christ's death and resurrection which in turn is the guarantee for our own resurrection (cf the Catechism of Heidelberg 42 and 45).

3.4 Man, poverty and a practical ministry of liberation and development

In chapter one the concepts of congregation, world, and poverty as well as their relation to each other were described. In chapter two an attempt was made to understand the problem of poverty within the context of the traditional Venda view of man and more specifically in terms of ethno-cultural and pshyco-cultural perspectives on Venda communalism. In this chapter (especially in paragraph 3.3) the conclusions drawn in chapter two (and to a much lesser extent, also chapter one) were viewed from the angle of the theological anthropology.

In view of chapters 1-3 we will now proceed to the last chapter where we will try to formulate some guidelines for the practical ministry of a congregation (eg the DRCA Congregation of Tshilidzini) which exists within a context of poverty and which is in search of

ministry of liberation and development which will glorify God and serve the people concerned.

Note

1. Liphauphau E: A Venda person and spiritual worker at the Tshilidzini Hospital in Venda.

At a recent function she remarked that the body is merely the plate from which the worms will eat one day. She explained that the body was therefore only serving the purpose of accommodating the spirit temporarily and the spirit should therefore thank the body for its kindness, but that it is primarily the spirit which should take responsibility for its own spiritual well-being in order to prepare itself for the final judgement.

A dualistic view of man is evident in this message, although there are also traces of communication between the body and the spirit. It was however interesting how incredibly difficult Mrs Liphauphau found it to express herself, repeating the same thing over and over again as well as using different concepts to try and make herself understandable. Obviously very confused herself she eventually ended by saying "I don't know.....".

4. TOWARDS A PRACTICAL MINISTRY OF LIBERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

4.1 A guideline

The problem of poverty, the dilemma which faces a congregation which finds itself operating within the context of poverty and the responsibilities of such a congregation, were attended to in the previous three chapters. In this last chapter an effort will be made to draw some of the most important lines of chapters 1 to 3 together with the purpose of trying to formulate a few guidelines which could serve as a framework for the practical ministry of a congregation which has to deal with the problems, dilemmas and responsibilities relating to poverty.

The intention is not to formulate a detailed structure, programme and content for the practical ministry. Such a detailed account would be an appropriate challenge for an advanced thesis. This chapter will therefore serve as a guideline towards such a more detailed thesis which could pay attention to all relevant aspects of the practical theology and its specific role as a basis for a relevant and effective practical ministry within the context of the problem of poverty.

4.2 The problem and the potential

In chapters one and two the problem of poverty was clearly defined as a theological, ethno-cultural and psycho-cultural corruptio totalis and corruptio interna (cf paragraph 2.5). Any congregation which exists in such a context of poverty will inevitably suffer from the very being and the effects of its context. This poses a dilemma for the local congregation, not merely because it bears the consequences of poverty but also (and primarily) because such a congregation consists of

members who themselves are poor and therefore experience poverty in its widest and deepest sense (cf paragraph 1.2.1.1). How can a congregation which is in itself poor cope with the responsibility of a practical ministry of liberation and development (cf paragraphs 1.2.1.6, 1.2.1.7 and 1.2.3).

In search for an answer to this question, different approaches in ministry were emphasized throughout the history of the DRCA Tshilidzini Congregation.

4.2.1 The mission work of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) began during 1956 here in Venda. The first period of mission activity was marked by a strong kerugmatic approach "with the accent on the preaching of the Gospel to the heathen in Venda" (Smith)¹⁾. Mission workers and money were supplied by the DRC resulting in whites bringing the Word of God in white terms in order for the traditional Venda people to adopt the christian religion according to white standards" (Smith)²⁾. Nobody would ever dispute the wonderful work which God did and the committed and tireless effort of all those who were involved as His servants during those first number of years. However, Smith himself admits that it remains a question whether their approach really contributed positively to the liberation and development of the poor as human beings.

The years which followed thereafter can be identified as an ecclesiastical period. In 1964 the congregation was formally established along the lines of the DRC, including the same church confessions and doctrines, the same church structures, the same church order and stipulations, etc. Great effort was made to create a well organized programme, guaranteed and run by the DRC and the mission workers with money it continued to supply. The foundations which were

laid during that specific span of time still bear positive fruits until today, but again it must be said that such an ecclesiastical approach is far removed from addressing the fundamental issues relating to the problem of poverty as they were explained in chapters one and two.

During the seventies the approach of the ministry was largely influenced by the events and spirit of that particular decade. Everybody everywhere suddenly became aware of the importance of the correct human attitudes and relationships and in the church this led to an increase in ecumenical activity, also here at the DRCA Congregation of Tshilidzini. From kerugma and ekklesia the emphasis shifted to koinonia, and rightly so, because the confessed fellowship and unity amongst all believers in Christ was neglected for too long, while the practical and visible nature thereof is intended to serve the functional purpose of a vital missionary instrument (eg John 17:20-23). It seems however that the fact of the fellowship rather than the content thereof was accentuated. As was explained in paragraph 3.3.2.2 one of the keys to a liberating and developing contribution to the poor lies in the correct content of the relations and relationships between man and man as body of Christ.

The early eighties saw some interest in the diakonia but unfortunately mainly in the form of projects (eg fruit orchards and vegetable gardens) which were good in themselves but did not form part of an all-embracing and inclusive ministry where kerugma, koinonia and diakonia all form part of a united approach (cf paragraph 1.2.3.7).

The first few years of my own ministry at the DRCA Congregation of Tshilidzini was a continuation of the emphasis on diaconal service, mainly because of the severe drought which was experienced in Venda from 1981 to 1986. It was however during this very same period that I

could observe the thoughts, words and lifestyles of the people whom I served. Visiting the people mentioned in paragraphs 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 from house to house gave me the opportunity of participating in the every day lives of the members of our congregation. In addition I was exposed to a variety of church activities which all contributed, together with the house visiting, towards a deeper understanding and insight into the life and world view, way of existence, needs, aspirations, pleasures and problems of the people of Venda. Church councillors and members of the congregation also played an important role in this process of learning and gaining knowledge, while discussions with my wife and black and white friends assisted positively in forming and formulating ideas. And in this whole process of relating to people within the context of work and daily contact with people as people I was primarily forced to think and to rethink.

The result was a realization that both in terms of approach and content my entire ministry should be redefined and redirected. And this dynamic process of participating, observing, thinking, rethinking, defining, redefining, directing, redirecting, etc still continues to my own great satisfaction, enrichment and fulfilment and hopefully to the honour of God and to the benefit of His congregation at Tshilidzini.

4.2.2 Regarding an appropriate approach I am of the opinion that an all-embracing and inclusive ministry with an even and interrelated emphasis on kerugma, koinonia and diakonia is a vital point of departure in addressing the problem of poverty (cf paragraph 1.2.3.7). On such a foundation all congregational leaders and members can build together towards a multi- and interdisciplinary approach (cf paragraph 2.2.3) by means of which each individual can contribute towards the efforts of the group as a whole and as such give a concrete and functional content to the concept of the congregation as the body of

4.2.3 As far as the content of the above-mentioned comprehensive approach is concerned, I believe that man as described in chapter 3 should be the focal point. In this way there is the possibility of addressing the problems which were discussed in chapters 1 and 2 and of leading man towards true human liberation and human development.

In the whole of this thesis it has become clear that the human element lies at the centre of the problem of poverty. In the first and last instance it is man who suffers the causes, nature and consequences of being poor. It is therefore obvious that both in terms of approach and content the practical ministry should focus upon theological anthropology in order to reach man in his human condition of poverty.

Liberation theology pretends to attend to man in his political, social, economic and cultural bondage and although commendable in an attempt to contextualize theological theory, liberation theology remains theologically questionable and still lacks effective practical application. This criticism can mainly be attributed to the fact that liberation theology represents a scientific-philosophical shift from theory to praxis and a theological shift from orthodoxy to orthopraxy with the inevitable result of an inductive methodology. One could therefore argue that this shift in scientific-philosophical and theological emphasis should in fact lead to an appropriate approach and sound content which would effectively address the human element within its practical situation. Unfortunately this is not the case because liberation theology has become not much more than liberation theory, a "talking theology instead of a doing theology" (Padilla)³⁾.

And yet there is room as well as a great need for true christian liberation.

"..... let us consider what the function of a Christian theology of liberation must be within the context where it operates.

Liberation in the Christian sense cannot be a liberation back to a certain phase of culture. There is a real danger of an idealization of the past and a desire to return to its idyllic circumstances, to return to the 'Mother'. For some people return to a communal way of life, to an African type of socialism and so on, seems to be the great solution. But there can be no turning back. Africa is part of the modern world and must go forward in it.

The modern world has entered the 'adolescent phase of culture, according to Faber, where authority is being challenged, old structures are being dismantled and new relationships sought. Van Peursen calls it the 'functional' phase, where pragmatic relationships are considered all-important (Faber 1976:285-303; Van Peursen 1976:80-111).

However, the African past is still very much alive. it contains great riches of culture and custom. At the same time it is the area of considerable tensions which cannot be ignored. It is in this context that a theology of Christian liberation must operate and must show the way to the freedom of God's children.

Christian theology must act as a catalyst in these situations. Its function must be to help to 'release' (another of Faber's terms: 1976:150) people from the dilemmas within which they find themselves, to help them toward a better understanding of these dilemmas, to help to open the road forward. Christian theology must help people to find authentic modern expressions of their cultural heritage and at the same time to realize authentic Christian freedom for the future. Christian theology may help to release the enormous amount of energy that is present in Africa's people and to show the way in which it can be used to build a 'house for the Lord' in Africa.

The context of Christian theology is then the world within which it operates. In Africa it is the world of Africa and its day-to-day realities and tensions. But one more word must be said about the context of theology. Strictly speaking the true context of theology is the Church and more particularly the local congregation. Contextual theology should be the occupation of active Christians in all walks of life. Theology should be 'de-professionalized' (Kirk 1980:183). All Christians should be involved and active in the process of working out the implications of the Gospel of freedom in the context of today's world.

If this sounds impractical and idealistic, it may simply be because we have not sufficiently tried this out in the Africa Church. A result could very well be more mature Christians, a clearer view of the context and more understanding of what the freedom of God's people implies" (Van Wyk 1984:187-188).

Jesus Christ and through His Spirit is directed upon the liberation of man from sin, suffering and sorrow. From this angle and within the framework of a comprehensive approach (cf paragraph 1.2.3.7) which has a content a sound theological anthropology (cf paragraph 3.3.2) one has a firm foundation for an effective practical ministry of liberation in the local congregation. While the local congregation faces the immense problem of being poor itself and existing within the context of poverty, its potential lies in the liberating work of the Trinity which He starts, continues and fulfils in the lives of His church on earth (Phil 1:6). He justifies and sanctifies man towards a lifestyle of progress and perseverance. In Him there is liberation from the past, renewal in the present and development towards the future.

Ministering to the DRCA Congregation of Tshilidzini according to the above-mentioned approach and content is slowly but surely starting to show its positive results in terms of quantitative and qualitative growth amongst the members, but particularly amongst the congregational leadership, eg church councillors, lay preachers, women leaders, youth committee members and Sunday school teachers. Mainly two factors contributed to this quantitative and qualitative growth.

First, there was the realization and promotion of the concept that even a poor congregation's existence, self-sufficiency, work and growth is not dependent on external assistance (eg mission workers and money from the DRC), but first and foremost on the grace of God who makes us His children and congregation in Christ and through His Spirit. It is therefore not necessary to want to stand on our own feet or on the toes of others, but because we stand in Him, therefore we are. I believe that the reason why the realization and promotion of this concept played such a major role is because it touched upon the heart of man's

being in the sense of creating a positive self-image which is built upon grace, faith and scripture alone.

Secondly, the above-mentioned concept was realized and promoted in the form of the already mentioned comprehensive approach with an even and interrelated emphasis on kerugma, koinonia and diakonia. This second factor needs to be worked out far better and with a greater amount of sound content, but the signs are already visible that the mere superficial awareness thereof is bearing fruits.

4.2.4 The above-mentioned ministry was arranged according to different cycles for the respective wards in the congregation. Cycle one would for instance have the following framework and content:

- Sunday 09h00 : Sunday school - theme : man and God;
- Sunday 10h00 : Church service - theme : man and God;
- Sunday 11h00 : Youth Bible study - theme : man and God;
- Thursday 14h00 : Women's prayer meeting - theme : man and God;
- house visiting during the corresponding week and in the same ward
- theme : man and God.

The second, third and fourth cycles followed precisely the same pattern, but with different themes such as "man and man", "man and himself" and "man and nature". The cyclical pattern as such worked well and is still bearing positive fruits, mainly because of the repetition and involvement of the whole ward's members surrounding one specific topic per week.

The content did however and still lacks depth. This is largely due to a lack of knowledge of and insight into the more basic and underlying life and world views, thought patterns and cultural values determining

the themes which were addressed during the respective cycles.

4.2.5 The potential of the congregation's ministry of liberation and development can however be made much more effective by means of mainly two additional factors which could enhance the dynamics of the two factors already mentioned in paragraph 4.2.3.

In the first place there is a great need to investigate and understand the dynamics of the traditional Venda concept of man as described in chapter two. In this regard every member of the local congregation can play a major role, because it is through these people that the congregational leadership can assess the ways of thinking, speaking and living of the relevant members and address the issues and apply the scriptural truths effectively. One can therefore state that it is in fact the congregation itself which forms the golden thread which runs through the problem of poverty. And while this constitutes the problem on the one hand, it simultaneously constitutes great potential if utilized properly.

Lastly, there is the important factor of merging liberation and development in the human sense of the word. Liberation from poverty is unquestionable and vitally important, but human development in the true theological sense of the word should be equally emphasized. The concepts of struggle, progress, growth and perseverance in relation to human development were already discussed in paragraph 3.3.2.2, but this process of human development can only find its true fulfilment within the context of the ekklesia. It is where members of a local congregation unite amongst each other as well as with members of other local congregations (eg the family of Dutch Reformed Churches) as well as exercising sound ecumenical relationships so that mutual upbuilding takes place through the work of God in Christ and through His Spirit.

And within this context of the ekklesia lies a great potential of true and total human development - probably more so than in any other given structure or context.

The concept of collective ecclesiastical upbuilding forms an important part in for instance Paul's writings.

"In summary the following can be said of the building up of the church as Paul speaks of it in his epistles:

- a) In accordance with the redemptive-historical character of the church this upbuilding must be seen first of all as the continuing work of God with his people (Rom 14:19, 20), whose temple and dwelling place it is. The continuing and consummating work consists both in the bringing in of those who till now have been without (cf Rom 15:20ff) and in the inner strengthening and perfecting of all who in Christ now belong to it (1 Cor 14:3; 1 Thess 5:11, et al).
- b) This upbuilding takes place on Christ the foundation once laid (1 Cor 3:10, 11), and the apostles and prophets ordained by him to that end (Eph 2:20, 21; cf Rom 15:20). It accordingly bears the character of a continuing confirmation and consolidation on this foundation (Col 2:7), by which the church receives a character of its own, comes more and more to adulthood, and is safeguard and cleansed from all alien powers and doctrine that darken its character and throw it into confusion (cf Eph 4:12-14; Col 2:6-8).
- c) For the sake of this upbuilding God equips the church with all sorts of gifts and powers that he places at its disposal, as also with various kinds of ministries that must further its upbuilding (Eph 4:11ff; 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10; cf Rom 12:3, 6 ff; 1 Cor 12:4ff, 28ff). In particular the gathering of the church serves this upbuilding (1 Cor 14:26); it is most closely bound up with the proclamation of the Word of God (1 Cor 14:3; Rom 15:20), and is directed toward the right corporate manifestation of the church in the world.
- d) The apostle devotes particular attention as well to the mutual upbuilding of the church, whereby it is primarily a question of the right relationship of community and individual, of the induction of the individual into and his functioning in the whole, but whereby each one is ever to place the good of the church above his own preference and ability (cf 1 Cor 8:1; Rom 14:15, 19; 12:3ff)" (Ridderbos 1977:432).

Ridderbos then continues to discuss and summarize a number of aspects

relating to the intensive and extensive upbuilding of the ekklesia:

"a) In the upbuilding of the church it is a question first of all of its establishment in Christ, of the certainty that it may and must ever increasingly draw from the fact that Christ is its foundation and the source of its life. Paul speaks of this being founded and rooted in Christ in terms of an accomplished fact. Christ is the foundation and cornerstone (1 Cor 3:11; Eph 2:20), the church is once-and-for-all grounded (*tethemeliomenoi*) and rooted (*errizomenoi*) in him (Eph 3:17; Col 2:6, 7), and on this ground the upbuilding is now to go on as an actual reality. This being rooted and grounded consists in having "received" Christ, a *terminus technicus* for the acceptance of the authoritative apostolic tradition concerning Christ (1 Cor 11:23; 15:1, 3; Gal 1:9; Phil 4:9; Col 2:6; 1 Thess 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thess 3:6). It is now of utmost importance for the upbuilding of the church that, as it has "received" and "learned" Christ (Col 2:6; Eph 4:20, 21), so it should walk in him and abide in him. Paul never wearies of stressing this binding character of the "tradition," in the authoritative, apostolic sense of the word, even in those words in which the church has received it (1 Cor 15:1, 2). Only thus will it be safeguard against instability, being moved up and down, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, in the game the men play with it, in the deceit of false doctrine (Eph 4:14). He sets this tradition, which is "according to Christ," over against "the tradition of men and the principles of the world," falling prey to human wisdom (Col 2:7, 8). This concern for the church remaining rooted and grounded in Christ, in accordance with the holy, apostolic (Eph 3:5) tradition and doctrine, is found in all the epistles of Paul, and not only in the Pastoral Epistles, although there the contrast with rising heresy and the admonition to continue in "sound" doctrine come particularly to the fore (cf eg 1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Tit 1:9; 13; 2:1, 2), and the expression "that which has been entrusted" (*paratheke*, *depositum*) takes the place of "tradition" (*paradosis*), otherwise with the same meaning (1 Tim 6:20; cf 2 Tim 1:12, 14; 2:2).

b) The being rooted and grounded in Christ as the church has "received" and "learned" him does not, however, signify a static condition, but precisely the foundation for a progressive upbuilding and growth from this root. One is also not to think here only or in the first place of a quantitative extension, but of inner, qualitative upbuilding and growth. It is a question here of remaining immature and underage (*nephios*, *nepiazos*; cf 1 Cor 3:1; Gal 4:3; Eph 4:14) as contrasted with progress toward perfection, manly maturity. What is intended by this is the appropriation of the full Christ. Although Paul thus distinguishes between being underage and full-grown in Christ (cf 1 Cor 3:1, 2; 2:6; Eph 4:14), he does not wish thereby to introduce a classification within the church, but rather he sets himself against the religious

whole church is to live out of the abundance and fullness of Christ, in order with all the saints to be able to apprehend what are the dimensions (of what has happened and been given in Christ); it must learn to know his love which surpasses knowledge and thus be filled into all the fullness of God (Eph 3:18, 19).

It is a matter here, as is again and again apparent particularly in Ephesians and Colossians, of the full awakening of consciousness, knowledge, insight into the all-embracing significance of Christ. What is intended is not a purely theoretical or speculative knowledge, but an ever more profound awareness and an increasing clarity of insight with regard to all the implications of the salvation given in Christ.

- c) This is accompanied by still another aspect of this upbuilding, that of mutual unity and love, which is no less a proof of maturity than is knowledge. For the truth must be practiced in love, and only so does growth take place (Eph 4:15), just as the hearts of believers are to be united together in love unto all insight and knowledge (Col 2:2). The building up of the church accordingly consists in this, that all may come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and may attain to mature manhood (Eph 4:13). On the one hand this means therefore a common growth and upbuilding to greater perfection. On the other, Paul's admonition, precisely in the texts on upbuilding, is directed toward this, that mutual harmony, the right relationship of community and individual, be preserved. It is accordingly here that his warnings apply against spiritual individualism and self-compacency. For this reason he also cautions against a knowledge that is not directed toward the whole and refuses to place itself at the service of others; this knowledge puffs up, but love builds up (1 Cor 8:1). Therefore it is precisely those who have come to a deeper insight and spiritual maturity who must bear with those who are not yet so far along. For each one must wish not to please himself, but his neighbourhood, for good, for edification (Rom 15:1, 2). With every spiritual gift that arises in the church the question should therefore be asked as to its "value for upbuilding," its value for the church (1 Cor 14:3, 5, 26), so that he who aspires to spiritual gifts must do so with a view to this upbuilding (1 Cor 14:12). It is repeated again and again that love is the secret of upbuilding (Rom 14:15, 19; 1 Cor 8:1), of all gifts is the most excellent (1 Cor 13), constitutes the bond that alone makes the church "perfect" (Col 3:14). Positively this upbuilding consists in mutual admonition, encouragement, warning, patience (1 Thes 5:11; cf v 14; 1 Cor 14:3). The continuing upbuilding of the church means that not only in its individual members but above all in its unity as the body of Christ it reaches perfection, ie, brings to revelation the fullness it possesses in Christ, in keeping what it has once received, in the increase of the knowledge of faith and wisdom, in love and mutual fellowship.

Furthermore, the charismata Christ wills to give for the

edification of his church, both in their diversity among themselves and in their collective tendency toward the upbuilding of the one church, are to be appreciated in the right way" (Ridderbos 1977:436-438).

4.3 The stories that muffle the meaning.....

Norman Habel writes:

Away with the manger,
the stable, the tinsel,
the pretty round halo,
the shed full of twinkles,
the virgin's blue bonnet,
and the sweet smell of shepherds,
if these are the stories
that muffle the meaning of Christmas
and take all the bite out of birth,
the crisis from Christmas,
the bleeding of babies,
and the greatness of God
in the scared little girl
called Mary.

Away with the manger
if Christ is not seen
as the real and the raw,
as the boy left in straw,
as your God at your door
on the night he was born.

God became man through the birth of Jesus Christ, the poor Messiah. But because of so many frills which were and still are added to His first coming, the fact that the

completely overlooked and the meaning thereof relativated. The same applies to the poor, the problem of poverty, liberation and development.

The true meaning of all these concepts is muffled primarily because of either a spiritualization or an ideologization of their contents. The result is that the poor remain poor, the problem of poverty increases and that the church is still in search of a biblical and theologically sound and effective practical ministry of liberation and development.

Notes:

1. Smith NJ: The first missionary who worked at Tshilidzini from 1956 to 1963.
2. op cit
3. Prof Rene Padilla, a liberation theologian from South America, addressed a group of theological students of the University of Stellenbosch during 1978. His whole lecture centred around the theme of "doing theology" as opposed to what is known in liberation theological circles as "talking theology" Padilla expressed great concern about theological theory as it prevails in some orthodox and liberation theological schools of thought.

SUMMARY

(English)

For almost a decade I have had the privilege of being in the service of congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in Ciskei, Transkei and Venda. During this time of service, by means of involvement and observation I had been brought deeply under the impression that by far the majority of the members of the DRCA are burdened by relative and/or absolute poverty. This problem of poverty is introduced in chapter 1 in the form of economic statistics but the ensuing theological and ethnological investigation in chapters 1 and 2 brings the deeper lying problematics of poverty to the fore.

From a theological and ethnological perspective poverty can be circumscribed as a spirit of poverty which is the result of the corruptio totalis and which therefore simultaneously and continuously disturbs the fundamental and total existence of the individual, group and community. The totality of man including his relationship towards God, towards others, towards creation, towards himself etc, disintegrates as a result of the destructive effect of the theological and ethnocultural corruptio totalis, while a psycho-cultural investigation of the traditional Venda view of man then also points towards a corruptio interna with regard to the traditional Venda life and world views, thought patterns, values etc and their inherent relation to the problematics of poverty. Theologically and ethnologically, poverty is therefore primarily an anthropological problem.

In the light of the above the search for a relevant anthropology is of determining importance. Chapter 3 therefore pays attention to the traditional Venda view of man in comparison to ancient Greek dualism and modern Western functionalistic-futurism. It seems clear that these three views mentioned regarding man have very little in common and therefore do not contribute much towards an effective anthropological ministry towards the poor. Ultimately a description of the

historical and recent trends in theological anthropology brings one to the conclusion that the liberation, responsibility and development of man lies in God who through grace in Christ and through His Spirit constitutes man as truly man. As man of God, man then lives in a covenant relationship with God, with others, with nature, with himself etc and he is eschatologically under way in the comfort and rest of God's promises and with death as gain.

This theological anthropology should form the core of the congregation's involvement in and ministry towards the poor. Such congregational involvement and ministry occurs within the context of the covenant by means of which the ekklesia as people of God, body of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit and cosmic-eschatological sign exists not of the world but in and for the world. The congregation therefore has a responsibility towards the world of poverty. Chapters 1 and 4 pay attention to the importance of an integrated and comprehensive ministry by means of which kerugma, koinonia and diakonia are equally emphasized with man as the focal point.

SUMMARY

(Afrikaans)

Vir bykans 'n dekade lank het ek die voorreg gehad om in diens te staan van gemeentes van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika in die Ciskei, Transkei en Venda. Gedurende hierdie dienstydperk het ek deur middel van betrokkenheid en waarneming diep onder die indruk gekom van die feit dat verreweg die meerderheid van die lidmate van die NGKA gebuk gaan onder relatiewe en/of absolute armoede. Hierdie probleem van armoede word in hoofstuk 1 in die vorm van ekonomiese statistiek aan die orde gestel, maar die verdere teologiese en volkekundige ondersoek in hoofstukke 1 en 2 bring die dieperliggende problematiek ten opsigte van armoede na vore.

Teologies en volkekundig beskou kan armoede omskryf word as 'n gees van armoede wat die gevolg is van die corruptio totalis en wat derhalwe die fundamentele en totale bestaan van die individu, groep en gemeenskap gelyktydig en voortdurend versteur. Die geheel van die mens met inbegrip van sy relasie tot God, tot andere, tot die skepping, tot homself, ens disintegreer agv die vernietigende effek van die teologiese en etno-kulturele corruptio totalis, terwyl 'n psigo-kulturele ondersoek na die tradisionele Venda beskouing van die mens ook nog dui op 'n corruptio interna met betrekking tot die tradisionele Venda lewens- en wêreldbeskouinge, denkpatrone, waardes, ens en hul inherente verband met die problematiek van armoede. Teologies en volkekundig is armoede dus primêr 'n antropologiese probleem.

'n Soeke na 'n relevante antropologie is in die lig van die bostaande van deurslaggewende belang. Hoofstuk 3 skenk derhalwe aandag aan die tradisionele Venda beskouing van die mens in vergelyking met antieke Griekse dualisme en moderne Westerse funksioneel-futurisme. Dit blyk duidelik dat hierdie drie

genoemde beskouings aangaande die mens weinig in gemeen het en derhalwe nie veel bydra tot 'n effektiewe antropologiese bediening aan die armes nie. Uiteindelik bring 'n beskrywing van die historiese en resente tendense in die teologiese antropologie die konklusie dat die bevryding, verantwoordelikheid en ontwikkeling van die mense geleë is in God wat uit genade in Christus en deur Sy Gees die mens tot ware mens konstitueer. As Godsmens lewe die mens dan in verbondsgemeenskap met God, met andere, met die skepping, met homself, ens en is hy eskatologies onderweg in die troos en rus van God se beloftes en met die dood as wins.

Hierdie teologiese antropologie behoort die kern te vorm van die gemeente se betrokkenheid by en bediening aan die armes. Sodanige gemeentelike betrokkenheid en bediening geskied binne die kader van die verbond deur middel waarvan die ekklesia as volk van God, liggaam van Christus, tempel van die Heilige Gees en kosmies-eskatologiese teken nie van die wêreld is nie maar weliswaar in en vir die wêreld bestaan. Die gemeente het dus 'n verantwoordelikheid ten opsigte van die wêreld van armoede en hoofstukke 1 en 4 skenk aandag aan die belang van 'n geïntegreerde en omvattende bediening deur middel waarvan kerugma, koinonia en diakonia ewewigtig beklemtoon word met die mens as fokuspunt.

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