A profile of the belief in Jesus and salvation among the Afrikaans speaking Christian youth

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Abstract

This article is based on the results of a large-scale empirical-theological research project on "Religion and Human Rights among South African Youth." Using the extensive database of this project, the article focuses on the results on the images of Jesus and the belief in salvation of Grade 11 learners. The results present a profile of the pluralistic and diverse scale of nuances in the belief structures of Christian teenagers. The results of the English-speaking private school learners are placed alongside the results of the Afrikaans speaking public school learners in order to obtain a more prolific picture of the belief of the Afrikaans speaking youth. The effect their belief in salvation has on their views regarding human rights is also examined. The results challenge the preacher to think dialectically and hermeneutically in a new age and context.

1.   INTRODUCTION

The results herein presented are derived from an ongoing quantitative longitudinal empirical-theological research project undertaken by the departments of practical theology at the universities of South Africa (Unisa) and Nijmegen in the Netherlands. The project, known as "Religion and Human Rights among South African Youth" (RHR project), was directed by J A van der Ven, J S Dreyer and the author. Two surveys have already been completed at eighteen (private and public) schools in the Pretoria/Johannesburg area in 1995/1996 and again in 2000/2002 – each time involving the same schools. In the case of the private schools, the samples were drawn with the assistance of the relevant churches (Anglican and Catholic) and in the case of the public or state schools, it was done with the assistance of the Department of Education. The surveys were conducted

among the Grade 11 learners at the private schools (English-speaking), as well as among Afrikaans-speaking learners from the same grade at Afrikaans-medium public (state) schools. The reason for the dual survey was that private schools had a multicultural pupil population all along and have thus always pursued a multicultural policy, whereas the Afrikaans-medium public schools were characterised by the monoculture of the white people. The following project data is available: in respect of the private school learners, questionnaire data obtained from 1995 (538 learners) and from 2000 (495 learners) is available while in the case of the public school learners, similar data dating from 1996 (283 learners) and 2001 (607 learners) exists. For the purposes of this report only the data of the self confessed Christian respondents (1995: 452; 2000:395; 1996:260; 2001:559) was analysed. Some of the results based on the data of the 1995 survey of all respondents have already been published in articles (see for instance Van der Ven, Dreyer & Pieterse 2000, 2000a, 2001, 2001a).

In the Christian tradition according to which Jesus is regarded as our Saviour, there is a strong link between belief in Jesus as the Christ and belief in salvation. Therefore, the results of our research of both themes are discussed in this article. A study of the images of Jesus and the belief in salvation held by these young South Africans, as well as the relationship between such belief and attitudes towards human rights, is very important at this point in our history. At the beginning of the 1990's, the Great Accord between black and white came into being. On 18 December 1996 the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa was signed by the country's new president, Nelson Mandela and with this democracy was extended to all South Africans, irrespective of race, creed or gender. Chapter 2 of the Constitution describes the fundamental human rights in a Bill of Rights based on the constitutional basis of most Western democracies, following the line of the British Bill of Rights (1689), the Bill of Rights attached to the US Constitution (1791), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 and the two covenants adopted on the basis of the declaration: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966. The South African Bill of Rights is incorporated into and is an integral part of the South African Constitution: Democracy is founded in human rights, and human rights are democratically affirmed in the supreme law of the country, the Constitution (Van der Ven, Dreyer & Pieterse 2000:112). Over the past six years the verdicts of the Constitutional Court serve as indication that the State has a

constitutional responsibility to protect the rights of the people, and that the constitution is given teeth through the courts.

However, the country is experiencing tremendous socio-economic problems. Half of the population lives below the poverty line (Pieterse 2001). The unemployment rate is still just below 30% of those who are able to work. Crime remains a huge problem. According to police reports released in September 2002, an average of 59 murders and 149 rape cases out of a population of 43 million are reported to the police per day (Beeld, 23 September 2002). The health situation in the country, with specific reference to Aids, has reached critical proportions. These problems evoke certain fundamental emotions in our people, which can be described by the following keywords: anxiety, fear and despondency. South Africans of all races and classes experience an unease that it could well be that our government does not have the finance, the power and the administrative means to bring these threatening powers under control, to roll them back and to provide an environment of peace and prosperity that all of us are yearning for (cf Pieterse 2001a:97). We are faced with the *problem* that the overwhelming ailments of our country can result in a feeling of hopelessness that can paralyse our youth. Therefore, the Christian faith of all South Africans, and especially that of our young people is put to a severe test. It is thus of great importance to establish what they believe and to establish the effect of their faith on the future of human dignity in this country.

This contribution focuses on the *question* of what these teenagers' views are regarding a central aspect of our Christian belief, namely their *belief in Jesus* and their *belief in salvation*, and how this belief (in salvation) influences their attitudes towards human rights. In the final analysis, such question has a bearing on the bigger question: can Christianity contribute to the solution of the social and economic problems in South Africa that are evident in violent crime, the health situation and the abuse of women and children? For Christianity to make a contribution in such a situation, salvation should also be a salvation into human rights.

In dealing with this question, I will first of all present a brief report on the results of our research into the images of Jesus among our respondents, then dealing with their belief in salvation, and the effect of their belief in salvation on human rights, making use of the draft written by Van der Ven in cooperation with Pieterse and Dreyer (forthcoming). In the article published in 2000 (Pieterse & Van der Ven 2000) we only made use of the results of the private schools' survey

of 1995. In this contribution I will present the results of the Christian respondents of all the surveys (1995, 1996, 2000 and 2001) in the private (English-speaking) schools and the public (Afrikaans speaking) schools.

2.   IMAGES OF JESUS

Out of the vast empirical information on tendencies in religious belief on various themes (God, Jesus, salvation, the church, their personal religious practice, the degree of secularisation, the influence of their faith on their decisions of various kinds, etcetera) obtained from our sample, I have, for the purpose of this article, chosen the images of Jesus the youth in the sample identify with and their belief in salvation.

It was not easy to describe images of Jesus which were meant to form a conceptual basis for our questions to the participants. It is manifestly impossible in an empirical study to cover the entire range of theological interpretations of Jesus. When the varied interpretations of Jesus (Christology) are examined, not only resemblances, but also differences come to the fore. Consequently, and following an earlier study of the same nature (cf Van der Ven & Biemans 1994:90), we decided not to measure adherence to the various interpretations of Jesus, but to test various dimensions of Christological attitudes. Hence, ours is a study of respondents' Christological attitudes. Different Christologies accentuate different Christological attitudes. The Christologies themselves function not as source for a measuring instrument, but as a set of criteria. Two other criteria for measuring the respondents' attitudes are the following: In compiling the items in the questionnaire, we drew on our practical pastoral experience among ordinary people. We asked ourselves whether the Christologies in question had any significance for people's everyday practice. Our third criterion was whether a particular statement or set of statements was researchable. Statements were reduced to one dimension of a particular Christological proposition in such a manner that they differ in essence from other Christological statements. Such a dimension was operasionalised in four items, shuffled and spread over the set of items. The measuring instrument was thus constructed with reference to three criteria: Christology, pastoral experience and methodology.

Six groups of items were drawn up. The first group covers the neo-scholastic attitude as a reaction to the Enlightenment, which has a relation to the classical two natures doctrine on Jesus; the second group focusing on the liberal-theological attitude towards Jesus; the third group dealing with the secular-

theological attitude; the fourth group the liberation-theological attitude; the fifth group covering the perspective that Jesus is the personal revelation of God and the personal sign and instrument of God's love for people; and the last group deals with the dialectical-theological attitude towards Jesus.

For lack of space I shall briefly refer to the *theological conceptualisation* of the six images of Jesus put before the respondents.

2.1 Theological conceptualisation of the images of Jesus

2.1.1 The neo-scholastic or orthodox attitude towards Jesus

By 325 and finally at Chalcedon in 451 the early church came to a Christological consensus of the divine nature of Jesus as being "of one substance" with God (McGrath 1994:18). Christianity still confess in the Apostles' Creed (forms part of the liturgy in my church every Sunday) that Jesus Christ is the only begotten son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, who suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, who rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father. Chalcedon makes the statement about Jesus that he is one person but with two distinct natures – perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity, with a human body and soul. In reaction to the modernistic influence on the traditional view of Jesus since the Enlighten-ment, neoscholastics strongly reverted to the early church's orthodox doctrine on the two natures of Jesus Christ (cf Jonker 1977). In its reaction to the new Christological formulations in the sphere of the Enlightenment it again connects with the classical christology which was influenced by Hellenistic metaphysics (see Van der Ven & Biemans 1994).

In our questionnaire a typical item expressing this traditional and neoscholastic attitude towards Jesus reads: "God has sent Jesus, his son, to earth."

2.1.2 The liberal-theological attitude towards Jesus

The principal exponent of this view of Jesus, as we understand it, is Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). He is rightly hailed as the first modern theologian. In Schleiermacher's theology human consciousness of God – piety, the supreme form of human affect – must develop from a weak to a powerful consciousness through *entwiklungsstufen*, which will take the pious person to the level of the higher life, that is, keener awareness of God (Schleiermacher 1980.1:33-49,

1980.2:19). Developments in our existence mean sharing in this higher life. Our existence is realised in our consciousness, which is a pious self-consciousness. Hence development to the higher life implies developing this pious self-consciousness.

Christianity owes its origin and continuation to the person Jesus of Nazareth (Schleiermacher 1980.1:61). Schleiermacher (1980.2:23) presents Jesus to all Christians as a fact, the original fact of Christianity as a whole. Jesus is a human being with a consciousness of God which is utterly powerful, utterly dependent on God, which precludes all sin, and which is posited together with his self-consciousness. In all this Jesus is the *Urbild*, the archetypal image, the original source, the original fact of all Christianity, and the model (*Vorbild*) of pious self-consciousness for all Christians (Schleiermacher 1980.2:19-26). Instead of the doctrine of two natures (God and human being in one person), then, Schleiermacher posits the concept of Jesus as the *Urbild* and the *Vorbild* (cf Jonker 1977:86). He concerned himself with the influence of Jesus' perfect consciousness on human beings. The church is the vehicle with which this influence is carried through history. Salvation is the salvific action emanating from Christ.

Schleiermacher's interpretation of Jesus life and work is a major factor in the liberal-theological conception of Jesus. A typical item in our questionnaire expressing such an attitude towards Jesus is the following: "Jesus Christ has shown us through his life how we can believe in God and in people."

2.1.3 The dialectical-theological attitude towards Jesus

The exponent of this interpretation and attitude towards Jesus is Karl Barth. As is generally known, his dialectical theology was developed at a particular time in European history and Barth's theology is thus also known as a crisis theology. It contrasts God's justice with human justice, and opposes all anthropocentric experiental theology and natural theology, all subjectivism, psychologism and historicism (Berkouwer 1954:12). Influenced by his times, Barth formulated a theology of crisis and judgement, of a radical "no" to human self-righteousness and human religious attempts to understand God. In Jesus, who as God's son was also God's Word, the Word of God placed all humans under divine judgement with this "no" (Barth 1964:142-146; 1960:117,121). The eternal God, the totally Other, and the insignificance and utter corruption of humanity resound

throughout his work. Jesus is the Word of God which has been called to place everything of human religious endeavour under critical judgement.

Barth replaces the static orthodox doctrine of Jesus' true divinity and true humanity with a dynamic approach. He sees the unity of God and humankind as a movement in history. The person and work of Christ are inseparably unified in the event of the reconciliation between God and humans effected in the man Jesus. He interrelates the two phases of Jesus' life and work (the stages of humiliation and exaltation) dialectically, so that Christ simultaneously participates in both humiliation and exaltation. According to Barth it is Christ's divinity that humiliates him and humanity which is exalted in him. Barth does not see the history of reconciliation as a historical course of events (although it can only be recounted as a historical narrative) but as *Geschichte* in the sense of an event that retains its relevance for all time. In this way he can visualise the humiliation and the exaltation as a single event. The reconciliation was not effected in time, it was only realised in time. The background to the *Geschichte* of the reconciliation enacted in the person of Jesus is the *Geschichte* of God's intra-trinitarian life. It is in this intra-trinitarian history of God's existence that God's primordial choice – his election – takes place, which consists in God's decision in freedom and love to extend mercy to humankind in Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of the two natures united in one person does not accord with Barth's dynamic vision of Jesus Christ as the event of the reconciliation. He speaks of *Geschichte*, a dynamic, ongoing real event in which God and humans are unified in the person of Jesus. This unity of God and people in the history of Jesus Christ has both a human and a divine aspect. The divine aspect is that God is the active subject in this history (Barth 1960:147). The human aspect is equally real, for Jesus has an authentic human history and existence. Barth can therefore insist that Jesus Christ is wholly human and wholly God (Barth 1960:165-177). A typical item expressing this attitude towards Jesus would be: "In Jesus Christ, God faces us with a radical decision: for or against Him."

2.1.4 The secular-theological attitude towards Jesus

This interpretation of Jesus' life and work is an attempt to clarify his significance for a modern secularised society. The transcendent dimension does not feature: It functions wholly on a horizontal plane. Proponents of this approach fully embrace the secularised thought of contemporary times. A prominent representative of this attitude towards Jesus is Paul van Buren (1963). His

premise relates to the question: "How may a Christian who is himself a secular man understand the Gospel in a secular way" (Van Buren 1963:xiv). Hence he proceeds from a Christian, rather than an atheistic position. His theologising is an attempt to comprehend the gospel in the secular world and is a "conversation from faith to faith" (Van Buren 1963:20).

According to Van Buren, Jesus was someone who lived and acted in complete freedom, the exponent or model of a good human being. As such, he is our prime example of how to live a Christian life. "When a Christian says that Jesus was a man, that is historical language. When he says he "is true man", he is indicating that Jesus is, for him, the measure of all men, and this leads already to the other side" (Van Buren 1963:168). This "other side" is the state in which Jesus regulates and moulds Christians' thinking and the way they see the world, and act in it, in such a way that they become "free for... (their) neighbour" (Van Buren 1963:169). Christians are freed to consort lovingly with other people. This loving association with fellow humans according to Jesus' example has no explicit religious reference. The caring, concern and loving association with people which Jesus exemplified to us, represent his meaning to secularised people today.

Van Buren's interpretation of Jesus represents a secular-theological attitude towards Jesus, and finds expression in the following typical item in our questionnaire: "Jesus Christ is the pre-eminent example of caring for our neighbour."

2.1.5 The liberation-theological attitude towards Jesus

Liberation theology regards faith not so much as a private, individual, inner world, but as something that pertains to the entire reality of human life. By the same token sin is not regarded "as individual, private, or merely interior reality ... which does not challenge the order in which we live" (Gutiérrez 1974:175). Christian life – including the church and theology – has to do with the entire political, social, economic and cultural situation in which people live. The concept of liberation "allows for another approach leading to the Biblical sources which inspire the presence and action of man in history. In the Bible, Christ is presented as the one who brings us liberation. Christ the Saviour liberates man from sin, which is the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression" (Gutiérrez 1974:37) Jesus supports the oppressed masses in their struggle for liberation.

The same idea manifests itself in South African liberation theology, for instance in the message of Desmond Tutu (Pieterse 1995:49-50). Jesus, the Son of God, also takes up the cause of the poor and the oppressed, and identifies himself with their interests and their political struggle. "True liberation will be the work of the oppressed themselves; in them the Lord saves history" (Gutiérrez 1974:208). A typical item in our questionnaire reflecting this attitude is: "Jesus supports the oppressed by liberating them from injustice."

2.1.6 The Jesuological attitude towards Jesus

This approach is expounded by Edward Schillebeeckx who works within a modernistic framework. He claims that it is futile today to defend the divinity of Jesus as someone who came from outside of our human reality. We are living in a world where many people have long ago bidden God farewell (Schillebeeckx 1974:546). "Christian theology is concerned with an interrelationship between an "analysis in the present" on the one hand, and an analysis of the historical experience of Christian life and hermeneutical reflection on this life, on the other (hand)" (Schillebeeckx 1980:72). According to this method the critical relation of the New Testament sources to present-day reality is part of our contemporary Christological response to Jesus. Every age has its own image of Jesus (Schillebeeckx 1974:48, 51).

In answering the question, "Who is Jesus of Nazareth?" Schillebeeckx's point of departure is the historical person Jesus. As is the case with all people, his person needs to be understood in the terms of his prehistory (his lifetime) and his subsequent history (after his death). But our knowledge about the historical Jesus is interpreted history, because our sources are the New Testament writings which reach us via the movement Jesus himself called forth. Hence, they already speak religious language. However, this religious speech does tell us what the historical Jesus meant to his followers. In his existential praxis Jesus actualised the kingdom of God, which he preached in a particular way. He lived the parables he recounted. He himself is a parable of the kingdom of God (Schillebeeckx 1974:129). In his loving concern for people his followers experienced his words and deeds as salvation worked by God. Jesus is the palpable manifestation of God's compassion with humankind (Schillebeeckx 1974:152-159, 166). On the cross, utterly deserted, his total trust in God did not cease. And God honoured his trust by raising him from the dead (Schillebeeckx 1974:261-270).

Jesus, interpreted as the Christ, is the personal revelation of God himself. He is also the personal instrument and sign of God's love for humans (Schillebeeckx 1974:146, 543). A typical item in our questionnaire reflecting this attitude towards Jesus is: "In Jesus' life and works the love of God for people is operative."

2.2   Empirical analysis of the images of Jesus

Our study of the history of theological thinking on christology revealed six different attitudes towards Jesus. After statistically processing our data by means of factor analysis, we were able to provide an answer to the question "Are different images of Jesus to be found in the consciousness of this group of the South African youth?" We were able to further refine it as follows: Does the empirical reality of the attitudes of the students in our sample display the same six attitudes, or are other combinations of these attitudes to be found?

The factor analysis confirmed three attitudes towards Jesus – the orthodox or neoscholastic attitude, the dialectical and the liberation-theological attitudes. An interesting finding, however, was what could be described as a combination in one factor of the liberal-theological, the secular-theological and the Jesuological attitudes moulding into a single image of Jesus, which can be termed: Jesus as a model of true humanity. What then could the reason for this be? Theologically viewed, it is a fact that, despite there being differences among the three attitudes, there is a common denominator: They all proceed from the humanity of Jesus.

Interestingly though, a heated debate raged since 2001 in the secular daily Afrikaans press (*Beeld* and *Die Burger*) on a New Reformation which has to come and according to which the Christian faith has to be reformulated in terms of this historical human reality pertaining to belief in God and Jesus Christ. . Some theologians joined the discussion in support thereof, while others defended the traditional belief in Jesus. Several books, mostly aimed at the popular market, have since been published on this issue. At this moment attitudes towards Jesus have become very topical in the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*.

Table 1 shows the *average* scores with regard to the different images held of Jesus. The scales run from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive). We interpret scores 1,00 to 1,79 as very negative, 1,80 to 2,59 as negative, 2,60 to 3,39 as semi-negative/semi-positive (ambivalent), 3,40 to 4,19 as positive, and 4.20 to 5,00 as very positive.

Table 1 Evaluation of the images held of Jesus

	Private Schools		State Schools	
	1995	2000	1996	2001
dialectical	3.54	3.36	4.08	3.99
liberation	3.72	3.70	3.84	3.93
neoscholastic	4.03	3.94	4.23	4.18
humanity	4.17	4.21	4.44	4.46

As can be seen from this table, the attitude of the young respondents in our population, vary from positive to very positive with regard to all four of the images presented of Jesus, although the private school classes of 2000 are ambivalent about the dialectical-theological image (3.36). The respondents from all the schools in both surveys are most positive about those attitudes that emphasise Jesus' humanity. The Afrikaans speaking respondents (of whom the majority are from Reformed churches) are more positive about the humanity images (4.44 and 4.46 – very positive) than the respondents in private schools (4.17 and 4.21 – positive and very positive). But at the same time, they are also positive about the neoscholastic or two natures interpretation of Jesus, with the classes of 1996 in state schools even being very positive about such interpretation. Theologically, these two interpretations of Jesus disagree.

While the tendencies in our findings indicate that our respondents show a preference for the view that emphasises Jesus' humanity they, apparently without strain, or maybe because of a discord in their minds, also accommodate the various images in their minds. Such trend is also noticeable in the findings on their images of God. In a world of modernity and late modernity with the process of globalisation well on its way, the dominance of the various communication networks such as the Internet and television, the influence of music, and the contact with others in the multicultural and multireligious context which is South Africa, Christians are overwhelmed by a pluralistic *collage* of ideas and beliefs (cf Castells 1996; Beck et al 1996; Witvliet 1999). This situation poses a problem for preaching particularly in a Reformed church, which is a confessional church. The empirical situation challenges our confessional tradition and compels us to think in a hermeneutical and dialectical way.

3.   SALVATION

We need to draw up an adequate soteriological framework (3.1) in order to develop a semiotics of soteriological codes that are relevant to our research (3.2). From this we have to infer the soteriological codes which, on theoretical grounds, we assume prevail among our learners (3.3). Finally, it has to be determined whether this assumption holds water by describing the empirical codes we have collected by means of our questionnaire research (3.4).

3.1   A soteriological framework

In enacting salvation in our world, we depart from the view that the relation between God and humans is not competitive, not even reciprocal, but mutual – therefore we see the relation as the intertwinement of human and divine activity (cf Schoonenberg 1969). In dealing with salvation one can start from either side: either one proceeds to explain human actions from God's acts, or conversely, one can proceed to explain God's actions from human actions. The distinctive nature of divine salvation can be determined by means of two sets of paired concepts: gift and task, inspiration and orientation. To believers the human salvation they accomplish signifies a gift which entails a calling. It is a gift that also entails a task. God gives believers the task to work for salvation in a comprehensive sense. In addition to the paired concepts of gift and task, there is another pair: inspiration and orientation. God's faithfulness in the narratives of the Bible inspires believers and fills them with enthusiasm. God's promise of his faithfulness in the eschatological future, in the coming kingdom, the new heaven and the new earth, gives believers an orientation – their task in working for salvation is not undefined, but has an orientation. This reflection shows the intertwinement of human and divine activity, also with regard to salvation.

3.2   A soteriological semiotics

Against this background a soteriological structure for our study of our learners' notions of salvation could be developed. To this end a semiotic procedure is applied, which enables us to distinguish between the deep level of soteriological codes and the surface level of soteriological signs. The signs are the actual images and metaphors that our learners (learners) used in order to articulate the notion of salvation, so we assumed. The codes underlie the signs, with the signs emerging from them and being directed by them. We also took note of the

plurality of signs and codes, depending on how a code is used in different contexts. We took cognisance of this aspect in our conceptualisation.

It is a distinctive feature of codes that they are binary or paired opposites, based on polarised contrasts, rather than on contradictions. For this reason it cannot be said that God's salvation both occurs and does not occur in the here and the now, that it is both a gift and not a gift. One can however say that it occurs both in the present and in the future, that it is both a gift and a task. We developed a soteriological semiotics of binary codes relating to the belief in divine salvation, conceived of as human salvation in a perspective of transcendence. From each code we infer certain items, based on the assumption that it functions as a sign representing divine salvation, and we do so according to the way in which the code refers to God's salvation. The resulting list of items constitutes the instrument with which we seek to trace our learners' soteriological notions.

The binary oppositions from which we developed the semiotic structure are the following:

- Transcendent versus immanent, referring to God's salvific involvement with people and the world in a manner that totally transcends them, or in a manner that locates God's salvific activities entirely in human actions. Both concepts occur in the Christian tradition. They are two extremes derived from a philosophical structure that is conceived of a dualism between God and human beings. From what we have said thus far it should be clear that in this contribution we have consciously and explicitly opted for maintaining a dialectic tension between transcendence and immanence.

- Present versus past, referring to God's salvific activities in the here and the now or his activities in the primordial past, prior to any human action whatsoever occurred. In this case too, we were able to determine that both notions occur in the Christian tradition. The first notion puts the emphasis exclusively on the present in which God's salvific activities are accomplished (cf Moltmann's description, 1969, of Schweitzer's and Bultmann's views on this issue). In the second view, by contrast, the emphasis is exclusively on God's salvific acts in the past, especially the primordial past which is not just the first phase of history, but its beginning, and as such constituting all history as we know it (cf McGrath 1994). We prefer to keep the dialectic tension between past and present intact.

- Present versus future, again referring to God's salvific activities in the present, as opposed to God's consummating actions in the eschatological future, stretching beyond all human actions of whatever kind. The notion of God's salvific action in the present versus his salvific action in the future is the mirror image of the previous binary opposition. Opposing the soteriological actualism with its emphasis wholly on the present, is the eschatological, even apocalyptic hope with its focus exclusively on the definite coming of divine salvation as a radical new creation (cf Berkhof 1973:544; König 1999:81-88).

  We prefer to keep the dialectic wholeness of past, present and future intact, or even better, of keeping the dialectic wholeness of present and past and of present and future, through which past and future are interlinked, intact (cf Heidegger 1979; Ricoeur 1984). The same applies to God's salvific acts. But the relation between present and future is no less important than that between present and past: after all, believers know that they are called to work for the coming of God's kingdom as God's co-workers, in the power of his Spirit. Temporally the eschaton does not only await us in the future, but is already in the present: it is in the here-and-now of the world (Moltmann 1969:5-25). In the salvific diaconate of people in all spheres of society, the kingdom of God is accomplished in an anticipatory, but effective manner (Heitink 1999).

- Intrapersonal versus interpersonal, implying that the human salvific activities within which God's actions are embodied are enacted within the individual, or in the person's relations with other people. In this instance the question is whether God's salvific activities occur in and via activities that people perform in their inner selves or in social relations of love, justice and peace that they maintain with others. In this respect, the golden rule of doing to others what you want others to do to you, is important. Therefore, we do not treat others as a means, but as an end in itself (Ricoeur 1992:262, 266).

- Once again an option for either intrapersonal or interpersonal salvation appears to be an unnecessary dilemma. We prefer a dialectical relation between the two concepts.

- Local versus global, indicating that the human salvific activities in which God's salvation is realised are enacted at either a local or a global level. Nowadays people are more convinced than ever that concern for global peace and harmony goes hand in hand with concern for local peace and harmony, and vice versa, since each presupposes and influences the other. In the African context, the humanity of the other is expressed in the concept of *ubuntu* or true humaneness, implying the value of universal brotherhood in which sharing and treating other people as humans are concretised, as well as the values of empathy, congruence and open communication (Coetzee and Roux 1998:41).

3.3 Theoretical codes

Against the background of these binary oppositions, including combinations thereof, we developed six theoretical codes referring to God's salvific action, spread over two groups: codes referring to the character and codes referring to the place of God's salvific action in and through human salvific actions. As can be seen from table 1, we divided the three codes relating to the character of divine salvation into two: an immanent-transcendental code and two transcendental codes. The immanent-transcendental code refers to God's presence in salvific human action here and now, whereas the transcendental codes refer to divine salvation in the primordial past and in the eschatological future.

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Table 2: Theoretical codes

Character of God's salvific action
1.   Immanent transcendence in the present (11, 17, 19)
2.   Transcendence in the primordial past (1, 9, 12, 14, 16)
3.   Transcendence in the eschatological future (6, 13, 18)

Place of God's salvific action
4.   interpersonal (3, 4, 15)
5.   Interpersonal/local (2, 5, 10)
6.   Global (7, 8, 20)

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The remaining codes, referring to the place of God's salvific action, relate to intrapersonal, interpersonal/local, and global human salvation in which divine salvation manifests itself in three ways. The six codes are termed theoretical because they are formulated and compiled on theoretical grounds. The semiotic structure results from a free application of the soteriological instrument developed

earlier by Jeurissen (1992) in his study of the religious element in the inspiration of the peace movement. It was adapted by interpreting the topic of peace, which is focal in Jeurissen's study, in terms of salvation. They are operationalised in a total of 20 items, as indicated in brackets after each code.

3.4   Empirical codes

Factor analysis was used to analyse the learners' scores on the 20 items. This enables one to determine the interrelationship between items and thus to divide them into empirical groups. Factor analysis assumes that the interrelationship between items is attributable to one or more underlying phenomena called factors. One might say with a certain degree of caution that what is called a factor in factor analysis, parallels with what is called a code in the semiotic procedure. In other words, the theoretical semiotic structure that we developed earlier is comparable to the empirical semiotic structure arrived at via factor analysis.

Table 3: Empirical codes

	priv 1995	public 1996	priv 2000	public 2001	total
Character of God's salvific action					
1. immanent transcendence in present	3.7	4.1	3.6	4.0	3.9
2. transcendent in the primordial past	3.6	3.8	3.5	4.0	3.7
3. transcendence in the eschatol future	3.9	4.4	4.0	4.3	4.2
Place of God's salvific action					
4. personal/global	4.0	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.2
5. global	4.0	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.9

We conducted two separate factor analyses on the scores of the private school learners in the 1995 study: one analysis on the scores relating to the character of God's salvific activity and the other on those relating to the place of God's salvific activity. For the sake of the commensurability of the 1995 data with those of 1996, 2000 and 2001, we took the factor structure of the 1995 study as our basis for scale construction and, in the studies of the other three years, confined ourselves to determining the statistical reliability of the scales we had constructed. As in the factor analyses conducted in other thematic domains in the Religion and Human Rights Project, smaller and bigger differences between the theoretical and empirical codes kept emerging (cf Van der Ven, Dreyer & Pieterse 2001b:181-186). The theoretical and empirical soteriological codes relating to the character of God's salvation do not. The intrapersonal and

interpersonal/local codes turned out to constitute only one factor, not two, so we labelled it "personal/local."

Table 3 presents the empirical codes with the average scores for the years 1995 and 2000 (private schools) and 1996 and 2001 (public schools), and the last column containing the total average scores of the four different year groups. In comparing these scores, we adopted a difference score of 0.5 or more as our criterion of relevance on the five-point scale on which the scores are based. We interpret these average scores as follows: 1.00-1.79: total disagreement, 1.80-2.59: disagreement, 2.60-3.39: ambivalence, 3.40-4.19: agreement, 4.20-5.0: full agreement.

At this stage it is possible to answer the question pertaining to how these learners evaluate the belief in salvation. The scores indicate that learners clearly agree with every one of the five images of salvation. This means that they agree with not only one particular image of salvation, but with a plurality of salvation images. This finding negates the view that only one image of salvation is possible in terms of which God is said to have realised his relationship with humankind and the world, be it God's immanent transcendent salvation in the present (code 1), God's transcendent salvation in the primordial past (code 2), God's transcendent salvation in the eschatological future (code 3), God's salvation in the intrapersonal and interpersonal/local domain (code 4), or God's salvation in a global sense (code 5). According to our learners salvation – or at any rate its image – manifests itself only in the plural.

4.   TOWARDS A HUMAN RIGHTS CULTURE

Before dealing with the question regarding the impact of our youth's belief in salvation on the advancement of a culture of human rights, we first examined their evaluation of the human rights culture. Again this information is taken from the article written by Van der Ven in cooperation with Dreyer and Pieterse as part of our RHR project (see also Van der Ven, Dreyer & Pieterse 2000). As a theoretical context for this empirical study of human rights, we made use of Ricoeur's philosophical theory of society, in terms of which institutions are the key component, and in the framework of which he provides an interpretation of the place and meaning of human rights. Proceeding from an Aristotelian approach to moral philosophy, he locates his theory of institutions in a theory of the good life (Ricoeur, 1992).

According to a relatively long-lasting tradition, human rights can be divided into three generations: "blue rights", "red rights" and "people's rights". "Blue rights" have a rather liberal background, as they stem from the Anglo-Saxon world; "red rights" have a rather social-democratic character; and "people's rights" emerged particularly from the concern of developing countries. Following Michael Haas who, after the example of Charles Humana's World Human Rights Guide, empirically researched the unidimensional and multidimensional character of human rights, we distinguish three kinds of human rights within the first generation of "blue rights": civil, political and judicial rights. Again following Haas we treat the second generation, the "red rights", as a single group entitled socio-economic rights. Finally we add environmental rights as an example of the third generation, "people's rights" (Haas 1994:54-58). Thus, we speak of a multidimensional human rights culture: a civil rights culture, a political rights culture, a judicial rights culture, a socio-economic rights culture, and an environmental rights culture.

As table 4 indicates, we differentiated the civil rights culture according to six rights (freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, rights to privacy, freedom of lifestyle, freedom of religion), the political rights culture according to three rights (rejection of political suppression, political action, political interest) and the environmental rights culture according to four rights (environmental action, appreciation, sacrifice, concern). Together with the judicial rights culture and the socio-economic rights culture this results in five human rights culture categories, which refer to a total of 15 rights. Having taken this decision we asked our learners to respond to various lists of items which are to be considered as an operationalisation of the five human rights culture categories just mentioned. In respect of the civil and judicial rights culture we used items from the measuring instrument by McClosky and Zaller (1984, Table 7.8); for the political rights we used a number of items from the Core Questionnaire "Democratization in Eastern Europe" by the Erasmus Foundation for Democracy and from the Nijmegen programme "Sociaal-Culturele Ontwikkelingen in Nederland (SOCON) (Felling, Peters & Scheepers 1992). With regard to the socio-economic rights we used a number of items from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), and for the environmental rights we used a number of items from the British social attitudes sourcebook (Brook et al 1992:2) and the SOCON-survey (Felling, Peters & Scheepers, 1992:33-34). We conducted a number of factor analyses on the learners' responses to these items in order to

construct a number of adequate scales with which we were able to measure their attitudes towards the human rights culture. We also compared the data of the different years and schools in the same way we did in respect of 2.4 above, again using the factor structure of the 1995 data as our basis for scale construction and confined ourselves to determining the statistical reliability of the scales we have constructed in the studies in respect of the other three years.

Table 4: Human rights culture

	priv 1995	public 1996	priv 2000	public 2001	total
Civil rights culture					
freedom of speech	3.3	2.9	3.7	2.9	3.2
freedom of the press	2.7	2.5	2.9	2.3	2.6
freedom of assembly	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.4	2.7
right to privacy	2.8	2.4	2.8	2.3	2.6
freedom of lifestyle	3.3	2.9	3.3	2.7	3.1
freedom of religion	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.5
Political rights culture					
rejection of political repression	3.2	2.5	3.3	2.5	2.9
political action	1.6	1.8	1.5	1.8	1.7
political interest	3.3	2.9	3.1	2.9	3.1
Judicial rights culture					
right of due process	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.2
Socio-economic rights culture					
socio-economic equality	4.1	3.9	4.1	4.0	4.0
Environmental rights culture					
environmental action	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.5
environmental appreciation	4.1	3.9	4.1	3.9	4.0
environmental sacrifice	3.7	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.7
environmental concern	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.7	4.7

In answering the question on how our learners evaluate the human rights culture, we have to refer to the average scores in the last column in table 4. They are negative-ambivalent towards the civil rights culture (an average of 2.6). The same applies to the political rights culture: negative-ambivalent (an average of 2.6). They are negative about the judicial rights culture (average: 2.2). However, they are clearly positive about the socio-economic rights culture (an average of 4.0), and evenly positive towards the environmental rights culture (average: 4.0). It is clear that the respondents are more inclined towards the second and third generation human rights culture than towards the "blue" rights culture. Experiences of the dark days of violence and disorder during apartheid and the struggle, as well as the actions of the militant trade unions in South Africa, may have played a role in the respondents' evaluation of the different human rights

cultures. What is however a cause of great concern is the negative scores on the judicial rights culture (average 2.2) and that of freedom of religion (average 1.5). The church has an immense task in its ministry, especially through preaching, to address this problem.

5. EFFECT OF THE BELIEF IN SALVATION ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS CULTURE

We can now focus on the effect the learners' belief in salvation has on their attitudes towards the human rights culture. Under the leadership of Van der Ven we conducted 60 regression analyses to discover the effects of the learners' belief in salvation on their human rights culture: one regression analysis was done in respect of each of the 15 human rights, as well as for each of the classes of 1995, 1996, 2000 and 2001. Each regression analysis produced one or more predictions. They show which salvation code or codes hold predictive value for the attitudes of the learners regarding a given human right. The predictive value can be positive, negative or absent. When put in a responsible theoretical hypothesis, these predictions can serve as indication for the extent of the effects of the salvation codes on the learners' human rights culture. We analysed the effects of the salvation codes on the human rights culture of our respondents – "not checked" for the population characteristics. Thereafter, we checked the results by means of a number of relevant population characteristics. This was done by means of conducting another 60 regression analyses. The goal of this exercise was to establish whether the effects found in the first round of regression analyses would stay intact when checked against a number of population characteristics of the respondents. (The table-presentation of these analyses will be available in the forthcoming publication.)

Because of the limitations of space imposed on this contribution, I will only present the final table of results pertaining to the effects the learners' belief in salvation, verified for reliability by means of a number of population character-ristics, have on their human rights culture. In table 4 we divided the different types of effects in five groups: purely positive effects and mainly positive effects, in which the positive load dominates the negative; ambivalent effects, in which the positive and the negative load more or less balance out; mainly negative effects, in which the negative load dominates the positive; and lastly purely negative effects. Within this categorisation we divided the factors into three

groups: salvation codes, other religious characteristics and other population characteristics.

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Table 5: Effects on human rights culture

Purely positive effects	<u>Salvation</u> Code 4: God's personal salvation <u>Other religious characteristics</u> Rites of passage <u>Other population characteristics</u> Political communication with the parents
Mainly positive effects	<u>Salvation</u> Code 1: God's salvation in the present <u>Other religious characteristics</u> Religious communication with the parents Religious steering Church membership (Anglican, Methodist) Church participation <u>Other population characteristics</u> Gender (female) Home language (official black language) Political importance Political preference (ANC) Transethnicity Postmaterialism orientation
Ambivalent effects	<u>Salvation</u> Code 2: God's transcendent salvation in the past <u>Other religious characteristics</u> --- <u>other population characteristics</u> age political agreement with significant others
Mainly negative effects	<u>Salvation</u> Code 4: God's global salvation <u>Other religious characteristics</u> Bible reading Religious saliency <u>Other population characteristics</u> ---
Purely negative effects	Salvation --- <u>other religious characteristics</u> religious transfers by the parents <u>other population characteristics</u> ---

Table 5 indicates that there are indeed salvation codes that have a sheer positive effect or a mainly positive effect on our learners' human rights culture, namely "God's personal salvation" (code 4) and "God's salvation in the present" (code 1). Other religious factors also have a sheer positive effect or a mainly positive effect on the human rights culture, namely the religious-institutional factors "rites of passage", "church membership" (Anglican and Methodist), and "church participation". There are also religious socialisation factors that have a positive effect, namely "religious communication with the parents and religious steering". Some population characteristics have a sheer positive or mainly positive influence on the human rights culture, namely the political factors "political communication with the parents", "political importance" and "political preference" (ANC). Demographic factors such as gender (especially female) and home language (official black languages) also have a positive effect, as well as two cultural orientations, namely "transethnicity orientation" and "postmaterialistic orientation". As can be seen from table 4, there are some factors that have an ambivalent effect and some which have a negative effect or no effect at all. It is important to notice that the salvation code of "God's salvation in the eschatological future" plays no role whatsoever in exercising an effect on the human rights culture of our respondents.

It is clear that not only the belief in salvation, but also other religious characteristics and non-religious population characteristics, have an effect on the human rights culture. It is also clear that the belief in salvation not only has a positive effect on this culture, but also has an ambivalent, and even a negative effect on the human rights culture of our teenagers.

5.1   How should we preach in such a context?

Sermons that address the human rights culture amongst our youth can begin by focusing on the problems highlighted by the results of our research – for instance a problem with regard to one of the generations of human rights, such as the "blue rights" or the "red rights." It should be the intention of the sermons to strengthen the belief in salvation and its implications for the human rights culture. The further development of the sermon could follow the line of the hermeneutical experience of the preacher with regard to the biblical text and the liberating message of the Christian tradition. The preacher can draw his/her audience into the hermeneutical debate with the text and the tradition with the biases that our research results showed that he/she had experienced. The listeners can then

finally be led into the message that crystallised out of the process of understanding under the influence of the Spirit.

We should also strengthen the youth's belief in salvation and its implications pertaining to the socio-economic and environmental rights which they so heartily subscribe to. From a communicative point of view, it would be wise to start sermons with the positive results of our research and to move from the positive to the more critical sermons on the ambivalent and negative results of our research. It is important to keep in mind that we must treat the youth as equal partners and communicate with them in freedom. We must present our message in freedom and act as examples of the Christian faith in this freedom. The youth must enjoy the freedom to question the message of the broad and border-transgressing implications of salvation for human rights, and even reject it, albeit temporally. But preachers should be inspired by the results that the youth's engagement with the church (except for some forms of religious praxis such as Bible reading, transfer of religious insights, etc) has a positive effect on the human rights culture (see Table 5 above under the themes: purely positive and mainly positive effects).

Preaching that can shed a new, hopeful light on our situation has the potential of inspiring Afrikaans speaking Christians to engage in working towards solutions for our country's problems.

6.   CONCLUSION

The research in the RHR project in South Africa is of vital importance to the praxis of the Christian ministry in this country, as this discussion on the theme of images of Jesus, the belief in salvation and the effect of the belief in salvation on human rights clearly indicates. The outcome is of vital importance to ministry in this country – a ministry that is popular in South Africa and a religious action, which reaches millions of South Africans every Sunday. The scientifically tested information of the beliefs of the youth empowers us to engage in *understanding* our Christian tradition in a way which is sensible for today, and which can lead to a preaching that can shed new, inspirational light on our situation.

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