

BLACK THEOLOGY IN URBAN SHADOW: COMBATING RACISM IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

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ABSTRACT

Church reports, *Faith in the City* (1985), *Seeds of Hope* (1991), *Staying in the City* (1995), and *The Passing Winter* (1996) are examined and assessed as being not so much about challenging racism as about exoneration for senior office holders who abdicate any individual responsibility. It is argued that the term 'institutionalized racism' is used by those who embrace a self-conscious Englishness to avoid the very issues upon which such a concept should be constructed. Full-blown racism involves structures and institutions with real power to discriminate in jobs, housing, policing, educational provision and includes the treatment of Black people in the Church of England. It is argued that Church of England reports associate race-related issues with urban deprivation and this reinforces the cycle of Black exclusion. However, academic credibility is maintained in this article by allowing *Faith in the City*, *Seeds of Hope* and *Staying in the City* to speak for themselves before conclusions are drawn, thus focusing upon both the positive and negative aspects of these reports. In conclusion the article finds grounds for criticism and serious comment, but also finds the germ of a way forward, taking into account the implications of African Diasporan identity. The article looks forward to discovering how a new understanding of English ethnicity can revolutionize the Church of England into a biblical, prophetic and inclusive community. If salvation is valid at the personal and at the institutional level, then the Church of England has nothing to fear from discovering its identity afresh.

Introduction

We need to examine the theology behind Church of England reports on the inner cities, urban deprivation, and 'race'-related issues. It is important that one understands the assumptions upon which the authors' base their theology. We need to look at how their theology is articulated, that is, how they explicate their theism. This will result in a need to treat their perspectives as an indi-

cator of how the authors seek to establish and uphold the Englishness of the Church of England.

This article is a systematic review of the Church of England reports, *Faith in the City* (1985), *Seeds of Hope* (1991), *Staying in the City* (1995) and *The Passing Winter* (1996). My focus is the Church of England's relationship with people from the African Diaspora, whose mode of involvement would appear to be dependent upon a political agenda that can be found in English ethnicity. However, there does not appear to be an obvious link between Anglicanism, Black theology and the Church of England. Clearly the Church of England has some interest in liberation theology, as it does in the urban poor, but its reports about the latter are not necessarily informed, nor do they inevitably arise out of interest in the former.

Any programme of 'racism awareness' will involve a long-term educational process that calls into question ourselves and the institutions within which we serve. We may not like what we find and we may have to say things that others will find difficult, and will even perceive as divisive or hurtful. We will need to convince both clergy and laypeople that we are not creating a problem that would not otherwise exist. We must do our theology, and that means taking seriously Black theology. We must ask what is this thing called racism and make some sense of the term 'institutionalized racism'.

What is the thing called racism? Racism can be defined as a doctrine, or a set of beliefs, in which a person's behaviour is determined by inherited characteristics making them inferior to other groups of people who have different inherited characteristics. The mistaken idea here is that these characteristics derive from separate racial stock, which have distinctive attributes. Individual racism involves prejudiced attitudes or overt acts against a person belonging to another 'race'. Individuals displaying such attitudes have no intrinsic power over the discriminated person or group, but full-blown racism involves structures and institutions with real power to discriminate in jobs, housing, policing, educational provision, and in the house of God.

The Church of England report, *Seeds of Hope*, defines racism in the following terms: 'The theory, prejudice and practice of disadvantaging or advantaging of someone solely on the grounds of their colour, culture and ethnic origin'.¹

1. Central Board of Finance of the Church of England, *Seeds of Hope: Report of a Survey on Combating Racism in the Dioceses of the Church of England* (London: General Synod of the Church of England, 1991), p. viii.

Faith in the City

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas (UPAs) published its report in December 1985.² The report informs us of a number of social problems that are associated with the experience and life of the urban poor: inadequate housing, unemployment, drugs and prostitution are the most obvious. The focus of the report is upon the work of the Church and the government, and the difficulties experienced by these institutions in meeting the needs of those who live in such environments. The report amounts to a reflection by Commission members as to the major issues that are likely challenge the Church, the government and the British nation.

The report does not limit poverty exclusively to UPAs but, clearly, it is here that the worst excesses of capitalism make their presence felt. The recommendations put forward by the Commission are designed to enable the Church to empathize with the urban poor and, in the course of time, to show solidarity for those who have little or no control over their lives. These individuals are consequently marginalized from the mainstream of national life. The report seems to imply that something has gone wrong with the market system, and that those who are unfortunate enough to be adversely affected must now be assisted in order to change their environment. To leave them outside national life would not only be dangerous to national security, but somehow, it would be unpatriotic and contrary to the British way of life.

At its most radical, *Faith in the City* claims that the deprivation of the inner city is not caused by those who live there but is the outcome of the political decisions of others. Thus, inner-city squalor is the result of a decision-making process that puts the needs of the powerful before those of the powerless in the allocation of housing, educational provision, employment and healthcare. Furthermore, such inequality can be linked with racism on the grounds that racial harassment, physical violence, policing and judicial procedures are also inner-city issues. *Faith in the City* informs us that ethnicity is used by the Department of the Environment as an indicator of deprivation. The report finds it deplorable that a large number of minority ethnic people live in the city, even though they are a minority across the country as a whole.

Faith in the City advocates what it calls 'decisive action' on the part of the Church in support of the urban poor. Having established that the Church is probably not all that relevant to inner-city people, the report goes on to say that those who do get involved have a high level of commitment. At the local

2. The Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, *Faith in the City* (London: Church House Publishing, 1985).

level, parishes are called upon to support their neighbourhood by being sensitive to local cultures. An important part of this is to work with other denominations, including Black Majority Churches. At the national level, *Faith in the City* recommended the creation of a Commission for Black Anglican Affairs in order both to challenge racial discrimination and disadvantage, and to foster Black vocations within the Church of England. The significance of *Faith in the City* in changing policy and radicalizing practice can be evaluated through an examination of the Church of England's own subsequent reports. The account below is necessarily inclusive in order to provide both an indication of the substantive consequent actions, and the manner in which they were shaped.

Seeds of Hope

In April 1987, the Church of England's Committee on Black Anglican Concerns sat for its first meeting. The Committee had been briefed by its main body, the General Synod's Standing Committee. A survey was to be undertaken into Church policy generally in the light of any possible implications for minority ethnic people in England. The survey's objectives were as follows:

- a. To gather information on racism in dioceses and the work done to combat it
- b. To identify good practice which might be shared with other dioceses
- c. To encourage dioceses to think theologically about justice issues
- d. To place racial justice on a higher level of priorities with respect to the Church's mission in diocese.³

The Initial Questionnaire

A letter was sent from the committee chairperson to all the diocesan bishops, enclosing a questionnaire concerned with combating racism in the dioceses of the Church of England. The initial questionnaire was as follows:

- a. Is there a particular committee responsible for issues on race and racism?
- b. Is any one employed on a full- or part-time basis to address these issues in your diocese?
- c. If neither (a) nor (b) apply, are there any plans for developing/employing personnel to work in this area in your diocese in the future?

3. *Seeds of Hope*, pp. 1-2.

- d. What strategies will be instituted to combat racism in your diocese in the future?⁴

The result of this survey was published as *Seeds of Hope*, which recognized three broad types of institutional response to the issues of racism and racial prejudice:

1. *Dioceses that had limited attempts to combat racism:* Some 15 dioceses surveyed reported that they had committees that contained anti-racism as a part of their remit. Only a minority of these dioceses, however, had full-time staff with specific responsibility for race relations. These committees were mostly sub-committees of the Diocesan Boards for Social Responsibility or the Diocesan Boards of Mission and Unity.
2. *Dioceses that describe strong initiatives and could be used as models:* There were five full-time officers in the two provinces that had specific responsibility for race relation as part of their title. One diocese even had a Commission of Race Relations with three full-time members of staff.
3. *Dioceses that did not see racism as a problem and so reported no initiatives:* 27 dioceses had no plans to develop such work. Ten dioceses had no machinery at all for recognizing race-related issues. 'It is impossible for us to initiate strategies to combat racism when the problem for us simply does not exist'⁵ was the response of one of these dioceses, and as such not unique to Anglican policy initiatives.⁶

According to the report, five of the dioceses to which the questionnaire was sent had undertaken 'commendable initiatives'. In order to find out more about this anti-racist work, a second questionnaire was drawn up which was as follows:

1. Information on programmes and strategies which had been or were being attempted by the diocese. Please include sample materials.
2. How does the committee responsible for Race Relations relate to the decision making process?
3. Does the committee report to the Bishop's Council?
4. Copy of the Job Description of any staff working in Race Relations/Community Relations (if applicable).

4. *Seeds of Hope*, p. 2.

5. *Seeds of Hope*, p. 6.

6. N. Connelly, *Race and Change in Social Service Departments* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1989).

5. Give the number of black people who sit on the following: Bishop's Council; Diocesan Synod; Deanery Synod.
6. Have specific objectives been set? What are the short, medium and long-term objectives?
7. Which committee within the diocese has responsibility for inter-faith relations?⁷

According to the report, a number of significant issues emerged from this second questionnaire and the survey as a whole. These were as follows:

1. *Diocesan structures*: Very few of the committees concerned with race-related issues had direct access to the Diocesan Bishop, to his staff meeting or to the Bishop's Council. These committees were often sub-committees of the Diocesan Board or Council for Social Responsibility and reported to the Bishop's Council through their parent body. The survey indicated that these committees were less effective in tackling racism when they were part of the Board for Social Responsibility. Anti-racist efforts which were publicized as having greater importance cannot maintain, or even reach, a high profile when they are so institutionally marginalized.
2. *Objectives and strategies*: The report recognized the importance of having clearly defined objectives and strategies in order to combat racism in the diocesan, deanery and parochial structures of the Church of England. It was felt that more attention should be given to planning, if programmes in support of these strategies were going to work.
3. *Equal opportunity policy*: in only two dioceses were Black people to be found on Bishop's Council. Four dioceses had Black representatives on Diocesan Synod. A grand total of three dioceses admitted to having an Equal Opportunities Policy. The report recognized the importance of monitoring equal opportunities policies, but only two dioceses had conducted surveys identifying the number of Black Anglicans.
4. *Inter-faith matters*: The dialogue with other faiths was largely the responsibility of the Diocesan Board or Council for Mission and Unity. However, in one diocese this was included as part of the race-related work of a Black Anglican Concerns Committee.

The report identified seven areas of work essential to combating racism in the Church of England. These include:

7. *Seeds of Hope*, p. 3.

1. *The diocese and its commitment to combating racism through its structures* (Paragraphs 5.3-21). The Church's involvement with ecumenical and secular bodies concerned with anti-racism should not be seen as a substitute for undertaking this work with diocesan structures. The report recommends a committee for Black Anglican Concerns, with direct access to the Bishop's Council, as the most appropriate body for combating racism through Church structures. It was also felt that this committee should have a full-time member of staff who would be on a par with other heads of department. The report also had comments to make on the training of clergy and accredited lay ministers, readers and Church Army officers. It was felt that these ministries should have an awareness of racism and social justice issues, as they were considered essential in widening the horizons of Church members. Theological training of clergy, prior to ordination and in-service training should contain an anti-racist component. Concern is expressed in the report about the strategy of combating racism through the exchange of ministers with developing countries. This is seen as an 'understandable' but 'mistaken' way of educating White people about race-related issues and the presence of Black people in British society. According to the report 'this reinforces the notion that Black people are essentially foreign and transitory' (Paragraph 5.19). The report recommended instead the encouragement of Black vocations within the British context that would increase the number of indigenous Black clergy. It was also suggested that bishops should consider appointing experienced Black clergy to senior posts (Paragraph 5.18).

2. *The role of the Diocesan Board of Education in combating racism* (Paragraphs 5.22-28). According to the report, 'all Diocesan councils or Boards of Education should formulate policies which would illustrate their commitment to equal opportunities and multi-cultural education' (Paragraph 5.24). Furthermore, where dioceses have such a policy, it must be implemented and monitored. Issues raised in this context included school admission policies, exclusion of minority ethnic pupils and recruitment of minority ethnic teachers and governors.

3. *The participation of Black people within the life of the Church* (Paragraphs 5.29-36). The report recommends that the dioceses encourage Black participation at all levels of the Church's ministry. The report comments that 'The Church of England has fewer than 100 Black clergy' (Paragraph 5.35). It was recognized that the vicar's attitude was crucial in identifying and encouraging Black ministry and Black participation generally, and that 'Apart from helping plan parish events and doing chores in the kitchen, there are many other duties to be performed in God's house' (Paragraph 5.34). One such other ministry was that

of accredited lay worker, both stipendiary and non-stipendiary, and Black participation could be encouraged in these areas.

4. *The Church as an employer—its commitment to equal opportunity* (Paragraphs 5.37-42). The Church as a responsible employer should recognize the importance of a declared Equal Opportunities Policy. To date, only two dioceses have accomplished this. To make such a policy work, there needs to be adequate provision for the training of staff and for monitoring progress. Equal Opportunities formed, at this time, a significant and increasingly contested issue in other British institutional settings.⁸

5. *Relationships with other Black Christians* (Paragraphs 5.43-44). 'Efforts should be made to obtain information about the presence of predominantly Black independent churches in the diocese with a view to developing relations with them. In a few dioceses the task of tackling racism is being done ecumenically with the participation of Black independent churches. The Committee would wish to see a greater willingness on the part of dioceses to make their resources (e.g. Church buildings) more available to other Christians. These are examples of good practice in some dioceses, which could well be emulated by others'.⁹

6. *Relationships with people of other faiths* (Paragraphs 5.45-46). The Church should open up channels of communication with other faith communities in order to discuss issues of mutual concern. It is hoped that good inter-faith relations resulting from the identification of common ground will make it possible for the Church to work with these communities in tackling racism. The report comments that 'In several dioceses there were examples of good practice in the building up of better inter-faith relations' (Paragraph 5.45).

7. *Racial justice issues within the wider society* (Paragraphs 5.47-49). The report comments that 'Racial justice issues should not be considered relevant only in areas where there is a concentration of people from minority ethnic communities' (Paragraph 5.48). The consideration of race-related issues is as relevant to rural England as it is to the inner cities. It can be argued that they are even more important to the former context, since it is here that the policy- and decision-makers often live. The report concluded that 'The Church focuses on racial justice issues too infrequently' and that there is a need for theological reflection 'to understand these issues in society and their effect upon the various people who comprise the society'.¹⁰

8. N. Jewson and D. Mason, 'The Theory and Practice of Equal Opportunities Policies, Liberal and Radical Approaches', *Sociological Review* 34.2 (1986), pp. 307-34.

9. *Seeds of Hope*, p. 25.

10. *Seeds of Hope*, p. 27.

Staying in the City

Staying in the City (1995)¹¹ is a second follow-up study to *Faith in the City*. It is a report by the Bishop's Advisory Group on Urban Priority Areas and incorporates the main findings of two earlier studies: *Living Faith in the City*, which appeared four years after *Faith in the City*; and *Hope in the City?*, published in 1994, the latter concerned with the work of the Church Urban Fund.¹²

Staying in the City is considerably smaller than *Faith in the City*. It contains the familiar story about environmental decay and social disintegration. We are informed that this deprivation is not exclusive to the cities but also includes urban estates and mining communities.

The report sets itself the task of asking what has been done with all the previous recommendations to Church and nation. In answer to the question, 'what has the Church done?', the report contains an interesting dilemma. On the one hand, deprivation is worse than it was ten years ago, while, on the other hand, the report wants to demonstrate the effectiveness of its work through the Church Urban Fund. Clearly the Church has to justify its presence in the inner city—it is present despite all the serious social problems associated with the city. But how can it be effective if the problems are getting worse? Like crime statistics that justify the deployment of more police, they also show the effectiveness of the existing force.

Living Faith in the City was concerned with the recommendations of *Faith in the City* in order to identify what still needed to be done, assuming that something had been done. It laments the gap between rich and poor that has emerged as a result of rising unemployment, homelessness and the decline of welfare rights. However, we are informed that UPA link officers were active and that the Church Urban Fund (CUF) had raised two-thirds of the £18 million target. Money had already been given to 200 UPA projects.

The centrality of the Church Urban Fund to the Church of England's commitment to equality is revealed in *Hope in the City?*, where the aspirations for this initiative are outlined as follows:

11. The Bishop's Advisory Group on Urban Priority Areas, *Staying in the City* (London: Church House Publishing, 1995).

12. Patrick Dearnley, *Living Faith in the City* (London: Church House Publishing, 1988); R. Farnell *et al.*, *Hope in the City?* (Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University, 1994).

CUF at the centre can encourage dioceses to adopt a strategic and supportive role in relation to the Fund's local initiatives.¹³

Priorities may need to be decided in the context of a more theological reflection on the role of CUF, in the light of both the challenges posed by *Faith in the City* and also the immediate and unfolding experience of local CUF projects and their surrounding communities.¹⁴

We are aware that the Fund has an enormously valuable and unique resource of information on individual projects which combines material obtained through its regular monitoring projects as well as independent evaluations... Such information should be made available to dioceses and be an important resource for the wider Church.¹⁵

In our view the Fund should be doing much more to fertilise the theology and mission of the Church and the understanding of the Church and wider society about the realities of life in UPAs. Its major educative and prophetic role, which we would see built into the operation of the Fund that has not happened before...¹⁶

And the implications for the Church:

Much has been achieved in the first six years of CUF's operation. However, the problems faced by people in many inner cities and outer estates remains acute, and in many cases are actually worse than when *Faith in the City* was published.¹⁷

A wide gulf remains between the realities of life in the UPAs and the experiences of the wider Church. What continuing priority can be accorded to CUF and more general *Faith in the City* issues in the light of present pressures upon the Church and the demands upon its apparently diminishing material resources?¹⁸

CUF is largely consistent with an earlier 'Anglican social tradition', but much of its activity sets aside issues of powerlessness and political marginalisation raised, but not developed, in *Faith in the City*. UPAs with high statistical measures of deprivation will still have high levels of deprivation even with the presence of several CUF projects. If the Fund's resources are to be used to greatest effect, issues of power and politics cannot be ignored.¹⁹

We believe the initiative supported by the Fund provide both information, the rationale and the authority for Church bodies to speak out on such issues.²⁰

13. *Hope in the City?*, p. 6.

14. *Hope in the City?*, p. 7.

15. *Hope in the City?*, p. 1.

16. *Hope in the City?*, p. 16.

17. *Hope in the City?*, p. 16.

18. *Hope in the City?*, p. 16.

19. *Hope in the City?*, p. 7.

20. *Hope in the City?*, p. 1.

Ten years on and an extensive network of link officers and their committees existed. The bureaucracy associated with maintaining the Church of England in the inner city has increased. Organizational issues are important to this report. In 1992 the Archbishop's Advisory Group was turned into the Bishops' Advisory Group when the House of Bishops took assumed responsibility for the work. Also the Archbishop's Officer was now known as the Bishops' Officer. The Advisory Group included the following:

The convenors of link officers in the six regions: they ensure that the concerns of the national network are voiced; they act as a link between the central body and the UPAs themselves.

Three General Synod representatives: they make vital links between the Advisory Group and General Synod itself.

Officers from the Board of Education, Social Responsibility, Mission, Ministry and the Committee for Black Anglican Concerns; they bring the experiences of their boards to the Group and vice versa.

Representatives of the Church Urban Fund, the Urban Ecumenical Forum, and the Archbishop's Urban Theology Group.²¹

The Advisory Group wanted to know about the following: 'Guidance as to whether the Board accepts that these concerns are relevant to their terms of reference'; 'A review as to how far the Board has already addressed these issues'; 'Short- and long-term proposals for doing so'; 'Proposals for monitoring and evaluating the achievement of objectives identified and for keeping these issues under long-term review'.²²

According to BAGUPA (The Bishop's Advisory Group for Urban Priority Areas) the role of these boards is 'To provide forums for sharing good practice across dioceses'; 'To ensure that policies formulated at the centre are informed by local experience and concerns'; 'To provide guidelines for dioceses on the implementation of centrally agreed policies'; 'To ensure that in their discussions with other national agencies, including the government, the real experiences and concerns of people are given a voice'.²³

According to *Staying in the City*, these boards and councils operate with a modest budget, as their only function is to carry out the missionary work of the Church. We are assured that these boards 'are not simply contributing to an expensive bureaucracy, but fulfilling an essential role'.²⁴ The report

21. *Staying in the City*, p. 40.

22. *Staying in the City*, p. 41.

23. *Staying in the City*, p. 42.

24. *Staying in the City*, p. 42.

proceeds to justify this meagre expenditure which has been cut back in recent years, on the grounds that 'an ill-resourced body is ill-equipped to support such a missionary church'.²⁵ Thus money should not be spent on bureaucracy if the Church is to be concerned with mission rather than maintenance. The report suggests some fine-tuning to make sure that this money is spent wisely. These improvements to Church structures include developing a closer link between link officers and diocesan boards; encouraging dioceses to develop strategies, and providing financial support to struggling parishes.

According to *Staying in the City*, people from UPAs are well represented in the committee structure of the Church's synodical government. Presumably these people are White, since the report talks about an under-representation of Black people. At the 1990 Synodical election, Black representation on General Synod rose from 8 to 14 members, out of a total of 250 laity, 250 clergy and 53 bishops. We are also told that inner-city people may be discouraged by a lack of information about the procedures of this structure. Nevertheless, link officers should encourage more 'UPA figures' to become involved. The Church is reported as addressing these issues in the following ways: 'Wider dissemination of information in more popular format about the Synod and other Church matters'; "'Tuition" for new members of Synod in how to work the synodical systems'; 'A more flexible approach to synodical procedures (including revision of the Standing orders)'.²⁶

Staying in the City also comments upon the work of the Committee for Black Anglican Concerns (CBAC). The role of this committee is described as 'assisting the dioceses in developing strategies for combating racial bias within the Church' and 'educating and creating awareness in General Synod and its structures about the nature of institutional racism and how it works'.²⁷

The committee's terms of reference are as follows: 'The Committee strives towards achievable results, however because of the nature of the work, these are not always measurable'; 'CBAC's location within the structures is an advantage, that it is accountable to General Synod Standing Committee, at the national level of the Church'; 'The advice and support of the House of Bishops is always sought, especially in relation to large projects. The House is informed regularly of the committee's progress'; 'CBAC's collaboration with General Synod boards and Councils is important. The Committee's terms of

25. *Staying in the City*, p. 42.

26. *Staying in the City*, p. 77.

27. *Staying in the City*, p. 79.

reference include calling Boards and Councils to account in matters that affect black Anglicans'.²⁸

The 'Strategies towards Empowerment' concern the participation of Black Anglicans at all levels of Church life and include the following: 'Deliberate targeting and support of younger black Anglicans—under 35 years'; 'Support and training provided to the network, communication links etc'.²⁹

According to the report, the Church's claim to success in this area appears to be based upon a weekend residential conference held in July 1994 at York. The report speaks as if racism was no longer a major problem for the Church of England and that significant progress has been made. Thus we read: 'In many instances prior to the setting up of CBAC, due to the hurt and alienation which black Anglicans had experienced as a result of racism in the Church, a lethargy of deference prevailed: now a new confidence is emerging.'³⁰

The Passing Winter: A Sequel to Seeds of Hope (1996)

The Passing Winter (1996)³¹ is the follow-up to *Seeds of Hope* and is by way of a progress report. It is not apparently intended to introduce new proposals, but rather to review existing work. The style and the layout are very similar to *Seeds of Hope*; not least the rather 'twice' title. Nowhere is the title explained and it is not one that resonates with this reviewer. It seems that the report's writers are consciously aping a 'proverbial style' without the benefit of the gift of wisdom such as that exhibited by inspired poets of old. Such titles are an irritating literary device that can create an unhappy introduction.

The self-congratulatory adverb in the acknowledgments similarly grates: 'CMEAC's Seeds of Hope Advisory Group has worked assiduously'.³² There are several statements that give cause for concern at the very outset of the report. For example, in the Foreword, the Archbishop of Canterbury states: 'Racism has no part in the Christian Gospel'.³³ He does proceed to qualify this assertion, and the reader is left wondering what exactly is his meaning. It seems that he wishes to import that racism and racialization ought to form no part of the praxis and thinking of anyone who claims to be Christian. If we

28. *Staying in the City*, p. 80.

29. *Staying in the City*, p. 81.

30. *Staying in the City*, p. 82.

31. Central Board of Finance of the Church of England, *The Passing Winter: A Sequel to Seeds of Hope* (London: Church House Publishing, 1996).

32. *The Passing Winter*, p. iv.

33. *The Passing Winter*, p. v.

look at the Scriptures, then we find that racism is a part of the canon in a way that makes many of us weep. One only has to look at Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Faith and Fratricide*³⁴ or any later Jewish-Christian studies to expose the virulent anti-Semitism of the Christian Gospel as received from the early writers.

The report opens with a reference to the Black Anglican Celebration for the 'Decade of Evangelism' held in York in July 1994. I attended that event and was saddened by the apparent 'good samboism' of that occasion. To my mind, the message of the conference appeared to be 'Please let us in and remember that we can offer a good sense of rhythm'. While it is important to remember that everyone is at different stages of the process towards conscientization, the leaders at York, arguably, should and could have challenged the level of sinfully naive enthusiasm much more firmly.

The opening chapter covers a number of areas making a number of sweeping assumptions in the process. A dizzying array of texts from Micah to the recon-dite speech by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, dating from 1970, flash before the astounded reader. The overwhelming impression after reading this report is that not much has changed. There are still dioceses and parishes that think that racism is not an issue for them. Incredibly, fatuous comments about descriptions of skin colour are quoted in the report without the necessary riposte against such trivialization that should have been delivered. Instead, a dreary list of disinterest, amounting to boredom and resistance, is catalogued.

It seems that where dioceses have altered their structures to include issues of racism at a formal level, it tends to take the shape of appointing half-time staff who do not have parity of status with other heads of department. These officers are badly serviced in terms of adequate secretarial support. This seems to be tokenism taken to levels of sadism when one considers what the consequence of this situation could be for one isolated Black person immersed within the labyrinthine toils of the very White Church of England. It also seems that there has been a decrease in the number of Black clergy in the Church of England but no explanation of the figures is forthcoming.

For Beckford,³⁵ *The Passing Winter* begins by focusing on examples of best practice rather than viewing the Church as inherently racist.

Often this kind of reasoning produces a 'play on emphasis'—for example, rather than saying that racial justice is not being tackled in most dioceses and parishes,

34. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1974).

35. R. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998).

the report states, 'Racial justice issues are being tackled in some dioceses and parishes'.³⁶

There is an inbuilt cosiness here that the Church is 'a home in need of renovation'.³⁷ So the approach used is negotiation as opposed to Milwood's paradigm of combative struggle. Thus the Church of England is still reliant on the multi-cultural, race relations dynamic.

By negotiating the extermination of racism, the authors rely upon the goodwill of White Anglicans. It presupposes that White people will stop being racist when racist practice is identified. Hence the struggle for a full Black humanity is as much a matter for the White members as it is for those who are Black. Here the Church is seen as an institution, which can be ushered out of its flirtation with racism by the clear articulation of the sinfulness of discrimination.³⁸

This is as fondly and as dangerously naive as the recently late Barry Goldwater's opposition to legal reforms in the USA outlawing segregation, on the grounds that it is a matter of private morality so simple definition will inspire people to see the error of their ways.

So Beckford sees Black Anglicans obliged to struggle within the Church machinery with the obvious disadvantage that the Church itself sets the pace, seeing as success the strategic placing of Black people in Church structures. This 'negotiative approach nurtures a persuasive piety'.³⁹ The note struck is one of dignity and patience. While there are undoubtedly some virtues in this approach, Beckford identifies two key failings: misrepresentation and appeasement. 'Consequently, racist structures are left thinking that progress is being made when, in reality, very little has changed.'⁴⁰ The theological frame for this approach is the 'not yet', eschatological approach rather than the 'now' of Kingdom theology.

Beckford argues for a middle way between these two poles, citing the tough love of Martin Luther King in *Strength to Love*.⁴¹ He sees himself as working in 'the master's house' in Queen's Theological College, teaching his students a balanced and tactical approach to resistance, while acknowledging the lure of the clear appeal of the combative perspective.

Later he demonstrates how this approach works. He describes the covers of the Birmingham Diocesan Directory for two successive years in considerable

36. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*, p. 51.

37. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*, p. 51.

38. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*, p. 51.

39. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*, p. 53.

40. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*, p. 54.

41. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981.

detail: 'For some people, the cover of a diocesan directory is just a cover. For me the front cover of a diocesan directory is a bit like a record sleeve: it tells you something about the character of what you can expect inside.'⁴²

The 1996 cover had a photograph of the six-foot-tall Bishop of Birmingham in purple, looking down upon a very small Black girl of five or six years old against the background of a school building. It does not take a finely honed mind to detect the obvious resonance behind such an image: 'Such imagery has a history. The annals of colonial history are littered with images of White power and domination over "native" peoples. Hence, this 1996 image harks back to an age of colonial domination and Black subjugation.'⁴³

He adds: 'If size signifies power, then it is clear who is in control here. Symbolically, I would contend that the young girl signifies the Black Anglican presence within the diocese: small, curious and problematic to those in power.'⁴⁴

The cover for the following year, 1997, depicts a White grandmother and child lighting a candle in a church. It has a Madonna-like appeal and communicates purity and piety. It is also powerfully White and completely unrelated both to the historical Jesus and to the diverse residents of the diocese. Beckford rightly asks, 'Is this Christianity?',⁴⁵ as he decodes these images against a frame of the under-representation of Black people within the diocesan structures, and the apparent lack of active promotion and nurture of Black vocations, both lay and ordained.

Beckford calls for change, roundly stating: 'Liturgy and church life must identify and challenge the psychologically damaging effects of White supremacy, and must also engage in the Black community's struggle for political mobilisation.'⁴⁶

The Church of England needs to reclaim the true identity of the historical Jesus. It also needs to do its theology starting with the context of people's lives, examining and changing their concrete daily realities. For God is not distant and Jesus has not gone away. Thus Beckford can posit a genuine Christology and real theology in the heart of Bob Marley's songs. Beckford sees Rasta thinking as a paradigm for Black rethinking of the Christian tradition—a way of receiving the gospel through Black experience, using all the powerful redemption evinced in the liberating God who inspires and rescues people out of unimaginable anguish.

42. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*, p. 108.

43. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*, p. 108.

44. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*, p. 109.

45. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*, p. 110.

46. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*, p. 148.

He sees this as a profoundly prayerful approach. He understands prayer to connote action, both divine and human, 'The prayer meeting as a sacred space for mobilisation against the forces of injustice',⁴⁷ following the praxis of Sam Sharpe, a 'freed' Baptist minister who led the uprising of 1831–32 in Jamaica. 'Subversive piety is a dangerous commodity which needs to be a part of the spirituality of any Church which is seriously concerned with holistic renewal.'⁴⁸

The Combination of Religion, Racism and Church Politics: Some Conclusions

The combination of theism and English ethnicity is found in a deep Anglicanism in which the Church of England as an institution looks back to its past. However, the Church also promotes a belief in a transcendence that is essentially eschatological and, as such, is concerned with the future. The challenge of a split temporal dimension is important for the Church of England. The Kairos of the Cross rests upon the Chronos of the world.

In this context, we explore the mode of involvement of Black Anglicans and their relationship with the Church of England. The political agenda to which this mode of involvement relates is seen in the response of the Church of England to racism.

So is the Church of England committed to combating racism in society and in its own structures, and how does it make sense of the term 'institutionalized racism'? Is it used to identify and challenge discriminatory practices or does the Church of England's conceptualization of an 'institutionalized racism' amount to a technique allowing the Church to avoid the very issues upon which such a concept should be constructed?

So what is this thing called 'institutionalized racism'? Here, we must not only look to racist belief systems that operate in society, but accept the possibility that certain institutions are able to amplify these values through long-established practices which work against Black people. Thus the actions of policy-makers and those who represent institutions can have an adverse impact on Black people, even when 'race' is not mentioned, or when there is no intention to discriminate.

A critical review of *Faith in the City*, *Seeds of Hope*, *Staying in the City* and *The Passing Winter* would suggest that institutional racial discrimination in the Church of England owes its origin to values located within English ethnicity. These values are then expressed in the actions of policy-makers who operate

47. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*, p. 172.

48. Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*, p. 173.

within a system that denies their culpability. By adopting the stance of challenge to institutional racial discrimination, the Church of England locates racism as a problem within the collective and, as such, does not see it as an error of the institutional manager. Thus the term 'institutionalized racism' is used to abdicate personal and individual responsibility. There is no serious note of personal contrition on the part of senior office holders for policies which are, intentionally or unintentionally, racially discriminatory. There is no real attempt to confront the racialized processes, which characterize their own mode of involvement. It could be argued that it is only when senior managers are able to confront racism individually and personally that they will be able to detect and challenge it as it operates at an institutional level. It seems that the Church of England hierarchy prefers to blame the institution but never their own personal part in it. Thus, their position is protected. If mistakes are made by the institution, then it is the institution that is criticized by its own managers, who are then seen as courageous, because they have acknowledged the problem. The political agenda here is about finding a convenient concept that will act as an alibi and, in doing so, make the Church of England look as good as the Race Relation Acts.

The Church of England operates historically in response to social need. It waits for society to set the agenda on social concerns before it is seen to address them. The Church of England commissioned a number of reports to maintain an authoritative voice within the discourse of society, and out of fear that it had become ghettoized to its own concerns. Church reports are concerned with looking back even though they are meant to be about looking forward. I want to argue that *Faith in the City*, *Seeds of Hope*, *Staying in the City* and *The Passing Winter* are really about maintaining the status of the Church of England within the political establishment. Thus these reports are not acts of mission, but rather they are acts of authority, issued for the necessity of preserving her authority.

That the Church of England felt she should make a special effort to say anything about racism is interesting in itself. It should be within the normal vocabulary and discourse of the Church of England to address the issue of racial justice without having to commission a series of reports. A biblical perspective tells us about defending the poor and needy and 'not gleaning your field to the edge' (Deut. 24.19-21; Lev. 19.9; 23.22). This answers the issues of racial prejudice since it is the Black communities in our society that are most likely to live in the urban areas of deprivation. Furthermore, the Pauline emphasis on equality of all within the Church should not leave Christians in any doubt about their responsibility to promote racial justice.

The common theme of the Church of England's reports is that UPA people are somehow different and that, furthermore, Black people, who are closely associated with these areas, are extremely different. The implied reference to Black people in *Faith in the City* (1985) reveals an interesting and recurring pattern within the frame of Urban Theology. This frame, in both its descriptive and analytical form, is to look at UPAs and think 'Black'.

For the English, to confront and deal with racism and the racializing process is to erode the national concepts of superiority that centuries of aggressive colonialism have embedded deep within the national psyche. Alongside this is the Church of England as the Church of the state and nation; hence a great deal is at stake when bishops and leaders are challenged about trying to be more accommodating to Black people.

The Church of England, in its present state, is attempting to span a gap of the most uncomfortable dimensions. On the one hand, it is the established Church, an organ of the state, whose interests and identity are generally perceived to be coterminous with those of conservative middle England. On the other hand, in part due to a renaissance of vigorous hermeneutics inspired by liberation and feminist theologies, the Church of England is beginning to rediscover its prophetic voice. Like a latter-day Minor Prophet, the Church of England talks about rivers of justice but, burdened by the down-side of its Englishness, namely its reserve, does its theologizing with gloves on. It talks about action, a most seductive of oxymoronic states. It claims to see, but pretends to be asleep.

Cone, Hood and Beckford all say that the Black experience and Black theologizing have come together to empower and liberate Black Christians.⁴⁹ It is not so much the content as the process that ought to aid the Church of England in its search for an effective, biblical, English identity. The Church of England has always regarded itself as the local English expression of the Catholic and Apostolic Church.

In Tudor times, the term 'Englishness' connoted respite from decades of civil war, aggressive opposition to Roman Catholic states such as Spain, and a particularly English relish for her growing language and cultures. In post-colonial times, the Church of England must find itself in a non-oppositional identity. It must focus at the insular level and drop the notion of global significance that it once carried. It can no longer even claim to be *primum inter pares*. When Black African missionaries are genuinely welcomed, maybe that day will

49. J.H. Cone, *For my People: Black Theology and the Black Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984); R. Hood, *Begrimed and Black: Christian Traditions on Blacks and Blackness* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1994); Beckford, *Jesus Is Dread*.

dawn! This reversal of the traditional flow will inevitably be a painful one. Following Hood's lead, the centuries of tradition that eschewed any notion of Africa as a centre of holiness must be reversed.

Perhaps the main call to the Church of England should be to rediscover what it means to be English in this third millennium. In this time of huge political changes, a period of uncertain and shifting frontiers, maybe now it is possible to discover what Englishness means and to distinguish this from Britishness. We need to identify approaches and expressions of liturgy, particularly those that unite passion, prayer and ritual into a genuine sacramental dignity. Perhaps by looking at the love affair with language that is an enduring English trait, we can consider the notion of fair play. These in themselves are not essentially racialized, and are potentially and profoundly inclusive.

During the last century the English looked at slavery and knew it was wrong. They normalized the concept of basic human freedom. Why should not an English Church seek its own identity founded on justice and mercy, and thereby normalize and institutionalize its opposition to racism? Freed of British colonial inheritance, Englishness could do this.

