

AN AFRICAN THEOLOGY OF DECOLONIZATION

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*If a man hasn't found something to die for,
he isn't fit to live.*

M. L. King, Jr.

W. E. B. DuBois was right when he said, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." That is to say, regardless of your own definition of your own being, you fall into one of four racial groups, namely, yellow, black, white, and red. But you cannot stand in or belong to more than one racial group. But history shows us that some racial groups have been victimized by another or other groups. But I am not interested in what happened in history in human relations — of all racial groups. I am particularly interested in the conditions of my Black existence under the most barbaric and inhuman system of man's inhumanity to man. That is to say, I would like to examine the conditions of my being which is oppressed by another kind of racial group — called "white." The nature of my oppression is also shared by my brother, Ho Chi Minh, when he said, "It is well known that the black race is the most exploited and most oppressed of the human family."

This essay, being just a summary of the introductory part to *The Harvard Divinity School's Black Religious Experience Report*, is not expected to offer all that I have to say on the subject. One of the main reasons for this is simply that there is not enough space in this review for that piece of work. Those who would like to do a further reading may get themselves a copy in The Andover-Harvard Library (in closed reserve). However, I would like to express some of the major ideas discussed in our work, especially that section of the report which deals with Theology of Decolonization.

What is Theology of Decolonization?

Before one discusses the quest for a radical theological decolonization of Bourgeois Theology, or white theology, one should

attempt to understand the meaning of the word "decolonization." But one cannot understand the process of decolonization without, in the first place, understanding its presupposition, namely, colonialism. For this reason, I would like to begin with the quest for the nature and meaning of such an ideology, called colonialism. What then, is colonialism?

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana says, "I have always regarded colonialism as the policy by which a foreign power binds territories to her own economic advantage."¹ The late Ho Chi Minh said, "Colonization is in itself an act of violence of the stronger against the weaker. This violence becomes still more odious when it is exercised upon women and children."² Dr. Frantz Fanon said that "Colonialism cannot be understood without the possibility of torturing, of violating, or of massacring. . . . To torture [is] a way of life."³ Amilcar Cabral of Guinea Bissau describes white colonialism as the most barbaric and inhuman process of "arresting, killing, massacring."⁴ And he goes on to say, "Obviously violence and lies have been, and still are, the weapons of any colonialism."⁵ Dr. W. E. Abraham of Ghana says, "Essentially, colonialism is aggression."⁶ Patrice Lumumba of the Congo defines colonialism by asking, "Who will forget, finally, the fusillades where so many of our brothers perish or the prisons where all those were brutally flung who no longer wished to submit to the regime of a law of oppression and exploitation which the colonists had made a tool of their domination?"⁷ Finally, answering to his Black son who asked, "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?" the late Dr. M. L. King, Jr., describes the conditions of American domestic colonialism in the following words: "When you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading 'whites' and 'colored';

¹ KWAME NKUMAH, *Autobiography* (London: Nelson, 1957), Preface, vii.

² HO CHI MINH, *On Revolution* (New York: The New American Library, 1963), 29.

³ FRANTZ FANON, *Toward African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 66.

⁴ AMILCAR CABRAL, *Revolution in Guinea* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ E. W. ABRAHAM, *The Mind of Africa* (London: W. & N., 1962), 152.

⁷ PATRICE E. LUMUMBA, *Speech on Independence Day*, June 30, 1960.

when your first name becomes 'nigger,' your middle name becomes 'boy' (however old you are) and your last name becomes 'John,' and your wife and mother are never given the respected title 'Mrs. '; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoes stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of 'nobodiness' — then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait." ⁸

Having lived under Belgian colonialism for more than twenty years, my historical reading of the colonial conditions of Africans in the Americas and the conditions of Africans in the colonized Congo are exactly the same. Hence colonialism means slavery.

But colonialism must be eliminated. In order to remove it, one must decolonize. To decolonize means to set the politically and economically colonized and thingified free. It is to set the captive free. When Jesus of Nazareth spoke about his own mission of decolonization, he took the Book of Isaiah and told his audience the nature of his mission here on earth. This is what he said:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

Jesus, who came on this earth, came to decolonize the ones who were under the political and spiritual yoke of colonialism. Political colonialism demands a political decolonization. And this political "decolonization which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder."⁹ Decolonization is always a violent phenomenon because one group of the oppressed wants to free itself from the shackles of the oppressor. Quite often, the oppressor does not want to give up easily. When he (the oppressor) refuses to let his captives go, he invites violence. The radical and violent response of the op-

⁸ MARTIN L. KING, JR., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: New American Library, 1963), 81-82.

⁹ FRANTZ FANON, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 36-37.

pressed will take place. And in such a political dialectics the oppressed will do all they have in their power to achieve their liberty. We call this "decolonization." It is a historical process during which a new humanity is welcomed in human society. Frantz Fanon says that decolonization "brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power, the 'thing' which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself."¹⁰ Finally, and precisely, Fanon describes the process of decolonization in the words of Jesus Christ, saying, "The last will be first and the first last."¹¹

Having defined the historical context within which the process of decolonization could be properly understood, I would like to move now into the religious discourse of Theology of Decolonization. What is to be decolonized here? Theology of Decolonization is an antithesis to the thesis of Bourgeois Theology, or white theology. Briefly, Bourgeois Theology can be defined as an atheistic, anti-Christ, inhuman, racist, colonial scientific ideology whose main purposes are (1) to save the white races by all means necessary, (2) to exploit non-whites, and (3) to dominate non-whites economically, politically, socially, and spiritually. As an ideology of dehumanization and depersonalization, Bourgeois Theology is the embodiment of all forces of evil which contributed to the misery of the world in general, and to the eternal pains and sufferings of the people of African blood.

Before we engage ourselves in the process of decolonizing of this Bourgeois Theology, we should examine its content. This content is twofold: (1) Bourgeois Theology as the Agent of White Colonialism, and (2) Bourgeois Theology as the Agent of the Cult of White Supremacism. This twofold content of Bourgeois Theology will help us to understand why Black people are now saying "Yes" to Jesus Christ, but "No" to white ecclesiology and theology.

Another comment to be made before we move into our exami-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

nation of the content of Bourgeois Theology is that we are not saying that all whites are naturally and inherently racist. We are not saying that there were no white peoples who were human enough to take the liberating and loving Gospels of Jesus Christ. What we are saying is that most whites, being brought up in a racist culture, are, in one way or the other, racist. Unless they prove that they are not, our trust in them as brothers and sisters will remain a myth. We are thankful to the Lord because of the good work of some human whites who did and continue to fight for justice, equality, and freedom of all of God's children.

A. Bourgeois Theology: The Architect and Agent of White Colonialism

If you think that Bourgeois Theology did not contribute to the policy of the exploitation of man by man, you should not read this essay. You should go into your library and do more critical research in the history of "Christian" missions. But we know that China is closed to Bourgeois Theology. We know that India is uncertain. Who knows who will be the next?

This is the way a white American Bishop, Dr. Ralph E. Dodge, begins his first chapter in his book, *The Unpopular Missionary*:

"MANY OF THE churches of this country are agents of government in the oppression of the African people. . . ."

There is always conflict between a missionary and an African Christian; the latter wants both Christianity and freedom from colonial powers. There are some missionaries who support colonial powers.

The Christian missionaries accommodated themselves to the psychology of the colonizers.¹²

These statements dealing with the identification of white Christianity with white colonial oppression may serve us as an introduction to this matter.

The belief that the missionaries are the most effective agents of white imperialism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism, that they collaborated in the colonial, barbaric, demonic, and inhuman conquest of Africa is well illustrated in the most pan-African popular saying which runs as follows, "*When the whites came to our*

¹² RALPH E. DODGE, *The Unpopular Missionary* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1964), 17.

country we had the land, and they had the bible; now we have the bible and they have the land."¹³ That is to say, white missionaries, working for colonial settlers, said to us, "Let us pray," and we closed our eyes, and when we responded, "Amen," at the end of that unusually long spoken prayer, we found the bible in our hands, and our land in the hands of the missionaries and their white colonists.

Perhaps a few historical reports and comments which explain to us more about the white missionary contribution to colonialism will help us to understand this matter.

The report from the All Africa Conference of Churches tells us that

There is [another] dimension to this picture of anarchy in the Church in Africa. We read as children from history that when the Portuguese discoverers reached a certain point on the coast of Africa, they implanted a cross. Since then the Church in Africa has gone hand in hand with the Adventurer, the Explorer, the Colonizer and even the Imperialist. Even up to this century the Church in this continent, in spite of remonstrations to the contrary, has not been able to tear itself loose from the cords of Caesar's robes.¹⁴

And not long ago,

. . . on his visit to Portugal in May 1967, the Pope brought a gift of \$150,000 to the Portuguese government 'for overseas use,' and he nominated the Cardinal of Lisbon to the office of Bishop of Portuguese Armed Forces, with the rank of brigadier.¹⁵

This attitude of this colonial government to the Church is clearly expressed in a statement made, on 28 August 1967, by the Under-Secretary for Overseas Administration:

When the State entrusts the Catholic missions with a share in the work of education, the State is certain that the mission will work for the common good, in the task entrusted to them. And when the Church accepts this task, the Church is equally certain that the State has taken the best path for defending the interests it is its duty to

¹³ EDUARDO MONDLANE, *The Struggle for Mozambique* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 23 (italics are mine).

¹⁴ *Drumbeats from Kampala*, Report of the First Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches, 1963.

¹⁵ MONDLANE, *op. cit.*, 72-73.

defend. From this we conclude that in the auspicious work which, for centuries, they have accomplished in Africa, the activities of Church and State will continue in perfect harmony, led by the same ideals.¹⁶

Perhaps the 10-paragraph long statement made by Monseigneur Alvim Pereira, of Lourenço Marques, Mozambique will show you the official position of White Vatican vis-à-vis the African political self-determination — when it suggests that the independence African people want not only is wrong but contrary to the will of God.¹⁷

The “holy alliance” between commercial interests, government circles, and missionaries proved to be effective. Dr. Philip, the Superintendent of the London Missionary Society who was out to the Cape in 1819, shows us with keen farsightedness in the following statement the role missionaries were to play:

While the missionaries have been employed in locating the savages among whom they labour, teaching them industrious habits, creating a demand for British manufactures, and increasing their dependence on the colony, there is not a single instance of a tribe thus enjoying the labor of a missionary making war against the colonists, either to injure their persons, or to deprive them of their property. Missionary stations are the most efficient agents which can be employed to promote the internal strength of our colonies, and the cheapest and best military posts a government can employ.¹⁸

Mr. Nasipho Majeke, a native of South Africa, discusses the manner in which the missionary approached the Africans and the consequences that followed:

At the outset, the missionary approaches the chief humbly, Bible in hand, and asks for a small piece of land to set up his mission station. At his heels hasten the trader, the purveyor of cheap goods. Thus, the Bible and the bales of Lancashire cotton became the twin agents of a revolutionary change. The peaceful penetration by the missionary and the trader — sometimes the missionary turned trader — is followed in due course by an “agreement” between the chief and the governor, whereby the British became “the friend and the protector”

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

¹⁸ RAM DESAI (ed.), *Christianity as Seen by the Africans* (Denver, Alan Swallow, 1962), 16.

of the chief . . . and it ends with a so-called "treaty" in which the chief "agrees" to the seizure of a large piece of land belonging to the tribe. In return he receives a magistrate as well as a missionary, who is much less humble than he was when he first arrived to beg a land of the chief.¹⁹

Without bringing in many other historical evidences, we may say that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in this context, was neither spiritually known nor existentially lived by white missionaries in their own pagan and barbaric land, but was used as an instrument by means of which the colonial conquest of Africa could be achieved. Someone has said that "Sometimes even Portuguese missionaries were used as 'pacifiers' of the natives, with the Christian faith offered as a lullaby, while the Portuguese military forces occupied the land and controlled the people."²⁰ In this stage of neo-colonialism, we are informed about the spying activities of white missionaries in the nationalist governments in the Third World. "Often unknown to each other, the C.I.A. deep agents masquerade as businessmen, tourists, scholars, students, missionaries or charity workers."²¹ Now, in this very respect, as previously stated by the Report of the All Africa Conference of Churches, the Saving, Loving, and Liberating Cross of our wonderful Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was replaced by the inhuman, demonic, and bloody Flag of white colonial oppression. What a contradiction to the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Bearer of liberty and not slavery, of justice and not injustice, of love and not hatred!

Right here, one can see how Bourgeois Theology, which is responsible for training white preachers, white citizens, white teachers, white students, has contributed to the architecture of that system of man's inhumanity to man. It conspired with the powers and principalities of colonialism in torturing, enslaving, massacring, and violating the peaceful citizens of the continent of Africa. This Bourgeois Theology became not only a threat to the existence of the Wretched of the Earth, but also a negation of humanity itself. It created and continues to create the most

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

²⁰ MONDLANE, *op. cit.*, 26-27.

²¹ *The New York Times*, April 26, 1966.

satanic instruments that go out (supposedly in the name of the Lord) to dehumanize, to terrorize, and to thingify the children of God. Crime or civilization!

B. Bourgeois Theology: The Architect and Agent of the Cult of White Supremacism

On April 29, 1968, Thomas A. Johnson, a Black reporter for *The New York Times*, reported the following conversation:

A German in Vietnam asked a Negro civilian if he was aware of how some American Whites talked about Negroes when they were alone. The Negro said he was. "Do you know that they call you animals," the German said, "that they say you have tails and that they seem especially anxious that foreigners — myself and Vietnamese — hear this?" "I know," the Negro said. "What's wrong with them?" the German said. "They're white Americans," he was told. "A strange breed of people."²²

Perhaps this dialogue tells us something about the psychodynamics of white racism. But I do not have time to say all I know about white racism in Africa and in the United States of America. However, we can just quote some racist statements made by those who had contributed to the religious architecture of white culture. These statements represent what I call "White Racist Mentality."

David Hume, "I am inclined to believe that Negroes are naturally inferior to whites."²³

William James, "The amount of alteration in public opinion which my utopia postulates is vastly less than the difference between the mentality of those black warriors who pursued Stanley's party on the Congo with their cannibal war cry 'Meat! Meat!' and that of the 'general staff' of any civilized nation. History has seen the latter internal bridged over: the former can be bridged over much more easily."²⁴

About William Penn, Rev. George Whitefield, and President Jonathan Edwards: Dr. Edwards Blyden tells us that "Some even of the most

²² BARRY N. SCHWARTZ and ROBERT DISCH (eds.), *White Racism* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1970).

²³ Quoted in JOSEPH WASHINGTON, *The Politics of God* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 18.

²⁴ WILLIAM JAMES, *The Moral Equivalent of War*, *Representative Essays in Modern Thought*, ed. by F. H. Restine and H. R. Steeves (Chicago: American Book Company, 1913), 533.

eminent divines were so far implicated in the terror, that they, with perfect ease of conscience, held Negroes in bondage. The distinguished William Penn, Rev. George Whitefield, or world-wide celebrity, President Jonathan Edwards, author of several standard works in Theology, were slaveholders.”²⁵

Albert Schweitzer: “With regard to the Negroes, then, I have coined the formula: ‘I am your brother, it is true, but your elder brother.’ ”²⁶

We know very well that there are enough historical evidences to show the names of many other white religious philosophers who, in one way or the other, were the founders of the cult of white supremacism. Moreover, through the centuries, the Bible was misused by white “Christians” to “justify” the “natural superiority of whites” and “natural inferiority of blacks.” But it is a big shame to discover that white theologians had put a great emphasis on the curse of Ham (or the supposedly Black race), whereas the one who was cursed by Noah was not Ham, but Canaan, believed to have been the ancestor of the white race. What a theological sin of omission! Too late to correct those thousands of books containing this big lie!

Having seen the twofold content that constitutes Bourgeois Theology, what can we expect from Black theologians, Black seminarians, Black people? What do you think Blacks are saying when they discover the other side of the coin (of Hume, James, Edwards, Schweitzer, and the whole of white Christianity)? Blacks, who have already come of age, do not take white theology again. They cannot swallow it. They have no place to keep such a dehumanizing and depersonalizing white ideology. They will call for a radical theological decolonization — or a complete rejection of white Christianity, white God, and white Jesus — and replacing this anti-Christ theological nonsense by more human, more biblical truths for both political and spiritual salvation of all of God’s children.

In non-theological literature, we have another critical analysis

²⁵ EDWARD W. BLYDEN, *Liberia's Offering* (New York: John H. Gray, Printer Stereolyser and Binder, 1862), 33.

²⁶ ALBERT SCHWEITZER, *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest* (New York: The Macmillan Company), 130ff.

of Bourgeois Theology and of its spiritual colonization over Black people. Let us now see how Blacks react to this colonial theology.

Ron Karenga sees "Christianity [as] white religion. It has a white God." Addressing himself to the twofold nature of Bourgeois Theology, Karenga says,

The Christian is our worse enemy. Quiet as it's kept, it was a Christian who enslaved us. Quiet as it's kept, it was a Christian that burns us. Quiet as it's kept, it's a Christian that beats us down on the street; and quiet as it's kept, when the thing goes down it'll be a Christian that's shooting us down.²⁷

Malcolm X puts it this way:

My brothers and sisters, our white slavemasters's Christian religion has taught black people here in the wilderness of North America that we will sprout wings when we die and fly up into the sky where God will have for us a special place called heaven. This is white man's Christian religion used to *brainwash* us black people! We have *accepted* it! We have *embraced* it! We have *believed* it! And while we are doing all of that, for himself, this blue-eyed devil has *twisted* his Christianity, to keep his *foot* on our backs . . . to keep our eyes fixed on the pie in the sky and heaven in the hereafter . . . while he enjoys *his* heaven right here . . . on *this earth* . . . in this life.²⁸

Frantz Fanon says,

The Church in the colonies is the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor. And as we know, in this matter many are called but few chosen.²⁹

A Black student once said,

The Christian religion is incompatible with the Negro's aspirations for dignity and equality in America. It has hindered where it might have helped; it has been evasive when it was morally bound to be forthright; it has separated believers on the basis of color, although it has declared its mission to be a universal brotherhood under Jesus

²⁷ CLYDE HALISI and JAMES MTUME (eds.), *The Quotable Karenga* (Los Angeles: US Organization, 1967), 14.

²⁸ MALCOLM X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, 1966), 200-01.

²⁹ FANON, *The Wretched of the Earth*, *op. cit.*, 42.

Christ. Christian love is the white man's love for himself and for his race. For the man who is not white, Islam is the hope for justice and equality in the world we must build tomorrow.⁸⁰

Tom Mboya said,

Before the Emergency was declared in 1952 [Mau Mau Revolt], most missionaries in Kenya were very much part of the colonial and white settler mentality. They were among those who constantly told the African he was not ready for various advances, that he must be patient and believe in God and wait for the day when he might advance sufficiently. They were among those who spread fear and feelings of inferiority among Africans, through the schoolchildren and through the Christians in their parishes. In no case can I recall a missionary — Catholic, Protestant or any other — fighting back and denouncing the colonial regime and the social setup, or trying to create among Africans a new spirit of pride and confidence in themselves. Rather, they undermined this confidence by a negative attitude.⁸¹

These comments about Bourgeois Theology suffice to show us how hostile and dehumanizing it was and still is on the one hand, and how impatient the oppressed are in attempting both to denounce and to destroy it, on the other.

I should also quote from my own article, "The Christian Marijuana of Pope Paul VI in Africa," a statement made by Africans about the hypocritical and imperialistic attitude of the White Vatican towards the oppressed. The following statement was made by The Nigerian Students Union in America (N.S.U.A.). It equates the Pope's visit to Uganda with a visit to Africa by a capitalist "only interested in profit never mind what happens to Africans." The statement goes on to say, "THE POPE is interested in expanding his Catholic Empire, even if it costs the instability and mass murder of Africans." The statement points out that Africans, with their traditional sense of hospitality for foreigners, welcomed the Pope. "They may have forgotten," says the statement, "that the Pope's visit was in no way different from a capitalist's or imperialist's visit to our gold and diamond mines in South Africa, our copper territory in the Congo or our sulphur-

⁸⁰ A missing quotation from MALCOLM's writings.

⁸¹ TOM MBOYA, *Freedom and After* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), 10-11.

free oil fields in Nigeria.” N.S.U.A.’s statement points out that *the Pope has visited a wrong place*. “He should visit South Africa to baptize Voster from his inhuman treatment of Blacks; he should go to Prime Minister Caetano of Portugal to teach him that Black Guineans, Angolans are eligible for basic, fundamental human rights; and Mr. Ian Smith of ‘Rhodesia’ is badly in need of Pope Paul’s blessing to know before it is too late that his illegal regime will be destroyed by our breed of Africans.” And “if the Pope visits and departs from Africa without being told in strong terms that the Catholic church in the whole Africa must be Africanized,” said the statement, “a big error of omission shall have been committed.” And the statement concludes that “AFRICA WILL NOT be free from imperialism until all its institutions are administered by its bona-fide sons and daughters.”³²

In November, 1970, I had the privilege to attend a Missionary Conference of Christianity and Racism. It was held at the Board of World Missions of the Presbyterian Church, U.S. in Nashville, Tennessee. When I was given an opportunity to address the conference, I said: “my family and myself were victims of white American missionary racism in the Congo. In the 2,500 seat temple at Luebo where my father was a pastor, there were special pews set aside for whites only. Black Christians were not allowed to sit over there, no matter how crowded the sanctuary was.” Yes, after my address, I was not challenged on that particular statement because those missionaries knew very well that I have experienced that white missionary racism and Belgian slavery for more than 20 years (until the Congo became independent in 1960).

The truth of the matter is that those who came to preach to us about the love of God were not capable of loving either. They could not love those who were different from them. And it was because of that white missionary attitude that one of the Kwena told Dr. David Livingstone, “To be plain with you, we should like much better if you traded with us and then went away, without forever boring us with preaching that word of yours.”³³

³² DIBINGA WA SAID, *The Christian Marijuana of Pope Paul VI in Africa*, 1970. This is an unpublished article.

³³ RAM DESAI, *op. cit.*, 4.

Mr. Ajo Adjei, commenting on white missionary racism, says, "I often wonder why Americans are so enthusiastic about sending Christian missionaries to Africa, while in America our cousins — I mean the black Americans of African descent — are segregated and subjected to all forms of endless humiliation."³⁴

In his article, "The Social Theological Bases of Apartheid," the Rev. Christopher N. Nteta raises the following question: Apartheid: Christian or Anti-Christian? In other words, he is asking those whites who call themselves "christians" whether their cult of white supremacy is truly Christian. He uses the records of the United Nations Security Council to answer his own question. This is what the records say,

In South Africa there is a government professing to speak in the name of Christianity and "European race" which is the only government in the world which chooses as its guiding policy not a striving to obtain justice, equality and safeguards for human rights, but a determination to preserve privileges, defend discrimination and extend domination to such a degree that it amounts to the organization of a society on principles of slavery. In South Africa the denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms is openly pursued as an avowed policy.

"Here," as Nteta quotes Mr. D. M. J. Redelinghuys, "the goal is the preservation of the Christian Western civilization — note carefully, 'Christian,' or more correctly, our own selfish self-preservation, nothing more."³⁵

Another South African Christian, Mr. Alan Paton, aware of all dehumanizing work of Bourgeois Theology, warned against the danger of its pseudo-Christianity: "The greatest danger to Christianity in Africa is pseudo-Christianity. And the marks of pseudo-Christianity are always easy to recognize: it always prefers stability to change; it always prefers order to freedom; it always prefers what it considers realism to love."³⁶

The collaboration and conspiracy of Bourgeois Theology with white colonialism, on the one hand, and its architectural work of

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ CHRISTOPHER N. NTETA, *Liberation Movements and the Issues They Raise for the Church*, an address to The Division of Overseas Ministry of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1971.

³⁶ Quoted in Nteta, *ibid.*

belief in and practice of white racism towards Black people convince us both in the United States and in the rest of the Black world that white theology is the negation of Blackness. That is to say, white theology has nothing to do for our liberation. Instead, it perpetuates our pain and sufferings for the survival of white people. For these two reasons, Blacks are saying that they will not buy the white man's theological lies. They are saying, "to hell with irreligious whitanity! To hell with white God! To hell with white Jesus! And to hell with those theological Black uncle toms who are still hung on the myth that the Black salvation will come from white institutions. Mr. Charlis wont do it for us!"

It is true, at least for Blacks, that no white theologians ever wrote anything in theology, or in ethics, or in any ecclesiastical disciplines dealing with the question of the liberation of the inferiorized. As an influential part of the ruling colonial class, white theologians forgot the prophetic nature of the Word of God and its radical call for *metanoia*. They became and continue to become the instruments of their own oppressive and inhuman political regimes. They conspire with the enemy of mankind in order to depersonalize, to lynch, and to dehumanize the made poor of this planet.

Both white theologians and white churchmen are in the same boat. The tragedy is that our white folks of today avoid any responsibilities for the causes that make Black people suffer. They say, "we are not responsible for the faults of our great, great parents." This usual statement was made to me when I spoke to a predominantly white church in Newton, Massachusetts in 1971. Knowing that Newton was the headquarters of Polaroid Company which economically and inhumanly contributes to the death of Africans in South Africa, I told the white churchmen the following words: "What do you do with Polaroid? Nothing! But you know what this company is doing in South Africa. You know very well that it contributes to the pains and sufferings of Black Africans." But I went on to tell them, "I know that you cannot oppose the inhuman contribution which Polaroid is making to the white regime in South Africa for two reasons: 1. You are whites and pro-white regime in South Africa, and 2. Polaroid is bringing in a lot of money in Newton for your welfare and that of

your children." The truth of the matter is simply that since modern whites deny that they are responsible for Black suffering, but resist any change for the old racist political system in which they participate, I can just say that they are liars. And this leads me to believe that a liberal white is a conservative white. They are the same. They are still living in and perpetuating the same old racist and aggressive policy of exploitation of man by inhuman forces. They like it because it contributes to their welfare.

Now, what has been the attitude of the inferiorized when they discovered that Bourgeois Theology was and still is the sole architect of White Colonialism and White Supremacism? In order to answer this question, I would like to bring in two black religious ideologies which really opposed Bourgeois Theology and all its injustice, aggression, exploitation, and death. These ideologies are, in Africa, Ethiopianist Theology; and Black Power Theology in America. Both ideologies are derived from the same people, oppressed by the same forces, and longing for one common thing — liberation of Blacks from the yoke of white domination. And since they agree with Fanon that "Between oppressors and oppressed everything can be solved by force," these ideologies use all means necessary for their liberation (including violence).

Ethiopianist Theology is derived from the biblical Psalms 68:31 "*Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God.*" The slogan of Ethiopianism was and still is, *Africa for the Africans*. This theology stands for (1) radical recapture of the lost land; (2) radical withdrawal of whiteness from all African institutions (including white God, white Jesus); (3) joint action of local African, anti-colonial movements of liberation (i.e., Mau Mau); (4) unconditional recognition and radical affirmation of Blackness through Black Sainthood (i.e., Kimpa Vita in the Congo, around 1450), Black Messiahhood (i.e., Chilembwe, Kimbangu, Shembe, etc.), through Black Prophethood (i.e., Alice Lenchina); (5) pursuit of a true biblical religion which will save man from material and spiritual bondages. Generally, the idea was and still is that the Black Messiah is at the gate of heaven; and that he is the holder of the keys. Only Blacks can enter. But under special circumstances, few *human* whites may also enter — depending on the number of seats left in the Kingdom of God, or the New Jerusalem.

The idea being, "Blacks first, but not for Blacks only." A kind of universal brotherhood of only those who are *human*.

Black Power Theology is another voice of liberation which comes out of the cry of the Wretched of the Third World, living under the colonialism of white America. It has its roots in Africa and through the whole history of the Black Church in the United States of America. But Dr. James Cone's crystallization of almost all feelings of the oppressed Blacks into his writings has been some of the most meaningful work done in the field of Theology of Decolonization.

What is Black Theology? Black Theology is a survival theology. It is a theology which is attempting to liberate blacks from the yoke of white oppression. "*Its task is to analyze the black man's condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ with the purpose of creating a new understanding of black dignity among black people, and providing the necessary soul in that people, to destroy racism.*"³⁷ And its "*purpose is to analyze the nature of the Christian faith in such a way that black people can say Yes to blackness and No to whiteness and mean it.*"³⁸ Rev. Craig J. Lewis, comparing Bourgeois Theology with Black Power Theology wrote, "White theology has confined Christ to history. Black Theology calls for Christ to walk every day in the community, it calls for his teachings to be acted out every day in the community. If they are acted out, there would be no problems with social justice, no problems with economic oppression."³⁹ As a theology *of* and *for* Blacks, Black Theology refuses to accept any doctrine of God which is irrelevant to the existential conditions of the oppressed. "Black Theology is a critique rooted in oppression, in the pains of black people in this country and in the world. The critique calls for a critical analysis of the whole white theology, to try to bring more of Christ who freed people from political, economic and spiritual colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism."⁴⁰

³⁷ JAMES H. CONE, *Black Theology & Black Power* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), 117 (italics are mine).

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ CRAIG J. LEWIS, Black Students Work on Audit of HDS, *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* (1970, No. 1), 3.

⁴⁰ DIBINGA WA SAID, *ibid.*

THE NECESSITY FOR THEOLOGICAL DECOLONIZATION

Black Theology in the United States and the Ethiopianist Theology of African Independent Churches represent a Theology of Decolonization. It is defined as a scientific enterprise of which the main purpose is the liberation of the Wretched of the Third World from spiritual-socio-politico-economic colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism. As a radical call for a new humanity, a new creation, this Theology of Decolonization addresses itself primarily to the situation of the oppressed, and provides some means for their liberation from the white man's system of exploitation of man by the inhuman.

Moreover, Theology of Decolonization seeks for a God and a Jesus who can respond to the cry of the oppressed, a God and a Jesus who are here and now, dealing with the situation of the oppressed and liberating them from *spiritual imperialism, psychological terrorism, intellectual atrocities, and academic genocide which the white establishment has inflicted upon the oppressed for more than 520 years.*

On its positive side, Theology of Decolonization calls for reconciliation between races in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ. But such a reconciliation is not the work of the oppressed, because, historically, he has already played his part for some 520 years, loving, forgiving, serving, and even dying for the oppressor. It is the duty of the oppressor to take the initiative, to take the first step toward such a reconciliation. We have loved him too much. Now we say that we are sorry; we can love him no more. Our love is turning towards ourselves because for a long time we have been hating ourselves and loving others — too much. Jesus said, "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself." Which says, if you don't know how to love yourself, how can you love your neighbor? Jesus was talking about the importance of self-love. Blacks must decide whether the oppressor is what Jesus called "neighbor." At the same time, Theology of Decolonization does not teach racial hatred, because you hate what you fear. Blacks fear nobody, why then hate? Hatred, as the late Whitney Young said, is associated with the fools. We are not fools. It is associated with the beasts, such as lions, crocodiles — those cannibals. We are not cannibals.

It is associated with inhumanity. We are not inhuman, but human. Hatred dehumanizes the one who hates. Do we have time to dehumanize ourselves? What Jesus told us was, "Love the sinner, but hate the sin." Which means, "You may love your neighbor, but not his dehumanizing system." This is why Theology of Decolonization is prepared to fight and destroy those systems of evil by all means necessary in order to free both the oppressed and the oppressor. This is a necessity, because the freedom of Blacks is also the freedom of whites. Our liberation means universal liberation. For there will be no free man, no peace, until freedom comes to all.

Theology of Decolonization as a theology *for* the inferiorized and oppressed leaves room for the oppressor. That is to say, indirectly it makes him aware of the pollution of his theological and politico-economic system and asks him to make some change. It helps the oppressor to discover his errors and to free himself from the bondage of inhumanity and white supremacy. It calls for a new race of people that recognizes the humanity of others and that deals with others as human, as ends in themselves but not as means, as subjects in themselves but not as objects.

Theology of Decolonization is a survival theology. It is a theology of freedom. It does not talk about it, but does something — joining freedom fighters who are fighting for both spiritual and political salvation of the oppressed. Christopher Nteta, addressing The National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.'s Division of Overseas Ministry, spoke of "Freedom Fighters as Agents of Hominization vs. the Forces of *Verdinglichung* (thingification)." ⁴¹ Speaking of the participation of God in the liberating process of the oppressed, Nteta says,

It is God who challengelessly rules all change. I believe History is a process governed by God, who may, if it suits His purpose, use evil to destroy evil and usher in the good. Thus Assyria was unwillingly and unwittingly used as an instrument for the achievement of His purpose in His universe. I believe God acts in History against the machination of principalities and powers who oppose Him, that He is alive and moving.⁴²

⁴¹ NTETA, *op. cit.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

The idea here is that God is the God of and for the oppressed. He is a God who takes care of business. That is to say, a God who takes sides in any situation because his righteousness cannot stand aloof. He is a God who does not only listen to the cry of the inferiorized, but also does something for or participates in the process of their liberation from the forces of inhumanity. The Rev. Boykin Sanders once said, "For in Him there is no fear of a power structure, no fear of losing blood for his cause, and no fear for any man."⁴⁸ And St. Paul, one of the colonized Jews, said, "If God *be for us*, who *can be against us*?" (Romans 8:31)

For Theology of Decolonization, God is understood only in the realm of suffering. He has revealed himself in the image of a humiliated and crucified Palestinian on the cross. That was God. He is the embodiment of the sufferings of the oppressed. And his being upon that cross moves the inferiorized and oppressed toward an unconditional achievement of their lost humanity — their lost freedom. Here we see that the collective pains and sufferings of the Black people in history constitute a concrete image of God. It is a divine manifestation in which God reveals his power, his will to the oppressed and allows them to launch their war against those principalities and powers of depersonalization, dehumanization, and thingification. This is why God occupies a central place in Theology of Decolonization. This is why Jesus, that liberating Lord who is not confined to or made prisoner of history, is a central figure in the process of our liberation.

Moreover, in this very context of the concrete participation of God in our liberation, we see him as a God of righteousness. His wrath is upon the oppressor. We know very well that Bourgeois Theology has purposely neglected the other nature of God as righteous — by emphasizing only the loving aspect of the nature of God — telling the oppressor that God, the loving and merciful father, would forgive them of all inhuman treatment and atrocities committed against Blacks. Here, Bourgeois Theology, through its confessional creeds, has contributed to the pains and suffering which the white society has inflicted upon the Wretched of the Earth. But Theology of Decolonization does not overlook the

⁴⁸ BOYKIN SANDERS, *Toward Collective Revolution in the Black Community*, Unpubl., 1970.

other nature of God — as a righteous father who punishes and corrects his children. It believes that the God of righteousness is a God who crushes all evils. He is against the oppressor because the latter is the embodiment of all evils that negate all good. God is taking care of the oppressor right now. Because a God who does not take sides, who does not make what is right right, cannot be expected to do much in our process of liberation. We don't want a God that comes and passes by. We want a God who stops by and takes risks for the liberation of our people.

Finally, Theology of Decolonization is a theology of people. It is a theology of food. That is, it helps the churches and other secular associations to unite and make farms and factories on a local basis, in order to feed the children of God on this earth. It unites the local people to organize themselves in financial cooperatives. That is, they can have their own small banks, small businesses in order that they will become economically self-sufficient. It creates educational, medical, political, agricultural centres for the local people in order to prepare the future generations for a better and responsible life. This is why this theology, as a street theology, has no room for tokenism. It is an active theology. It is a theology of the *déclassés*. It is a theology of the prostitutes. It is a theology of the thingified. That is, it is a proletarian theology which includes all the rejected ones, and does something for their welfare here on this earth.

Theology of Decolonization says with Frederick Douglass:

I love the religion of our blessed Savior, I love that religion that comes from above, in the "wisdom of God, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." I love that religion that sends its votaries to bind up the wounds of him that has fallen among thieves. I love that religion that makes it duty of its disciples to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction. I love that religion that is based upon the glorious principle, of love to God and love to man; which makes its followers do unto others as they themselves would be done by.

If you demand liberty to yourself, it says, grant it to your neighbors. If you claim a right to think for yourself, allow your neighbors the same right. If you claim to act for yourself, it says, allow your

neighbors the same right. It is because I love this religion that I hate the slaveholding, the woman-whipping, the mind-darkening, the soul-destroying religion that exists in the southern states of America. It is because I regard the one as good, and pure and holy, that I cannot but regard the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. Loving the one I must hate the other; holding to the one I must reject the other.⁴⁴

Integration or Separation? Let those who want integration do integration. It might very well work. Let those who want separation do separation. It might work. All roads lead to Harlem. It does not matter where you live or who is your friend. What is important is what you are doing for the liberation of the inferiorized. But as far as Theology of Decolonization is concerned, it is neither a matter of separation nor integration. It is rather a matter of liberation. If there are human whites who want to join us, they are welcome. Because what the Theology of Decolonization wants to do is to make white people more human: to teach them how to love, how to become human so that they will be able to come into the Kingdom of God, which does not welcome those who are inhuman. And when they join us, they come as they are, but are not going to be washed by the red blood of Jesus in order to become whites. Nor are we going to wash them with black paint making them blacks. All of us want to go to heaven, although we don't want to die. But Theology of Decolonization does not think that there will be one color of people in heaven. We will be in heaven as we are. To be made white through a process of red blood is a contradiction in terms. This is why Dr. James Aggrey told his white audience in the first half of the twentieth century that:

I am glad I am black, God knew His business when He made me so, because it means He wants to do something through me. And if God ever wants me to come back into this world, and should offer to me a different color, I should say, "No! make me black again, but this time, blacker than ever."⁴⁵

Yes, "They took our lands and gave us the Bible." Theology

⁴⁴ P. S. DONER (ed.), *Frederick Douglass* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 55-56.

⁴⁵ ANNE G. COLLOCK, *Sons of Africa* (New York: Friendship Press, 1928), 124.

of Decolonization says, they did not give us the Bible, but they dropped it down while that long prayer was going on; and the African took it! We ain't going to give back that Bible. Rather, we are going to use it as the means through which we can humanize our white brothers and sisters; and also as a process by which we can recapture our lost lands. We want to destroy the sperm and the egg of white colonialism and the cult of white supremacism. But we are not going to destroy anybody, because we do not want to copy the inhumanity of the oppressor. Rather, we want to humanize the oppressor by all means necessary (including violence, the language of the oppressor) in order to humanize both the oppressed and the oppressor.

It is for this reason that we call for a radical change in the whole theological scholarship so that we can come up with a Theology of the Street. A theology which talks about God and Jesus in the everyday language. A theology which preaches the true message of Jesus Christ without any processes of dehumanization, thingification, or depersonalization.

And this is why Theology of Decolonization is needed in this time, because, although centered in God, it calls for a radical and unconditional recognition of HUMANITY. And this HUMANITY is the noblest thing in God's creating process: "For," as the Freeing Gospel tells us, "God so loved HUMANITY, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Theology of Decolonization walks in the street and says, "What can I do for you?" It does something *with* the oppressed, but not *for* them. It makes them producers and not consumers. It does not create new needs for the oppressed in order to make them eternally dependent on the technological forces of evils. Rather, it helps them to use their own resources in creating new things which will make them independently mature and responsible people. This is why Theology of Decolonization wants to see more of humanity in capitalism, more of humanity in communism, more of humanity in socialism, and more of humanity in any other "isms" (such as neo-colonialism, imperialism, christianism, etc.); or these inhuman systems must be destroyed once and for all.

CONCLUDING WORDS

Let the following words conclude this essay:

Portugal came to our countries proclaiming it came in the service of God and in the service of civilization. Today we reply with arms in our hands: whichever God is with the Portuguese colonialists, whichever civilization the Portuguese colonialists represent, we are going to destroy them because we are going to destroy every sort of foreign domination in our countries.

AMILCAR CABRAL

Already the demons are being named. The enemy is being identified. Its names are legion. Racism is a demon. War is a demon. Poverty is a demon. Powerlessness is a demon. Self-depreciation is a demon. And those who prop them up are demonic in effect. A strategy of liberation includes a ministry of exorcism, the naming and casting out of demons.

REUBEN A. SHEARES, II

It is a question of the Third World starting a new History of Man. . . . We must invent and we must make discoveries . . . for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man.

FRANTZ FANON

We need a new philosophy, the philosophy of the oppressed.

HERBERT O. EDWARDS

Let all men and women, Blacks and human Whites, join hand in hand in order to name, cast out, and destroy the demonic forces which constitute the negation of God's HUMANITY. And if freedom is for others, let the Black freedom free the oppressor from his cancer of spiritual imperialism, psychological terrorism, intellectual atrocities, and academic genocide!



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