

Q: I'd like to actually ask you some things about background and how - really briefly - how you got involved. Let me just start by back-talking and ask you to say what you've just said.

If someone were to say to you, Ag is this a valid topic, why would you say you think it is?

A: No, I think it is. a valid topic, the white resistance in South Africa. I think it's important that it be known, first of all, especially because in my experience outside of South Africa it's seldom known.

The struggle is seen in simple black and white terms which I think is not entirely true. The resistance is often a class thing to start off with, and a question of who one sides with, in terms of siding with the oppressors or the oppressor and whites have that choice whether they're going to side with the oppressor or the oppressed.

I think it is significant that there are a good number of whites who have not sided with the oppressor but sided with the oppressed. And I think that's an important fact in the struggle in South Africa.

In other words, although race is the most prominent part of the struggle, the whole issue in the final analysis is not simply about race.

It's about oppression. And when it's about oppression, well, you can side with or against oppression, whatever your colour may be.

Q: And do you think there are whites inside South Africa who don't know about white resistance in South Africa or who don't realise? Or do you think that they know something more about it?

A: Yes, I think there probably are whites who don't know that. On the whole they do, but they don't know much about it, but ~~generally~~ think of it as there are a few white communists around the place.

And they know for example that there are white people in the ANC. They've often heard of people like Joe Slovo or somebody like that.

So, in the minds of most white people, there is the fact that there's some of these white communists who go round agitating.

But on the whole, I obviously think that it's very very important that they should know about it, know more about it and have more accurate knowledge of white resistance. Yes.

Q: OK. Let me take you back. I'm interested to know a bit about your background, and how you grew to have your political views and personal ideological views that you did? Where do you come from?

A: Well, I'm born in Cape Town. I'm fourth generation ~~white South African~~ white South African. I should think.



Acont: I come from a working class white background and worked in a bank for four years. My father was a carpenter, so I went up the scale, so to speak, to be a bank clerk for four years.

And then I became a priest. Now, my conscientisation has to do with being a dominican priest. There are several factors to that.

Perhaps one of them is an understanding of my faith in religion as starting from the fact of suffering, suffering in the world, the nature of the suffering, why people suffer - the fact of starvation and why people are starving, getting one's issues like oppression etc.

Now, that has always been very important for me and I should think that's an important starting point for me.

It's an important starting point for me in my own theological studies of what religion is about, what the Bible is about and so forth.

And on the other hand if you have a concern and interest for suffering people, you're likely to mix with them, you're likely to listen to them, you're likely to side with them eventually.

It is of course a gradual process. It's difficult to describe all the stages or anything like that. With that sort of principle, if you like, behind it of concern with people who are suffering and concern to do something about it and religion is about that kind of thing, one gradually becomes more conscientised as you learn more of what's happening, as you discover more of why it's happening, and as you discover more of what the Bible really means.

Q: Except for most people don't really go through that gradually - was there anything specific, was there any turning point that you could pull out to say that this is an example of something that opened my eyes?

A: There was no big dramatic change that I know of. I can mention some things that were very important.

One is working with students. I was a student chaplain for a long time. I therefore faced the questions that students asked. The questions that students asked about politics and the questions that students asked about the Bible.

So, I was faced with those questions and having to try and find answers to those questions. So, working with students, first of all white university students, then black and white university students and eventually black school kids as well. That certainly had a conscientising effect.



Acont: But again it's not one dramatic moment change, but it's working over a good number of years with such people, that would say that had an influence ja.

Q: Do you have a recollection of when you first heard about black figures in politics? When you first heard mention of Mandela and the ANC? Do you have any remembering of how that first was made clear to you and how you?

A: No, I can't remember when I first heard exactly of the ANC or Mandela. One grows up with that. What would have been more important - I would have heard about it first of all in a very perjorative sense and a very bad, and then gradually come to realise that it wasn't so bad or to change one's mind about it.

But again I'm afraid I haven't got any nice dramatic stories of change or conversion! It's mostly gradual.

A very important thing too, was a Theology of Liberation in Latin America. But even that, I started reading that gradually and then spent six weeks in Latin America in '75 and that was very important to me.

But, ~~even that, I started reading that then.~~ I had been reading Theology of Liberation before then.

Q: Where did you go in '75?

A: Basically I went to a conference, a Catholic student conference in Lima, in Peru. But on the way, I passed through Brazil and on my way back from Lima I passed through Santiago and Chile and Buenos Aires.

Then I met some of the Theologians of liberation and students and so forth.

Q: Had you before that thought about it in context of South Africa?

A: O, yes, - very much.

Q: And when you say this gradual movement, was that going through a stage of liberalism? You grew from being unaware to being a liberal to ...

A: Yes, definitely. I definitely went through a stage of liberalism.

Q: But most people would not move there and if they moved there they'd stay there.

A: Ja. The movement from being liberal to being, what shall we call it, being more radical, is something that has interested me for a long time - how people take that step and why they take that step.



Acont: I felt I did myself. It's very difficult to account for exactly, but a great deal of it is simply infirmitation, a great deal of it is for example - it's one thing to know that there are poor people, and want to do something about it, another thing to know why there are poor people.

So, social analysis I would say is an extremely important factor in moving from one to the other. Openmindedness is obviously important there so you don't get stuck.

And then just generally experience of people. People you mix with and know, talk to and learn from, I would say that makes a difference too.

The big stumbling block for very many Christian liberals is theology. That they have a way of understanding what their Christian faithh is that will prevent you from taking the step from liberal to radical.

And I think that one of the advantages I had, was that ~~in theology that the subject~~, theology was one of the things I was thinking about, questioning and ~~urging~~ understanding better, and that meant perhaps that I was less likely to get stuck in a liberal phase.

Q: It's interesting that you say that there can actually be a block - the theology.

A: Oh, decidedly so. Theology is my particular hobby-horse, my interest, the thing that I do most about and I'm convinced that it is extremely important and that one of the reasons why the churches can't move any further, more deeply into the struggle, more effectively into the struggle at the moment is in South Africa we don't have an adequate theology to do that.

We don't have an adequate way of accounting for why we should do that, why we must do it and one of the differences between ~~South America~~ and say Latin America, is that in Latin America, as people began to get involved, there was current a new fashionable theology that made sense of what you were doing and that made sense of taking the next step.

But we don't have that, and that's one of our big lacks.

Q: And do you think if that's one of the lacks, do you see that changing?

A: Well, yes, there are numbers of people trying to do something about that and the whole institute for Contextual Theology that I'm working for tries to do that, to provide a South African theology, a contextual theology in that sense, to help people to see that their faith doesn't mean, or doesn't have to mean what they think it means - doesn't have to have the kind of constraints that it appears to have.

And that in fact it challenges one to do different things from what one might have expected. And that that's all thoroughly Biblically grounded, and



Q: Can you tell me a bit about your history in the Dominican order? A couple of people have told me about various junctures, but can you tell me..

A: OK. I'm a Dominican and I became a Dominican at the beginning of 1954 and studied first in Stellenbosch where we had a seminary, and then two years in Rome.

I came back from there and I was an electurer in our own seminary in Stellenbosch. I gradually did various other jobs and ended up as a student chaplain and was then made what is known as the Provincial of Southern Africa, which means the person being responsible for the Dominicans in that area, the southern African area.

That was an election. I was elected to that and I did two terms of office, two terms of four years, I did that for eight years.

When I was appointed provincial I came to Johannesburg - the headquarters of Dominican orders is in Johannesburg. Before that I'd always been in the Cape.

1983 at an international meeting of Dominicans, I was elected to be the what is called the Master General, the title of the person who's responsible internationally for all Dominicans.

According to our rules and regulations, one can decline such an election but then you have to give your reasons for declining and then the assembly vote again about whether they accept your reasons or not, because you might give totally trivial reasons.

I gave my reasons as being the importance of the work in South Africa, particularly the theological work in the struggle in South Africa and the assembly accepted my reasons unanimously. And so I came back again.

Now normally that would not have been a particularly important event - but it was blown up in the newspapers, in Europe particularly, partly because it just hadn't happened before, partly because I'm a South African and a white South African and I mentioned apartheid in my reasons for not taking it up,; all of which made it newsworthy.

Q: Tell me a bit more about - I mean why you at all think of taking it up? I mean it would have been an important..

A: No. I didn't hesitate at all. I believed subsequently someone's produced a play on the BBC about the election and my not taking it up, etc etc. It caught the imagination of people in a strange sort of way.

And according to this play, I come back home and things go very badly and turn against me and all



Account: and all the rest and then I begin to think maybe I should have taken that and not stayed back here and there's another twist which I'd forgotten at the moment where things go well again anyway, and then I'm glad that I didn't take it and that I'm back in South Africa.

Which is just so unlike me or my reasons, that it's totally laughable. I didn't want to take it and I've never regretted for a moment that I didn't take it.

It was - I think even the romanticising of it and making it a big thing and people talking about it is just a symptom of the very thing that I was fighting and that is to say that what happened was that there is a particular job that needs to be done which is Master General of the Order, which is to a certain extent an administrative job, which is a certain kind of leadership job.

But it has an enormous amount of prestige attached to it.

Now, one of the things I was rejecting, was the prestige attached to it, and saying we've got to look at this as a job. It's no different from any other job that I could do. And I've got to compare it with the job that I'm doing in South Africa without any thought of prestige of either of them.

It's got nothing to do with promotion, it's got nothing to do with prestige. It's two jobs. And I must ask which am I most suited to or which does God want me to do, to put it like that, or where would I be most effective?

And to me it was absolutely obvious that I'd be more effective in the South African situation with my background and the things I've been able to do, and that someone else could do the other job.

So, to me it was no different from deciding whether I was going to teach theology in the university or work for the ICTU or take a parish or something like that. It's deciding on a job.

Now, people have romanticised it because it's got all that prestige attached, because one is elected to it etc. Now that's, as I said, precisely what I was asking people not to do take into consideration and asking our chapter, as it's called, of the assembly to just look at it as two jobs and say now anybody in their right mind would see that I'm better suited to the job in South Africa than the other one. And that somebody else can do the other one, but not as easily find someone to do the job that I want to carry on doing in South Africa.

To me it was as simple as that. There was no problem about it. I had no regrets about it, there's no question of thinking maybe I made a mistake and should have gone to do it, because that kind of issue about the prestige or something like that is precisely what I'm fighting against, precisely what I reject.



Acont: The prestige of that job - so there's no question about the job.

Q: Do you mean what you're fighting about in South Africa?

A: Yes, because one of the most important things in terms of values and values of the Bible, or Christian values etc is precisely that one doesn't go for status, prestige, for top things, for success, for achievement in that sense of going to the top.

Christianity is all about not doing that, but serving people in whatever ways it is and it doesn't matter whether I'm on top or where one is, how can I serve people most effectively?

If I felt that I could serve people most effectively by being <sup>the</sup>Master-General, then I would have done it. I wouldn't have hesitated to do it. But I was not convinced of that.

The issue I'm trying to say here is there are two possible jobs you could do without regard to the relationship of the one to the other in terms of prestige and status.

And that, it seems to me, the man who wrote this play for example and many others have not understood.

Q: Do you know who it was who wrote that play?

A: Desmond O'Grady, or O' Brady or something like that. I think, is he a BBC correspondent or something like that? In Rome? I haven't met the man.

Q: Was it a televised play?

A: I'm told so yes. I believe so.

Q: You haven't heard ... (???...228)

A: No. I've only heard about it, from other people who've seen it. Might have been a radio play, mind you. I'm not too sure, I've just heard about it.

Q: And you wouldn't know anyone who I could try to get it through?

A: no. The person who told me about it had heard it from someone else when he was in ...

Q: And the name of the conference that elected you?

A: Every four years we have an international meeting of Dominicans which is called a General Chapter. And this was the general chapter of 1983.

Q: And I would only use this to show the way you feel misrepresented. But do you have any of those clippings of...



A: The only clippings I have are sort of very odd. First of all let me tell you two things. First of all, I didn't keep the clippings of the newspapers, secondly, I refused to be interviewed about it.

So, I wasn't interviewed about it, they simply took the story as they got it from anyone. But the only clippings I happen to have, which I could dig up for you, are the ones from the newspapers in Italy, because it was sent to me by the South African embassy. That's why I've got them.

Q: Why on earth did they send them to you?

A: I don't know. Perhaps to tell me they knew all about it.

Q: And they're in Italian?

A: Yes.

Q: In how would anybody have them?

A: I have them, those. But the rest of them I doubt whether anyone's kept all that - at least I don't know.

Q: OK. Well, maybe I might follow up to ask about those.

When you said the job that I have to go back and do in South Africa, you're still clear about that?

A: Hmm. Yes very clear about that. I'm clear about it in my own mind, but it's difficult to find the right words to describe it to someone. Because I would describe it as doing theology.

But that doesn't sound particularly exciting, or very important for the struggle in South Africa, etc, but I believe it is.

So, you could say that at one level I came back to continue in the struggle as a Christian, as a priest, but the specific role, the specific contribution I feel I can make, is in the area of theology.

There are plenty of other people who could also do that, but a few people are as convinced of that importance of that as I am. Frank Chikane is just as an example, that's why we work together.

But you won't find very many others who are totally convinced that theology has an extremely important role to play.

And what I described to our General Chapter was - you see, we are Dominicans and one of our specialities as Dominicans has always been theology. And I live in a country where theology is actually being used to promote the system. The way in which Christianity is associated with apartheid or just generally with the system and where opposition to it is regarded as atheistic, as communist.



Acont: Now, that faces us with a particular theological problem that's different from most other countries where there is forms of oppression. There are some similarities in Latin America, but they haven't used Christianity and theology as obviously and intentionally as the South African regime has done, throughout the ages, with the Dutch Reformed Church say behind it in that kind of thing.

And we're at a stage now where the opposition does come from the church. There are enormous problems about that, because the church is often hamstrung and not able to, as I said earlier, not able to get fully involved in the struggle. It hesitates at certain points and all the rest, because its theology doesn't enable them to do so. Whichever way you look at it, there is a very serious theological problem.

There is the problem, if you like, of the theory of what Christianity is. And this is very, very, - how should I say, - has an enormous influence because you're not merely talking about political theory or social theory or the theory that takes the form of policies etc. You are talking about a problem that affects the conscience of people.

What they feel guilty about, or not guilty about. You talk about something that's sacred for people or has a particularly strong influence on the way they will act or not act.

Talking about the way they understand God, and what God wants and what God will do to them. Now, all of that, whichever way you understand it, whether you understand it that God wants the system the way it is or whether you understand that God doesn't want it the way it is, is a very powerful social force.

And when that's all confused and mixed up, and all the rest, you are not easily going to move, how should I say, from where we are to something better. You might be able to do that, but you would do it with a great deal of confusion. And we wouldn't be quite sure that what we move to is all that much better, with that kind of confusion.

Because we are to a very large extent a so-called Christian country and religion and Christianity still plays a very important role in the lives of the people and so it is important what kind of Christianity it's going to be.

So, that's what I came back to contribute towards it. And I feel that's very important and since I know I can do that, and I am so convinced that it's important to do that, so I feel I have a role, a contribution.

Q: Since you're a person that really appreciates the concrete, that the name of this institute sounds a bit vague to me - what would you say you do? What do you do? You've told me what your goals are, and what you want to do, but



A: OK. The words Institute of Contextual Theology all sound very abstract and that's true. Let's take theology to start off with.

Now, although that's an abstract word and not generally a people's word, it seems to us very clear that theology is something that has been confined to seminaries, universities, academic circles.

Often generally clerical circles, middle class etc.

Now, that has been its context up to now, the context in which it happens. Now, we feel that should not be the case. Theology should happen and be done by the people at grass roots. In groups - youth groups, women's groups, and whatever other groups there are and within the struggle and from the experience of the struggle.

So, we use a word like theology because we don't want it to be simply confined to the context of people who generally side with the oppressors. And in a certain sense, reappropriate, get the people to reappropriate it for themselves.

If I use another word than theology you might understand me better. But the Bible is now possessed by the people who are on the whole on the side of the oppressor and they are the ones who use it, just in the same way they use the media or they use culture or they use education to perpetuate the system.

Now all of these things have to be taken out of their hands it's not only weapons that have to be taken out of their hands, but the bible has to be taken out of their hands, and given back to the people to whom it belongs.

Because the Bible of all things belongs to the poor, it's a book about the religion of the poor and the oppressed, the slaves in Egypt right the way through. Part of what we want to do is take the Bible and theology and give it back to the people.

Now, it's called contextual theology because we are aware of the fact that all theology comes from a particular context and we want a theology that develops from our context in South Africa, that is thoroughly South African, that comes from the grass roots, from the struggle, from the conflicts, from the people.

Now we're trying to enable that to happen. So, we're an institute because we're a group of people in an office with a steering committee with a membership and all the rest who are trying to enable something to happen in South Africa.

So we have projects, but we don't try to possess them, we try to get them off the ground, initiate them let them go. I'll give you some examples.



A: There were feminists, there were women around the country who were also interested in theology and what this had to do with the Bible. They didn't know one another, or there were no links or anything like that, so we brought them together had conferences enabled them to discuss this further, set up groups, write a book etc, etc,

So, we enable it to happen, but we don't possess it. Black theology to a large extent died out in South Africa, we enabled it to be revived. We organised conferences, again writing books, a reader on some articles on black theology etc, etc. We revive it to enable it to go forward again an enabling job.

We work with the African Independent Churches. We are trying to help them articulate their own theology. We are not trying to tell them what it ought to be, but their theology is contextual - it comes right out of the context of townships and of an African culture and of the experience of the moment and this is the way they understand what Christianity is about.

It's never articulated as a theology, it's never articulated in concepts, or systematically. So, we helping it to do that, so that they can say it to others, so that they can be in dialogue with others.

So, it's an enabling job. We're enabling something contextual to happen. And so forth and so forth.

We have all sorts of other groups that we work with where we try to enable things to happen, try to publish what happens, try to fertilise the various things that do happen, provide people with information so that they can do their own theologising, and our hope thais that out of that a South African theology will come.

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Q: a lot about white and apartheid and ~~black~~, why can you actually situate for me - do you ever think about what am I doing as a white in the situation? Do you think it's relevant that you're a white? Can you say anything about your role as a white?

A: Well, first of all I believe in non-racialism if that's the way to express it. I would like to say that although the form the oppression has taken is obviously a black/white thing, that below and behind that, very simply, the exploitation of people - there are oppressors and oppressed and that if one could even conceivably do away with race, and a class system could continue in which there are still poor people suffering, to get back to the beginning that the starting point is the suffering of people.

Whether those people are black or white is irrelevant, the people suffer. And if the people who make them suffer are black or white is also irrelevant. At the present moment it is white, but even if you changed it, mixed it as black or white, from my point of view you would still have a problem.



Account: So that even if you have a kind of equality amongst the races, but no equality amongst rich and poor because there's unequal distribution of wealth, you just have the same problem in another form.

Now, because of that, the issue for me is oppressor and oppressed, not simply black or white, although I know only too well that it takes that form in South Africa and the myth of race has been used as a very effective way of oppressing people in South Africa.

Now, because of that, there's no problem for me. I don't feel guilty about that or I don't wish I were not a white South African like any other South African. We South Africans are of different shades of colour and racial backgrounds and national backgrounds and all the rest.

A really important choice is between justice and injustice, oppressor and oppressed and that's the important thing, whether you make the choice or not. Now, perhaps through no fault of their own, there are many people who are oppressed, who haven't made an option for themselves if you know what I mean.

Perhaps I could just start using that term. We talk about an option for the poor, which might describe what I'm trying to do and describe what Latin American theologians and others are trying to do.

Make an option for the poor. Now, if you use that terminology, the issue is who's taking an option for the poor and who hasn't. And maybe the poor themselves are not taking the option for themselves, and for their cause, but either go along with things as it is and haven't been conscientised because they have a kind of faith in a religion which seems to think you couldn't possibly take an option for the cause of the poor themselves as God's cause.

But, there're also people who grew up on the other side, as not part of the oppressed, who can take an option for the oppressed and be one with them in the interests, concerns and in striving.

And that that happens is very, very important. It happens everywhere. It could happen in Latin America the Phillipines or anywhere else as well. But it's more remarkable in a way, or more - stands out more in South Africa, because of the colour.

You can see, even if a person who is white takes an option for people who are black is much more of an anomaly than a Phillipino who grew up in a middle class, should take an option for the poor it is hardly noticed, whereas the colour of our skin makes us conspicuous.

But in itself it's not a strange phenomenon. But anywhere in the world in any of the changes or revolutions or anything, there were certainly lots of middle class people who took an option for ~~middle~~ class peopleow however you want to put it.



Acont And that's all that's happening here. So, I don't find it extraordinary, I don't find it odd, etc.,

Because of the racial form of the oppression in South Africa, it's sometimes limiting, - there's certain things because you're white, you wouldn't do, but you would let a black person do. But that's important not only in colour but in all sorts of other things.

If I haven't got a talent to do a particular thing and someone else has, I must let the other person do it and not try and push myself into it, so that's all part of my own philosophy anyway.

So, it doesn't bother me as a white that there's certain things I wouldn't be able to do. I couldn't easily write articles about black theology for example, or say that I'm writing about black experience.

I can't write from a black experience, but that's alright, it doesn't have to be a problem, I can do other things.

Q: I would love to ask you a whole lot of questions, but can you just tell me about YCS and YCW and the action movement, in the context of the issue I'm asking you about, being white. What you said about encouraging people to take the option for the poor, was that one of the contributions of YCW?

Cos I understand you were part of the founding of YCS then...

A: Of, Yes, not YCW. YCW has existed since shortly after the second world war, in South Africa, and I was working with Catholic university students and went to Latin America, one of the things we learnt about is first actually the methods of the YCS - a method which YCW also uses.

And so I introduced that method and eventually YCS into Catholic university circles in South Africa, with the help of YCW and from their experience and then into schools.

Now, when I say I did it, I mean I was amongst people who did it, I wasn't alone. I did it with the students to a very large extent. So, I was National chaplain to YCS for about eight years or something like that, and certainly had a lot to do with the building up of YCS in South Africa.

CAM was first of all YCS post-graduates after school or after university and then gradually broadened out to include people who hadn't been in YCS as well. And it's a small group of people and it's centered around Johannesburg - it's a movement of the type that's quite common in the Catholic Church that uses Review of Life, which is the Sea Judge Act(?) and that's what all of those have in common.



Agent: It's a method of involvement in the struggle that characterises those three.

YCW working with workers, YCS with students and CAM being for adults. In this particular case, mostly white adults. We might have another group working in Soweto with adults.

Q: O.K. So much of what you've been saying has been abstract or has been in theory and I'm just worried that someone will read this and might have trouble envisioning what these people actually do. So, can you give me some sense more experiential, anecdotal - I was going to ask you what achievements can you point out, but can you say that in concrete terms, can you tell me about some activity of YCS or something you've been involved in and you think this is whites working in. - I'm really proud and pleased of this achievement that they did this and this?

A: Sure. I would hesitate to want to mention names if that doesn't bother you.

I'll come to actions in a moment. But the most important achievement of it is the building of leadership, and a good number of black and white leaders in the struggle have come out of YCS. The experience that they went through and all that has made them leaders and they're all over the place.

So as formation as leadership training, that's the path if you want to say it where I feel most pleased about that, it was really worthwhile etc. the number of leaders who have come out of that. OK? And that's black and white.

As regards actions, well they vary enormously. It's basically let's say putting right something that's wrong. And as I understand what justice is about in the Bible, there's a verb that's difficult to translate into English and the closest translation would be to do justice or to put right or to wrong someone. To put right what is wrong.

Q: What is the verb?

A: I've forgotten what it is in Hebrew; if you can imagine it as a Hebrew word for justice, now that noun can be used as a verb. You haven't got a verb that corresponds to justice, we have to say to do justice, if you understand what I mean.

That doesn't help very much either. We talk about doing justice to a meal or something like that, but what I wanted to say is the closest you could get to the idea is to put right something that's wrong.

I wanted to say that, because that's a broad understanding of what work for justice means. Putting right what is wrong.

All the actions of YCS and CAM etc are always actions to try and put right something that's wrong. So, it could be anything from a bad geography teacher who doesn't teach geography well, is boring or something like that and then they work out how can we put right what is wrong here.



Acont: It could be a drunken teacher or it could be something that happened in the church, or it could be something in the community or it could be problems that kids are having with their parents.

And of course you don't just jump to conclusions about what is wrong that has to be put right. You have a longer view of what is wrong and am I to blame perhaps or is it really wrong etc and what do you do about putting it right?

But it could be what appear to be tiny little things, it could be big things, you get involved in. You might find something else is going on which in your judgement from a Christian point of view is a process of putting right something wrong in the schools say, or in the system then you would join it.

But, the simplest way I can say it is if I say actions, which is the word generally used, then people think of marches on the streets or something else like that, which is not what I have in mind.

An action could be talking to somebody. But what is characteristic of it is that it's putting right something that is wrong.

Now, very often the young people do very small actions of that sort, as I say, there's something wrong with the way geography is taught, and everybody's always failing so they do something about it and put that right.

Now, those are the things that build leadership. It's the fact that hundreds of times, you have done that, you've taken the initiative, you've involved other people in doing it, you found a way of doing it, when it didn't work you reviewed why it didn't work and again that's the stuff of which leaders are made. That's education.

And we're involved in that kind of education and out of that leaders have come. So, what am I saying? I'm saying I'm most pleased that there's leaders coming out of it and they came out of it through little actions that were reflected upon continuously.

C: Do you have any visions of the future of South Africa that you are working towards? And do you ever look at the news one day and think what's happening and think we're closer to it? I know that's the question that nobody wants to answer - but do you have any sense?

A: O, yeah, One of the things about church or religion is that we don't have a political policy in any way, or a blueprint for the future, but we do have a vision I think of our own ...religion provides for the vision of a just society. where there would therefore be peace.



Acont: And in a South African context, there's no doubt about it, it would have to be - I won't go into all the reasons why, but it would have to be a democratic society, one person one vote and to me nothing short of that is ever going to bring peace.

It has to be a non-racial society and not a multi-racial society where you've still got groups where their interests balance out against one another in some formula or other that's again not going to bring peace, but that's non-racial, so that race is as irrelevant as creed or gender or anything else.

It has to include a redistribution of wealth in some form or another, because if you still have rich and poor, even if it's a democratic society and even if it's non-racial etc, it's still oppressive and it wouldn't be just, so it would have to be one that redistributes the wealth in some way or another.

And obviously common citizenship, common patriotism, one nation that sort of thing seems to me to be the things that are necessary.

I would think the problem comes with sustaining that. How do you build a sustainable society. In that area it is your culture - how do you have a new South African culture, and within that you have the issue of what role is religion going to play? in sustaining this, in making sure that people's values continue to be the values in community and quality and you could even change structures.

You could have people continually trying to jeopardise those structures for selfish reasons - it's how you contain that and sustain that system new we're assuming it's changed - which is the area where I think religion has a role to play.

Q: When were you born?

A: 1934...51 this year.

Q: So, I'm just comparing the situation now with the forming of Jodak and the Congress of Democrats in the fifties. Do you have any remembrance of those times? Do you remember what your reaction was then? to the COD movement? as compared to how you feel now about Jodak?

A: Well, what I do remember is Trevor Huddleston. I didn't meet him, but we always read about him in the papers and then he wrote that book Nought for your Comfort which where I was training to be a priest at that time was an very important book for us.

Remember I came from the Cape -- a lot of these things like Congress of Democrats was a Transvaal Johannesburg type of thing. So I wasn't directly involved in anything. I was younger then I suppose and not particularly involved in those things.

OK. I do remember admiring Trevor Huddleston very much. I do remember feeling that one would want to side with him - that's about as close as I got to doing anything. I didn't understand a great deal of what was going on, but by that stage, I would decidedly be against the government, but without a clear idea of what 1955 meant for example, what the freedom charter was really all about as I would know it now.



Q: I was going to ask you about the risk of getting involved as individuals, - the heroes and figures one would admire, would there be others besides Trevor Huddleston?

A: Not really. Trevor Huddleston definitely stands out as a hero figure. No, I can't say that there's any other particular one. I mean later on perhaps someone like Mandela could - become a hero figure, but that was much, much later on.

No, I don't think I could safely say anyone else. Probably hero figures in other parts of the world, because when you're a Catholic in an international religion and an international order like Dominicans, there were other Dominicans in other parts of the world one admired.

And in my particular case, the particular thing I was interested in was theology and they would have been theologians and then admiration for many of the Latin Americans and the things that they were doing.

So, often enough my attention in terms of ideals and heroes was outside of the country rather than inside.

But Trevor Huddleston I remember particularly from South Africa.

Q: energies. Where do you channel them now? Are you involved in any political organisations?

A: Yes. I'm involved in Jodak.

Q: Why?

A: Well, because I think at the moment it's extremely important to have extra-parliamentary activity - the parliamentary activity seems to me no way out - you're not going to get anywhere via the Parliament.

It's a racial parliament, it's an undemocratic parliament and all the rest. So if you want to build democracy and racialism and things like that, then you must - it has to start outside parliament. It has to be extra parliamentary.

I would think that whatever one was part of should be affiliated to WDF, to be part of a complete front. I can see the importance of working in different constituencies, like students women, but also white, Indian, coloured etc. Not that one wants any of those divisions, but there are.

So, it would be natural for me to work in the white constituencies of Johannesburg. I've worked most of my life with blacks, but still should work in the white constituency, because that's where I belong.

What other reasons would I want to be part of Jodak? Well, it's exciting building something like this at this time. For years we've agonised over the fact that there was nothing like that, and the white left was not at all organised. So, that's why I'm there.



Acont: I do also a lot of work with CAM of course. And the actions of CAM are generally, to a very large extent anyway, in the church. They often have activities outside of that.

Individuals themselves can have activities, because CAM itself is a review thing. We review what we're involved in. But everybody's an activist of one kind or another, and very often an activist in the church, trying to change things in the church develop things in the church etc.

So, a lot of my time is spent with that. And then of course, I work with ICT and then I travel around giving talks lectures, I try to write and get things written and to find time for studying etc.

Q: I'm unclear. Real quickly, could you tell me - you said you worked for blacks before. Could you just again tell me ...

A: O yes of course, I didn't give you the racial composition of things.

YCS started as white university students but then it gradually became mixed and when we went into high schools, it was majority black, so 90% of YCS was black. So, one of the features of YCS was one of the first, apart from the movements that are in exile etc the first thoroughly non-racial movement that actually mixed people in the same movement, in the same committees, so it could be a white or a black who was president or coordinator any particular year.

Q: First, what year was that, that you were doing it?

A: '77 - but we really became mixed in about '77. But you see, how can I describe what I'm trying to say? I mean usually they are thoroughly non-racial. But there was nothing like the UDF at that stage.

Earlier on of course, there had been the ANC and the congress of democrats etc, etc which had been mixed.

The black consciousness period, when everything was divided - even though everyone agreed with each other they were nevertheless separated - we started something where they were together and sort of worked through the problems of that and I think very successfully. That's a small group of people.

It was an experiment in non-racialism all right. That, and even in what I call Parish work that I have done, I worked in Stellenbosch in the so called colored community,

So, I'd been mixing a year in the office at ICT, I mean I'm the only white, and I got to African Independent churches, I've been to their conferences and I'm the only white amongst them all.

When I went to their conference three weeks ago, I had to run their conference - I was the first white who'd ever been to one of them. So, I'm often the only white in black circles, but when it comes to the actual politics, my constituency is white Johannesburg.



Q: How do you define actual politics?

A: Well, when I'm working with the African Independent Churches or something of those things, I'm working more directly as theology.

I'm trying to understand Christianity in relation to this context. I'm there in the capacity of someone who's supposed to be informed about that. It's a particular form of service, which I see as related to the struggle definitely.

But when I mean Jodak, I'm not their theologian, I'm not their priest, I'm there as one member amongst others. I'm there working out about what do we do about Johannesburg liberals. How do we carry on this campaign? It's two very different roles.

The direct political one, which is more the Jodak one, - it's very difficult for me to go and sit in a civic association in Soweto, in the middle of KOSAS or whatever else trade union, and try to just be one with them.

There's no point in fooling myself that I am. That's not my constituency.

Q: So, before Jodak, did you have a kind of gap?

A: Ja. You could say there was. There were often discussions and little things going on but I suppose you could say there was never the more direct political activity that's possible now, with UDF.

I mean that wasn't possible for a lot of people, not only whites.

Q: As you've explained you deal with the whites in Jodak. But do you ever deal with the white majority, the white grouping, the more conservative roles?

That's a criticism often, it's preaching to the converted.

A: Ah! Let me just say I've got a family of course, and I've got a family that's very conservative for that matter, politically. And therefore relatives and lots of friends and so forth. So I know those circles quite a bit.

And then through the church, I spend a lot of time talking to liberals and even conservatives in church and workshops and things like that. And then through Jodak cos they try to have public meetings which does include them when I gave a talk the other night, to a broad public Jodak meeting, which was very much a matter of talking to liberals etc, etc. PFP types. So, ja I do have some contact with them. Not a great deal and do work to some extent with them. As I said earlier, I'm very interested in how people take that step. And whether they take it, because as you said, they can get stuck there.



Q: Have you seen Jodak help people take that step?

A: Yes. Precisely because Jodak has provided a platform on which to step. Because if you take the step now by say moving from being a member of the PFP Youth Group or something else like that to being a member of Jodak, you've got an actual concrete way of taking the step. That helps.

And then through its own argument that extra-parliamentary politics is a good thing, it is not illegal and it is not banned and you don't have to go underground and you don't have to be chased by security police etc by being extremely parliamentary, so by the whole creating of that possibility and arguing for it, I think has made the step possible for people for whom it might not have been possible before.

Interview ends...394