

CHAPTER 5

Black Public Theology of Liberation: *Amandla Ngawethu*.

5.1. Introduction

This chapter attempts to develop a Black Public Theology. We argued that reconstruction is a proposal for a particular kind of public theology and also demonstrated the potential resonance between development and the African anamnestic *praxis*. We now search for the ecclesial symbols that derive from, and provide *poiēsis* with the expectations that are rooted in the trenches of poverty and the underside of history. Democracy is a form of polity connected with a particular kind of ecclesiology. The RDP for example, was essentially projected as a vehicle of social democracy (Terreblanche 2002:461). Our use of the concept of ecclesiology connotes the symbols that arise from religious forms of polity, which are translated to public life.

Related to Black theology have been the notions of Black Power, *Ujamaa*, Pan Africanism, Black Consciousness and now recently, the African Renaissance. They also mutually developed in tandem with theology and *ipso facto* Black ecclesiology which sees the church as a site of the struggle. In South Africa, the phrase *amandla ngawethu* (power belongs to us), is an expression that became rife during the struggle against Apartheid.

It is still rife in public gatherings even in recent times, but what does it signify? How do we translate black liberating power in a new democratic situation of power sharing? Black liberating power must now be used to reconstruct and rebuild the freedoms of public participation, economic participation, gender equality, sustainability and a transparent democratic polity. As stated in the previous chapter, Black power must now be in a mode of “constructive impatience,” meaning an insurgent re-channeling of power from a polemical mode to an agentic, apologetic one. Black Public Theology of liberation seeks to harness black power for use in public life. What is the essence of power as seen from the Black African liberation perspective? By answering these questions the purpose is to delineate the expressive contours of Black Theology in public life.

The chapter argues that there are many public theologies and demonstrates the potential of Black Theology as a public theology. The chapter then moves on to show that the place of religion in our modern society is a contested affair. The chapter then proceeds from this to the core of our argument that harnesses the heuristic device of the kraal (*ubuhlanti*) as an ecclesial symbol of our phrase : “*Amanadla nga wethu*” (power belongs to us). The Nongqawuze interstice is employed to historically demonstrate the gestation and mutations of agentic black African power in the struggle for liberation.

5.2. Theology and Polity: Establishing the Link

If the word polity designates power, in spite of the differences we have made between Political Theology and Black Theology of liberation, it is the sphere of the political that needs to be engaged to develop a Black Public Theology of liberation. Taking our cue from Ingram (2002:1), by the political we refer to that space of life by which people collectively govern their lives by laying down general rules of conduct or laws.

One way of defining theology separates *theos* and *logos* to define theology as talk about God - a conversation about God. Conversation is a sociological construct which means the engagement of human social actions in relation to a particular principle or normative value. Talk about God therefore, involves inter-subjective and normative values attached to God in human cultural interaction. In the liberation paradigm, theology is a second act. The first act is *praxis*, the practical engagement in the acts of faith. *Praxis* means that the acts of the poor are understood as the voice of God and their culture, the echo of God's voice (Boff). "Theology is critical reflection on practice in the light of faith" (Gutiérrez 1999:27). The acts of faith by the poor black masses echoed by their culture, constitute the basis on which we seek to establish the relationship between theology and polity. So, a theoretical link of our God-talk with the *praxis* and echoes of the poor in the sphere of collective governance (politics) is what we seek to demonstrate.

5.2.1. The Intent of Black Theology as a public Theology

Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, we reiterate, there has been a view among some leading scholars previously linked with the liberation school to find new contours for theology. S. Nadar, referring to Mosala, says:

Mosala penned these arguments at a crucial time in apartheid South African history, even before the release of Nelson Mandela. Whether his arguments still hold true for Black Theology currently remains to be seen, as the relevancy of Black theology as a liberation discourse in post-apartheid South Africa is still hotly debated (2003:3-4).

Nadar expressed this in the light of Mosala's argument that Black Theology failed to become a useful weapon in the hands of the oppressed exploited blacks. First, we need to realize that Reconstruction has been portrayed as a new way of engaging in public life in the context of this "hot" debate. One such innovation in our view is the emergence of talk about public theology, particularly in a number of the JTSA volumes after the demise of Apartheid.

Public Theology has been plumbed as a theology much more compatible with the new "boundaries" defined by the reality of a plurality of "publics" in a constitutional democratic polity and also in the New World Order. Hereunder follows a glimpse of the questions posed to establish a role for theology in public life after Apartheid:

...what is religious discourse? Is this a separate type of discourse, which then requires “translation” when spoken in public? Is it essentially subversive talk, “giving voice” to those who are marginalized or silent? ...or is religious discourse already public discourse, drawing on values which are meant for the common good of society as a whole? Does religious discourse have to be explicitly “faith language,” or can visions and symbols be expressed in non-religious language? (Cochrane et al 1999: 66).

Black Theology of liberation is religious discourse – it is a conversation within the ambit of a sociological phenomenon called religion. Yes indeed, in the current dispensation, Black Theology of liberation needs translation when spoken in public. We would argue that it is essentially subversive talk. It must be a constructively impatient conversation giving voice to those who are marginalized or silent. Yet in one sense, religious discourse is already in public in our view because it is hard to deny that in many of the spheres, there are many mirrors of religious symbols. As a polity, democracy in its current form in South Africa is a mirror of a particular kind of religion, if not a product of a particular kind of religion. The question is whether in such a polity of democracy and ensuing spheres of public are symbols that mirror Black Theology of liberation. Surely where Black Theology is not the only type of religious language it cannot be expressed in explicit faith language, but should be translated in non-religious terms as an apologia of Christian faith.

The quotation above also signifies how other religious conversations should find a way in public life. It is taken from the summary of the proceedings of the ME99¹ which wrestled with these questions. The fundamental question is the extent to which religion is separate from other spheres, thereby requiring a mode of translation in public discourse. When this question is answered, it defines the place of religion and the resultant theological models that can be adopted for its place in public life. Furthermore, if religion is viewed separately from public life, this will inevitably imply that there are spheres that will be devoid of religion, hence the talk about a “religionless” language above. Still, we should state at this very juncture that whether it is possible to separate religion from other spheres is a highly complex debate. It has resulted in the notion of secularization, at least in the West where religion “ceases” to exist or find a home in some other spheres.

There are views that religion already exists in public discourse, but the mode of its existence is not necessarily a subversive one only. For example, the theory of secularization has been challenged by Casanova (1994) among others - the debate itself becoming much more complex in globalizing conditions and the modern society of pluralistic truth references. In the current globalizing conditions, certain forms of religion are already implicated as we shall see later in this work.

¹ ME99 is the Multi-Event Conference held in Cape Town in 1999 to debate and formulate a language in which religion could find expression in public life. Prior to the ME99 an Academic workshop attended by some fifty South African-and internationally based academics met to formulate this language. It was called Multi-Event due to a wide range of participants that included politicians, religious leaders, academics, local community group representatives and cultural workers. I also participated in the Event.

The need for a non-religious language arises out of the term “public” which refers to a particular space that requires rules of entry, trusts and a specific language. “Public” seen as a separate space, thus necessitates the need to equip “boundary” people who can move between publics. In his project of reconstruction, Villa-Vicencio has used the terms “religionless” and “intelligent” participation of theology in public life. Quite clearly, this proposition by Villa-Vicencio and Mugambi to develop a theology of reconstruction could be viewed as a response to the need for a new language to equip theology and its exponents to move between publics hence, a multi-disciplinary approach that implies the inculcation of intelligent expression of theological symbols and vision “religionlessly.” What is implied and intended so far is that change in South Africa has presented us with a change in the boundaries of doing theology and the under-girding factor is the notion of public as described above. Public theology seems to be one such proposed mode of doing theology in changed boundaries.

Our view is that the valorization of reconstruction and the equally urgent call for public theology uncritically, is sometimes used against Black Theology of liberation. Nadar’s case above is a good example. While Mosala can be cited for the current Biblical forms of criticism, the pertinence of Black Theology as a public discourse in the current situation is doubted. Contrary to such views, we submit that Mosala’s critique and his sentiments are pertinent for us to develop a public theology that will be a weapon in the hands of the black African masses.

The notion of the “public” in contrast with the notion of “private” is a philosophical attempt to give credence to the existence of publics devoid of religion or religious symbols or with “disguised” religious symbols and language. The notion of “public sphere,” which is influencing South African thinking on public theology, can be located in Habermas’ key thoughts on the notion of public sphere. These, it is stated, are found in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, interpreted for us by Crossley & Roberts (2004). The Habermasian² public sphere has two central theses. First, the changes that took place in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Germany, France and Britain gave rise to public sphere. These social conditions provoked a situation where middle class men came together to engage in reasoned arguments over public issues of mutual concern and interest. The emergence of this new form of public place effectively mediated between the state and the private individual and prompted the emergence of a philosophical concept and consciousness of “publics.”

The second tenet of the Habermasian public is that conditions that effectively served to undermine the public space came into being almost soon after the consciousness of this space itself. While the theories of publicity remain intact, the actual reality shows a lot of discrepancies. Key to the notion of public are historical changes that facilitate the differentiation of public spheres. This differentiation of public spheres is problematic. Sometimes differentiation is almost fragmental and yet in other instances there is a blurring of spheres and domination of some spheres by others.

² We discuss Habermas in the next chapter.

Habermas uses the notion of colonization of spheres to describe this problem meaning the containment of other spheres by some. While differentiation is necessary as a result of historical changes and revolutions such as the Industrial one, and today the information revolution, the problem of the fragmentation of public spheres remains a thorny issue in the discourse of public life. Public theology must contend with these questions.

First, the notion itself is bourgeois. It is male-dominated in its origin and reflects the history of the West during the Industrial Revolution. This revolution also accounts for huge atrocities of colonization in the Third World. Second, the philosophical frameworks used to describe differentiation have caused fragmentation in our experience, in the light of technocratic approaches to development that have contributed to the “en-framing” of the aspirations of the poor.

Related to the question of our democratic polity, the binary dichotomies of church-state and the representative and the represented, require mediations that constantly combat fragmentation. Yet there is also a notion of “subaltern counter publics” coined by Fraser, (Crossly & Roberts 2004:14). These are alternative public spheres to the dominant ones, demonstrating the inadequacy of the liberal concept of public sphere. They are alternative discursive arenas espoused by marginal groups to invent their counter discourse against the dominant spheres of public. We locate Black Public Theology of liberation within the arena of subaltern counter publics.

Arguing at the same ME99, Maluleke (1998b:60) contends that by its own intent and character Black theology has been public. He explains that Black Theology has always had intentions beyond “the four walls” of the Christian Church. He goes on to say that Black Theology “is essentially an apologia for Christian religion and for Christian theology” (Maluleke 1998b:60). The connection between Black Theology and Black Consciousness and *ipso facto*, the former’s methodological orientation is the first example we cite to demonstrate our point. The integral nature of Black Consciousness philosophy to the origins of Black Theology of liberation is adequate to signify the symbiosis of theological language with discourses that are non-religious.

What this implies therefore is that methodologically, Black Theology, starting from social analysis and the experience of the non-person, moved out of the four walls of the Christian church and its confessional boundaries (Jacob 1994). Dubbed by Wilmore-Cone (1972) “a theology of the guts,” Black Theology and black history became inseparable from the very beginning. Taking leave of philosophy as the starting point in preference of the experience of the poor as a starting point certainly expanded the boundaries of Black Theology as a discourse directed beyond its own adherents. In fact, it is hard to recall writings of Black Theology that do not address other publics such as economy, health, education and others, seeing that Black Theology ultimately saw its role as addressing deficiencies in public life holistically.

It becomes hard to think of Black Theology as anything other than public, given the fact that the Apartheid state was a public expression of a pseudo-religious confession supported by the NGK (Ngcokovane 1989). It was a state supported by a certain form of civil religion that blessed its autocratic nature. In fact, South Africa was a Christian state. That there were also public commissions³ appointed to investigate the character of Black Theology made Black Theology public lock stock and barrel even though by default.

This experience of Black Theology shared above is not mainly the point that is being contested by us but rather, the caution often expressed about the relationship between theology, public life and the state in our new situation. The notion of “critical solidarity” in the first decade of democracy signifies these cautions about this relationship. The experience of theology in public life is not unprecedented. In our view these “ambiguous terms” and “ambiguous reality” (Cochrane 1999) do not rule out the public nature of Black Theology, but create a confusion about which theology will be compatible with the current context. For example, in relation to the *raison d’etre* of Black Theology one has said:

³ We recall the Steyn’s Commission in particular. The report of this Commission is discussed in Khabela 1992 :121-123. This South African government set up this Commission to investigate various organizations that were critical of government policy. It reported that African Theology was an innocent and genuine attempt by Africans to claim a unique cultural, geographical, spiritual, social and temperamental heritage. Black Theology was viewed as full of hatred and influenced by American history of the black struggle. This made a lot of South African theologians to refrain from African Theology and mount their resistance by focusing on Black Theology.

The need for Black Theology is surely past...The need for an African Theology is self-evident but amply supplied by the ZCC. The rest of us in the 'white' churches are bending over backwards and making ourselves look quite idiotic by pretending to be 'African.' It is as though Christianity is like some interdenominational game and those who attract the most blacks will take home the medals to their camp (J. Williamson in van der Water 1998:223).

Add to this the false charge that in the past liberation theology did not think intelligently (Villa-Vicencio 1993:24) when doing theology and it is challenged to move into doing theology "proper," there is no ambiguity then about the place of Black Theology in the charge. It is simply suggested that its need is surely past! Black Theology in our view is not an unsophisticated, anti-intellectual reaction to whatever is happening at any moment in history (Willmore-Cone 1979:4). It is rather "the intellectual spark that flew from the anvil of oppression upon which the Black religious groups were hammered into existence" (1979:2). In the previous chapter we already indicated that Roberts wrote a book about Black Political Theology in the 1970's.

Kairos theology is also another expression of theology that could be viewed as public theology. Its relationship with Black Theology of liberation can be established through the three different theologies distinguished in the Kairos Document: "State Theology," "Church Theology" and "Prophetic Theology."

According to Desmond van der Water (1998:213-225) Kairos theology is the type of theology first committed to writing in a well-known document which bore 150 signatures and got published in South Africa in 1985.⁴ Van der Water goes on to say that the implication of this definition of Kairos theology is that it is directed at the socio-political events of crisis which preceded the writing of the document and also the subsequent development of events of crisis both in South Africa and abroad. To this effect we can cite Robin Peterson (1995) who has reflected on “Kairotic Theology” whose tenets are analogous to that of Kairos theology as propounded by Van der Water.

Accordingly, Kairos theology is a “radically different hermeneutic,” responding to “reality-based” questions that are “non-rhetorical” (Van der Water 1998: 219). Hence methodologically, Kairos theology is alongside liberation theologies. Villa-Vicencio says that Black Theology and liberation theology in South Africa reached their high water mark in the Kairos Document (1999:153). The governing symbols of the Kairos theology are thus “liberation” and “context.” The fact that Kairos theology was addressed to “State Theology” made it public, and what we have already said about the methodology of Black Theology above in signifying its publicity equally applies to Kairos theology. While the limitations of liberation theologies should be accepted, for the reasons cited by van der Water with regard to Kairos Theology, it is conceivable that these liberation theologies maybe indispensable for the formulation of new theological ventures and Prophetic Theologies in particular.

⁴ Van der Water here is citing Nolan and the quotation from Albert Nolan is paraphrased.

The constitutive elements of Kairos theology, therefore, on the evidence of the KD is,[sic] first and foremost, the experience of crisis, and secondly, the reflection upon such an experience in the light of the Word of God. The normativity of context in Kairos theology has been criticized in certain quarters on the basis that such theological discourse is open to total relative and arbitrary use of the Bible (Van der Water 1998:221).

Crisis in reality based experiences of life of oppression is a significant element of Kairos theology. The criticism of Kairos theology will be valid, according to Van der Water, when the critic is aware of and acknowledges that his/her context and assumptions provide a particular perspective of the Bible.

In the same manner, Black Theology of liberation needs to be critiqued on the basis of consciousness regarding its context and assumptions, without the assumptions of the critic and the critic's context gaining arbitrary preeminence. Responding to Goba, Moore, and others who do no longer see any role for Black Theology in public life today, Maluleke poignantly says that "Black Theology lives on a permanent crisis" (1995a). Black Theology is thus a theology of crisis in the same way as crisis is normative in the constitutive elements of Kairos theology. Furthermore, Van der Water asserts that the *raison d'être* of Black Theology is empowerment "against the weight of the white superiority complex," and this confirms our thesis discussed already in chapter two.

And we must submit that in itself and of itself, Kairos theology, is - if progeny is taken into account, a product of the liberation paradigm of theology and not the other way around. It is a product of the symbiosis of Black Theology with liberation, adequately attested by the presence of many black theologians in its genesis as signatories and ultimately its publication in South Africa. Black Theology is the first liberation theology in South Africa. If the symbol of liberation signifies a totally new way of doing theology, it is misnomer to imagine or even anticipate the death of Black Theology of Liberation without anticipating the death of liberation theology itself in South Africa. We can reformulate our question in the statement made by Villa-Vicencio:

Can liberation theology liberate the liberated – from both complacency and cynicism? Is liberation theology indeed a vehicle for liberating the poor not only when liberation is on the distant horizon but also when it is within grasp? Can liberation theology be more than a theology of resistance? (1999:154)⁵.

To these questions Villa-Vicencio responds in the affirmative. Kairos does not only signify the potential and *de facto* publicity of Black Theology of liberation but also the potential of liberation as a paradigm to liberate the liberated and to continue as a vehicle of the poor to be liberated within the grasp of liberation in public life today.

⁵ We need to be aware of the fact that this quotation is taken from a later work that pursues the conversation between liberation and reconstruction.

We need to make the last point before we conclude this section and explain the reason why “intent” is central to our thought at the moment. As a Christian *apologia*, Black Theology, according to Van der Water, has a crucial role in shaping new forms of Prophetic Theology. Our take is that Prophetic Theology is a polemical tone of theology and for that matter any theology or religion can be prophetic. Prophetic Theology is a moment of theology. A tone of theology must be differentiated from its content, purposes and vision. The crucial mistake that has been made in our view, both by insiders and outsiders of the school of thought, has been to equate the prophetic tone of theology to Black Theology itself. This creates the assumption that Black Theology and liberation cease to become pertinent as the prophetic mode or tone of theology is not appropriate in a changed situation of a legitimate state. We reinstate that Prophetic Theology was as Van der Water has argued, directed at the Churches. The logical flow from this is that Prophetic Theology is confessional and ecclesial in direction. However, Prophetic Theology is not the *Leitmotiv* of Black Theology of Liberation, but its tone and moment in the most repressive stages of the pseudo religious Apartheid state.

An *apologia* is a less polemical mode of theology directed to those outside the boundaries of the Church. It is for us a call to engage in “a less-embittered” mode in the changing circumstances of our context in South Africa. This is the first aspect we need to concede about the direction or mode of Black Theology of Liberation.

About this question of *apologia*, which must be distinguished from a prophetic mode of doing theology, Shriver (1988) maintains that it is grounding in a *scientia*, defensible in public discourse the chief tenets of Christian faith.

Christians now and in the century to come may learn to feel, think, speak, and behave toward all their earthly neighbours with an integrity that combines confidence with humility, local pertinence with universal meaning and religious particularity with respect for the universal in other religions (Donald Shriver in the Preface, Stackhouse 1998:iii).

Stackhouse (1998:9) further explains that *apologia* is a willingness to enter into the thought forms of those who do not always share the faith assumptions or worldviews that we hold when we enter into dialogue. An *apologia* is also an endeavour to account for what we hold dear in the face of skepticism, doubt or suspicion and to hear empathetically the merits of any alternative perspectives. An *apologia*, of course, must refute unsound objection to a defensible theological perspective. So, Black Theology is a willing partner to enter into the thought forms of a world different from its own in a less-embittered mode. This seals the intent of Black Theology as a *scientia* - an intellectual tradition to defend in public life its chief tenets based on its understanding of Christian faith. From the very outset, Black Theology of liberation crossed confessional boundaries and operated on the frontiers drawing its inspiration from the poor. A less-embittered mode, yet insurgent constructive impatience and the development of agency for the reconstruction of freedoms, is the task of Black Theology in public life.

5.2.2. Ecclesiology and Polity

The role of ecclesiology in the theory of polity or publicity is crucial (Everett 1988, 1999; Vellem 2002). Looking at ecclesiology, which could be roughly defined as the study of the systematic and institutionalized practices with reference to the sacred and the transcendent, we can manage to relate publicity and religion clearly. Free public assembly and conciliar decision making borne out of Christianity were crucial for the development of modern polities, particularly the traditions of republicanism and federalism. Those are concepts and practices that have reinforced federalism in our modern times. “European and American thinkers generated the belief that public life requires a basic constitution that articulates the relationship between independently legitimate polities,” and this is rooted in the Bible (Everett 1997:5)⁶. In Everett’s frame of inquiry (1997:7), which views ecclesiology as the study of any form of religious assembly, whether it be a synagogue, mosque, temple or kraal (in the case of Africa), a germane connection between ecclesiology, religion and polity (politics or power) is attained. In ecclesiologies we can discern a practical expression of religious beliefs, values and orientations for public life.

⁶ See also Villa-Vicencio (1992) in his discussion of Theology and Law with regards to Reconstruction Theology, particularly the concepts of *archē* and *principium* which have already been mentioned in the Dissertation.

The term *ecclesia* means assembly, itself synonymous with *kehal* or *edah* that in ancient Israel became synagogue. The term *ecclesia* has now come to designate church in our time. Semantically it vivifies the political roots of *ecclesia*, *kehal* or *edah*. These “open assemblies” were not necessarily religious but political. Furthermore, the Latin word *res publica* meaning public affairs, is closely tied to *ecclesia* (Everett 1997:12).

Following this, *res publica* constitutes the root of our modern conception of a republic which means governance conducted in an open assembly by citizens. Republic means the “re-making” of assemblies for open governance by the citizens of a *polis* i.e. a city. As we go further into these semantic connections, we discover that the word covenant equally has an import of “treaty relationships.” Covenant often referred to a set of mutual obligations forming people’s common life. Then the word federal, connected to *foederal*, fidelity, trust - in itself has deep affinities with covenant. These semantic affinities are so telling that we can immediately grasp the link that Everett (1988:122-123) makes between republicanism and federalism. Let us try to relate these concepts in one sentence: covenants - “federals”- *foederals* –trusts of common good are forged and re-made in assemblies –“*ecclesias*”- “*res publicas*” in open space! The rationale here is that covenants are processes based on agreements rather than status or command. They are flexible bonds of trust adequate to create and accommodate change while they simultaneously bind. On the other hand, publicity directs our attention to the need for patterns of expression and negotiation that are devoid of terminality, rigidity and closeness.

They are open and freed from the limits of appeals to biology in ordering human relationships, e.g. monarchy by consanguinity. This is what federal republicanism entails. In our modern times, federal republicanism finds expression in constitutional democracy, the role of the constitution being to balance “power with power and authority with authority.” On the basis of this connection of *ecclesia* with publicity and covenant with *federal*, Everett rightly concludes that both covenant and publicity have a normative and descriptive import. They normatively evoke deep symbolic ways, i.e. values, commitments, trusts and ultimate orientations in public life. .

The concept of covenant also points to the theological roots of federalism just as the symbol of *ecclesia*, [assembly] points to the roots of publicity. Covenant and publicity are thus symbiotic concepts, hence “covenantal publicity” is a bridge term. Technically, it provides bridges between republicanism and federalism. Clearly stemming out of the biblical model of covenant which anchors Everett’s *oikos* model and Vellem’s⁷ notion of *ikhaya* the claim is that, theologically, God or gods maintain the covenant. A covenant is not full without God, land, faith and the people. On the other hand, publicity implies the proclamation of convictions or claims in public-open assembly (*inkundla*). This open space, the *polis*, offers people the opportunity to govern their affairs - it is political.

⁷ In Vellem (2002), Everett’s *oikos* model has been profoundly used to conceptualize the African notion of *ikhaya* as a heuristic design for an African ecclesio-political symbol. In this section and others that follow much will be drawn from this work however, the focus is not the conceptualization of the notion of *ikhaya* but its further development as a symbol of power (polity) for liberative polity.

The bridge term-“covenantal publicity” is also about participation, which in turn evokes procedures and thus issues of polity. A constitutional democracy would be a good example of such procedures. This is about procedures and polities that enable all citizens to participate in public life. From the Greek context to our modern times the problem of maximization of participation in public life and governance has been the bone of contention. There is hardly a polity that is able to allow all citizens to participate in every decision, and more, to be at one place at the same time. Representation becomes a crucial aspect for legitimate decision making or participation in publicity or politics. This means that theories of representation and participation are important in so far as they enhance or undermine maximum participation in public life and governance.

It is also about plurality as an intrinsic characteristic of public life, open space or *inkundla*. Plurality inevitably begets choice, whose value is freedom. This has implications for the nature of ecclesiology that can be chosen at a given time. An ecclesiology that is associational is compatible with the intrinsic pluralistic nature of publicity as it engenders volition meaning, the absence of coercion or force. Everett says that to foster freedom is to choose among associations (1988:14). It logically follows from this understanding that persuasion which “emerges from argument” and “leads to promise” should be freed from force. Then the operation of reason becomes important - faith being its nurturing dimension. We will come back to this matter at some stage as choice is also a complex notion with inherent suppositions.

Commonality resides in culture and natural circumstances. The dynamic of publicity however pushes beyond such bonds, albeit without totally rejecting them. Maximum participation should be experimented with by going beyond the necessities of “biologistic” appeals informed by ethnicity, religion, kinship and race, without necessarily rejecting them as the basis of such a move. The relationship between covenant and publicity evokes the reciprocity between its theological and political domains and, *ipso facto*, ethical values. “Political longing finally expresses itself in religious hope, just as religious aspiration requires political content or form” (Everett1997:21).

5.2.3. Liberative Publicity

In our previous chapter we have accorded the symbol of liberation almost the same meaning as covenant. We defined liberation as a covenant and liberation, we argued, is a central theme, albeit not exclusive to the Exodus motif. The combination of the Exodus motif with the Sinaitic *corpus* which enunciates the covenantal relationship between God and the Israelites, biblically brings about a germane connection between liberation and covenant as interchangeable terms. As an evocative and evangelical symbol, it becomes *federal*, - it becomes a faithfully sanctified (Cone) symbol that bridges between the issues of *fide* and open assembly, namely the political content in the irruptions of the poor and marginalized.

This evocative dimension of the liberation symbol *de-terminates*, *de-rigidifies* and opens closed “federals” and “republics,” thus becoming a call for life-giving and alternative dreams in society. More than this, itself attaining the imports of covenant, liberation creates bonds, trusts, co-operations, associations such as defined by “God of the oppressed,” “the irruption of the poor,” “the preferential of the poor,” “the church of the oppressed,” and the “echoes of the oppressed.” These trusts, bridge with the *polis*, in the re-making of publics (*res publica*). Liberative publicity or polity is thus a federation of polity - a *fides* of polity that is inspired by the aspirations of the poor and their anamnetic *praxis*.

We have said that the vision of liberation serves as a converging point for reconstruction and development. Freedom as development, or development as freedom, includes a process of rebuilding freedoms and resisting “unfreedoms.” We have also demonstrated that public, from *res publica*, has the meaning of remaking the assemblies purposed for the common good and life of the people. In the African sense it is the re-establishment of the community purposed for life. It is not the assemblies *per se* that are re-made, but the bonds, trusts, co-operations, associations between people and people, people and land, people and God, people and *fide*, and people and work. Publicity connotes the reconstruction and development of the bonds of “freedoms” oriented to life-giving. Liberative publicity is the power of the masses re-establishing meaning and life from their counter subaltern publics in the reconstruction, remaking, rebuilding and development of freedoms in public life.

The application of liberation to sociological notions of: legitimation, differentiation and mediation can also demonstrate the relationship of Black Theology and the political. Political frames or polities need to be accepted and sanctified by theological longings emanating from the trenches and the underside of history. They need to bond with the aspirations of the poor. Religious symbols like the liberation of the poor play this important role of cementing the procedures or polities that are employed to attain life-giving participation in public life. They *de-terminate* and *de-rigidify* polity structures and procedures that deprive participation and hamper the solidarity of the poor. One of the semantic metaphors employed to describe legitimation is “rootage” (Everett 1999:64-68). The roots of the struggle for liberation are in their culture and history (Mosala), thus liberative polity should be rooted in the history and culture of the oppressed. Thus the “echoes” (Boff) and the “silences” (Mosala) of the poor should “sanctify” political frames and structures.

We have already said that it is impossible to acquire a polity that can offer all citizens the opportunity to participate in every decision at once in the same location. Faith or *fides* in the modes of representation and participation is essential for the legitimation of the outcomes of any chosen procedures or modes of representation. In our perspective of liberative polity, that faith derives from the “God of the oppressed,” “the preferential option of the poor” i.e. the *praxis* of the poor and “the church of the poor.”

Boff's notion of "ecclesio-genesis" implies a liberating church that remakes the church.⁸ If the word republic means the remaking of the public (assembly), liberation as a bridge term with polity cosigns a similar meaning of "ecclesio-political-genesis." Such agency for the creative genesis of publicity springs out of the dreams and aspirations of the poor.

Legitimation is also about the processes of socialization and character formation. In other words, the manner in which people are nurtured creates space for the legitimation of procedures and polities that govern their participation in public life. The word "consciousness" which we have discussed previously, is at the centre of socialization and character formation. If Black ecclesiology derives from the spirituality irruptions of the poor, Black Consciousness is the renewal, the remaking of socio-political strategy of liberative polity for legitimation. The world views of the marginalized become important for the legitimacy of the polity.

As in the Kairos' civil disobedience and the "Status Confessionis," the ambiguity of symbols such as "State Theology" places the role of religion and theology in a precarious situation in the sphere of the political as well. This does not however, dispute the bonding role of religion and its legitimating role in public life and society. In the quandaries of political legitimacy, Gyekye makes a distinction between formal and informal legitimacy (1997:173-186).

⁸ An explanation of this notion is crucial. It is the title of the book by Boff which deals with the question of ecclesiology – an alternative form of ecclesiology that springs from the Base Communities in Latin America (1986)

Formal legitimacy is enjoyed by a government by virtue of being elected or installed. It is more of a contractual (legal) process or procedure of legitimation. Informally, legitimation is more symbolic, bringing to the legal validity of the governing ones the dimension of consenting that leads to consensus *ipso facto*, the moral cementing of power. Ecclesial symbols play this role, they are validating values which measure consensus that must accompany legal validity or contractual validity of governance. Ideology plays this significant role in public life including the ideology of Black Consciousness. It is inevitable, however, when the vision of liberation and the present are conflated, ideology becomes detrimental. Open space, and thus the porosity of any legitimating device is an ethical obligation for the remaking of public bonds.

Differentiation is another important sociological notion which requires bridging with ecclesiology. Having referred to the Habermasian public, differentiation implies the distinction between the church and kingdom or the distinction between prophet and king. The intrinsic nature of plurality in publicity yields to differentiated publics. Re-making and thus re-creating spheres is not a problem on its own. However, the boundaries between different spheres (*poloi, imizi*) must be in harmony. Liberative polity opens boundaries instead of making fortresses out of *poloi* or *imizi* that are differentiated spheres. Publicity excludes in order to include in public life. A sum of all publics in the end must constitute a coherent public life or one *oikos* or *ikhaya*.

Tracy's (1981:5) "three publics" for example, is *inter alia* based on the understanding that "each theologian addresses three distinct and related social realities: the wider society, the academy and the church." The social location of an individual theologian provides what he calls "elective affinities." All theology, nonetheless, is public discourse. By the same token, we argue that the "elective affinities" or spheres are cohered in one *ikhaya* or *oikos*.

The role of religion in maintaining the relationship between publics is crucial. How we exclude or include, expose or impose in publicity is obviously an ethical matter. Liberation thus provides an open ethic to the political and the intricate relations of equality to public life. The exposition in this section makes one point, namely, there is a link between federalism and republicanism explicable through the bridge term of covenantal publicity. As covenant is truly encapsulated in the liberation symbol, we coin liberative publicity as our proposal for a Black Public Theology of liberation. What has been said above in the construction of this paradigm may not be exhaustive, but it is adequate to render the broad contours of this brand of ecclesio-political theory. It includes notions of rebuilding, reconstruction, development and reawakening, all encompassed in the vision of liberation in a less-embittered but constructively impatient agency echoed by the culture of the oppressed in their subaltern counter publics.

5.2.4. Many Public Theologies

Our focus on establishing theoretical links between ecclesiology and polity is based on the understanding that there are equally many ecclesiologies. By many ecclesiologies we do not only refer to possibilities within one given religious fold. Different religions too have ecclesiologies that are distinct from others informed by different religious worldviews. In this section we need to emphasize that even in one religious fold there are but, many public theologies:

At the outset, we need to recognize that there is no universal ‘public theology’, but only theologies that seek to engage the political realm within particular localities. There are however, shared commonalities, both confessional and ecumenical, in approach and substance between theologies that seek to do this. This makes it possible to engage and fruitfully learn from each other at this colloquium. In doing so, both here and in many places around the world, the contours and content of a broader ecumenical; public theology begin to emerge. But they, in turn, have to be tried and tested in specific localities, critically informing each other and being recast in ways appropriate to specific contexts (De Gruchy 2004:45).

Reflecting on the ME99, De Gruchy consciously employs the term “public theologies” as informing the Christian conviction to engage in public life and in a democratic dispensation in South Africa in particular.

Recognizing the existence of many public theologies and having established that ecclesiology and polity are two sides of the same coin; the plausibility of a liberative polity is hereby re-emphasized. It underscores the conviction that in the proposal for any particular kind of public theology, consciousness to the fact that there are many public theologies is imperative.

In the same article cited above, De Gruchy asserts that political theology, and by implication, public theology, assumed the character of an African 'black theology' in South Africa (de Gruchy 2004:51). This simply implies that the broad notion of public theology does not exclude Black Theology of liberation. In our view, this is a crucial turning point for theology and the development of public theology in post-Apartheid South Africa. This point has already been made in the previous chapter. It is repeated to emphasize that no one kind of public theology should be hegemonic. This is a moral and ethical question. Different forms of public theology need to engage in dialogue. Surely what will continue to demarcate public theologies will be the distinct methodologies they employ and espouse. We move from this conviction to tacitly give content and shape to an African black ecclesio-political discourse. Before we do so, it is necessary at least to revisit the import of the notion of *politike koinonia*.

5.2.5. The Political Community

The Aristotelian *politike koinonia* is renowned as the central thrust of the tradition of political philosophy and ethics (McLean 1997:12). Aristotle understood human beings as the *zoon politikon*, i.e. political beings (Cohen & Arato 1995). The exact meaning of this depiction of human beings, however, depends on the anthropological framework in which it is utilized. For example, in Africa, the saying that *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, (I am because we are), rendering African ethics to be anthropocentric (Mbiti), could as well mean that “I am a political being because we are political beings.” In the terms of Descartes’ old and well-known formula *cogito ergo sum*, “I think therefore I exist” we can render the Cartesian Ego as, “I am political because I think.” Whatever is said therefore depends much on what the given anthropological view is. *Zoon political* simply means a living political being. *Zoe* means life and *zoon* is a derivative of *zoe*. Without being over elaborate, the political community is a living being. McLean says that, “to be political means to govern and be governed as a member of a community” (1997:13). So, to be a living political being means to govern and be governed as a member of a living community. From an African perspective it is equally important to differentiate *Gemeinschaft* (community) from *Gesellschaft* (society) (Bujo 2003:89). Intimate life as in a home (*ikhaya*) is life in community.

In his *De Anima*, Aristotle identified intelligence and freedom as the distinctive attributes of human life (McLean 1994:8-13). In other words, intelligence and freedom constitute the foundation of human dignity and imply a civic union of human communication and co-operation. In the *polis*, i.e. the city, *politike koinonia* constituted a unique collectivity, a unified organisation with a single set of values derivable from a common *ethos*. To be political meant to govern and to be governed as a member of a community. The *politike koinonia* was an all-encompassing social system in which all spheres of life were interconnected. *Oikos* i.e. household was the smallest unit of the political community, which was the living *habitus* and locus of the life goals of community. In other words, the form of governance in the political community was reflected and lived in the household, *oikos*. We need to further state that according to Aristotle, the state is prior to the individual or family. So *oikos* serves the goals of the *politike koinonia*.

If intelligence and freedom were, however, foundational tenets of human dignity, the orientation of human beings to the same *telos*, together as a community, had to be actualised in freedom: persons rightly guiding or governing themselves toward that end as free persons. Freedom implies choice. Choice implies a plurality of goals. A plurality of goals inevitably yields to plural spheres of governance. The paradox of plurality was nonetheless, easily resolved in this setting, as there was an absence of the distinction between community and society. The *politike koinonia* fused the different publics by blending the politics of community and society together as purposed for life.

The tension between solidarity and subsidiarity, unity and diversity in the *politike koinonia*, i.e. the synergetic ordering of groups, spheres, and publics has immense implications for the nature of participation in governance. Because humans are by definition political animals, it follows that all human beings should participate in governance. While solidarity and unity could easily be attained due to obvious commonalities, differentiation and diversity are surely posing huge challenges with regard to the forms of polity that could be chosen at a given time in the *politike koinonia*. To attain the “balance,” elimination seems to have been the solution to this tension, meaning that certain things are eliminated and excluded in publics.

One such example is the distinction between “private” and “public,” where private means those aspects that are not included in public or the remaking of polity. In the Greek *politike koinonia*, while freedom of all was guaranteed, wealth became a condition of participation in the governance of the *polis*. Only a few participated in the ordering and governing of the *polis*. Women were also excluded for example. The connotation of private thus denotes a state of being deprived, i.e. deprivation from participation in governance. The objective to maximise participation in governance or the exercise of freedom of the members of the community, thereby enabling them to live more fully as persons and groups, is the cardinal vision of the *politike koinonia* on whose basis any polity becomes invalidated or validated. The elimination of life in its fullness constitutes the litmus test of any form of polity in the tension of subsidiarity and solidarity.

Forms and structures that ensue from a particular worldview give governance its specific character and content. The mapping of publicity is thus influenced by different worldviews and the anthropological understanding of each worldview. The contemporary notion of publicity we dialogue with mostly engages the Habermasian concept of public sphere. From this a definition of the concept of publicity is summed up as “ a kind of discourse to which everyone has potentially equal access, whose content is people’s common concerns, and whose out-comes are governed by reason and persuasion rather than by force or deception” (Everett 1988:129). The eliminating factor in this form of political community is reason and persuasion as contrasted with violence. This we do not readily accept and we shall engage with it below.

To sum up what we have thus far discussed. In Aristotelian terms, humanity is seen as political beings. Participation by all is the supreme value of the political community. In fact, without participation there is no *zoe*. To enhance participation, worldviews, structures and forms have a bearing on the concretization of the ideals of the *politike koinonia*. In the *politike koinonia*, politics is placed in a continuum with ethics. A perspective on the place of religion in our modern society is important as a prelude to our African perspective in the debate. In other words, we need to establish the place of religion in the *politike koinonia* having analyzed the modern debates of the subject. We have affirmed that Black Theology of Liberation is religion, but what is religion and where do we place it in our current modern context? Let us now delve into the question without much ado.

5.3. The Modern Debate on the Place of Religion in Public Life

Searching for the place of liberative polity, the analysis of the current world is extremely important. We have already seen that the notion of publicity can be linked with the symbol of liberation, but publicity itself presupposes some kind of power structure or polity and the debate is nuanced. We have also seen the ramifications of subsidiarity and solidarity; unity and diversity, participation and elimination through the prism of the *politike koinonia*.

5.3.1. Social Integration and Ecclesiology

Sociologists agree that it is a common moral order or system of values that binds people together into a community. This they call social integration. Social integration is a product of normative systems, rituals and communal practices comprehended as the central fabric of social relations. We have already made the point that religion has been universally regarded as a central component of these value systems. Hamilton says, “That spiritual entities and forces can materially affect the course of events and thereby human fate and well-being, is a central aspect of most systems of belief which we normally think of as religion” (1995:9). Religion functions as a social cement of a common moral order.

That religion plays an important role in social integration is already indicated by the fact that the Latin word *religere* (from which the word religion is derived) means to bind (Ngcokavane 1989). It means that the function of religion is expressive of the societal thought patterns and value systems even though it derives its mandate from the transcendent ultimate(s). It should be clear that from a social religious point of view, religion mirrors the thought patterns of a given society. We must then be alert to the fact that with religion, “we may be dealing, in fact, with many different things - philosophical systems, cosmologies, systems of morality, even forms of drama, literature and other symbolic representations of religion” (Hamilton 1995:19). In some contexts religion can be an intricate whole of these elements: philosophical system, cosmology, system of morality, drama and other symbolic representations, while in other contexts it may only assume some of these elements. We have alluded to this point at the very beginning when we spoke about the construction of religious language in public life. So religion can be a total system or part of a system.

A polity that derives from a unitary understanding of religion, where religion embraces the total system of a community or a society is called a theocracy. A theocracy usually fuses all these elements, mentioned above, together - it is a fusion of the bio- and geopolitical spheres. On the contrary, when religion is seen as only one dimension of society that has to be differentiated from other spheres of society, secular polities become both conceivable plausible.

Some religions are at the same time faith and moral systems e.g. Christianity and Islam, while on the other hand there may be moral systems that embody no religion, e.g., humanism according to (Hamilton 1995:20). Stackhouse affirms this assertion that some religions are at the same time religions and moral systems when he says that every civilization has as its architecture religious commitments that point to a source of normative meaning (2002:11). Social integration, presupposes that forms of knowledge and understanding shape all social actions and relations. This means that human beings participate in social actions meaningfully, i.e. their actions mean something for them.

There will be choices of alternative means for achieving alternative ends, hence social action and interaction are a contingent, open-ended exercise which is not predictable. Social actions thus urgently require a hermeneutic of situations as they do not occur in a vacuum. Disruptions, changes and threats to social order irrevocably question the meaningful character of social action and religion usually plays a role of repairing, managing or coping with these circumstances. In the context of a plurality of truth references and meanings, religion cannot be the sole custodian of truth, as it has to enter the fierce contest with other claims of truth. So, the manner in which religion is placed in society is a matter of contest, yet its integrative role for social cohesion is true, whatever place and space it assumes in society. This particular point will soon be apparent in our discussions below.

5.3.2. Religion (Theology) and Civil Society

In the modern advanced society Casanova (1989:216) sees a solution for the place of religion and theology in the Habermasian discursive model, which operates with a tripartite analytical division of the polity into economy, state and lifeworld or money, power and the lifeworld. According to this, the state and economy are systems that have their own steering media. They are different from the lifeworld, which is the terrain of symbolic and normative actions. Civil society is part of the lifeworld. In this order, religions and *ipso facto* theology and ecclesiology operate at the level of civil society, becoming consistent with the modern principles and modern differentiated structures of political, economic and civil society spheres.

The tripartite scheme however, is problematic as Habermas⁹ himself acknowledges that the spheres of politics and economics exert pressure on the lifeworld. The political and economic spheres have their own language (media) and constantly seek to “colonize” the lifeworld. In this order then religion and theology as constituent parts of civil society live under constant threat of being consumed by the steering media of power and money. Nonetheless, the current view is that religion should fit into this tripartite scheme. It should function at the level of civil society as part of the lifeworld.

⁹ The Habermasian tripartite scheme will receive our attention in the next chapter where our critique will be given. Our purpose here is to give clarification on the contested place of religion and theology in public life for analytical reasons.

Having explained that the modern advanced society locates religion and therefore theology in civil society as part of the lifeworld, we should ask what civil society is then? Again, the notion of the *politike koinonia* is central to our understanding of the notion of civil society.

Baker traces the history of civil society to the Scottish philosophers. We nonetheless go back to the notion of *politike koinonia*, as there is no one who has developed a systematic theory of civil society (Cohen & Arato 1995:3) in which civil society could be described as the beginning of action or taking of initiative toward an end (McLean 1997: 14.). The notion *koinonia politike* by Aristotle as we have seen, presents the notion of civil society as teleological, in other words, a socio-political order that is aimed at the common good or common life. Human beings, being political beings, have a defined objective to govern themselves, without which they cannot live and be human. The notion of civil society thus encapsulates an exercise of freedom by individuals and groups in originating (*archē*) responsible action toward a common good and life. In civil society people participate in action together for their common good and life, and to govern themselves. The modern view presented by Habermas however, entails that these actions are outside the spheres of economics and power, so civil society is a space of social action that is distinct from the steering media of money and power. In a nutshell, civil society is that space occupied by formal organizations, informal networks and global organizations outside the sphere of power and money that do not possess coercive power.

These organizations are characteristically associational as people volunteer (take initiative) to participate in them. According to Cardoso, (Baker 2002:55) civil society is potentially the participatory public sphere within which the popular sectors can resist the otherwise all powerful state. Hence it is both a realm of the public and the private at the same time as asserted by Cohen & Arato, Baker further explains.

According to Habermas, civil society is the source of self reflexivity in society without which democracy dwindles. Civil society, according to Habermas, protects the autonomous development of public opinion and holds back the systems imperatives of money and power. The notion of civil society has been popularized by Gramsci particularly among the left. He perceived it as a realm of culture and ideology outside the might and power of the state. Crucial was his theory of hegemony to start with:

By hegemony Gramsci seems to mean a sociopolitical situation, in his terminology a 'moment,' in which the philosophy and practice of a society fuse or are in equilibrium; an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all tastes, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotation. An element of direction and control, not necessarily conscious, is implied (in Duncan 2003:35)

The concept of hegemony prompted departure from orthodox Marxism in which power or the state is viewed as a bourgeois adversary to the power of the people and their ultimate emancipation from capitalism. By propounding the concept of hegemony, and to this effect, the notion of counter-hegemony as a plausibility of constructing popular resistance, conceptualized as distinct from both state and economy, even the left was wedded to the idea of civil society. Civil society became conceived as raw material for radical democracy to offer the possibility of a genuinely transforming politics. By the same token, in order to de-establish religion and thus to disassociate religion from power, it is argued that the best sphere for religion in the current modern order is the sphere of civil society. The power of religion is thus in civil society. According to Casanova (1998:216) both the liberal and civic-republican views conceive of the role of religion or theology in pre-modern terms as co-extensive with the political or societal community. The solution should thus be found in the Habermasian tripartite discursive model.

While the debate on Church and State¹⁰ continues in the new democratic situation in South Africa, failure to come to terms with this current analysis of the modern world might have repercussions for our democratization processes. The implications are enormous.

¹⁰ The traditional debate on Church and State relations is a taken-for-granted substratum of the section. Concomitant to the debate itself are issues of secularization, and therefore secular state and religious state, including private and public divides of religion. It is believed that once the tripartite analytical division is explained, clarity on those questions will be implied. Moreover, in our case, most of these debates do not emanate from our interior horizon as they were not intended for the oppressed black African masses as interlocutors. The next chapter will also take the matter further in our discussion and critique of Habermas and the current world order.

The notion of “critical solidarity” with the state is a product of a different analysis of the place of religion in a modern state. Similarly, the current struggle to locate the place of Prophetic Theology in public life is symptomatic of an analysis that is binary, at least from the point of view of the tripartite analytical division of power, economy and the world.¹¹ According to this analysis it is neither solidarity with the state, nor Prophetic Theology that is required, but the actual differentiation of publics in a modern democratic state that sees civil society as distinct from power and money. The implications for an African view of religion are apparent already. Only when we begin to engage with this world system shall we be able to take the debate to another level. In other words, it is the analytical scheme itself that needs to be engaged with in order for dialogue to prevail. We can make a few summations on the basis of what we have achieved so far.

¹¹The recent altercation between President Mbeki and Archbishop Desmond Tutu signifies this constraint in the analysis of the current modern state. Tutu charged that the ANC seems no longer to be prone to robust debate. In this charge he implicated President Mbeki as one who is stifling robust debate due to his leadership style. Mbeki on the other hand responded by saying that Tutu is not a member of the ANC, even though he is an icon of the struggle. While in many respects a lot of the arguments advanced from both sides are carefully constructed, it is hard to defend Tutu on the basis of theology’s right to be prophetic or Mbeki’s right to be a “citizen” in response to Tutu. It is uneasy for us to exonerate boundary extensions of a differentiated sphere to the detriment of the other sphere. Both power and theology are subject to the ethic of opening up (open space) in liberative-polity. Once the spheres are differentiated, their language becomes different and a bridge language acceptable to them is required. At worst, differentiation of public spheres is essentially a determinate of *fides* i.e. fidelity to one sphere of expression. What combines and divides Tutu and Mbeki is *fides* (trusts; bonds). Tutu assumes a prophetic stance which is no longer momentous. Mbeki assumes the position of a citizen when he is in power operating in a sphere that has coupled out of civil society. A polemical approach erodes trust. In other words, it is not what Tutu says or what Mbeki says that is significant here, but the mode of their dialogue. None should be above the other and this is our debate in the next chapter because their spheres of operation are differentiated and equal.

First, Black Public Theology is a second act, a reflection governed by the symbol of liberation on the nature of governance and the participation of the people in governance. The relationship between ecclesiology and polity (power) gives us the theoretical basis for engagement in public life through the designs of liberative publicity. To the extent that liberation is an evocative and therefore power(ful) symbol and indispensable for the “rootage” and echoes of polity frameworks and procedures, social integration and social actions equally require these functions of religion and ecclesiology.

Second, while these functions are not disputed, it is the place of religion - where it is “housed” that is the preoccupation of the modern advanced world today. The indications are that its house in modern society is in the sphere of civil society. Actions in civil society are initiatives that are un-coerced, but are driven by the goals of common life together. In addition, and anthropologically speaking, human beings are political beings and certainly power(ful) beings. Civil society is thus the locus of power and the power of the people. We have asserted this in our treatment of the notion of *koinonia* in our soteriological architecture of liberation. Cone’s ethics of *koinonia* vigorously reject the separation of ethics from theology (Tsele 1994:128). *Koinonia* is an interstice of face to face *praxiological* encounter with God that grounds solidarity in the *politike koinonia* with the experience of the oppressed. Yet theology and liturgy cannot be separated in African Theology. From this view that power is in the bonds in between spheres an African perspective of publicity can be developed.

5. 4. *Ubuhlanti (Kgoro): A heuristic Symbol of Power for Black Ecclesio - Political Discourse*

In the foregoing discussion we have defined ecclesiology to designate symbols that arise from ecclesial structures which are translatable in public life. In this manner, ecclesiology focuses on polity, meaning the forms of governance emanating from a particular kind of ecclesiology. Polity is power, hence democracy is about power. Public Theology thus concerns issues of power and structures of power in public life.

Second, publicity is about the re-making of bonds, trusts, *fides* in an open space which hold together the structures of governance or the structures of power. To share in power, modern society has developed differentiated publics that become an aggregation of the political community. Differentiation requires legitimation without which fragmentation ensues. In the current modern context, religion is differentiated from power and economics. One of its key roles in society is “cementing,” thus giving cohesion to the differentiated spheres of society. We have argued that such a remaking of publicity derives from the symbols and culture of the masses, liberation being a rooting vision of this reconstruction. *Ubuhlanti* is this African ecclesial symbol.

5.4.1. The Nongqawuze¹² Interstice: A Civil Space of

Ambiguity and Social Death

Speaking about the resilience of the African culture, in the South African context, after protracted wars, Frontier Wars, Bambathatha, Sekhunkhune and many others waged against the indigenes of this country, one has to take into account the legend of Nongqawuze as a symbol of final defeat of the African people at the military might of the white race (Khabela 1996). Khabela introduces the Nongqawuze saga in the theme he calls “the final act of atonement,” (1996:71-80). The prophecy went this way:

Nongqawuze! Nongqawuze! Tell that the whole community will rise from the dead; all cattle must be slaughtered for they have been reared by contaminated hands because there are few people who deal with witchcraft. There should be no cultivation, but great new grain pits must be dug, new houses must be built and great strong cattle enclosures must be erected. Cut out new milksacks and weave many doors from buka roots. So says Napakade, the descendant of Sifuba-Sibanzi. People must leave witchcraft for soon they will be examined by diviners (Khabela 1996: 76).

¹² The story of Nongqawuze is an interesting legend known across the spectrum of different indigenous groupings of South Africa, even though it is historically located in the Eastern Cape. It is about a fatal prophecy that was made by Nongqawuze to AmaXhosa to kill all their cattle and await their deliverance from the clutches of White oppression from their gods. Another legend is about Shaka’s words as he was slain. He told his conspirators that they had forgotten the presence of the White man in the territory and thus committed a fatal strategic mistake by killing him. Among the Setswana speaking people there is also a legend that says that in the face of Mfecane sometimes called Shaka Wars, Batswana, instead of taking on Shaka warriors decided to flee and commit suicide in order to disappoint Shaka by not engaging his men. In other words they fought Shaka by killing themselves. A recurring theme in the stories is “strategy”, and in the case of the first and last legends “suicidal” strategies. This interstice serves as an antithesis to theories of total defeat and inability of political power to possess all power.

Let us make a few comments on the prophecy. The prophecy promises the rise of the whole community from the dead. We need to understand what the understanding of community is in the culture of AmaXhosa and the African people. The significance of cattle in the *ubuhlanti* and grain with the injunction to build new homes (*amakhaya*) and strong cattle enclosures (*iintlanti*) is instructive. The call to depart from witchcraft evokes a soteriological understanding by Africans too. Suffice it to say that *ubuhlanti* is evoked in this prophecy. The point is that of the prophecy signifying total defeat. Njeza (2002) in his discussion of the theme of “colonizing the mind” also affirms that the defeat of AmaXhosa was sealed at the time of the Nongqawuze prophecy. This prophecy accounted for the loss of identity, land, cattle and political power of AmaXhosa.

What we seek to drive home is that this defeat was militaristic and political, but not total in the sense of eroding everything about the being of Amaxhosa. We warm up to the point Njeza (2002:52) makes that there was a significant shift in emphasis from the political to the religious among AmaXhosa after the tragic prophecy of Nongqawuze. This paradigm shift to quasi-religious strategies is affirmed by Khabela (1996:81-102) too as an expression of millennium hope manifest in the prophecy by Nongqawuze cited above. Widespread mortality among AmaXhosa due to internecine wars, existential anxiety and defeat polluted their ability to govern their own affairs, letting them revert to quasi-religious strategies for governing their lives.

It is for this reason that we argue that the military and political defeat of the AmaXhosa did not seal victory in war, but in a battle.¹³ One of the pivotal points made by Mofokeng is that oppression does not require the extermination and annihilation of the oppressed. Kōee (1986), in his study of liberation and domination, makes a similar point. After all, who will be left to be the subject of oppression if all the subjects are annihilated? Genocide is different from oppression in this respect. Oppression is not victory, this is the point we need to emphasize and unpack through the Nongqawuze interstice.

To revert to what has been said about the civil sphere: the Nongqawuze interstice signifies a clear space of the absence of colonial power and signifies actions carried out through and commanded by a power source that is different from the colonial might. Seen from another angle, something of the core that was not “touched” by the might of the colonial master can be looked for in this space which heralded new ways of identity and strategies of survival and living.¹⁴ No doubt, there were serious wars! There was and there still is a lot of suffering. Chidester (1995:93) has used the categories of “containment and dismissal” to denote the ethos that obtained through colonization after the defeat of the oppressed by the militarily strong whites.

¹³ Among those who have convincingly argued that Africans in South Africa were not totally defeated are Maimela (1991). Maimela sees the formation of the African Independent Churches as an expression of resistance to total conversion. Njeza (2002) uses Maimela’s thesis as a synthesis of the thesis of conflictual mission by the Camaroffs and the antithesis of Christianity as a non-Western religion by Bediako.

¹⁴ A reading of the colonial history the Africans shows this. There have been a number of tools used to expose this history and there are many publications. The basic question is what the inspiration of a defeated people is. Within this interstice it has been shown that some accepted defeat and thus imbibed content from the master. Others accepted defeat but found space for creative imagination and rejected, refined and re-thought their content and identity in excessively repressing conditions.

According to Mamdani (1996:16-23), under conditions of modernity the scenario was that of a bifurcated state of affairs between subject and citizen, and we add, the savage and the civilized, the undeveloped and the developed, black and white, superior and inferior, poor and rich, landed-ness and landless-ness, the godly and the ungodly.

Civil society in South Africa is thus a double-sided affair - racialized and tribalized.

According to Mamdani, democratization must entail both de-racialization of civil power and the detribalization of customary power. Nongqawuze signifies all this drama – a space of ambiguity captured by Njeza (2002) as “subversive subservience” and as “coercive agency” by Duncan (2003) respectively in the titles of their dissertations.

Military force and the militarization of civil society, the rule of terror *de facto*, created an ambiguous state of civil society. The Nongqawuze interstice signifies this ambiguity in which the conversion of the religion of the master into a liberating tool takes place. It is a device to signify the ambiguity of the conversion of ontological denial to ontological blackness and the conversion of the Bible as a tool of oppression to the conversion of the Bible as a tool of resistance to suppression and repression. The Nongqawuze interstice is the horizon of ambiguity out of which we discern the ecclesio-political dilemmas and options for liberative publicity. It is a prism through which the significance of the black African praxis and *poiēsis* is illuminated. It is an attempt to aggregate the renewal and the re-establishment of the existence of the African *politike koinonia* and its “protological foundational acts” that originate community into life.

The significance of the choice of Nongqawuze is that she was a woman. While she is viewed by some as having been a traitor not to be celebrated, it is exactly this paradox or ambiguity that attracts us to this symbol. Above all, she was a victim. The apocalyptic literature in the Bible uses images of grave abuse of women. Often emerging in times of empire, Nongqawuze is an apocalyptic symbol of resistance in the face of the imperial legion of colonization, containment and dismissal and the fragmentation of community. This space, this “interstice” is the one in which Maluleke (2002b:46) rediscovers the agency of the African people. Out of this, he postulates an emerging paradigm of post-cold war and postApartheid African Theology.

Maluleke proposes that theology retains a unique role in valorizing, interpreting and enhancing the agency of African Christians in their struggles against the cultural, religious and economic forces. His proposal is about the relevance of theology in public life in general. The construction of what he calls a less-embittered and less schizophrenic relationship between Africa and Christianity on the one hand and between the excruciating past and Africans on the other, is centered on the discovery of African agency in sequestered spaces of African culture. This agency provides the synergy of past influential assumptions with the search for theoretical tools and perspectives that will enhance our comprehension of the “mythical, the socio-cultural and the popular in religion and society” (2000b:19). Our point is that the Nongqawuze interstice is a symbol of a space in which the resilience of African culture and agency took place up to the dawn of democracy.

It is a space in which battles of strategies to wage the struggle further took place, the Ethiopian Movement, the African Instituted Churches, the formation of the African National Congress and later the Pan Africanist Congress, the Black Conscious Movement, Black Theology of Liberation, the Kairos Document - all in this interstice of defeat indicating that something of the core of African power remained. But not only did they maintain a particular core. There were mutations. See, the prophecy of Nongqawuze is a mixture of traditional cosmology and Western Christian eschatological and apocalyptic beliefs (Njeza 2002:53 ; Khabela:79). We can look at projects that sprang out in this interstice and their power of success in their liberative mutations. The point is that this was an interstice without military power, but a trench of formidable, fiery spiritual power reestablishing the African community into life.

5.4.2. *Mirabile Dictu*. The Locus of Liberative Spirituality

According to Sobrino (1988:1), “The human person embodies elements that remain constant throughout the course of history, however much that history may change.” In its etymological sense the word “tradition” Sobrino contends, connotes handing down elements that remain constant throughout the course of history, however much that history might change. Put otherwise, these constant elements in history become inserted in history, they are truths that are actualized and historicized. They are re-established in history.

Karl Marx in particular begins his work by explaining that Hegel ruled out the capacity of empirical techniques to describe the characteristics of a nation and their propulsion by one generation to the next (Cohen 1978:1). Developing his historical materialism Marx claimed that there is an intrinsic coherence in history. Not extrinsic, as theology claimed. Not alienated, as idealism claimed” (Kee 1990:108).

The fact that at the defeat of *AmaXhosa* as depicted by the Nongqawuze interstice, there was a paradigm shift to pseudo-religious strategies to wage a struggle against oppression, is indicative of the religious roots of the African people and thus the “historization” of faith with the struggle. This historization of faith with the struggle is coherently intrinsic and materialistic in the experience of the Africans. In arguing that the historical and cultural struggles of the black people are a hermeneutical starting point for Black theology, Mosala (1989:67-68) by implication refers to the black masses’ reclamation of history and destiny as their freedom, and thus the liberation of their productive forces as a spiritual and material freedom. This spirituality that surges out of the Nongqawuze trenches marks the “solidarity of the shaken,” to use Jan Patocka’s formula (in Shanks 1995:115). It is the inherent religious drive to overcome nihilism, which is the denial of any positive meaningfulness in history, serving as an effective basis for solidarity among those shaken. It is about a people that has suffered a soul-destroying obliteration of their peace, re-placing themselves in history.

The connection between Ethiopianism and the origins of the African National Congress is indicative of this fact: the religio-political mutations that shaped this struggle for freedom and liberation. The composition by Enoch Sontonga that is symbolic of the aspirations of a number of African countries today, the national anthem of our country South Africa, *Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika*, lived in symbiosis with African nationalism at the very gestation of the irruption of the liberation struggle in South Africa. For example, at the conclusion of the 1938 Congress, Walshe (1995:16) records, “The meeting then sang the movements’ great hymn and anthem of hope, *Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika* (God bless Africa).” The political culture of black Africans is inseparable from the “ecclesial canon” of the shaken. Rev John Dube was the first President of the ANC and he was a Congregational Minister. Rev Zacheus Mahabane, a Methodist minister, leader of the Cape Congress and President of the ANC in the late twenties and thirties, often repeated his theme that “the universal acknowledgement of Christ as common Lord and King (would) break down the social, spiritual and intellectual barriers between the races” (Walshe 1995:15). Dr Xuma who was also the President of the African National Congress, perceived the liberation movement as not anti-white, but in addition as purposed to promoting “the ideals of Christianity, human decency and democracy” (Walshe 1995:15-16). This symbiotic relationship of Black Consciousness with Black Theology is evidenced by the fact that many BCM leaders were theological students (de Gruchy 2004:14). Biko himself reflected on theological issues and he was commonly seen among theological students.



Steve Biko at the Lutheran Seminary in Pietermaritzburg

It is safe to infer that consciousness and spirituality, in our paradigm, are two sides of the same coin. Nationalism and consciousness too, went hand in hand, as education i.e. the conscientization of the masses was among the pillars of African Nationalism. According to Shanks (1995), civil religion studies the proper spirit in which the narratives of civil religion are handed down. By analogy, the proper spirit that has been handed down from the trenches of the struggle is the locus of the spirituality we are delineating here. Civil religion contributes to the development of self-consciousness, Shanks explains. He says:

Civil theology, one might say, is a study of the proper spirit in which the narratives of civil religion are to be handled. Considered as a contribution to the developing of self-consciousness of civil society, it could further be defined as the exploration, from theistic perspective, of the requirements of moral solidarity in the face of oppression in so far as

need is for a spirit of moral solidarity transcending all confessional boundaries – even including those between theist and atheist (1995:115).

enced from Nongqawuze, Black Consciousness therefore was an expression of life lived with a particular spirit. This tradition must be handed down in public life today in South Africa. It is a tradition of consciousness that is inseparable from a particular kind of spirituality and hence, a particular kind of theology and canon of ecclesiology.

is thus difficult from the experience of this interstice in question to conceive of a polity that is without a certain kind of spirituality. More, the liberation struggle has strong theological roots in South Africa. One of the points we have persistently made in this chapter is the question *fides*. We have used the terms such as “trusts” and “bonds” to describe the power and “force fields” in between the spheres. If spirituality is spiritual life, in line with our description of spirituality above, the historization of the spirit then is in the trenches of poverty. Its truthfulness is the life of the poor and this is where spirituality bonds with history. The spirit of fidelity, Sobrino explains, is the spirit of openness (porosity) and causes this irruption or porosity in polity structures that find expression in public life. *Fides* means honesty; trustworthiness. It is honesty and trustworthiness about reality. In our historical relations, testimony about the neighbour is important because it is the truth about the neighbour (Brueggemann 1999:91-98).

The prodigious renewal strategy of the African Renaissance associated with Mbeki in our public life today as analyzed by Farisani (2002) will still have to make this connection with the ecclesial spiritual canons of the struggle. The diffuse links it makes with Black Consciousness might undermine the spirituality and thus, the spiritual life that must be handed down in the quest for liberative reconstruction. If consciousness is about the relationship with the totality, spirituality and historical life must converge. Spirituality is *hologenic* - a spirit of *fides*, of trustworthiness in the totality of the expectations of the poor and marginalized. The heuristic symbol we use for this resilient power and spirituality that defied the might of the colonial and Apartheid order is *ubuhlanti* (*IsiXhosa*), *kgoro* (*Sesotho*), the kraal.

The beginning of *Umanyano* we have alluded to in the previous chapter is in this interstice. *Umanyano* means unity. As we indicated, *Umanyano* has a distinct liturgical symbol of *invuselelo*. The beginning of *Umanyano* in time and space or history is an important dimension to the spirituality of this interstice. It is “a dangerous restless memory”. Cornel West calls this a Socratic love of wisdom, “It is a meditation on and a preparation for death”. Cornel West says, “He or she who learns how to die unlearns slavery” (in Mangcu 2006:14). To learn how to die is to care for the soul. To care for the soul is to unlearn the death of a slave. It is to refuse to die as a slave! To unlearn the death of the slave is to value self in the midst of being devalued.

To unlearn “the death of a slave” is to be a great spirit in the midst of a disheartening and excruciating experience. To unlearn the death of a slave is to be moral and integral in the midst of immorality and disintegration. That is the heritage of *Umanyano*. The *archē* of *umanyano* is unity in trenches of the social death perpetrated by the crushing might of colonialism and apartheid. The *archē* of *umanyano* is in the interstice of the loss of everything: cattle, people, land, women and children dislocated by the bigotry of the migrant labour system of a god of gold and glory. Achebe calls this “when things fall apart.” Martin Luther King jr. calls this *archē* “the movement of the maladjusted.” Malcom X calls this *archē* those who “are catching hell.” Fanon calls it “the wretched of the earth.” The African Initiated Churches call this “*Umoya*” (spirit). The Bible calls this “the least of these.” The *iimanyano* call this *imvuselelo* (*revival*) the spirit of refusing to die the death of a slave!

The notion of *Imvuselelo* is a rich dangerous memory of restlessness and insanity in the midst of oppression. *Imvuselelo* is a rich, impatient, insurgent and dangerous memory of the spirit that refuses to be relegated to the grave and the hillside. *Imvuselelo* is the death of a spirit of death (*ifufunyane*) and the revival of home for the indwelling and liberation of the spirit. *Imvuselelo* is the beginning of the breath of life, the *ruach* of life in the face of the tangent of death. *Imvuselelo* is the arch of solidarity of the shaken. *Imvuselelo* is to unlearn to die the death of a slave. It is a spirit of governance - a reign and rule of a great spirit in the dungeons of oppression. *Archē* should be read as the architecture of the spirituality of liberation we are talking about in the Nongqawuze interstice.

Spirituality is also related to tradition. Tradition is the repetition, “routinization” of an experience that is tested through the blood of the people in order for life to be abundant. Spirituality means handing down that great spirit of the traditions of value and worth. This is what *imvuselelo* means. It means imbibing and drinking from the well of the “restless memory” that needs to be inserted in the remaking of our public life.

The nature and character of the *politike koinonia* that emerges out of the Nongqawuze interstice defines the meaning of civil society in our African context. This interstice affirms Gramsci’s notion of civil society as a space of culture outside the might and power of state and money. The Nongqawuze interstice is a civil society imbued with ambiguity. It is a restless political community. It is the space of unlearning to die. In this interstice, religion plays a pivotal role of liberation and provides cohesion and sanity in the incomprehensible paradox of being colonized by Christian religion and yet being liberated by it. The Nongqawuze interstice is the seat of the gestation of a “shaken solidarity” generating a spirituality that coheres and integrates all spheres outside the ambit of state power and might. The Nongqawuze interstice is an antithesis of the Habermasian public redolent of fragmentation because, on the contrary, it houses *umanyano* (the unity) of subaltern counter publics. It is the *praxis* and *poiēsis* of the fellowship of the shaken in their re-establishment of a new dynamism to the *politike koinonia*.

5.4.3. ***Ubuhlanti: The Communication of Efficacy of Ikhaya***

The Nongqawuze interstice is a historical testimony of the kind of publicity we must contend with in South Africa. It spells out the kind of political community that mediates engagement of liberative publicity. The question now is where do the irruptions of power occur to reconstruct, rebuild and remake the “trusts,” “faiths,” “bonds,” “associations” and “co-operations,” out of a shaken solidarity? We employ the notion of “communication of efficacy” to denote this power (Paserwark 1993). Examining the concept of power in Luther’s theology, Paserwark says that “power is the communication of efficacy which posits itself at the borders between beings” (1993:220). This means that power is created at the intersection of inwardness and externality. Paserwark’s motivation for the use of the notion of communication stems out of the fact that the term communication stresses “the in-between nature of power” (1993:219). This definition of power is profound for our work, not only because it is a theological attempt to chart the geography of power. It is also profound because it qualifies covenant (bond, trust, *fides*) as power and *ipso facto*, as power in-between differentiated publics. The definition of power as the communication of efficacy is profoundly pertinent for this dissertation also, because publicity, we have observed, is open discourse that needs bonds without which there is violence. What is the seat of the communication of efficacy? *Ikhaya*, we argue.

Fundamentally in the African setting *ikhaya*, which is almost an equivalent of *oikos*, is a place of worship. It is the whole of the space that is occupied by the humans (physical and metaphysical) between the ancestors and the Supreme one called *uQamata* in *isiXhosa*. *Ikhaya* is holy, it is *Heimat*. *Ikhaya* is both the earth and the world, God's household.

Indlu is specifically the physical space or structure. For example, one can say a special hut in the homestead usually used for cooking or sleeping, is an *indlu*. It is thus a physical structure of *ikhaya*. The word *indlu* can also connote pedigree. It is often used to delineate members of the same *ikhaya*. We could say the house [*indlu*] of Abraham constituted: *indlu enkulu*, i.e. the great house with Sarah and *indlu encinci*, the small house with Hagar. To trace the lineage of the children *Amaxhosa* would say one is the child of the great (first) house, *indlu enkulu* or first house. This is essentially important, as traditionally there would be more than one wife in one *ikhaya*.

Especially in the royal family, this is how children are often described mostly for purposes of heritage or succession to the throne. Of course, this is not exclusive to the royal house only. One could, with some measure of constraint say *indlu* is much more conjugal, is a legal, physical kind of boundary that even separates family members, i.e. *abantu bekhaya*.¹⁵

¹⁵ For some concise description of *indlu*, see Mdende, N. 1999.

Usually, the fireplace called *iziko* divides *indlu* into two sections. The right hand side of *indlu* is where women sit, while males sit on the left. On the women's side of *indlu* is where labour, religious and other social rites needed for childbirth are performed. The great hut, *indlu enkulu*, becomes the seat of major religious rites where the clan assembles sometimes for days. During major ritual rites abstention from sex, arguments, noise or any altercations are forbidden. In the great hut we see a specific kind of *decorum*, a liturgy in reverence of the ancestors and God.

Umzi, on the other hand, is in an *indlu* with a kraal, *ubuhlanti*. There is no *umzi* without *ubuhlanti*. An *indlu* graduates into *umzi* by establishing a kraal, *ubuhlanti*. The socio-economic importance of the kraal can be seen from this. The kraal, being the main shrine of a family or social group, is also a place of an "association between a social group and the dead ancestors group" (Kuckertz 1981:5). Cases and disputes and thus the politics of a clan have as their rendezvous, the kraal. It is a place of social and community intercourse between the living group and the living-departed. The kraal symbolizes this fusion of life and integral society. This is where the "communication of efficacy" between the people and God, people and land, people and work, people and people, people and faith takes place. We need to state at this very juncture that designations such as *iziko*, *umzi*, have been in public for some time. For example a college of education would be called *iziko lemfundo*. A factory would be called *umzi-mveliso*. The South African Broadcasting Cooperation is called *iziko lo sasazo*. If the word *iziko* is translated to mean public, publicity then is a fiery place. To this we shall return in due course.

5.4.4. ***Amandla and Ubuhlanti***

Ubuhlanti, as a symbol of power among the surviving Africans in South Africa is unquestionable whether with or without cattle, sheep, *izindlu* (houses) or even gods. In this section, however, it is the metaphysics of power we need to glance at in our attempt to describe power in the ecclesio-political discourse of the black Africans. We will look at various aspects symbolically expressed through the heuristic design of *ubuhlanti* (*kgoro*). To recapitulate, *ubuhlanti* signifies the unity of power (politics), economy (livestock), people, land, gods and the Supreme Being (God). It is the symbol of integrative power venerated by Africans for its decorum and harmony between the living, the living-dead, nature, people and God. Without *ubuhlanti* (the kraal), “things fall apart” (to use Achebe’s famous words of the title of his book).

What is also fascinating about the symbol of *ubuhlanti* are the words that are associated with this space. They seem to share the same roots¹⁶. For example, the word *inkundla* (a space where meetings are held or people are gathered next to the kraal) displays phonetic affinities with the word *ukudla* (a word for food). Related to the word *ukudla* (food), is the word *ukudliwa* (the act of eating) but also, the same word *ukudliwa* means judgment, implying that justice is related to food. Now the words for power (*amandla*) and *ukudla* also display this affinity.

¹⁶The same thing could be said about Sesotho. *Kgoro*, (kraal) *Lekgotla* (gathering or assembly), *Kgora* (plentitude, plenty of food). They are related and point to one origin.

For instance, one of the clans called *Amatolo*, in praises describe themselves as “*O dlangamandla*,” meaning “those who eat through power” or “those who eat with power.” Mfeki’s clan, called *oDlamini* means “those who eat at day.” Because it is difficult to translate thoughts and not words, the praise “*O dlangamandla*” could as well be rendered as those “feasting with power.” We should reckon that praises are evocative and mean prayer. The combination of “feasting” with “power” is quite illustrious, as this praise “*O dlangamandla*” is said when people “go back to their origins,” i.e. in their praises. This can be said without a feast in times of starvation to express a yearning for the days of plenitude of food and resources. We have now gone around full circle, from politics, veneration, space (land) and economy through one word. So, emanating from these semantic affinities power is food, people, God, space all united in one (*ikhaya*).

Let us once again revert to Aristotle who sees power in three forms mainly: monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. De Jouvenel, (1993:20) who studies power by reference to its extent, rather than its forms can be useful for our purpose here. The Greeks have these words for life, *bios* and *zoe*, the former signifying extent of life while the latter refers to the intensity of life. We find two words in *isiXhosa* that can also be defined in the same manner, *ubomi* (the lifespan or extent of life) and *impilo* (the intensity or quality of life). By looking at the *bios* of power, its extent of life (its biosphere), in our understanding de Jouvenel sees civil obedience as the proportioned quantum of power- the quantity of obedience or the measure or calibration of obedience. Civil society by inference, is the space, the extent of the life of power.

But we need to explain what obedience is then. According to de Jouvenel, the essence of obedience is habit. If we agree with this, we will recall that the word habit is also connected with the word “habitat” (space). Crudely, habit then is an occupation of space. The material understanding of obedience is thus the space, extent of social actions. Let us look for some explanation elsewhere. Bourdieu (1994:139) further defines *habitus* as a social structure that has become interiorized and *ipso facto* the significance of a certain view of the world which has been acquired. Habit is thus acquired and the acceptance or acquiescence with that which has been acquired is obedience.

If habit is acquired, and it is obedience, there must be a prerogative that harmonizes *praxis*, which then in turn produces and reproduces society in its cultural, social and economic dimensions. There should be something that activates action. This origin of action is the sovereignty. Sovereignty is the *archē* - the origin of power. Sovereignty is outside the *bios* of power i.e. the extensity of power, but it confers power. That sovereignty can be God, people, magic, law, but whatever it is, the sovereignty commands obedience. It is instantiated in bonds. So de Jouvenel (1993:108) concludes, “the essence of power is command, command that lives for its sake and for its fruits.” Command is power in its pure state, power as cause or as it first looked.

The kraal, i.e. *ubuhlanti*, commands power. In the expression “*umanyano ngamandla*” (*kepano ke matla*), meaning unity is strength, Africans do not express a *telos* or an end, but the emanation or preeminence of the sovereignty in the acquired unity of the universe. *Ubuhlanti* possesses this commanding power; it communicates the efficacy of integration of life. It communicates the efficacy of this mysterious force of attraction so enduring that it produces both physical and moral effects of order that galvanize the integrative life of the African people. Under the shades of the kraal this awesome experience of unity is venerated, and not land, animals, work, people and faith can be exempt of this veneration and obedience. The role of ancestors can thus be understood in this manner, namely as an “aristocracy of the absent” (Mosala 1989:68) present and residing in *ubuhlanti* to communicate the efficacy of an integrated life. The *zoe* of integration is communicated in *ubuhlanti*.

Umntu ngumntu ngabantu signifies power that is shared. Our ecclesio-political view will be “I am a political being because we are political beings,” and this is the principle of the origins of power, the *archē* of liberative polity. Over people and outside people, the power is sovereign, but among them the relationship of shared political *bios* is sovereign. Between beings, integration is efficaciously communicated by the sovereignty. So, when we see unity, wherever we see it, its instantiation is the communication of its efficacy. A human being is “*inkosi*,” king, queen or monarch, not alone or for himself or herself, but in the sovereignty of the relation with others. Indeed the acts that instantiate and communicate the efficacy of the extent of life regulate these relations.

This is where the subsidiarity and solidarity of human governance rests, in the sovereignty of their relationship rather than the sovereignty of an individual or even an individual sphere over the relationship with other spheres. Obviously the question that comes to mind is that of a king who rules over the people. The categories of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy then come to mind and reasonably so. These are forms of the extent of power, the quanta of power different from sovereignty (De Jouvenel 1993 :20).

The power of a king in Africa was always shared and limited. It never was, at least ideally, *legibus solitus*. No king was viewed to be sovereign because it is only custom, or to be precise *Isiko*, that was thought of as immutable. In fact, this is the case up to this day. As the embodiment of the aspirations of the people, kings take risks on themselves. In *isiNdebele* they say “The King is the people”. In Sesotho there is a saying that goes, *morena ke morena kabatho* meaning a monarch exists because of the people. Gyekye (1997:117) attests to this fact, namely that the king in Africa has always been understood to be under the law. It is kings who must not flout *Amasiko* (custom and tradition). It is the magical authority that is conferred to the king or queen as a representative of the Sovereign for the sake of giving and maintaining life for the subjects – life aspirations that are embodied in *Isiko*. Titles such as *isidima* (a person who radiates exuding good) or “*umntu wa Bantu*,” (a person of persons as in man of men or *primus inter pares*) or in Kenya¹⁷ *mzee*, (more than sir) are not easy to acquire.

¹⁷ In one of the meetings of the WCC, Sam Kobia the General Secretary of the WCC was introduced as Mzee by one of the South African delegates before he addressed the meeting. Sam Kobia was so

This is conferred by the sovereign, but confirmed by the people, hence *morena ke morena ka batho!* Perhaps Madiba, Nelson Mandela, with the legendary power he exudes and without whom there would have probably been a different South Africa, is the only person in our times from the South African context that can be called *motho wa batho* (a man of men) and, may be in South Africa even in the world today. Botman concurs and says:

There never existed a naivety in Africa on the need to relate critically to the institution of the state and power of royalty. At the centre of interactions between social institutions Africa had always placed ethical dictates (2000:104).

The reading offered by de Jouvenel of the medieval structure of power is instructive. He views medieval power as shared and continues to argue that the absolute power (sovereignty) that was conferred to the monarchy, which has influenced the theories of power in the West, was not necessarily a product of the autocracy of the Church. According to him divine authority was watched by the church. The Church provided the rules and in case of need pronounced the forfeitures of the functions of mandatory monarchical power to make provision for the successor. In the same manner, popular sovereignty was governed by parliament. Absolute power as in the sovereignty of the people is called plebiscitary power and is also dangerous.

“shocked” that he almost refused to take the honour as he felt the accolade *mze* to be too high for him in his humility. Difficult to explain but this picture has made an imprint that is equally difficult to forget.

Popular sovereignty had to be governed, but in Medieval times the Church and the people clashed and according to de Jouvenel, the people won. As a result of this victory by the people, giving the monarch sovereign power, separation between sacred and secular laws occurred.

It is always stated that the Medieval period was feudal and aristocratic. De Jouvenel takes the view that in fact the propensity to usurp sovereignty by the monarch arose from Roman Law. We concur. The emperor was sovereign in the Roman imperial dispensation. The meaning of imperialism is that a monarch became sovereign. *The Pax Romana* was an empire, and the Europeanization of the world has been an empire. The Enlightenment rationality we contend, and its connection with positivist science became imperial. This is what Everett (1988:125) argues in his book. Enlightenment rationality took the place of a monarch and dominated public life to a point of effacing emotive symbols in public life. The exercise of public power relies on mythologies and symbols, at least usable and reasonable symbols (Eze 1997:317). We have stated also that technocratic approaches to development have been found wanting and our reference to models of advocacy by Jennings testify to this point, namely the domination of positivistic science. We need not repeat the dichotomies, dualism and fragmentation arising from the modernist paradigm. The elevation of the power of reason to the ranks of an absolute monarch is the point we are driving home.

Apartheid was also an empire, hence a confessional stance was needed against it. It had to be declared a pseudo-religious heresy. It fragmented public life by absolutising racial classification. Apartheid is a direct descendant of the modernist paradigm and is Western in provenance. Villac-Vicencio (1992) avers that parliament in the days of Apartheid was law unto itself. The State of Emergency in the 1980s, coupled with the strategy of Low Intensity Conflict, are glaring examples of a legally legitimate discourse attaining the level of an imperial, sovereign state. After all, Apartheid was “rationalized.”

In the transmission of Roman law¹⁸ the church played a decisive role. The medieval church borrowed the term constitution and applied it to ecclesiastical regulations concerning the church and monastic orders. The term was utilized also to regulate church-state relations and this symbiosis contributed to the path that fused law finding with law making (Arjomand 1993). Arjomand says:

The conception of constitution as the foundation of political order and the term itself have secular origins. They are contributions of ancient Rome to legal history. From our point of view three elements of Roman law can be underlined: the idea of legislation, or the creation of man-made law (*lex*) proposed by the magistrates and approved by the popular assemblies, the fundamental distinction between public and private law, and the idea of the political order as *res publica* (the public thing) (1993:70).

¹⁸ Sanneh (1994:19) make the point that the church took the existing Roman legal codes and employed them. The thrust of his debate nonetheless, is the vernacularization of the Gospel, the translation of the Gospel into the language of the Africans. By analogy, we argue, law or Roman Law became translated into the Church. The problem is that in its translation, it became transliterated i.e. adapted, more than modified or re-made to suit the precepts of the church, much as Christendom simply became part of the *pax Romana*.

Arjomand continues to say:

The church played the decisive role in the transmission of Roman law, the medieval church borrowed the term constitution and applied it to ecclesiastical regulations concerning the church and monastic orders. ...As Weber points out, canon law of Western Christendom was unique among the sacred laws of the world religions in traveling the path from law-finding to law-making, from being a jurists' law, consisting of compilations and interpretation of traditions and of *responsa*, to "legislation by rational enactment" (1993:70-71).

Natural Law and the influence by Aquinas became the source of the legitimation of positive law. Reason later becoming the basis for making and seeking law. Arjomand says:

With the triumph of Thomism, Western Christianity accepted human reason as the agency for the determination of transcendent justice in matters political and secular (1993:74).

We maintain that rationality or reason became sovereign¹⁹ and this means that it became an "empire" that sought to totalize the habitat of human participation in public life.

¹⁹ Our use of the phrase "reason became sovereign" is not misguided as Cohen (1978:5) quotes Hegel as having said that philosophy proves 'that reason is the sovereign of the world.' As we discuss in this section both the geography of power and its metaphysics, sovereignty is employed as a form of power that commands habituation often usurped and manifest in hegemonies in public contestations power.

The Aristotelian notion of humanity as a political being attained a new meaning with rationality being the political being at the expense of other elements of a full *oikos* in our interpretation. Power being understood as communication of efficacy between beings, is distorted when the elevation of rationality assumes the communication of efficacy in between things.²⁰

This is what empires do, we submit, by usurping sovereignty. An empire is power that dominates through military force, not only politically, but also defends its culture and value systems by force. It is the absence of space for the interstice of social actions outside force and might. It is disequilibrium between solidarity and subsidiarity in the *politike koinonia*, a forced kind of obedience through usurped sovereignty whose *telos* is not life-giving, but power for the sake of itself. It is not by means of this kind of power that the struggle for liberation was conducted, but by means of the transcendental vision of *Ubuntu* and the immanent harmony of life located and efficaciously communicated in *ubuhlanti*.

²⁰ This argument is pursued in the next chapter. It is important rather to explain that our use of the term reason or rationality is influenced by others like Everett (1988:129) and should always be read in context as our critique of reason is done in context too. In the next chapter we do indicate that reason is a human attribute and in the previous chapters we have alluded to the emancipation discourse of modernity in our discussion of redemption-emancipation and redemption-oppression divides between liberation and orthodox theologies. Our main point here is to elucidate the metaphysics and geography of power. Following this, we argue that sovereignty is a particular attribute of power that is consonant with God/gods. Sovereignty is the *archē* - the origin of power an attribute of God/gods. For us anything or anyone who assumes this attribute is an empire, an idol as the only way to do so is by usurpation. After all, we have argued, in the *politike koinonia* the private and the public participate. We have repudiated the dichotomies of public-private and one of the courses is reason or objective reason or instrumental reason. It is its form of power we denounce and not its inclusion in the *politike koinonia* and thus, public life.

So the king in Africa was not an absolute sovereign, but an embodiment of the conferment of life aspirations of the people's power as in "I am a monarch because we are monarchs." This echoes Boesak's (1976:41) contention that "Power, being a social reality, cannot exist *an sich*, on its own."

The *telos* of power is life. This life is in the bonds of all the spheres. *Ubuhlanti* is *iziko*, the fireplace in-between publics and provides the norms for Black Public Theology of liberation. This fireplace is liberation. We conclude with the metaphor of Queen Modjadji. Among *Balobedu*, Queen Modjadji is a rainmaker. Her majesty is the one who brings rain for the *Balobedu* in Magobaskloof. To reign among the people she brings rain. "Rain" must the "monarchs" bring to the people, for *Amandla ngawethu* is the communication of the efficacy of life in unity. Batswana say *pula* (rain)! That means life is good.

5.5. Conclusion

Black Public Theology of liberation is the communication efficacy of life in social death. Its task is to instantiate life in the bonds, trusts and spheres of public life. It is the reconstruction, rebuilding and revival of publics in civil society. We have essentially attempted to link theology and polity to develop our theory of Black Public Theology.

The Nongqawuze interstices provided us with a model of civil society imbued with ambiguity, housing the solidarity of the shaken. This is the *iziko* of the *archē* of a political community. If there is any construction of language for public life in South Africa, the re-making of freedoms in public life is efficaciously communicated and echoed in *ubuhlanti*. *Ubuhlanti* is the instantiation of bonds, trusts, *fides*, spirituality and the agency for a sane, constructive but restless Black Public Theology of liberation.