

**“Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts”: A contextual interpretation of  
Bernard Huss’ model of social transformation and its implications for the  
Missionaries of Mariannhill today**

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Theology (Theology and Development),  
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**2008**

### **Declaration**

I, Gideon Sibanda declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Theology (Theology and Development) In the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

Student Signature.....

Date.....

### **Acknowledgements**

I am profoundly thankful to Dr Beverley Haddad for supervision throughout the time of writing this work, and to all the professors and lecturers in the School of Religion and Theology who lectured me throughout my studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. My special thanks also go to Wenceslaus Kwindingwi, Sindiso Mkhwebu, Patrick Sibanda, Leonard Ndabenhle Mcwabe, Musawenkosi Mchunu and to all my friends for their unwavering support and confidence that I would eventually complete this work.

I am also deeply grateful to the Missionaries of Mariannahill, especially the General Government in Rome for their financial support and for allowing me to pursue my post-graduate studies in Theology and Development.

## **Dedication**

I humbly dedicate this work to my grandmother, Maria Mamunye Tshuma whose contribution to my life is beyond the value of any pearl, to my uncle Patrick Sibanda and to Immaculate, a dear friend, for all her support.

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## Abstract

This paper argues that a contextual version of Bernard Huss' model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" can make a positive contribution to poverty alleviation in rural KwaZulu-Natal. The model addresses both the material and non-material aspects of poverty. It seeks to achieve integral human development by empowering the poor, especially women, to be self-reliant. Poverty eradication remains one of the greatest challenges facing South Africa, and analysts concur that it is largely a rural problem. Women who head the majority of rural households are the most affected by poverty which also exposes them to the risk of HIV infection and sexual violence due to their economic dependence on men. Gender equality is a critical aspect which the model seeks to address in order to counter particular cultural injustices which subject the majority of women to male subordination. The model is therefore interpreted in the context of poverty and underdevelopment in rural KwaZulu-Natal and it endeavours to confront the challenges of poverty and unemployment at the grassroots level. It is argued in this paper that women should become the main beneficiaries of the contextual version of the model and begin to participate fully in decision-making in respect of the strategies to alleviate poverty in rural areas. The model recognizes the agency of the poor as an imperative factor in the development praxis and discourse, for this reason it is a pro-poor approach.

It is also argued in this paper that the Missionaries of Mariannhill should revive the model and use it in their mission work in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal. The model has the capacity to broaden the scope of mission work and address both the material and non-material aspects of poverty. It provides a practical response to the Christian commitment to assist the poor in the endeavour to alleviate poverty and mitigate the impact of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in rural communities.

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIDS -	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC -	African National Congress
ARV -	Antiretroviral
BEE -	Black Economic Empowerment
CAU -	Catholic African Union
CMM -	Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill
COSATU -	South African Congress of Trade Unions
CGE -	Commission for Gender Equality
GEAR -	Growth, Employment And Redistribution
HIV -	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
IFP -	Inkatha Freedom Party
ICU -	Industrial Commercial Workers Union
SANCO -	South African National Civic Organisation
SACP -	South African Communist Party
RDP -	Reconstruction and Development Programme
UN -	United Nations



## Chapter One

### Introduction

Poverty is a complex phenomenon which cannot be reduced to a single satisfactory definition. Individuals, families, communities and nations experience the effects of poverty to different degrees and respond to it according to their means and situation. The reality is that any form of poverty causes misery and dehumanization. Poverty is therefore a phenomenon to be actively rejected because its existence is an obstacle to human progress and it impedes human life from flourishing. In communities and nations where poverty is prevalent, the life span of individuals is reduced due to the effects of poverty. To this end, Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele assert that, "poverty is like illness. It shows itself in different ways in different historical situations, and it has diverse causes."<sup>1</sup> The existence of poverty in communities creates an environment in which other social ills such as crime, diseases, war, and epidemics like HIV and AIDS can spread and entrench themselves. This explains the prevalence of HIV and AIDS epidemic in those regions such as sub-Saharan Africa where poverty is deeply entrenched. This shows that poverty and HIV and AIDS are intrinsically linked, and that HIV and AIDS cannot be effectively addressed without poverty alleviation.<sup>2</sup> Poverty is therefore one of the greatest challenges facing humanity and it needs effective measures to counteract its impact. In order to respond effectively to the challenge of poverty one needs to analyse its basic causes and expose its material and non-material aspects.

This research deals with the reality of poverty in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Specifically, it attempts to understand how the Catholic Church, especially the Missionaries of Mariannhill, can best respond to the challenge of poverty as part of their mission work in the rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal. Through its social teaching over the years, the Catholic Church has expressed its concern over social matters which violate the dignity and well-being of the human person. The social teaching of the Catholic Church attempts to provide a theological reflection on social concerns and to stimulate practical action within Christian communities. The social teaching

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele, *Uprooting poverty: The South African Challenge*, (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1991), p.14.

<sup>2</sup> Christian M. Rogerson, "Local economic development in post-apartheid South Africa: a ten-year research review," in *The development decade?: Economic and social change in South Africa, 1994-2004*. Ed. Vishu Padayachee, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006), p.234.

which comes in the form of Papal encyclicals and pastoral statements published by the bishops provide a theological motivation and guidance for Christians and missionary organizations to engage in practical social action as part of their vocation. This research will investigate the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts,” which was created by Bernard Huss, one of the missionaries of Mariannhill, to respond to the social, economic and spiritual poverty of black people during the colonial era in South Africa. As a missionary, Huss endeavoured to provide a holistic approach to poverty, an approach which sought to address both the material and non-material aspects of the poverty experienced by black people during the 1920s. The three components of his model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” indicate that he was aware of the need for an integral approach to poverty. Bhekizizwe Peterson asserts that Huss used the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” to emphasize the connections between the “spiritual well-being of Africans and their social, economic, and political welfare.”<sup>3</sup> While we appreciate the value of Huss’ model we need also to realize that it cannot be applied in a straightjacket way in today’s context. The democratic dispensation of the present South Africa implies a different framework of social reality and our understanding of poverty and underdevelopment should thus be informed by contemporary social theories and theological reflection.

This research seeks to present a contextual interpretation of Huss’ model of social transformation and recommend its applicability to the Missionaries of Mariannhill who are engaged in pastoral and social action in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal. The contextual interpretation of the model will take into account issues of gender equality and empowerment of women in the rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal. The following question is key to this research: In what way is Bernard Huss’s model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” relevant for the Missionaries of Mariannhill’s response to the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment in the rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal today? The hypothesis of the study is that, Huss’s model remains relevant for the Missionaries of Mariannhill to use as a tool to address the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal.

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<sup>3</sup> Bhekizizwe, Peterson, *Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals: African Theatre and the Unmasking of Colonial Marginality*, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2000), p. 26.

In order to meet the objectives of the research, it is imperative that we present Huss's model in its socio-economic, political and historical context. Approaching the study in this way will introduce us to the person of Bernard Huss and his contemporary world. Therefore, the researcher's approach to the study will involve a thorough examination and conceptual analysis of Huss's writings especially his lecture notes, published newspaper articles and other unpublished archival material. An analysis of Huss's annals will constitute the historical part of the thesis and will cover the period from 1925 to 1929 during which Huss did most of his writings and undertook the promotion of his model.

This research is an empirical study that uses existing primary data. One of the difficult tasks in archival research is that the researcher has to "sort out and read through mounds of paper to find bits of evidence here and there".<sup>4</sup> Neuman also points out that "archival research can be very slow and frustrating, particularly when the researcher discovers holes in collections, gaps in a series of papers, or destroyed documents."<sup>5</sup> However, the benefit or advantage of archival research is that the researcher can discover and develop new insights and ideas by carefully reading and inspecting previously untouched material.<sup>6</sup> It is the researcher's contention that the archival research methodology which is adopted in this project will enhance the study and contribute to the endeavour of academic research and current development praxis.

In addition to archival research, the researcher will consult books, journal articles, newspaper articles and electronic information as secondary sources in order to gain a deeper understanding of the problems of poverty and underdevelopment in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal. The current situation of poverty, unemployment and HIV and AIDS in rural KwaZulu-Natal will be outlined as the background and context of the research. As we have already argued, poverty has both material and non-material aspects, both of which dehumanize the poor. Therefore, this study will examine the wider conceptualization of poverty in order to establish a broader understanding of the phenomenon of poverty.

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<sup>4</sup> Lawrence, Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (4<sup>th</sup> edition). (London: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), p.395-398.

<sup>5</sup> Neuman, (2000), p. 396.

<sup>6</sup> Neuman, (2000), p.396.

The two Papal encyclicals, namely, *Populorum progressio* of Pope Paul VI, and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* of Pope John Paul II will provide a theological framework for the study. These Papal encyclicals are chosen because of their broad based approach to the problem of poverty and underdevelopment. They both emphasise the importance of the integrated development of the human person and spell out key elements of human dignity, human agency, solidarity between rich and poor, as well as the option that justice for the poor is at the core of Christian commitment in the process of social transformation. The contextual interpretation of Huss's model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" which we aim to accomplish in this research should therefore be informed by these fundamental Christian values and principles which provide a holistic outlook on human life.

In the next chapter, a wider conceptualization of poverty will be examined in order to establish a broader understanding of poverty for the purpose of this research. The social, cultural and historical dimensions of poverty in South Africa and the rural areas of the province of KwaZulu-Natal will be analyzed. The reality of poverty, unemployment and HIV and AIDS in rural KwaZulu-Natal will be outlined as the background and context of the study.

Chapter three will present the history of the Missionaries of Mariannhill. We shall also outline the life and work of Bernard Huss as well as his involvement with the social and economic activities of black people at the time. His model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" as a tool to provide a practical response to the socio-economic and spiritual poverty of the black people will be presented and analyzed in this chapter. Various structures which Huss created to promote the model, as well as his attitude to the political question of power and exclusion of black people will be also explored in this chapter.

Chapter four will focus on the social teaching of the Catholic Church as the theological framework of the study. In this regard, two Papal encyclicals, *Populorum progressio* of Pope Paul VI, and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* of Pope John Paul II, will form the thrust of this chapter due to their concern for development as a people centred process. These two Papal encyclicals recognize the importance of integral development of the human person and emphasise the promotion of human dignity, the agency of the poor in development praxis, the solidarity

between rich and poor as well as the option for the poor as key Christian principles which underpin development praxis.

Chapter five will explore and provide a contextual interpretation of Huss' model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts." The strengths and weaknesses of the model as an empowering tool which can benefit the poor, especially women in the rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal will be examined in this chapter.

Chapter six will conclude the study and recommend further research in order to enhance the model from the grassroots level by taking into account the experiences and voices of the poor.

## Chapter Two

### Poverty and underdevelopment in rural KwaZulu-Natal

#### 2.1 Introduction

The concept of poverty can be a source of controversy as it is no longer possible to confine it to a single “correct” definition.<sup>7</sup> It is therefore imperative that we begin this chapter by looking at the concept of poverty in order to set the stage for our discussion of poverty and underdevelopment in rural KwaZulu-Natal. We shall then give a brief overview of poverty as a legacy of the past in South Africa in order to gain a deeper understanding of its relation to the social, cultural and historical context. This chapter will also look at the efforts made by the South African government to alleviate poverty and improve the lives of the poor in rural areas of South Africa. The link between poverty, unemployment and HIV and AIDS will be elucidated in this chapter. Finally, the researcher will extrapolate the contribution which the Church can make towards social transformation in rural KwaZulu-Natal.

#### 2.2 Conceptualizing poverty

In many communities, especially in the Third World or the developing world, poverty is a reality which cannot be denied or overlooked. It is deeply entrenched and it impacts the lives of the poor in various ways. The paradox of poverty is that, although it is so conspicuous across most societies, it is defined and conceptualized differently. In her explication of poverty, Ruth Lister emphasizes that the “narrowness or breadth of the definition of poverty depends to a large extent on whether it is confined to the material core; the nature of that material core; and whether it embraces also relational and symbolic factors associated with poverty.”<sup>8</sup> In a traditional sense, the narrow definition of poverty is confined to the material and subsistence needs such as financial resources which primarily determine the individual’s participation in socio-economic life.<sup>9</sup> The limitation of the narrow definition of poverty, as Lister points out, is that it excludes the non-material elements which are included in the broad United Nations’ (UN) definition such

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<sup>7</sup> Ruth Lister, *Poverty*, (Malden: Polity Press, 2006), p.12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

as: "lack of participation in decision making, violation of human dignity, powerlessness and susceptibility to violence."<sup>10</sup> While these elements are essential to form a wider conceptualization of poverty, the researcher contends that a broader definition of poverty should also include elements which are emphasized by the poor themselves. The poor experience poverty as a lived reality and their articulation of poverty in different circumstances can enhance the wider conceptualization of poverty. For example the poor who live in rural areas experience and conceptualize poverty differently from those in urban areas because of different life settings.

The work of Amartya Sen has also contributed to the wider conceptualization of poverty and development in the international domain. Sen's perspective of poverty "as capability deprivation" stands in opposition to the standard definition which has traditionally viewed poverty simply in terms of low income or other income related variables. Such standard definitions are narrow and they ignore the non-material elements which are essential to a wider conceptualization of poverty. Sen looks at income and wealth, not as aspects which matter in their own right, but as instruments which can be used to attain "something that really matters, namely the kind of life that a person is able to lead and the choices and opportunities open to her in leading that life."<sup>11</sup> What is essential to note in Sen's approach is his understanding of living as "being and doing" which are embodied in two key concepts: "functionings" and "capabilities".<sup>12</sup> Sen uses the term "functionings" to refer to what an individual can actually manage to do, and these possibilities "range from elementary nourishment to more sophisticated levels such as participation in the life of the community and the achievement of self-respect."<sup>13</sup> "Capabilities" on the other hand denote what the individual can be in terms of the range of choices open to him or her.<sup>14</sup> Critical to Sen's perspective is the notion of "freedom" which should be the primary concern of development, hence the title of his book, "Development as freedom."<sup>15</sup> Sen argues that freedom does not only allow people to live the kind of life which they value "but also allows us to be fuller social persons who are able to influence the world in which we live."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>11</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), p.19.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.75.

<sup>13</sup> Lister, *Poverty*, p.16.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.16.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.15.

Sen's argument that poverty entails not only low income but also deprivations in capabilities and functionings, which "result from a lack of access to adequate nutrition, clean water, electricity, sanitation, health care, housing and education," has made a major impact on the international understanding of poverty.<sup>17</sup> Polly Vizard points out that due to Sen's contribution of "the capability perspective" there has been an important shift of thinking, "away from an income and towards a human rights-focused approach" to the issue of poverty.<sup>18</sup> The South African government has also adopted a human rights focused approach to poverty. This is attested to by the fact that poverty in rural households is described as "conditions that are inadequate or intolerable in terms of access to shelter, energy, clean water, nutrition, sanitation, electricity and roads infrastructure."<sup>19</sup> This wider conceptualization of poverty lays the platform for us to examine the relation of poverty to the social, cultural and historical context of South Africa. This will also set the stage for us to look at the reality of poverty and underdevelopment in rural KwaZulu-Natal.

### **2.3 The challenge of poverty in South Africa – a burden of the past**

In South Africa the roots of rural poverty lie deep in the past. When the National Party came into power in 1948 it inherited an already entrenched process of exclusion and systematic disenfranchisement of black people which had been set in motion by the colonial regime.<sup>20</sup> The National Party intensified the process of exclusion and reinforced it by adopting racist policies which severely assaulted black people's humanity and dignity. Wilson and Ramphela identify six major lines of operation which the National Party implemented to entrench, maintain and protect white political and economic privileges: "a shift in policy from incorporation to dispossession; anti-black urbanization; forced removals, both rural and urban; Bantu education; crushing of organization; and destabilization."<sup>21</sup> These policies which were adopted by the apartheid government severely impacted on rural poverty by alienating black people from their land by forcing them to farm as tenants and also by confining them into the homeland territories.

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<sup>17</sup> Polly, Vizard, *Poverty and Human Rights: Sen's capability perspective explored*, (Oxford: University Press, 2006), p.17.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>19</sup> Chris Pycroft, *Addressing rural poverty: Restructuring rural local government*, (2002), p.105.

<sup>20</sup> Francis, Wilson and Mamphela Ramphela. *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge*, (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1991), p.204.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204.



Lungile Ntsebeza explicates that the former homelands or Bantustans during the apartheid period were placed under “the control of Tribal Authorities which were dominated by chiefs and headmen.”<sup>22</sup> The institutions of Tribal Authorities were imposed by the apartheid regime on unwilling rural people and were part of the apartheid regime’s method of keeping the black people in the homelands areas under its hegemony. Legislation such as the 1913 Natives Land Act and the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act formed the basis on which the apartheid government later built the homeland system.<sup>23</sup> The homelands system reduced black people’s access to land which was directly under the custodian of the Tribal Authorities, and limited the amount of land they could farm.<sup>24</sup>

The impact of forced removals from urban areas which had been zoned for whites only and from white farms in the 1970s added to the pressure on homeland territories which were already overcrowded and resulted in landlessness and environmental degradation.<sup>25</sup> There were also discriminatory trends “in the provision of government subsidies, taxation, extension services and rural infrastructure development which restricted black people’s access to land, capital and markets.”<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the systematic deprivation and discriminatory policies of the apartheid government entrenched poverty in rural communities. Within the framework of the wider conceptualization of poverty as elucidated by Sen, black people were deprived of their “capabilities” and “functionings” during the period of apartheid. This means that their human rights were being violated by the regime and they were confined to dehumanizing conditions.

The concentration of poverty in rural areas particularly affected women due to the patriarchal nature of the South African society which compelled most women to be financially dependent on their husbands. In this regard, Wilson and Ramphele note that in the event of a divorce or desertion by a husband, women lost their only source of income and often found themselves destitute.<sup>27</sup> The situation of women was also compounded by “the combination of the migrant

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<sup>22</sup> Vishnu Padayachee, Ed. *The development decade? Economic and social change in South Africa, 1994-2004*, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006), p.444.

<sup>23</sup> Chris Pycroft, *Democratizing Local Government*. Eds. Susan Parnell, Edgar Pieterse, Mark Swilling and Diminque Wooldridge, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2002), p.106.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106.

<sup>25</sup> Wilson and Ramphele, *Uprooting Poverty*, p. 216.

<sup>26</sup> Pycroft, *Democratizing Local Government*, p.106.

<sup>27</sup> Wilson and Ramphele, *Uprooting poverty*, p.178.

system, traditional laws and sexism of society.”<sup>28</sup> The system of migrant labour resulted in situations in which women would be left behind in the rural areas to care for the family and survive on a small share of the husband’s income. In the event of the death of a husband, traditional law required that a male relative be the custodian of the deceased husband’s estate, and many widows became impoverished in the process.<sup>29</sup> The labour market was also not conducive for many women as they experienced exploitation and encountered numerous barriers due to educational disadvantages and, of course, the discriminatory policies.

The most exploited groups of women were the domestic workers and agricultural labourers who worked long hours and received the lowest wages.<sup>30</sup> This placed and continues to place the majority of African rural women at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Poverty is therefore a gender issue and is prevalent amongst female-headed households. To this end, Beverley Haddad argues that “poverty is thus not a gender neutral issue, but one circumscribed by patriarchy.”<sup>31</sup> The researcher concurs that patriarchy disempowers many women both in the socio-cultural setting and in the economic realm by silencing their voices of protest and depriving them of economic independence. This means that in relation to the social and cultural context of poverty, women have to carry the heaviest load, especially those in female-headed households in the rural areas.

In this section I have located the challenge of poverty in South Africa within its social, cultural and historical context. I shall now examine the efforts made by the Southern African government in the post-apartheid era, to address rural poverty and underdevelopment.

#### **2.4 The new government’s efforts to address rural poverty**

As we have noted above, the apartheid system left a legacy of deep seated rural poverty and a society built generally on racial lines in South Africa. To address the imbalances of the past and seek to alleviate poverty, the African National Congress (ANC) government introduced the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.178.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.178.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.179.

<sup>31</sup> Beverley Haddad, “Theologising Development: A gendered analysis of poverty, survival and faith,” in the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 110 (2001), 5-19.

Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which it used in its election manifesto in the first democratic election in 1994.<sup>32</sup> The objective of the RDP was “to mobilize all our people and our country’s resources toward the final eradication of apartheid and the building of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist future.”<sup>33</sup> The RDP was seen by many as a pro-poor economic policy and had the support of the South African Congress of Trade Union (COSATU) as well as the South African Communist Party (SACP), both of which were strong allies of the ANC. The South African National Civic Organization (SANCO), whose primary concern was the issue of housing for the poor also supported the RDP programme.<sup>34</sup> One of the tasks carried out by the RDP office in 1995 was to commission a survey of the extent of poverty in the country. And the results indicated, as Haddad points out, that an “estimated 53% of the total population live on less than R300 a month and also that it was female-headed households that were most vulnerable.”<sup>35</sup> In addition to this, the report also revealed “that 41% of all African households are headed by women in South Africa,” a startling reality which brings to light the burden of poverty that many women have to face in their lives.<sup>36</sup>

As an economic policy, the RDP had proposed a massive increase in the “delivery of social goods; the construction of a million houses; the provision of water, electricity and energy; increased employment in education, health and policing; and a rapid land reform.”<sup>37</sup> On paper, the researcher contends that the objectives of the RDP appear to be sound and pro-poor but in practical terms it is questionable whether such a programme would have been sustainable in the long term. The new government would have been compelled to raise money elsewhere to implement the social objectives of the RDP, otherwise it would have been difficult to provide the required resources to meet the social investment needs.<sup>38</sup> By 1996 the new government had recognized its limitations to implement the noble objectives of the RDP, and was compelled to develop a new economic policy which would address “major macroeconomic variables, such as

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<sup>32</sup> Alan Hirsch, *Season of Hope: Economic reform under Mandela and Mbeki*, (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005), p.59.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Haddad, *Theologizing development*, (2001), p.9. see also Nelson Mandela’s speech before the first democratic elections on 27 April 1994, *A Better Life for all: working together for jobs, peace and freedom* (Johannesburg: ANC Department of Information and Publicity, 1994), p.2

<sup>34</sup> Hirsch, *Season of Hope*, p.59.

<sup>35</sup> Haddad, *Theologizing development*, p.9.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>37</sup> Kuben Naidoo, *The development decade?: Economic and social change in South Africa, 1994-2004*, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006), p.111.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.112.

inflation, interest rates and tax rates, which determine long-term investment decisions.”<sup>39</sup> This is how the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) economic strategy was adopted by the ANC in 1996, and it marked a shift in government policy. The GEAR approach is a macroeconomic strategy which encourages private local and foreign investment. Since the implementation of GEAR, South Africa has experienced a credible economic growth which has elevated South Africa to middle income status in the global setting.<sup>40</sup> This is despite the fact that so many people still “lack adequate nutrition, clean water, energy, decent shelter, health care and education,” particularly in the rural areas.<sup>41</sup> It is apparent, therefore, that GEAR is not good news for the poor, especially women in the rural areas who remain at the bottom of the economic pyramid. According to Cashdan, the GEAR strategy has also “led to the shrinking employment rates in the private sector, pushed up urban joblessness and generated a knock-on effect in the former homelands where rural unemployment is around 50 per cent.”<sup>42</sup>

Whilst the RDP was seen as a people driven agenda, an effort to reform social and economic structures from bottom upwards, the GEAR approach sought to reform the past economic and discriminatory policies from the top, and move gradually to the grassroots levels. And indeed as we have already noted, GEAR has set the stage for successful economic growth in South Africa. However, only a few citizens seem to have benefited from programmes such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) which was designed to create economic opportunities for members of the previously disadvantaged groups. The BEE programme appears to have benefited a new elite and maintained the trends of widespread poverty and inequality. Joel Netshitenzhe, the head of ANC’s policy co-ordination and advisory services, claimed recently that through GEAR South Africa has achieved macro-economic stability and created a climate for greater economic reforms.<sup>43</sup> Notwithstanding these achievements which have made South Africa a key player in the global sphere, the gap between the rich and poor has widened and inequality has not been significantly reduced.<sup>44</sup> What this means in practical terms is that the fruits of economic growth which is driven by the GERAR strategy have not trickled down to the majority of the poor and improved their quality of life. This shows that the top down model does not transform the lives

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.112.

<sup>40</sup> Pycroft, *Democratising Local Government*, p.108.

<sup>41</sup> Ben Cashdan, *Democratising Local Government*, p.159.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.161.

<sup>43</sup> “Too little done on poverty – Presidency.” *The Natal Witness* 2 Oct. 2008, p.4.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.4.

of people at grassroots level. The neo-liberal agenda of the government has espoused economic policies which promote export and international competitiveness, but at the expense of the majority of the poor. There is a need for action to also take place at the local level so that the poor can execute their “capabilities” and participate as agents in the process of social transformation.

However, government has made substantial progress in the democratization of state and society. The democratic transformation has occurred on the national, provincial and local institutions such as municipalities thereby creating space for citizens to participate freely in the socio-political life of their country. The fundamental rights of citizens and their freedoms are now guaranteed and enshrined in the national Constitution. On the political plain this means that even the poor are granted the liberty to exercise their rights of choosing their own leaders through an electoral process. In a nutshell, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa “enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.”<sup>45</sup> To this end, there has been general improvement in the lives of the poor through different types of governmental social security interventions such as social grants, old age pensions, and orphan and foster care grants. This social security system is essential for reducing the financial burden on the poor but as we noted in our discussion of the wider conceptualization of poverty, it does not embrace the non-material elements and other deprivations which still characterize the situation of poverty in rural communities.

## **2.5 Poverty, unemployment and HIV and AIDS in KwaZulu-Natal**

The province of KwaZulu-Natal is divided into eleven district municipalities: Ugu, Sisonke, Umgungundlovu, Zululand, Amajuba, Uthukela, Umkhanyakude, Lembe, Uthungulu, Umzinyathi and Ethekwini.<sup>46</sup> The city of Durban falls within Ethekwini Metropolitan Municipality, which is one of the six Metropolitan Municipalities in South Africa, and the only municipality with such a status in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. According to the National Census of 2001, KwaZulu-Natal constitutes 21.0% of the population of South Africa, with an

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<sup>45</sup> Adila Hassim, et al. *Health and Democracy: A guide to human rights, health law and policy in post-apartheid South Africa*, (Cape Town: Creda Communications, 2007), p.9.

<sup>46</sup> Provide Project. *A profile of KwaZulu-Natal: Demographics, poverty, inequality and unemployment* (2005), p.2. <http://www.elsenburg.com/provide>. (Accessed: 28 May 2008)

urban/rural distribution of 46/54.<sup>47</sup> KwaZulu-Natal is rated the third richest province in South Africa, after Gauteng and the Western Cape,<sup>48</sup> yet it is marred by high poverty and unemployment rates, as well as high HIV and AIDS incidences.

In his speech delivered at the launch of the South African Social Security Agency on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2007, Premier Sbu Ndebele noted that, while there has been a general improvement in the quality of life for many people, “the incidence of poverty in KwaZulu-Natal remain [ed] the highest in the country.”<sup>49</sup> In addition, Ndebele pointed out that between 1996 and 2002 “unemployment had increased by 9.3% according to the strict definition, and by 9.6% according to the expanded definition.”<sup>50</sup> While poverty and unemployment manifest themselves in the villages, towns and cities of the province, it is deeply rooted in the rural areas, most of which fall under the former KwaZulu homeland. According to the Provide Project, “poverty is clearly a rural phenomenon, with the rural poverty rate estimated at 78.2% compared to 28.9% in urban areas,” and is more prevalent in female-headed households.<sup>51</sup> Further, poverty is also viewed as a black problem because it is especially prevalent in black households.

It is imperative to note that the province of KwaZulu-Natal includes large rural areas which formed parts of the former KwaZulu homeland and the large population of the province is concentrated in these poor areas. Many of the people in these rural areas are involved in agricultural activities, either in an informal or formal capacity. According to the Labour Force Survey, farm workers in KwaZulu-Natal are estimated to be around 339 841.<sup>52</sup> This figure varies from year to year and represents the number of people in rural areas who are formally employed in commercial farms in the former homeland areas. Farm employment has been the largest source of employment for many black people in the rural areas, but in recent years there has been a decline in the number of farm-worker jobs and this has contributed to the high rural unemployment rate of 45 per cent.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Sbu Ndebele, <http://www.polity.org.za/article.php?a-d> (Accessed: 28 May 2008)

<sup>48</sup> Provide Project (2005), p.1.

<sup>49</sup> Ndebele, “Launch of South African Social Security Agency”, <http://www.polity.org.za/article.php?a-id>. (Accessed: 28 May 2008)

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.polity.org.za/article.php?a-id>. (Accessed: 28 May 2008)

<sup>51</sup> Provide Project, p.9.

<sup>52</sup> Themba Mbhele and Michael Aliber, “KwaZulu-Natal Case Study.” <http://www.hsreprpress.ac.za> (Accessed: 9 October 2008).

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.hsreprpress.ac.za> (Accessed: 9 October 2008)

Households in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal fall under the broad definition of agricultural households, which means that they “earn income from either formal employment in the agricultural industry or from sales or consumption of home produce or livestock.”<sup>54</sup> The difficulty lies with the poor households whose main source of livelihood is farming. Because of poverty, these households, most of which are female-headed, lack the financial capacity to purchase materials and implements such as fertilizer, seeds and tractors to till their land.<sup>55</sup> The problem is also compounded by poor farming methods and the lack of knowledge of modern commercial agriculture. This situation amplifies the vulnerability of poor households which are exposed to the danger of malnutrition.

The rural households do benefit from the social security interventions,<sup>56</sup> but it must be noted that such interventions do not reduce poverty. While they assist the poor, they also encourage dependence on welfare assistance. A situation whereby the poor are empowered with various vocational skills which they can use to earn income, and with effective farming methods to produce enough food from their fields, will assist to improve the quality of their lives. The transition into democracy in South Africa has broadened the space for participation and created many opportunities. But the lack of skills and high levels of illiteracy in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal inhibit the poor from benefiting and seizing the opportunities to improve their socio-economic conditions. Added to this, many rural communities still lack basic services such as clean water and electricity.<sup>57</sup> This shows that poverty is deep rooted in these rural areas and it inhibits the progress of social transformation.

Themba Mbhele and Michael Aliber point out that the political tensions between ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and those between and among the local government officials and traditional leaders also contribute to the slow process of social transformation in some rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal.<sup>58</sup> Mbhele and Aliber argue that the conflicts which emerge as a result of leaders’ different political affiliations or “because some are municipal officials and others

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<sup>54</sup> Provide Project (2005), p.5.

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za> (Accessed: 9 October 2008)

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.polity.org.za/article.php?a-id> (Accessed: 28 May 2008)

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za> (Accessed: 9 October 2008)

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za> (Accessed: 9 October 2008)

traditional leaders, become personalized and entrenched.”<sup>59</sup> These political tensions result in the lack of co-operation between key stakeholders who are supposed to provide leadership, ensure service delivery and promote the common good in the rural communities. It is apparent that, poor relations between different political parties perpetuate poverty and are counter-productive to democracy and the process of development. The high incidence of poverty and unemployment in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal also fuels the HIV and AIDS epidemic in these communities.

The province of KwaZulu-Natal has the highest HIV and AIDS prevalence in the country, with 39 per cent of all pregnant women who attend pre-natal clinics testing HIV positive.<sup>60</sup> This high figure points to the avalanche of problems which poor rural communities have to deal with both now and in the future. Poverty contributes in many ways to the spread of HIV and AIDS, and its eradication would serve as a precondition to the efforts aimed at mitigating the impact of the epidemic in the rural communities. Additionally, patriarchy and some traditional practices such as *lobola* place many women in traditional Zulu society at a disadvantage in terms of social and economic empowerment. Hence, Haddad writes, “Traditionally, women have little say over the kind of sexual practices they engage in. Cultural practice such as *lobola* and polygamy may also contribute to the women’s vulnerability.”<sup>61</sup> In rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal where traditional culture plays a significant role in the lives of the people, HIV and AIDS epidemic finds a conducive environment to entrench itself and cause serious social turmoil. Again, Premier Sbu Ndebele lamented the fact that KwaZulu-Natal has the highest HIV prevalence in the country and the number of orphans and child-headed families is growing in proportion to the rate of the growth of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in the province.<sup>62</sup> This is a situation of emergency which needs a collaborative response from all stakeholders in order to mitigate its impact.

The HIV and AIDS epidemic is also to a certain extent, fuelled by the exaggerated efficacy of the traditional medicines or remedies which still play a significant role in the lives of the rural people. In a recent study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council in three hospitals

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za> (Accessed: 9 October 2008)

<sup>60</sup> “HIV/AIDS in numbers” City Press 24 Aug. 2008, p.12.

<sup>61</sup> Haddad, “Gender Violence and HIV/AIDS: a deadly silence in the Church,” in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 114 (November 2002), 95.

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.polity.org.za/article.php?a-id=111439> (Accessed: 28 May 2008)



providing antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) to people living with HIV in rural KwaZulu-Natal, it was revealed that one out of every two people with HIV believes that traditional medicine is safer than Western medicine.<sup>63</sup> The possibility that HIV positive people on ARVs are simultaneously taking traditional medicines is high, and this can compromise treatment programmes. There is, therefore, an urgent need to intensify sex education programmes especially in rural schools, together with various preventive strategies and to tackle issues of treatment in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal in order to mitigate the impact of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. This task cannot be left to the government alone; it requires the combined effort of all the stakeholders. The Church is a key stakeholder in society and has a paramount role to play in poverty alleviation. Julius Oladipo writes that: "The Church has a strong value base of concern for poor and marginalized groups that is supported by its biblical mission and that inspires commitment from its leaders, members and development agencies."<sup>64</sup> Oladipo also notes that in most African countries, Christian missionaries did not only "bring the message of spiritual redemption," but that they also addressed the physical needs of the people.<sup>65</sup> In different countries across Africa missionaries introduced staple crops and new methods of farming, formal education, vocational skills training and modern health care services.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, engagement in social transformation or socio-economic development is not optional for the Church, it is a duty which is embodied in Jesus' declaration concerning his mission: to bring "good news to the poor."<sup>67</sup>

One missionary who tried to respond in a practical way to the plight of poverty and underdevelopment of black people during the colonial regime in South Africa was Bernard Huss of the Missionaries of Mariannhill. Bernard Huss developed a model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" to address the socio-economic poverty of the black people and empower them for self reliance. This model will be examined in the following chapter and interpreted in the context of poverty and underdevelopment in rural KwaZulu-Natal. The history of the Missionaries of Mariannhill will be also outlined.

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<sup>63</sup> Bongani Mthethwa, "HIV patients trust in traditional remedies." *Sunday Times* 12 October 2008, p.5.

<sup>64</sup> Julius Oladipo, "The role of the Church in Poverty Alleviation in Africa." In *Faith in Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*. Eds. Deryke Belshaw, Robert Calderisi and Chris Snugden, (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2001), p.219-236.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.223.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>67</sup> Lk. 4:18-19.

## 2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have looked at the wider conceptualization of poverty as well as its relation to the social, cultural and historical contexts of South Africa. The researcher observed that the broader understanding of poverty has been enhanced by insights from the work of Amartya Sen which has influenced the international community to shift its understanding of poverty from income deprivation and rather to focus on human “capabilities” and human rights concerns. It was also shown that the reality of poverty in South Africa is a legacy of the past which was characterized by discriminatory policies and severe deprivation of black people’s rights and freedom. As such poverty is concentrated in rural communities most of which are situated in the former homeland areas of the apartheid state.

The reality of poverty in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal was discussed and the link between poverty, unemployment and HIV and AIDS was made. It was also demonstrated that poverty affects female-headed households the most due to the fact that women are both socially and economically disempowered by patriarchy. It was argued that the task of addressing poverty cannot be left to government alone but that the Church, as a key stakeholder in society, has a role to play in alleviating poverty. The Church has a track record of being proactive in socio-economic development in Africa, through the works of missionaries. In the following chapter I shall present a history of the Missionaries of Mariannhill and examine the work of Bernard Huss and his model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” which he developed to respond to the socio-economic poverty of black people during colonialism in South Africa. The objective of the research is to interpret Huss’ model in the context of the reality of poverty and underdevelopment in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher will recommend the use of the contextualized version of the model by the Missionaries of Mariannhill who work in these rural areas.

## Chapter Three

### “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts”

#### 3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline the history of the Missionaries of Mariannhill and introduce us to the person of Bernard Huss and his involvement in social and economic activities among black people during the colonial era in South Africa. His study of the “native question,” which he undertook during his tenure as principal of St Francis Teacher’s College at Mariannhill helped him to understand the causes of the poverty and underdevelopment of black people. To address this, Huss created the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” which he used as a tool to empower black people in order to improve their socio-economic conditions. His model will be presented and elucidated in this chapter. We will also examine ways in which Huss undertook to address the political question and structures of power which were used by the colonial government to deprive black people of their fundamental freedoms and human rights.

#### 3.2 History of the Missionaries of Mariannhill

The Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill developed out of the Trappist Monastery of Mariannhill, which was founded by Abbot Francis Pfanner in Natal, South Africa in 1882.<sup>68</sup> The name Mariannhill is a combination of three names: Mary, Anne and hill, which Abbot Francis Pfanner used to form the name, Mariannhill.<sup>69</sup> Abbot Francis dedicated the monastery to Mary the mother of Jesus and St Anne in whose guidance and intercessions he trusted entirely.<sup>70</sup> The monastery developed gradually, operating on the Benedictine maxim of *Ora et Labora* (Pray and Work).<sup>71</sup> At first the monks lived and worked according to the demands of the Trappist Rule of perpetual silence and contemplation. Within a short period of time, great achievements were made in transforming the land around Mariannhill into “well-tended fields and pastures, to

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<sup>68</sup> *Constitution and directory of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill* (Rome, 1987), article, no. 101.

<sup>69</sup> Adalbert L. Balling, *Abbot Francis Pfanner 1825-1909: A Missionary Who Made History*, (Northern Ireland: Appletree Press, 1980), p.60.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60.

<sup>71</sup> Francis Schimlek, *Mariannhill: A Study in Bantu life and Missionary effort*, (Mariannhill: Mariannhill Mission Press, 1953), p.116.

luxuriant plantations, vegetable gardens and orchards.”<sup>72</sup> Due to the socio-economic poverty of black people around Mariannhill, the monks constructed schools and opened a network of mission stations which served as centres for monastic and missionary activities. In addition, the schools became important centres of Christianizing the “Zulus” and transforming their social conditions. The education of black students was modelled after the *Ora et Labora* method, with the aim of forming Christian families who would be settled in the vicinity of mission stations.<sup>73</sup> To this end, “the education of boys and girls was to be a school for life, a formation of body and soul to foster and refine the spiritual and physical potential of the scholars.”<sup>74</sup> Boys were trained in various vocational skills and crafts. The education of girls was entrusted to the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood, which was founded by Abbot Francis for the education of girls and young women.<sup>75</sup> In short, Abbot Francis and his monks developed a social programme aimed at “improving the lives of indigenous people through schools, cultivation of the soil, technical training and manual work.”<sup>76</sup>

From the outset of their mission work in Natal, the Trappists of Mariannhill endeavoured to address the life situation of the indigenous people holistically, looking at the various aspects of the human person: physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual.<sup>77</sup> Education was seen by the Trappists as the best tool to achieve integral human development. For this reason, “wherever the Trappists set up new mission stations they concentrated first on planting food crops and erecting buildings that were essential for their survival,” and schools were part of the building projects in almost every mission.<sup>78</sup> It is significant to note that in all Mariannhill schools which were established at various mission stations across Natal, and as far as Griqualand,<sup>79</sup> preference was given to poor children and orphans. Apart from education, the Trappists provided poor children

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<sup>72</sup> Rudolf Kneipp, “Success through ill success: Mariannhill under the ruling abbot,” in *Mariannhill and its apostolate* (Reimlingen: St Joseph Mission Press, 1964), p.17.

<sup>73</sup> Schimlek, *Mariannhill: A Study in Bantu life and Missionary effort*, p.117.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.68.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.120.

<sup>76</sup> Yves La Fontaine, *CMM Charism: Identity and Spirituality* (Curia Generalizia dei Missionari di Mariannhill, 2006), p.50.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50.

<sup>78</sup> Joy B. Brain, *A new Beginning? The Umzimkhulu Diocese: Fifty Years later* (Diocese of Umzimkhulu: Mariannhill Mission Press, 2004), p.23.

<sup>79</sup> In 1888 Abbot Francis bought a farm for the first time outside Natal. The farm belonged to Donald Stachan, one of the first traders of East Griqualand. On that farm, Lourdes Mission was built, together with primary, secondary and industrial schools to benefit the local people (Brain 2004:22).

and orphans with board and lodging as well as free clothing, books and tools for school.<sup>80</sup> The methods which Abbot Francis and his monks adopted brought them closer to the indigenous people. The involvement of the monks in active missionary work made it impossible to maintain the strict Trappist Rule of perpetual silence. In fact, Abbot Francis had gone against the Trappist tradition by allowing the monks of Mariannahill to get involved in active missionary work in the outstations. The problems that emerged out of this led to the suspension and subsequent resignation of Abbot Francis Pfanner in 1892.<sup>81</sup> Efforts were made by his successors to reconcile the requirements of Trappist life and missionary work, but to no avail. Consequently, the Apostolic See separated the monastery from the Trappist Order in a decree of February 2, 1909.<sup>82</sup>

The decree of the Apostolic Order set the stage for the formation of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannahill (CMM), a Religious Missionary Community of the Roman Catholic Church. Following the separation from the Trappist Order in 1909, the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannahill expanded their missionary activities to other parts of the world.<sup>83</sup> They continued with mission work on the same lines of *Ora et Labora*, placing much emphasis on education, manual work and apprenticeship which formed an integral part of the school curriculum. The Monastery of Mariannahill remained the centre for the Missionaries of Mariannahill. It developed further into a centre of higher learning, with St Francis College for African teachers being established in 1909 and also a Technical College running apprenticeship training for various trades such as building, plumbing, carpentry, motor mechanics, printing and bookbinding.<sup>84</sup> The aim was to empower black people with technical skills for employment, but which they could also use to improve their conditions of living. It is apparent that Bernard Huss developed his model along similar lines to the mission work of Mariannahill. According to Yves La Fontaine, Huss' model of "Better hones, Better fields, Better hearts" epitomizes the integral

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<sup>80</sup> La Fontaine, *CMM Charism: Identity and Spirituality*, p.53.

<sup>81</sup> After his resignation, Abbot Francis retired at Emaus Mission where he died on 24 May 1909.

Brain, *A new beginning?*, p.30.

<sup>82</sup> *Constitutions and Directory of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannahill*, p.17.

<sup>83</sup> The Missionaries of Mariannahill expanded their missionary activities to Europe and established centres in countries like the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Poland, and also established their General administration in Rome. In addition, they established centres in the United States and Canada, as well as Papua New Guinea. In Africa, the Missionaries of Mariannahill expanded their mission work beyond South Africa's borders into Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique and recently, Botswana.

<sup>84</sup> Helen Gamble, *Mariannahill: A century of prayer and work* (Pinetown: Mariannahill Mission Press, 1982), p.195.

approach to human development and it seeks to address the “entirety of the human person, with human dignity as the central point.”<sup>85</sup> We shall outline the life and work of Huss in the next section, and also present his model.

### 3.3 Bernard Huss (1876 – 1948)

Bernard Huss was born on February 27, 1876 at Oedheim in Germany, and at baptism he was given the name Alexander.<sup>86</sup> After matriculation Huss decided to become a priest, and with the support of his parents, particularly his mother, he commenced his studies in philosophy and later in theology, in preparation for priesthood. It was during his studies for priesthood that a natural catastrophe shrouded his life when his father died unexpectedly of heart failure and within two weeks his mother also died.<sup>87</sup> The tragedy of the death of his parents devastated him so much that he resolved to “resign from the world” and join a religious order.<sup>88</sup> He came to South Africa to join the Trappist Order in Mariannahill, and as if to signal a new phase in his life, Huss gave up his baptismal name of Alexander and received the new name of Bernard.<sup>89</sup> His official reception into the Trappist Order symbolically gave him closure with regard to the death of his parents and marked the beginning of a new trajectory in his life. He was ordained a priest at Mariannahill in December 1900 and his first assignment was at the mission station of Hardenberg, in the Cape Province near the border of Basutoland.<sup>90</sup> He worked at Hardenberg for five years after which he was transferred to Marizell mission where he worked for a year before returning to Natal, to work at Kevelaer mission. He was then transferred to Keilands in 1908.<sup>91</sup>

It was at Keilands, the farthest of Mariannahill missions located at the Kei River in the Cape Province, that Huss experienced the greatest challenges in his career as a missionary. Keiland mission had been founded by the Jesuit Order and was ceded to Mariannahill in 1908.<sup>92</sup> Huss was transferred from Kevelaer mission in Natal to Keiland mission to work among the Xhosa people.

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<sup>85</sup> La Fontaine, *CMM Charism: Identity and Spirituality*, p53.

<sup>86</sup> Francis Schimlek, *Against the stream: Life of Father Bernard Huss, C.M.M. The social apostle of the Bantu*, (Mariannahill: Mariannahill Mission Press, 1949), p.30

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30-31.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>89</sup> Gamble, *Mariannahill: A Century of Prayer and Work*, p.156.

<sup>90</sup> Gamble, *Mariannahill: A Century of Prayer and Work*, p.156.

<sup>91</sup> Francis Schimlek and John Sauter, “The Social Apostle of Mariannahill,” in *Mariannahill and Its Apostle*, p.98.

<sup>92</sup> Joy B.Brain, *Catholics in Natal II (1886-1925). Archdiocese of Durban*, (Durban: Printing Centre, 1982), p.272.

Schimleck and Sauter (1964) indicate that Huss was the first Mariannhill priest to work at Keiland and that this period was a difficult one for him.<sup>93</sup> Joy Brain echoes a similar sentiment when she states that Huss spent “seven disappointing years at Keilands without converting even a dozen of the Xhosa people.”<sup>94</sup> Helen Gamble points out that Huss found the Xhosa people at Keilands apathetic to their spiritual welfare and that they only responded after receiving gifts from the missionaries, which they regarded as tribute for their attendance.<sup>95</sup> The method of distributing food and clothes had been introduced by the Jesuit Missionaries together with the Dominican Sisters to encourage the Xhosa people to attend the school which they had built.<sup>96</sup> Huss terminated the system of distributing food and clothing to the indigenous people and insisted that “native people should be taught to help themselves in order to achieve a good standard of living...”<sup>97</sup> However, the indigenous people were not pleased by Huss’ new approach and complained that “they would die without the gifts from the mission”.<sup>98</sup>

According to Gamble, Huss believed that religion and social work could be taught equally within the parameters of the Trappist rule of *Ora et Labora* (Prayer and Work), which had proved to be effective and progressive at Mariannhill and other mission stations.<sup>99</sup> The system of distributing food and clothing encouraged idleness and did not concur with the philosophy of self-reliance. Huss was therefore determined to employ the same method of *Ora et Labora* among the Xhosa people at Keilands, hoping that the same successful results would be achieved. After observing the unproductive farming methods used by the Xhosa people, Huss concluded that black people needed to be trained in the correct use of the soil.<sup>100</sup> However, his efforts to train the Xhosa people in the method of dry farming failed because the Xhosa people still preferred their traditional farming methods which were simpler and had been used by their people for hundreds of years with success.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Schimleck and Sauter, “The social apostle of Mariannhill”, in *The History of the Missionaries of Mariannhill*, p.98.

<sup>94</sup> Brain, *Catholics in Natal II 1886-1925*, p.272.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p.158.

<sup>100</sup> Brain, *Catholics in Natal II*, p.273.

<sup>101</sup> Gamble, *Mariannhill: A Century of prayer and work*, p.158.

Huss' approach was prescriptive and he generally regarded the indigenous cultures and farming methods as inferior to the Western ones. It is the researcher's contention that his attitude and lack of mutual dialogue to convince the Xhosa people of the advantages of his new farming methods also contributed to his failure. His disappointment and frustration was amplified by the fact that he expected to achieve results in a short period of time, and when this failed, he branded the indigenous people "lazy and obdurate."<sup>102</sup>

Huss' tenure at Keilands mission, though described by Brian as disappointing and unproductive, provided him with an opportunity to study and to examine his own approach and seek a deeper understanding of the black people's worldview.<sup>103</sup> He had not achieved much in terms of converting the Xhosa people to the Christian religion and his efforts to reform agriculture had also been unsuccessful.<sup>104</sup> Despite the difficulties and resistance which he encountered at Keilands, Huss used his time to develop his knowledge of agriculture and also gained a deeper understanding of the broader socio-economic issues affecting the indigenous people.<sup>105</sup> In addition, Schimleck asserts that the difficulties which Huss experienced at Keilands also helped him to develop great trust in God whom he considered to be "the inexhaustible well of Divine assistance"<sup>106</sup> and source of grace. His unhappy tenure at Keilands came to an end in 1915 when he was transferred to Marainnhill and appointed principal of St Francis Teachers' Training College.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.3.1 Bernard Huss the Educationist

St Francis College had been in existence for thirty years already when Huss was installed as its principal on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915.<sup>108</sup> It was the oldest Catholic institution of learning and also considered the best in Natal.<sup>109</sup> A number of Sisters and Mariannhill priests had already been fully involved in the teaching at and development of the college over the years.<sup>110</sup> According to

<sup>102</sup> Schimleck and Sauter, "The Social Apostle of Mariannhill," in *Mariannhill and Its Apostle*, p.99.

<sup>103</sup> Brian, *Catholics in Natal II*, p.272.

<sup>104</sup> Gamble, *Mariannhill: A Century of prayer and work*, p.158.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p.164.

<sup>106</sup> Schimleck, *Against the stream*, p.32.

<sup>107</sup> Brian, *Catholics in Natal II*, p.273.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>109</sup> Schimleck and Sauter, "The social apostle of Mariannhill," in *Mariannhill and Its Apostle*, p.100.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p.100.



Schimleck, although St Francis College was rated highly among the educational institutions in Natal, it had little to boast of in terms of its "native education".<sup>111</sup> Lack of progress at the College had become a great concern for Mariannahill priests and it was Abbot Gerhard Wolpert whose vision it was to see that the College develop into "a first rate institution that shall bring credit to Mariannahill."<sup>112</sup>

The College needed an innovative leader who would impart new ideas and guide its development. Huss' name was suggested to the Abbot by Father Cyprian Ballweg as the ideal candidate to set the stage for the desired development of the College.<sup>113</sup> When he met with the Abbot, Huss made the following pledge to demonstrate his determination and zeal for the work which lay ahead:

"As far as I am concerned, I shall put my shoulder to the wheel. It shall be my ambition, Venerable Father, to see to it that the College of Mariannahill shall become the best Bantu school in Natal, if possible, in the whole of the Union of South Africa, from which inspiring ideas will go forth and penetrate to the last Native [*sic*] Reserve, and even into the hearts of the hardened Xhosas of Keilands."<sup>114</sup>

The above statement expresses clearly his ambitions and determination to work with vengeance in order to succeed and put the College on a new trajectory of advancement. It is most likely that the painful experience of his failure at Keilands motivated him to set higher goals for himself at the College and to work hard to avoid any possibility of failure which could have been an embarrassment to him. The author contends that the conditions at Mariannahill presented Huss with the necessary resources and support which he lacked at Keilands.

Brian describes Huss as "a man of wide interest and considerable dedication", and this was demonstrated clearly during his tenure as principal of St Francis teachers' training college. Schimleck and Sauter assert that as principal of the college, Huss, "took over religious instruction, musical training and rehearsals, psychology of education and the training in agriculture and

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.39.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p.40.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p.40.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.40.

horticulture.”<sup>115</sup> Government authorities, particularly Dr Loram who was the chief inspector of native [*sic*] schools, took a keen interest in Huss’ approach of training in agriculture and requested him to “write a textbook on agriculture for the Bantu [*sic*].”<sup>116</sup> His book entitled *A Textbook on Agriculture* was printed and published by Longmans, Green, & Co. of London in 1920, and it was officially prescribed for all native [*sic*] schools in South Africa.<sup>117</sup> In addition, Huss wrote a series of lectures in psychology for his students and for publication in the Johannesburg newspaper called *Umthetheli*.<sup>118</sup>

It was during his tenure as principal of St Francis College that Huss developed and refined his ideas for social work amongst the black people. His ideas culminated in the creation of his model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts”. Bhekizizwe Peterson asserts that, “at St Francis College Huss was compelled to rethink the nature of mission work and the education of black people”<sup>119</sup> in the context of dislocation, impoverishment and alienation. Huss had come to the realization that mission work tended to place more emphasis on “the things of worship and religion, or the affairs of the inner life” and grossly neglected the social, political and economic realities of life.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” was meant to provide a broader approach to mission work. It would seem that Huss understood mission work in these broad terms to include the amelioration of the socio-economic conditions and impoverishment of black people, which could not be ignored without undermining their dignity as human beings. According to Gamble, by creating the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts,” Huss was attempting to put Jesus’ declaration that he had come to offer humanity “abundant life”<sup>121</sup> into practical action.<sup>122</sup> This implies that Huss viewed the socio-economic impoverishment of black people as a deprivation of that “abundant life,” hence the need for a model to empower them to be self reliant and to participate in the modern economy. We shall now present and expound on each of the three components of the model.

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<sup>115</sup> Schimlek and Sauter, “The Apostle of Mariannahill,” p.100.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.100.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p.100.

<sup>118</sup> Brain, *Catholics in Natal II*, p.273.

<sup>119</sup> Bhekizizwe Peterson, *Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals : African Theatre and the Unmasking of Colonial Marginality*, (Johannesburg : Witwatersrand University Press, 2000), p.26.

<sup>120</sup> Schimlek, *Against the stream*, p.56.

<sup>121</sup> Jn. 10:10.

<sup>122</sup> Gamble, *Mariannahill: A Century of prayer and work*, p.169.

### 3.3.2 Better homes!

In an undated and unsigned article entitled, "The life of a rural native," the writer states that "the rural natives live in kraals scattered here and there over the hilly-country."<sup>123</sup> These settlements slowly developed into big villages. The huts were mostly built of rods and were thatched with grass. It is pointed out in the article that they were only two types of huts, "either a perfect round style or a rectangular block."<sup>124</sup> The work was not shared equally in the rural home, and the chief occupations of women constituted the "cleaning of the home, caring for the children, collecting firewood, fetching water from the well or river, and reaping during harvest time."<sup>125</sup> The article reveals that men on the contrary did not do much work; their main occupations were "fighting and hunting."<sup>126</sup> This means that most of the work at home was done by women and as a result, "in many homes there was no mutual help and relationship between father and mother."<sup>127</sup>

This is the context within which Huss developed the notion of building "Better homes." The model was not only intended to improve the socio-economic conditions of the black people, but to facilitate the process of "Western civilization." In order to build "Better homes," black people were encouraged to abandon their traditional huts which Huss described as being "squalid and unfit for decent human living, and build proper houses designed on modern lines of civilization".<sup>128</sup> A decent house had to have at least two windows for ventilation. The houses would then be kept clean and properly managed by women who were taught domestic skills such as cooking, knitting, sewing and gardening.<sup>129</sup> It was a gender-specific role of women to create "Better homes" and maintain them in line with the standards of "civilization". The Mariannahill Sisters were involved in the training of female students in household management and home industry as a way of promoting the notion of "Better homes".<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> "The life of a rural native." This is an undated and unsigned article probably written by one of Huss' students. It is available at Mariannahill Monastery Archives (Box 04, file number 2).

<sup>124</sup> Mariannahill Monastery archives, (Box 04, file number 2).

<sup>125</sup> Mariannahill Monastery archives, (Box 04, file number 2).

<sup>126</sup> Mariannahill Monastery archives, (Box 04, file number 2).

<sup>127</sup> Mariannahill Monastery archives, (Box 04, file number 2).

<sup>128</sup> Gamble, *Mariannahill: A Century of prayer and work*, p.159.

<sup>129</sup> Lydia Brouckaert, "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts": *The Catholic African Union, 1927-1939*, (University of Witwatersrand, unpublished Honours thesis in history, 1985), p.56.

<sup>130</sup> Bernard Huss, "Results." *Southern Cross* 16 Oct. 1929, p.16.

In her unpublished honours thesis, *"Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts": The Catholic African Union, 1927-1939*, Lydia Brouckaert points out that in household management women were also encouraged to serve their husbands and taught how to nurture their children. While Huss may have contributed by giving input and ideas on how to create "Better homes", there is no evidence to show his direct involvement in the actual teaching and training of young women in household management and home industry. The task seems to have been delegated to the Sisters, and at some stage it also involved the Catholic Women's Associations.<sup>131</sup>

It is apparent that Huss' aim was to encourage black people to build "Better homes" on the lines of what was viewed as "modern civilization", but it is also striking that the notion of "Better homes" was dominated by patriarchal attitudes which confined the role of African women to the domestic sphere. However, this did not mean that women would then be exempted from working in the fields, but rather that their work load would be extended. It is clear, therefore, that the building of "Better homes", although it was aimed at improving the living conditions of black people, did not consider issues of gender equality. It reinforced and legitimized the oppression of African women within the cultural paradigm of patriarchy, which was the norm in both Western and African societies.

### 3.3.3 Better fields!

For many years Huss had closely observed and analyzed the farming methods used by black people and classified them as "primitive and unproductive".<sup>132</sup> Through observation and analysis, Huss established that the farming methods used by black people had contributed to soil erosion and rendered vast tracts of land unfit for cultivation.<sup>133</sup> In addition, archaic agriculture meant that the tillage of the soil was not deep enough and the methods of sowing were inadequate, which meant that the seeds were applied too thickly resulting in poor crops and failed production.<sup>134</sup> Huss also observed that black people did not apply manure to their fields or

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<sup>131</sup> Reports given by various branches of Catholic Women's associations at the Social Courses held at Mariannahill and Marizell Mission (January 1926), Huss Papers. Box No. 22.

<sup>132</sup> Huss, "Native agriculture." *Southern Cross* 16 Nov. 1927, p. 1-2.

<sup>133</sup> Huss, "Native Agriculture." *Southern Cross* 16 Nov. 1927, pp.1-2.

<sup>134</sup> Huss, "Native Agriculture." *Southern Cross* 16 Nov. 1927, pp.1-2.

practiced crop rotation and fields were given up as soon as they were exhausted.<sup>135</sup> There were also other factors such as “lack of knowledge of dreadful diseases of soil cancer which were caused by the absence of surface drainage”, and lack of general knowledge of the soil among black people.<sup>136</sup> In a nutshell, the traditional methods of farming wasted the soil which Huss considered to be “the most precious food-producing machine entrusted by God to man and every square inch should be saved from ruin.”<sup>137</sup>

Huss was determined to reform “primitive agriculture” along the lines of scientific methods in order to aid black people to build “Better fields” for themselves. Huss had acquired a broad knowledge of modern agriculture and St Francis College provided him with the opportunity to impart it to his students both in theory and practice. Peterson states that St Francis College received widespread praise during Huss’ tenure of office as principal and teacher because of “the quality of its agricultural and industrial training” which was conducted in a thoroughly practical manner.<sup>138</sup> From St Francis College, Huss’ methods of modern agriculture spread to several other schools in Natal and beyond where agriculture was introduced as a subject in all classes.<sup>139</sup> In an article to the *Southern Cross* Huss wrote that, “new ideas and practices are most effectively introduced in a people through the schools”.<sup>140</sup>

To take the idea of “Better fields” to the public domain, Huss began to publish articles on agriculture in newspapers such as *Ilanga* and *Izindaba zabantu*, both of which were in Zulu language, *Leselinyana* and *Mochochono*, which were in the Sesutho language, and the Xhosa newspaper called *Imvo*.<sup>141</sup> He also published articles about his methods in the “Native Teachers’ Journal”.<sup>142</sup> However, there were other authors who also contributed to the literature on agriculture. For example in 1920, Rev Fr A.T. Bryant published a book in Zulu entitled *Imisebenzi yamapulazi*.<sup>143</sup> Although Huss played a pivotal role in the project of building “Better

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<sup>135</sup> Huss, “Native Agriculture.” *Southern Cross* 16 Nov. 1927, pp.1-2.

<sup>136</sup> Huss, “Native Agriculture.” *Southern Cross* 16 Nov. 1927, pp. 1-2.

<sup>137</sup> Huss, “Native Agriculture.” *Southern Cross* 16 Nov. 1927, pp.1-2.

<sup>138</sup> Peterson, *Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals*, p.25-26.

<sup>139</sup> Gamble, *Mariannahill: A Century of Prayer and Work*, p.166.

<sup>140</sup> Huss, “Necessity of agriculture.” *Southern Cross* 28 Dec. 1927, p.15.

<sup>141</sup> Huss, “Necessity of agriculture.” *Southern Cross* 18 Jan. 1928, p.16.

<sup>142</sup> Gamble, *Mariannahill: A Century of Prayer and Work*, p.167.

<sup>143</sup> Huss, “Necessity of agriculture.” *Southern Cross* 18 Jan. 1928, p.16.

fields”, articles and books written by different authors<sup>144</sup> show that there were other stakeholders who were equally concerned about reforming the farming methods used by black people at the time.

The central idea of building “Better fields” was to empower peasant farmers with modern skills of agriculture so that they could produce sufficient food for themselves and improve food security for the “native [*sic*] population”.<sup>145</sup> The new farming methods would also aid the peasant farmers to produce first-rate goods which could be sold on the world market, thus creating economic leverage.<sup>146</sup> In 1928, Huss wrote in an article that the results which had been achieved in “the efforts of improving Native [*sic*] agriculture are very encouraging.”<sup>147</sup> Again, in 1929 he acknowledged the progress made when he wrote that: “Better fields have appeared long ago, for many of our natives [*sic*] who formerly had to buy grain are now selling. Some even succeeded in this way in buying their farms.”<sup>148</sup>

### 3.3.4 Better hearts!

In his explication of what he termed the “Treasures of Africa,” Huss identified the following as the qualities of the African heart: kindness, hospitality, sociability, humour and patience.<sup>149</sup> His analysis of these qualities led to the conclusion that “black people were also capable of becoming genuine Christians and lead a pure life.”<sup>150</sup> The dilemma seems to have been the African traditional religion which, according to Huss, subjected black people to “a spiritual, moral and mental darkness.”<sup>151</sup> Accordingly, Huss believed that a thorough religious and moral education would “free the natives [*sic*] from the dominance and deadly influence of the belief in the spirit world and in superstition, according to which any calamity, disease or death is due to malignant

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<sup>144</sup> In 1923 a book entitled, “Incwadi yabalimi,” which was co-authored by N.A. Mazwi, J.E. East, B. Huss, and D.T. Jabavu was published by the Lovedale Press Publishers. In 1924, the Transkeian Bhunga also began publishing a quarterly paper entitled, “Umcebisi wabantu,” in Xhosa.

<sup>145</sup> Huss, “Necessity of Agriculture.” *Southern Cross* 28 Dec. 1928, p. 16.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>147</sup> Huss, “Necessity of agriculture.” *Southern Cross* 18 Jan. 1928, p.16.

<sup>148</sup> Huss, “Results.” *Southern Cross* 16 Oct. 1929, p.9.

<sup>149</sup> Huss, “Treasures of Africa.” *Southern Cross* 15 Aug 1928, p.7.

<sup>150</sup> Huss, “Treasures of Africa.” *Southern Cross* 15 Aug 1928, p.7.

<sup>151</sup> Huss, “Needs of education.” *Southern Cross* 21 Sept. 1927, p.15.

spirits and any remarkable success the result of magic.”<sup>152</sup> An analysis of Huss’ writings about “Religion and Natives [*sic*],” indicates that he believed that the general mentality of black people was largely influenced and shaped by their belief in witchcraft and superstition, which impacted negatively on their relationships and led them to live in perpetual fear.<sup>153</sup>

Additionally, Huss also alluded to the general perception of Europeans at the time that “the morality of uneducated natives is very low.”<sup>154</sup> When writing about morality in black communities at the time, Huss pointed out the negative effects of alcoholism and stated, “the evil of drinking has degraded the moral lives in whole communities, so much that it is quite common for one to find certain portions of native locations correctly but unfortunately called Sodom and Gomorrah.”<sup>155</sup> He did not go into detail to spell out the “immoral” activities which were taking place in black communities, but he explains for example how a mere quarrel could easily lead to someone getting killed. The notion of “Better hearts” was also intended to “reform” and convert black people who were regarded as “pagans or heathens,” to Christianity through religious instruction. In one of his articles on “The Christian Religion,” Huss stated with emphasis that, “the Christian religion is not only suitable, it is even essentially necessary for the Natives.”<sup>156</sup>

It is apparent that the notion of creating “Better hearts” was aimed at converting black people to Christianity with the hope of raising the “moral standards” in black communities. To this end, Huss stated that the “old Bantu sanctions of discipline which were broken down to a large extent by the Europeans, must be replaced by the sanctions of Christianity, otherwise moral disaster will be the inevitable result.”<sup>157</sup> He described the Christian religion as the nursery of such virtues as justice, charity, co-operation, temperance, honesty, frugality, sincerity, love, and reliability, which he regarded as the imperatives for developing the moral fabric of society.<sup>158</sup> In

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<sup>152</sup> Huss, “Need of education.” *Southern Cross* 21 Sept. 1927, p.15.

<sup>153</sup> Huss, “Religion and Natives.” *Southern Cross* 20 Jan 1926, p.15.

<sup>154</sup> Huss, “Effect of Race Contact on Europeans.” *Southern Cross* 21 Sept. 1927, p.15.

<sup>155</sup> Huss, “Morality.” *Southern Cross* 16 Jan 1929, p.7.

<sup>156</sup> Huss, “The Christian Religion.” *Southern Cross* 17 Fer. 1926, p.8.

<sup>157</sup> Huss, “The Christian Religion.” *Southern Cross* 17 Fer. 1926, p.8.

<sup>158</sup> Huss, *People’s Banks or Use and Value of Co-operative Credit for African Natives*, (Mariannahill: Mariannahill Mission Press, 1928), p.20.

the final analysis, it seems that it was easier to create “Better hearts” amongst children who were more receptive to the new teachings than amongst adults, and this is evidenced by his writing:

“Better hearts are already seen in Children of Mary who have been taught to practice the works of piety and charity, while among the general adult population “better hearts” can only be seen in a faint glimmer at few instances where Catholics and non-Catholics co-operated with each other as members of one family.”<sup>159</sup>

From the above statement it seems that the objective of creating “Better hearts” was also to improve the quality of social relationships amongst black people and develop the attitude of co-operation.

### 3.4 Promoting the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts.”

In 1922 Huss and Fr Emmanuel Hanisch were asked by the Bishop of the Vicariate of Mariannhill to study the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) of Pope Leo XIII.<sup>160</sup> Huss and Hanisch addressed several conferences on the encyclical, with the aim of explaining its contents to the Catholic population, especially teachers.<sup>161</sup> Both Huss and Hanisch were equally concerned about “the social and economic conditions of the Native [*sic*].”<sup>162</sup> Their study of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* inspired them to start social courses<sup>163</sup> which would be used as vehicles to teach and empower black people to ameliorate their socio-economic and spiritual conditions. In an article to the *UM-Afrika* newspaper Huss wrote: “The encyclical gave us a vision for our Africans and in Dr Loram’s Winter School we saw a machinery for passing on our vision to the African people, first of all, of course, to our educated Catholics and through them to our other Christians.”<sup>164</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Huss, “Results.” *Southern Cross* 16 Oct. 1929, p.16.

<sup>160</sup> Bernard, Huss. *African Co-operation*, (Matatiel: Mariazell Mission, 1941), p.5.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>162</sup> Huss, *African co-operation* (1941), p.5.

<sup>163</sup> Social courses were similar to a winter or summer school. The winter schools had been organized as “refresher courses for African teachers, with the aim of upgrading black education in Natal. The courses had been started by Dr C.T. Loram, a liberal educationist who had been influenced by the winter schools held for black American teachers on his study tour to the United States in 1916. The courses were held in Natal for four years, and sometimes twice a year. They collapsed after African teachers decided to boycott the winter school which was to be held in Mariannhill in 1921. According to Brouckaert, Huss and Hanisch then decided to hold an alternative course for the African Catholic teachers. Instead of winter school, they used the title, “social courses.” The courses were open to any other “educated native [*sic*]”, even non-Catholics.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.



The first social course was held at Lourdes mission in January 1923 and it marked the beginning of ten other similar courses which were held annually at Lourdes, Mariannahill and Mariazell missions. The target group for the social courses were the African teachers and the courses were designed to:

“...help our African friends to discover the hitherto unknown treasures of their homes, their fields, and their hearts, as is the case with people of other countries where similar regular courses are held. Thus we intend to create an elite or selected body of educated men and women who are able to interpret, to their uneducated or less educated brothers and sisters, better ideas and high ideals, and help them to translate those ideas into simple African everyday life.”<sup>165</sup>

The above statement declares the manifesto and intended goal of the social courses which was to promote the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” and to create a class of black elite imbued with the values of capitalism. Through the social courses, the black elite would be empowered with the necessary skills and knowledge to participate in the modern economic system of capitalism which was developing steadily in the Union of South Africa. It is clear that the social courses provided Huss with the platform to promote his model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts.” An analysis of the curriculum of the social courses, which were conducted annually for African teachers, shows that the courses were intended to promote the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” which Huss viewed as an effective strategy of addressing socio-economic impoverishment of the black people. For example, the time table of the first social course held at Lourdes mission in January 1923 shows that the curriculum constituted the following subjects: Psychology, Social Work, Economics, Agriculture and Domestic Economics.<sup>166</sup> In the social course held in 1924, also at Lourdes, Sociology, Catechetics, Poultry and Manual Work were included in the curriculum. It seems that the curriculum was enhanced every year by adding new courses. It is interesting to note though that in all the social courses, there was a daily Eucharistic celebration and spiritual address. These were ubiquitous and were part of the strategy of creating “Better hearts” through the inculcation of Christian principles and values of prayer, piety, works of charity, love and forgiveness in the minds of the audience.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Programme of 1923 Social Course held at Lourdes Mission, Huss papers (Box 22).

<sup>166</sup> Programme for Social Course held in 1923 at Lourdes Mission, Huss papers (Box 22) Mariannahill Archives.

<sup>167</sup> Programme for Social Course held in 1924 at Lourdes Mission, Huss papers (Box 22) Mariannahill Archives.

The manner in which manual work was divided during the social courses confirms that social courses were part of the strategy to promote the model of “Better homes Better fields, Better hearts” along gender lines. In the social courses held at Mariannahill and Mariazell in 1926, the syllabus for manual work was divided into two categories for men and women. The syllabus for men included wood work, agriculture, wagon making, bricklaying, painting, tailoring, bookbinding and shoe making.<sup>168</sup> The syllabus for women on the other hand included needlework, embroidery, crotchet, knitting, plain cookery, sewing and cutting.<sup>169</sup> Apparently the subject of manual work was designed to equip both men and women with practical skills to build “Better homes and Better fields”. Accordingly, agriculture was given prominence in these social courses: apart from lectures, there were also “actual demonstrations and exhibitions of agricultural produce” in order to stimulate and encourage more people to learn new methods of farming.<sup>170</sup>

In addition, the social courses were an attempt to temper “the process of class formation in a colonial context, during the transition to a Capitalist Society, where racial and class divisions appeared to be irrevocably converging.”<sup>171</sup> The work of associations, the contemporary of which could be non-governmental organisations or NGOs, was also important. Huss and his colleague Hanisch were keen students of Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. One of the issues which the encyclical addressed and encouraged was the formation of associations: “The Church intervenes directly on behalf of the poor, by setting on foot and maintaining many associations which she knows to be efficient for the relief of poverty.”<sup>172</sup>

Of course the encyclical was written in a different socio-historical context but it clearly inspired Huss and Hanisch in their vision to aid the black people to uplift themselves. Regarding the formation of associations, Huss wrote in one of his articles: “We have been trying to achieve this aim since 1923 through our social courses by teaching our people to form various co-operative societies under the motto: “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts.”<sup>173</sup> Consequently, various associations were formed such as the Catholic Native Farmers Association which had fourteen

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<sup>168</sup> Programme for Social Courses held in 1926, Huss papers (Box 22).Mariannahill Archives.

<sup>169</sup> Programme for Social Courses held in 1926, Huss papers (Box 22) Mariannahill Archives.

<sup>170</sup> Huss, “Agricultural schools.” *Southern Cross* 18 Jan. 1928, p. 16.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>172</sup> Huss, *African Co-operation*, p.5.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

branches throughout the Vicariate of Mariannhill, Catholic African Teachers Association and Catholic African Women Associations.<sup>174</sup> It is significant to note that all the associations which were formed at the time had to adopt the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” as their motto. It is the author’s contention that such a move was a deliberate strategy to promote Huss’ model.

To enhance our understanding of this model we shall now examine Huss’ views on the “native question.” We shall argue in this paper that Huss’ critical study of the “native question” compelled him to engage actively in the social and economic activities of the black people in South Africa.

### 3.5.1 Bernard Huss and the “native question”

The “native question”, which referred to the broad situation of black people in South Africa, had received tremendous attention from various stakeholders. In a Memorandum about the Catholic summer school to be held at Lourdes in January 1924, Huss wrote: “The native question is forcing itself more and more into the foreground. White and Black are tackling it more and more, it receives prominence in parliament, on the platforms, in the press, even in current literature such as novel.”<sup>175</sup>

While Huss seemed to acknowledge the efforts of government and other stakeholders to find a solution to the “native question,” his conviction was that it had not been addressed competently. He identified as a discrepancy in addressing the problem, the failure to recognize the dignity and aspirations of black people by both government and other stakeholders.<sup>176</sup> He saw it as an imperative to understand and appreciate “the natives” as human beings before attempting to offer a solution to the “native question.” To this end, he wrote: “...to understand the native[sic] we must not think of him in terms of physical labour or as an asset, but as a human being with human instincts and ambitions, as a man, husband, father of a family, citizen and (often) Christian.”<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Gamble, *Mariannhill: A Century of prayer and work*, p.172.

<sup>175</sup> “The native question.” Memorandum for Catholic summer school in Lourdes January 1924. Huss papers (Box 22). Mariannhill Monastery Archives.

<sup>176</sup> Huss, “The native question.” *Southern Cross* 17 Jun. 1925, p.11.

<sup>177</sup> Huss, “The native mind.” *Southern Cross* 15 July 1925, p.13.

This statement indicates that Huss' approach would provide a different and broader perspective to the pertinent issue of the "native question." In his pursuit of a solution, Huss unravelled and wrote on a multitude of aspects of native [*sic*] life namely: religion, agriculture, land, education, politics, native mind, culture, etc. However, the researcher contends that although Huss wrote on many aspects of native [*sic*] life, there are two basic perspectives which underpinned his approach. One perspective sought to unearth the causes of poverty and underdevelopment of the black people and offer a solution. Meanwhile the other perspective sought to explain the causes of dissatisfaction and unrest among the black people and also to offer a solution. We shall discuss these two approaches in the following sections.

### **3.5.2 Causes of poverty and underdevelopment of the black people**

In his endeavour to address the causes of poverty and underdevelopment of the black people, Huss set the stage by bringing to the fore what he referred to as the "treasures of Africa."<sup>178</sup> These treasures constituted the wealth of resources which Huss had identified in black people and Africa in general. Huss wrote that: "Modern sciences of sociology, anthropology and ethnology help us to discover moral and mental treasures in the so-called child-races, but tremendous efforts are required on the part of both civilized and uncivilized [*sic*] races to arouse and develop those newly discovered treasures, to tap and harness them for social service".<sup>179</sup>

Huss recognized the local resources of black people and Africa in general as the primordial foundation on which to develop strategies to eradicate poverty and spearhead development in black communities. He argued that Africa had been endowed by God with the splendid gift of the soil and all the material treasures found in the soil in the form of metals, minerals and plants.<sup>180</sup> Agricultural shows had displayed a great part of Africa's wealth and better methods of farming had aided black people to reap a larger part of Africa's wealth from the soil. In addition, Huss noted that black people were endowed by God with the magnificent gifts of physique and "precious interior values or gifts of the head and heart."<sup>181</sup> Thus he described the gifts of the body in terms of the powerful muscles, good health and numerous skills which were manifested

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<sup>178</sup> Huss, "Treasures of Africa." *Southern Cross* 15 Aug. 1928, p.7.

<sup>179</sup> Huss, "Treasures of Africa." *Southern Cross* 15 Aug. 1928, p.7.

<sup>180</sup> Huss, "Treasures of Africa." *Southern Cross* 15 Aug. 1928, p.7.

<sup>181</sup> Huss, "Treasures of Africa." *Southern Cross* 15 Aug. 1928, p.7.

in what he called “native [*sic*] industry”. The gifts of the head could be seen in the intellectual capacity of black people which Huss had witnessed in his students. To this end he wrote that “natives [*sic*] have a remarkable memory and can keenly observe, they are born speakers and smart debaters...”<sup>182</sup> The most fascinating gifts for Huss were those of the heart: kindness, hospitality, sociability, humour and patience. He argued that these qualities of the “African heart” enabled black people to become genuine Christians capable of practicing other Christian virtues such as love, charity, truthfulness and forgiveness.<sup>183</sup>

In summary, Huss stated that, “in Africa’s people we find wonderful spiritual, moral, mental and muscular wealth, whereas the land supplies a stupendous variety of material wealth.”<sup>184</sup> So how could Africa be so rich, while so many Africans live in abject poverty? For Huss it would seem that the answer was simple: he used the metaphor of the leaking tank to illustrate the causes of poverty and underdevelopment amongst black people. He compared the wealth of Africa and the black people described above “to an enormous rain-water tank” which was “leaking on all sides and at all times.”<sup>185</sup> The major problem was that the African people were neither aware of their wealth nor of the many holes in the “tank”. Ignorance of the wealth and holes in the “tank” was therefore the main cause of poverty and underdevelopment amongst the black communities. Black people needed to be made aware of the “tank and the holes” which they had to learn to close for themselves.

Huss pointed out that Christianity and Western education provided black people with the opportunity to harness and develop their gifts and employ them in the solution of their economic problems.<sup>186</sup> He also advocated for the establishment of co-operatives which he saw as the best strategy of teaching and helping the poor to help themselves. Through co-operatives, the poor would be taught and trained in thrift and business methods, the lack of which exacerbated the problem of poverty. In an article to the *UM-Afrika* newspaper, Huss stated that co-operatives had been used with great success in Canada to help the poor to proceed from poverty to prosperity,

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<sup>182</sup> Huss, “Treasures of Africa.” *Southern Cross* 15 Aug. 1928, p.7.

<sup>183</sup> Huss, “Treasures of Africa.” *Southern Cross* 15 Aug. 1928, p.7.

<sup>184</sup> “Treasures of Africa,” Huss papers (Box 04, file 7) Mariannahill Monastery Archives.

<sup>185</sup> “The leaking tank,” Huss papers (Box 04, file 4) Mariannahill Monastery Archives.

<sup>186</sup> “Treasures of Africa.” (Box 04, file number 4) Mariannahill Monastery Archives.

provided they paid the right price.<sup>187</sup> There was therefore no reason why the same could not be achieved in Africa.

The model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” was created to provide a practical solution to the socio-economic plight of black people. By building “Better homes, Better fields and Better hearts,” the holes of the “tank” would be sealed and the wealth of Africa used to ameliorate the socio-economic and spiritual conditions of black people. This seems to have been the goal which Huss hoped to achieve, but we shall see whether this was possible without simultaneously addressing, in a practical way, the racial and discriminatory policies of the colonial government of the time. We shall now proceed to our discussion of Huss’ understanding of the causes of dissatisfaction and unrest amongst black people at the time.

### **3.5.3 Huss’ understanding of Black unrest and dissatisfaction**

In an article entitled “Native Unrest,” Huss argued that the causes of unrest and dissatisfaction among black people were numerous and could be classified under different aspects.<sup>188</sup> He pointed out that in the political realm black people had no direct representation in any structures of government, yet they were being subjected to heavy taxation which had been imposed on them in order to “compel the young men to leave their homes and go to work for the Europeans.”<sup>189</sup> Further, black people had no constitutional outlet for their grievances and such political disfranchisement was viewed as being contrary to the black people’s ancient tribal systems, hence the unrest and dissatisfaction.<sup>190</sup> In addition, black people were being bombarded with the rhetoric of “superior and inferior race,” which alienated and compelled them to retaliate with slogans such as “Africa for the Africans or *Mayibuye iAfrica*.”<sup>191</sup>

Huss identified agrarian unrest as the driving force which fuelled all other types of unrest and dissatisfaction. He argued that the Land Act of 1913 had reduced the black people to serfdom and severely restricted their lease and purchase of land while providing multiple opportunities

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<sup>187</sup> Huss, *African co-operation*, p.2.

<sup>188</sup> Huss, “Native unrest.” *Southern Cross* 21 Oct. 1925, p.7.

<sup>189</sup> Huss, “Native unrest.” *Southern Cross* 21 Oct. 1925, p.7.

<sup>190</sup> Huss, “Native unrest.” *Southern Cross* 21 Oct. 1925, p.7.

<sup>191</sup> Huss, “Racism.” *Southern Cross* 18 Nov. 1925, p.13.

for white farmers.<sup>192</sup> To that end, Huss wrote another article in which he described the “Land Question”, as the “foundation of the stupendous and unique South African problem” which was synthetic and required an “unusual degree of knowledge and character” to unravel.<sup>193</sup> He stated the purpose of his article on the land question as being to demonstrate the importance of land to the black people, to show the insufficiency of land presently available to them and “to contribute to the education of public opinion.”<sup>194</sup> Thus he advocated for adequate land on secure tenure for the black people and stated that the inequitable distribution of land was the major cause of “native [sic] unrest”. Further, Huss argued that: “If the Natives have adequate land on secure tenure, their minds will be anchored in the land. They will have something to lose, which will make them wary. The security will give them vision and hope.”<sup>195</sup>

In the economic terrain, Huss stated that the rising cost of living had hit the black people harder than the white people. While the salaries of white officials, clerks and labourers were greatly increased, the black people were expected to be satisfied with what Huss called pre-war wages.<sup>196</sup> This situation compelled black people to mobilize themselves in order to fight for better wages and opportunities at work places, hence high incidents of unrest and dissatisfaction.<sup>197</sup> In addition, the government was extracting enormous revenue from black people through taxation.<sup>198</sup> In this respect, the government was committing grave injustice and exploiting black people.

Huss campaigned for the equitable distribution of wealth as part of the solution to the problem of unrest and dissatisfaction among the black people. His emphasis hinged on the delimitation of land for the black people and the importance of land for the well being and economic development of black communities.<sup>199</sup> Huss also campaigned for the education of the public on the “native question.” To this end, he contributed weekly articles to the *Southern Cross*

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<sup>192</sup> Huss, “Agrarian.” *Southern Cross* 18 Nov. 1925, p.13.

<sup>193</sup> Huss, “The land question.” *Southern Cross* 22 Feb. 1928, p.17.

<sup>194</sup> Huss, “The land question.” *Sothern Cross* 22 Feb. 1928, p.17.

<sup>195</sup> Huss, “The land question.” *Southern Cross* 22 Feb. 1928, p.17.

<sup>196</sup> Huss, “Economics.” *Southern Cross* 16 Dec. 1925, p.15.

<sup>197</sup> Huss, “Economics.” *Southern Cross* 16 Dec. 1925, p.15.

<sup>198</sup> Huss, “Economics.” *Southern Cross* 16 Dec. 1925, p.15.

<sup>199</sup> Lydia Brouckaert, “Better homes ,Better fields, Better hearts”: *The Catholic African Union*, p.25.

newspaper from 1925 to 1948 in the hope of bringing white Christians to a better understanding of black problems and aspirations.<sup>200</sup>

The solution to the problems of unrest and dissatisfaction ultimately depended on sacrifices from both white and black communities. In this regard Huss explicated that “inter-racial peace and co-operation must be held up as an ideal and unremittingly aimed at by all possible means.”<sup>201</sup> This was the only way to promote and achieve economic prosperity of all sections of the South African population at the time. For this reason, Huss vehemently rejected any political action which sought to change the socio-economic conditions of black people through military action or civil disobedience. Despite his viewpoint, the political landscape had reached that stage of rupture which was characterized by strikes, riots, disturbances and various expressions of dissatisfaction.<sup>202</sup>

While Huss advocated inter-racial peace and co-operation, black people began to exercise other forms of political and industrial actions. Peterson points out that “a new militancy among urbanized Africans revealed itself in 1917 with the replacement of John Dube by Sam Makgatho, from the Transvaal, as president of the African National Congress.”<sup>203</sup> A key event which took place was a landmark industrial action organized by “African workers on the coalfields of Natal” in 1919.<sup>204</sup> Black workers in general began to form various trade unions to protect their interests, and this was followed by an increasing number of strikes and riots across the country. The most successful black trade union was the Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union (ICU), which was founded by Clements Kadalie in Cape Town in 1919.<sup>205</sup> The initial aim of the ICU was to meet the needs of black workers by campaigning for just wages and better working conditions for black people, as well as encouraging “black workers to become skilled and to participate more fully in the economy.”<sup>206</sup> The activities of the ICU which had gained tremendous support from the rural African population and other black trade unions “contributed to the Rand

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<sup>200</sup> Brain, *Catholics in Natal II*, p.274.

<sup>201</sup> Quoted in Peterson, *Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals*, p.28.

<sup>202</sup> Huss, “Native unrest.” *Southern Cross* 21 Oct. 1925, p.7.

<sup>203</sup> Peterson, *Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals*, p.27.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>205</sup> Nel, P.S., et al. *South African Employment Relations; Theory and Practice*. Fifth edition (Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers, 2005), p.73.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73. See also George Mukuka’s unpublished Doctoral thesis, p.181. Copy in University of KwaZulu-Natal main library, Pietermaritzburg Campus.



Rebellion in 1922, an infamous incident in South Africa's labour history."<sup>207</sup> The ICU had developed into a formidable force which posed a threat to the political establishment of the colonial regime and as a result, it was accused of meddling in politics and was disbanded.<sup>208</sup>

The researcher finds Huss' response to the initiatives of African people to emancipate themselves and find their own self expression in the political realm quite worrisome. Firstly, Huss regarded all political and industrial actions exercised by Africans "as essentially degenerate" and branded the black activists as political agitators whose primary aim was to mislead the public.<sup>209</sup> His fears seemed to escalate with the creation and activities of the ICU, which he accused of being a communist organization sponsored by the Russians to advance their interests.<sup>210</sup> Fr J.B. Sauter, editor of the Catholic weekly newspaper also shared Huss' concerns and began publishing articles detailing activities of the ICU.<sup>211</sup> The articles were published as a campaign to expose what he called "the fallacies of Socialism and Communism."<sup>212</sup> Brouckaert points out that "the influence of communism in black politics was intolerable to the Catholics and was commented on with alarm, and total rejection."<sup>213</sup> For Huss, the ICU's philosophy ran counter to his own view of inter-racial peace and co-operation. To discredit the ICU leadership, Huss wrote: "There are radical leaders or firebrands who attract large crowds, preach the gospel of non-racial co-operation with Europeans, the wholesale expropriation and expulsion of the later, the destruction of capitalism and promise to change Africa into a New Jerusalem as it exists in Russia."<sup>214</sup>

In the eyes of Huss and the Catholic Church, the ICU and other black political organizations seemed to epitomize the values of socialism and communism which was practiced in Europe, especially Russia, and was seen as being anti-white and anti-Christian.<sup>215</sup> It is not clear whether such organizations had actually embraced and propagated anti-White and anti-Christian philosophies to the public. The reality however was that they were fast gaining momentum amongst the poor.

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<sup>207</sup> Nel, P.S., *et al. South African Employment Relations*, p.73.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73.

<sup>209</sup> Peterson, *Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectual*, p.27.

<sup>210</sup> Huss, "Native unrest." *Southern Cross* 21 Oct. 1925, p.7.

<sup>211</sup> Brouckaert, "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts," *The African Catholic Union*, p.35.

<sup>212</sup> Quoted in Lydia Brouckaert's unpublished honour's thesis, p.35.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36.

<sup>214</sup> "Sociology," Huss papers, Box 3, file 5 (Mariannhill Monastery Archives).

<sup>215</sup> Brain, *Catholics in Natal II*, p. 273.

The main objective of the ICU was to meet the needs of the black workers. This was no different from the aims of other trade unions of white workers which were also formed to meet the needs of white workers. Some of the white trade unions became politically active and the South African Labour Party was formed, and drew its support from trade union members.<sup>216</sup> Evidently, white trade unions were also engaged in strikes, particularly between 1913 and 1915,<sup>217</sup> yet Huss never condemned any of their activities or labelled their leaders as political agitators. He did however regard the initiatives of the Africans “as essentially degenerate and chaotic”,<sup>218</sup> and he referred to black activists as “political agitators.”

To counteract the activities of the ICU and other African political organizations such as the ANC whose political and ideological tunes had already posed a threat to the Catholic Church, Huss and Fr Emmanuel Hanisch initiated the formation of the Catholic African Union.<sup>219</sup> It seems that Huss had contemplated the idea of bringing all Catholic associations into a single movement with ecclesiastical recognition so that their activities could be coordinated easily.<sup>220</sup> The activities of the ICU made the prospects of forming such a movement more urgent.

When the Catholic Bishops met for their Conference at Kimberley in 1927, they nominated a committee of three Bishops: Bishop H. Delalle OMI, Bishop A. Fleischer CMM and Bishop L. Klerlein CSSp.<sup>221</sup> The committee met at Mariannhill on October 13, 1927 and officially formed the Catholic African Union (CAU), with all existing Catholic associations being obliged to join it.<sup>222</sup> The manifesto of the CAU, as stated by Huss, was to promote “the spiritual, moral, social and economic welfare of the Africans.”<sup>223</sup> According to Brouckaert, the creation of the CAU provided a Church-sanctioned solution to the political and social upheaval of the 1920s. Therefore Catholics were not allowed to join the ICU or any other African political organization but rather to become members of the CAU.<sup>224</sup> In this regard, George Mukuka also points out in

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<sup>216</sup> Nel, P.S. et al. *South African Employment Relations: Theory and Practice*, Fifth Edition, p.72.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p.72.

<sup>218</sup> Huss, “Native criminality.” *Southern Cross* 20 Mar. 1929, p.11.

<sup>219</sup> Schimlek, *Against the stream*, p.75.

<sup>220</sup> Huss, “Preliminary attempts.” *Southern Cross* 18 Sept. 1929, p.15.

<sup>221</sup> Brouckaert, “*Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts*”: *The Catholic African Union*, p.39.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.

<sup>223</sup> Huss, “Formation of C.A.U.” *Southern Cross* 18 Sept. 1929, p.15.

<sup>224</sup> Brouckaert, “*Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts*”: *The Catholic African Union*, p.39.

his doctoral thesis, *The Establishment of the Black Catholic Clergy in South Africa from 1887 to 1957*, that the formation of the CAU was in fact influenced by the founding of the ICU and was put in place as a tool to protect the Catholic faith from communism.<sup>225</sup> This view is reinforced by Brian when she states that “to counter the influence of the ICU three Mariannhill fathers, Sauter, Hanisch and Huss founded the Catholic African Union...”<sup>226</sup>

Huss’ anti-communism campaign and failure to reconcile with the growing black-nationalist politics put him in a problematic position with regard to organized black resistance. The situation on the ground showed that black-nationalism was gaining momentum amongst the black political leaders such as Govan Mbeki, Alfred Xuma and others who began to view Huss’ anti-communist campaign as a counter-productive initiative and his approach as being too paternalistic.<sup>227</sup> In this regard, Huss’ solution of inter-racial peace and co-operation as well as influencing public opinion, lacked a deeper understanding of contemporary political developments and issues of structural power entrenched in the hands of the minority.

Notwithstanding Huss’ counter-productive and paternalistic approach to the black political initiatives, some authors, such as Brian and Brouckaert, have acknowledged the role played by the CAU in the religious and economic life of black people in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>228</sup> The social courses which were held annually were now integrated into the programme of the CAU’s annual congresses. Mukuka points out that the meetings of CAU “dealt with saving, co-operatives, farming, elementary bookkeeping, accounting and business methods.”<sup>229</sup> Further, practical organizations such as Savings Banks, the Farmers’ Union, Thrift Associations also emerged as a result of the activities of the CAU. Mukuka asserts that, as part of the CAU’s programme of action, Industrial and Agricultural shows were held every year as “an incentive for better homes, industries and better farming.”<sup>230</sup> The African Teachers Association provided leadership for the CAU, and the teachers were actively involved in activities aimed at improving the socio-

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<sup>225</sup> Mukuka, *The Establishment of the Black Catholic Clergy in South Africa from 1887 to 1957*, p.181.

<sup>226</sup> Brain, *Catholics in Natal II*, p.273.

<sup>227</sup> Paul, B. Rich, “Bernard Huss and the experiment in African Cooperatives in South Africa, 1926-1948,” in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 26, No. 2, (1993), p.297-317.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/219548> (accessed: 11/04/2008)

<sup>228</sup> Brain, *Catholics in Natal II*, p.273.

<sup>229</sup> Mukuka, *The establishment of the Black Catholic clergy in South Africa from 1887 to 1957*, p.182.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182.

economic life of black people.<sup>231</sup> It is essential to also note the role played by Fr. Andreas Ngidi, one of the first black Catholic priests who was concerned about the socio-economic empowerment of black people. Mukuka explains that Ngidi was inspired by Huss' concept of self-reliance and wanted black people to be empowered so that they could counter their economic impoverishment.<sup>232</sup> Mukuka also points out that Ngidi became actively involved in the activities of the CAU, especially in "training Africans for leadership positions as well as helping them to uplift themselves economically."<sup>233</sup>

At some stage, a non denominational savings scheme was formed and managed by the CAU, and Ngidi was "asked to be an honorary advisor to the board of directors of the savings scheme."<sup>234</sup> As such, Ngidi became well known and when he eventually went to work in Zululand people continued to approach him to ask for advice and input.<sup>235</sup> This demonstrates that there were lay people and other pastoral agents such as Ngidi who were equally concerned about the socio-economic betterment of black people and who were inspired by Huss' work and thoughts. However, the researcher asserts that Huss' approach was problematic due to the ideological motivations which seemed to underpin his involvement in the social and economic activities of black people. We shall examine Huss' ideological motivations in the next section.

### 3.6 Huss' ideological motivations

Huss was a keen scholar who upheld Christianity and western education as the paramount tools and gifts to develop the good qualities of black people and empower them to be self-supportive.<sup>236</sup> He argued that Christianity was the religion that would "awaken and sublimate the African's mental and moral treasures and harness them into service for her true welfare."<sup>237</sup> While he acknowledged the need for the social reform and economic development of black

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<sup>231</sup> Teachers were the real supporters of the C.A.U., because many of them had been educated by missionaries and also trained as teachers at St Francis Teachers' College. We have figures like Mr W.J. Gumede, Anna Mgobozi, Miss L.P. Vilakazi, Francis Cele and others who were prominent leaders of the union (Brouckaert, 1985:47-48)

<sup>232</sup> Mukuka, *The establishment of the Black Catholic Clergy in South Africa from 1887 to 1957*, p.182.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182.

<sup>236</sup> Huss, "Treasures of Africa." *Southern Cross* 15 Aug. 1928, p.7.

<sup>237</sup> "Need of Christian policy," Huss papers (Box number 04). Marainnhill Monastery Archives.

people, he also emphasized that all the endeavours aimed at socio-economic betterment had to be guided by Christian principles, with Christ as the centre, otherwise all changes would bring chaos and hasten the destruction of black people.<sup>238</sup> On a personal level, Huss had resolved “to have complete confidence and reliance on the power of religion in all undertakings, in all circumstances.”<sup>239</sup> And indeed, a closer look into his diaries and daily time-table confirms that he had an intimate relationship with God.<sup>240</sup> His belief in the power of religion was so deep that he asserted that religion alone would “provide the great reconciling element between White and Black in this country.”<sup>241</sup> Apparently, Huss perceived in religion the power to transform the socio-economic conditions of the poor and reconcile society which was deeply divided along racial lines. It is not surprising therefore, that for the political problems of unrest and dissatisfaction he advocated “peace and inter-racial cooperation” as a solution.<sup>242</sup>

While Huss often referred to various biblical passages to consolidate and justify his involvement in the social and economic activities of black people, the researcher contends that there are two key biblical texts which especially shaped his thinking. Firstly, the text of John 10:10 is central to his theological thought and forms the foundation<sup>243</sup> of his model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts”. Huss argued that Christ’s wish that “they may have life and have it more abundantly”, was the starting point for the creation of a new humanism based on Christian virtues.<sup>244</sup> It would seem that by Christian humanism Huss meant an integration of the social, political, spiritual as well as economic life of the poor, that would affirm their dignity. Therefore, the notion of “having life in abundance,” for him, in practical terms, translated to a life of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts.” The researcher understands Huss’ model as an attempt towards a holistic approach to mission work and socio-economic development aimed at enhancing both the spiritual and material well-being of the black people.

When “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” were achieved, black people would be self-reliant and empowered to participate in economic development. In this regard, Huss emphasized

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<sup>238</sup> Schimlek, *Against the stream*, p.125.

<sup>239</sup> Gamble, *Mariannahill: A century of Prayer and Work*, p.158.

<sup>240</sup> “Personal,” (Box number 01). Mariannahill Monastery Archives.

<sup>241</sup> “The Christian religion,” Huss papers (Box number 04). Mariannahill Monastery Archives.

<sup>242</sup> Peterson, *Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals*, p.28.

<sup>243</sup> Gamble, *Mariannahill: A Century of Prayer and Work*, p.158.

<sup>244</sup> Huss, *People’s Banks or Use and Value of Co-operative Credit for African Natives*, p.20.

the notion of self-help and reinforced it with the second influential biblical passage: the text of Mark 2:8-12, which tells the story of Jesus curing a paralytic.<sup>245</sup> His perspective was that poverty and the “primitive” culture of black people, especially the fear of witchcraft were like a trap which “paralyzed them and prevented them from progressing both spiritually and economically.”<sup>246</sup> Hence he viewed Christianity and “western education” as the only suitable tools to liberate black people and set them on the trajectory of “civilization” and economic progress in order to “walk without crutches.” Through the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts,” and the establishment of different forms of co-operatives, Huss seemed determined “to help the poor to help themselves”, and “to encourage economic thrift and financial prudence among African peasant farmers.”<sup>247</sup>

As we have argued earlier, Huss tended to be both prescriptive and paternalistic in his approach, and this attitude was compounded by his firm belief in the power of Christianity and western education as well as by the influence of Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which also had a paternalistic outlook. In the context of the encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, which was written against the backdrop of the industrial revolution, workers were seen as minors who needed to be guided and formed by religious, moral and social education. The “boss” assumed the father figure while the worker was considered to be a child. It is the researcher’s contention that Huss adopted this paternalistic attitude towards black people, which was also prevalent in the Church leadership. Likewise, Brouckaert points out that paternalism was in fact inherent in the attitude of many white Catholic priests at the time.<sup>248</sup> This also comes out clearly in the manner in which the CAU functioned, always “under the guidance of the priests, bishops, sisters and brothers” to ensure that all operations progressed along the “right” paths.<sup>249</sup>

The researcher suggests that such a paternalistic attitude towards black people may have been counter-productive to the good intentions and endeavours to reform the socio-economic conditions of black people. Huss’ attitude towards the ICU and the development of African politics was influenced, to a large extent, by paternalism. Rich argues that, as an exponent of

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<sup>245</sup> Huss, *People’s Banks or Use and Value of Co-operative Credit for African Natives*, p.20.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>247</sup> Rich, “Bernard Huss and the Experiment in African Cooperatives in South Africa”, p.297.

<sup>248</sup> Brouckaert, “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts”, p.42.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42.

black self-reliance, Huss insisted that self-reliance amongst black people could only be possible “after a considerable period of missionary supervision.”<sup>250</sup> Again this demonstrated a strong influence of paternalism which was also reinforced by his viewpoint that the white people at the time, were “the trustees of the native [sic] people and must promote their moral and material welfare.”<sup>251</sup> In addition, Huss explicated that it was a duty of the “Catholic Church and missionaries to promote the economic and social welfare of the African races by helping them to develop their great treasures and to make the best use of them.”<sup>252</sup> Hence he created the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” achieve that purpose. As I will later argue, the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts,” continues to have some value and can be used today to bring about social transformation in poor rural communities. It is therefore the objective of this research to give Huss’ model a contextual interpretation and recommend it for use to the Missionaries of Mariannhill. In our endeavour to give a contextual interpretation to Huss’ model, we shall use Catholic social teaching as a theological framework which guides and inspires practical action at the grassroots level of the community. The next chapter will therefore focus on the theological framework of this study.

### 3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we have looked at the person of Bernard Huss, his involvement in missionary work particularly at Keilands, and his response to the poor farming methods of black people. His tenure as principal of St Francis College and his efforts to improve agriculture were discussed in detail, and this set the stage for our critical examination of the creation of his model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” as a holistic approach to social transformation. Various approaches to promote the model, such as the social courses, different co-operatives and associations under the CAU were also discussed, including Huss’ response to the “native question”. Finally, we looked at the ideological framework which inspired and influenced Huss’ involvement in the socio- economic and political activities of black people. In the following chapter, I shall examine Catholic social teaching as a theological framework for this research, with the aim of interpreting Huss’ model in the context of poverty and underdevelopment in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal.

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<sup>250</sup> Rich, *Bernard Huss and the Experiment in African Cooperatives in South Africa*, p.317.

<sup>251</sup> Huss, “Responsibilities.” *Southern Cross* 19 Sept. 1928, p.14.

<sup>252</sup> Huss, “Responsibilities.” *Southern Cross* 19 Sept. 1928, p.14.

## Chapter Four

### **Catholic social teaching as a theological framework for a contextual interpretation of Huss' model of social transformation**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to provide a theological framework which will underpin our contextual interpretation of Huss' model of social transformation. To do this, the researcher will briefly discuss the biblical foundation of Catholic social teaching and thereafter draw some theological insights from two Papal encyclicals, namely: *Populorum Progressio* (1967) of Pope Paul VI and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1988), of Pope John Paul II. These two encyclicals are particularly important because of their focus on and concern with poverty and development. Our contextual interpretation will be informed by theological insights from these two Papal encyclicals.

#### **4.2 The Bible as a foundation of Catholic social teaching**

The biblical tradition forms the impetus of the Catholic Church' social teaching<sup>253</sup> that concerns itself with fundamental principles of justice and freedom in the social order and human advancement. In the Old Testament for example, the concept of justice and righteousness are significant in all human relationships, and as Phillippe Denis points out, "justice is the social principle that held the Hebrew social fabric together."<sup>254</sup> In other words, justice and mercy or righteousness were key principles which were supposed to govern the social and economic life of Hebrew society. The exodus experience, which was a defining process in the liberation of the Israelites was an act of justice and mercy shown by God, in concrete terms. That exodus experience served as a root metaphor for the nation of Israel, a memory of the redemptive love of God shown to the poor and oppressed. Likewise the people of Israel had to be expected to deal with each other in justice and mercy, and also to be charitable to the poor, to orphans and to

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<sup>253</sup> Until Vatican II, the Church's teaching on social issues was referred to as the "social doctrine of the Church," but since Vatican II, social teaching is preferred because it is a more dynamic concept, as opposed to doctrine which constitutes a more rigid and fixed set of beliefs determined from above and seen as eternal. In this thesis, we shall use the term "social teaching" to refer to the Church's teaching on society (Prof Phillippe Denis's lecture notes, Social teaching of the Church. St Joseph's Theological Institute, 1992), p.1.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., p.3.



widows. It is not surprising, therefore, that episodes of injustice such as Naboth's murder and subsequent dispossession of his land (1Kings 21) and the amassing of wealth at the expense of the poor (Is 5:8; Amos 2:6-8), provoked the wrath of God and were strongly challenged by the prophets. The Old Testament as such has numerous examples of social concerns and demonstrations of God's clear stand with the poor and the marginalized. In the same vein, the Church cannot afford to stand aloof in the face of injustice and poverty, it is compelled by its nature and purpose to take the side of the poor and denounce all forms of injustice and exploitation.<sup>255</sup>

In the New Testament Jesus clearly declared his mission as being ultimately to reform his contemporary world and to restore the liberty and dignity of the poor and marginalized. What he proclaimed as his mission had a strong element of social concern, and he resolutely confronted all forms of social ills and dehumanizing conditions in order to restore the dignity of all people (Lk 4:18-19). Denis points out that Jesus did not reject justice as a principle which was meant to govern all social relationships, instead he reinforced it with the notion of love which he crowned as the greatest of all commandments (Lk 6:27-34; Mtt5:38-48).<sup>256</sup> In Jesus' ministry, love was a vital force which attracted people from all walks of life to Jesus and also compelled him to be compassionate to the hungry (Mtt 5:1-6; Mk8:1-10), the sinners, the sick and the marginalized. Love therefore became the "centripetal" social maxim of Jesus' mission in the world.<sup>257</sup>

The principle of love and justice as practiced by Jesus in his mission formed the basis of how the early Church addressed issues of wealth and poverty. The first community of Christians shared and distributed their possessions and food according to their needs (Acts 2:42-47). A life of sharing was a practical way of implementing the principles of love and justice amongst Christians, and it served as a mechanism for curbing poverty. To this end, Denis notes the fact that Paul had to "anathematize"<sup>258</sup> Christians who took part in the Lord's Supper while refusing to share their riches with the poor (I Corinthians 11:21-22). James also condemned the rich who defrauded the poor whose cry and "complaints have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts" (James 5:1-6).

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., p.3.

There is enough evidence in the biblical tradition to inspire and give a theological motivation for the Church's concern with social issues such as poverty, disease and underdevelopment which impact on human dignity. We shall briefly explicate the notion of the social teaching of the Catholic Church in the next section.

### 4.3 The social teaching of the Catholic Church

Situations and problems regarding justice, poverty, freedom, peace, underdevelopment, disease and relations between peoples form an integral part of the Catholic Church's evangelizing mission. Without going into the details of history, we can safely assume that the Church often took a stand on social and political issues, even if there was no developed systematic teaching on such matters.<sup>259</sup> However, the social teaching of the Catholic Church as a systematic and official discourse was initiated by Pope Leo XIII in his famous encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* of 15 May 1891, which was written in the context of Industrial Revolution in France. In *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII protested strongly against the exploitation and harsh conditions of industrial workers. The encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* was therefore a call for justice. In this regard, Donal Dorr argues that Pope Leo's encyclical was an intervention which demonstrated "that the Church could not be taken to be indifferent to the injustices of the time. Rather, the Church was seen to be taking a stand on behalf of the poor."<sup>260</sup>

In this encyclical, Pope Leo explicated the moral authority of the Church to promote justice and the duty of the State to protect workers and defend the right of associations through legislation. Associations of workers and industrialists were suggested as the appropriate means to "promote the interests of all parties, especially of the poor."<sup>261</sup> As we have shown in the previous chapter, *Rerum Novarum* had made a deep impression on Bernard Huss and it influenced his approach to the problem of poverty and the underdevelopment of black people. Pope Leo's encyclical became the *Magna Carta* for Catholic social teaching and its development.

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<sup>259</sup> Herve Carrier, *Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace: The Social Doctrine of the Church Revisited* (Vatican City, 1990), p.17-18.

<sup>260</sup> Donal Dorr, *Option for the poor: Hundred years of Vatican social teaching* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983), p.11-12.

<sup>261</sup> Carrier, *The social doctrine of the Church revisited*, p.24.

Catholic social teaching seeks to offer a theological reflection and interpretation of the social realities and how they should be responded to. It is not a blue-print for any social or economic system but as Carrier points out, “it expresses for our times the reflection of the Church on social realities, assessing them in the light of the Gospel and offering guidelines for practical behaviour in society.”<sup>262</sup> This teaching of the Church on social matters is not just a theory nor is it a static set of fixed principles; it is rather an effort by the Church to offer a theological understanding which seeks to “accompany spiritually the social experience of the human family.”<sup>263</sup> Carrier also asserts that the teaching of the Catholic Church on social matters is eminently practical and open to “successive historical applications and constant renewal.”<sup>264</sup> The social realities in different contexts and historical milieu stimulate a new theological reflection and interpretation, and call for action. This explains the multitudes of encyclical letters as well as pastoral statements authored by different popes and bishops to address various social matters across the globe. In this way, the teaching of the Church on social matters is continually enriched and develops into “an accumulated experience of reflection and action in evolving social contexts.”<sup>265</sup> It is rooted in the biblical and Christian tradition, and it is continually renewed as the Church endeavours to make sense of and “interpret the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel.”<sup>266</sup>

The teaching of the Catholic Church on social matters plays a paramount role in stimulating action in different missionary organizations, individual missionaries and pastoral agents within the Catholic Church and beyond. It provides theological insights and motivation for various organs of the Church and associations to engage in the process of social transformation in order to ameliorate the life conditions of the poor. Accordingly, the first lines of the Catholic Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes* state, “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>266</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), no. 2.

<sup>267</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (1966), no.1

These words capture the Church's concern for the conditions of poverty and underdevelopment which violate and dehumanize the poor in different parts of the world. In the next section we shall draw some insights from the two encyclicals: *Populorum Progressio* (1967), and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1988), which will provide a theological motivation for our contextual interpretation of Huss' model.

#### 4.4.1 *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1988)

Pope Paul VI wrote the encyclical, *Populorum Progressio* after Vatican II, as an attempt to address the issue of poverty and injustices on the global level. His primary concern was the relationship between rich and poor nations, and how the consequences of inequitable relationships have impacted and perpetuated the dehumanization of the poor in the developing countries. The Pope stated that, "Today the principal fact we must all recognize is that the social question has become worldwide."<sup>268</sup> In this, the Pope was pointing out "the close interdependence of all human beings and their common responsibility for the development of all peoples."<sup>269</sup> Apparently, Pope Paul VI wrote his encyclical after the realization that economic problems and poverty had become a worldwide phenomenon, and therefore could not be addressed effectively at a local or national level. The worldwide problems of poverty and underdevelopment required a comprehensive approach which would facilitate the "growth of persons in their cultural and spiritual dimensions, and embrace the progress of all."<sup>270</sup> In this regard, the encyclical proposes the creation of a "world solidarity" which could be achieved through international aid and co-operation, so that the all embracing goal of "the development of the whole man and of all men [*sic*]" could be attained.<sup>271</sup>

A key observation which the encyclical points out is the fact that economic, social and cultural inequalities can arouse tensions and conflict within national borders and in the world, and are a threat to peace. To this end, the Pope coined the phrase, "Development is the new name for peace."<sup>272</sup> It follows therefore that poverty and underdevelopment are conditions which can

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<sup>268</sup> *Populorum progressio*, no.3.

<sup>269</sup> Carrier, *The social doctrine of the Church revisited*, p.29.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>272</sup> *Populorum progressio*, no. 76.

generate social unrest as well as a myriad of other social ills and turmoil such as crime and HIV and AIDS. At stake in the midst of poverty and underdevelopment is the dignity of the poor which is violated by the injustice of poverty.

On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*, Pope John Paul II wrote the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1988). Pope John Paul II reflected on *Populorum Progressio* in the context of the eighties and sought "to trace the major lines of the present world always within the context of the aim and inspiration of the development of peoples, which are still far from being exhausted."<sup>273</sup> Pope John Paul II reasserted the teachings of the encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*, and also emphasized the importance of integral development<sup>274</sup> which should take into consideration "the cultural and spiritual dimensions of human progress."<sup>275</sup> In addition, Pope John Paul II explicated in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, that the reality of poverty had worsened and "had become widespread in many parts of the world," making the task of development an urgent issue as the tragedy of poverty had led many people to "live without hope." The Pope stated that the reality of poverty and underdevelopment was exacerbated by the "unbearable tensions between the ideological blocs of East and West which constitute a gigantic impersonal mechanism dividing the world..."<sup>276</sup>

A great deal could be said about both these encyclicals, but for the purpose of this thesis, which is the contextualization of Huss' model, it will be sufficient to focus on key philosophical and theological elements which are addressed by both encyclicals, namely; causes of poverty, poverty and human dignity, the option for the poor, and the agency of the poor.

#### **4.4.2 Causes of poverty**

The achievement of the two Popes was their bold step to discern and articulate the basic causes of poverty and underdevelopment in the world. Although they wrote their encyclicals in different

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<sup>273</sup> *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1988), no. 4.

<sup>274</sup> The notion of integral development concurs with the wider conceptualization of poverty which we discussed earlier in chapter two. It embraces the non-material aspects of poverty, such as deprivation of freedom, lack of respect, lack of social justice etc.

<sup>275</sup> Carrier, *The social doctrine of the Church revisited*, p.30.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

socio-historical contexts, they both analyzed the global situation and sought to understand the depths of the imbalances and injustices between rich and poor countries. The consequences of inequalities and injustices between rich and poor countries on the global level are translated into socio-economic and political realities at the grassroots level and material indigence which have reduced life to subhuman levels in the Third World.<sup>277</sup> Any enterprise aimed at finding solutions to the problems of poverty and underdevelopment in poor countries had to start by identifying and addressing the basic causes of poverty and injustices on the global level.

In the encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul VI enumerated various causes of poverty and underdevelopment in the Third World countries, such as the negative effects of colonialism, the prevailing neo-liberal situation which he perceived as a disguised form of colonialism, and the imbalance of power between nations which created unjust trade relations between rich and poor nations.<sup>278</sup> Further, Pope Paul VI argued that colonial powers not only shattered the political and economic structures of colonies “but also the social, cultural and religious frameworks which gave order and meaning” to people’s lives.<sup>279</sup> In this regard, the Pope advocated an integral enterprise which would take into consideration all facets of human life.

Pope Paul VI identified two features of the neo-liberal situation as firstly, the economic domination by rich nations at the international level and secondly both economic and political domination at the national level by a small privileged elite in control of national wealth and power.<sup>280</sup> As a result the poor nations were getting poorer, due to unjust trade relations, while the rich were getting richer. At the national level, a few individuals with access to national wealth and political power were also getting richer while the poor were being pushed further into poverty and turmoil. Accordingly, Pope Paul VI stated that, “development demands bold transformation, innovations that go deep.”<sup>281</sup> Here the Pope was calling for a reform of structures and economic systems which were protecting and serving the interests of the rich and powerful at the exclusion of the weak and marginalized. Such reforms would have to take place on both

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., p.30.

<sup>278</sup> *Populorum progressio*, nos. 7-11.

<sup>279</sup> Dorr, *Option for the poor*, p.140.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., p.140.

<sup>281</sup> *Populorum progressio*, no. 32.

international and national levels, and be guided by the principle of solidarity of rich and poor.<sup>282</sup> This call for a reform of structures of power and economic systems at both global and national levels concurs with George Monbiot's vision of the globalization of democracy. Monbiot's argument is that both economic and political power arrangements on a global level "have been designed by a few rich and powerful nations who execute them to enhance their own wealth and consolidate their positions over the poor and weak nations."<sup>283</sup> In line with Pope Paul VI's logic, Monbiot argues for a mutation or change to take place in the global political space in order to create "a global political system which will hold power to account."<sup>284</sup> The hope is that such a system would protect and create space for national and other local institutions to flourish and curb poverty in poor communities.

Pope John Paul II identified the same basic causes of poverty and underdevelopment as did Pope Paul VI in the sixties. But in addition to the material poverty, Pope John Paul II went further and talked of the various forms of poverty "caused by violent denial of the elementary rights of social, cultural, religious freedom and participation in economic matters."<sup>285</sup> He argued that this type of poverty could be more detrimental to the dignity of the human person than material poverty. All these various forms of poverty and underdevelopment emanated from the political tensions between the two opposing blocs of the East and the West, as well as the moral ills brought about by the "structures of sin."<sup>286</sup> The division of the contemporary world into blocs and the existence of unjust economic systems were being sustained by rigid ideologies which fostered different forms of imperialism and took no cognizance of interdependence and solidarity of rich and poor.<sup>287</sup> To this end, Pope John Paul II called for a deep collective conversion which would pave the way for universal solidarity as the "only dynamic reality capable of redefining true progress on the basis of the individual's authentic being."<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> *Populorum progressio*, no.48.

<sup>283</sup> George Monbiot, *The Age of Consent: A Manifesto for a New World Order* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), p.16.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>285</sup> *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, (1988) no 15.

<sup>286</sup> *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, (1988)no.20.

<sup>287</sup> *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, (1988)no.36.

<sup>288</sup> Carrier, *The social doctrine of the Church revisited*,(1990), p.30.

It is indeed imperative to establish the basic causes of poverty and underdevelopment before attempting to offer a solution to the problem. Within his own liberal paradigm Bernard Huss tried to apply the same axiom in his endeavour to address the problems of poverty and underdevelopment of black people in his time. His model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” was an attempt to offer an integral development enterprise. The principles used by the two Popes to analyze and discern the problem of poverty and underdevelopment at a global level can also be applied at a local level, when responding to issues of poverty in communities. Without establishing the basic causes of poverty and underdevelopment in poor communities, we stand the risk of wasting time and resources dealing with symptoms of poverty instead of the root causes. Failure to diagnose the basic causes of poverty and underdevelopment will perpetuate the dehumanizing conditions of the poor, and continue to undermine their dignity. It is our argument in this research that human dignity should underpin all development initiatives, and that responses to poverty and underdevelopment should attempt to be holistic.

#### **4.4.3 Dignity of the human person as the foundation of integral development**

The human person does not exist as a material being only; there must be a second element. The first element is the earth from which God formed the human person, the second element is God’s breath which God breathed into the nostrils of the body which was created from the earth, thus divine reality entered the human person (Gn 2:7). The second creation story tells us in simple language that the human person is created in God’s image and likeness (Gn 1:26-27). In this regard Joseph Ratzinger points out that, “in the human being heaven and earth touch one another”, and a direct relationship between God and the human person is established and sealed forever.”<sup>289</sup> Further, the relationship between God and the human person is manifested in the relational and social dimension of human nature. This implies that the human person can only develop and realize his or her potential in the context of social relationships with other fellow human beings.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *“In the beginning...”: A Catholic understanding of creation and the fall* (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), p.44-45.

<sup>290</sup> *Pontifical council for justice and peace: Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), p.63.



The Bible asserts that whoever violates a human being in any way also violates God's property (Gn 9:5) because each human person "bears God's breath in him or herself, each one is God's image."<sup>291</sup> The *Imago Dei* forms the foundation and theological justification for the inviolability of human dignity and for this reason, the Catholic Church "proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society."<sup>292</sup> This belief in the sanctity of human life and our Christian faith compel the Church and indeed all its various organs to protect the dignity of every person and work to ameliorate all facets of human life. In addition, the Catholic Church affirms that the human person is also created in freedom, which is a "sign of being made in the divine image and a sublime sign of the dignity of every person."<sup>293</sup> In freedom therefore, every person should be able to pursue initiatives of an economic, religious, social and political nature. Poverty stifles the freedom and dignity of the poor, and it is a condition which should compel Christians to engage in social action in order to transform it and create a space which is conducive for authentic human existence.

In this regard, Sen's notion of "development as freedom," which is also the title of his book becomes useful for our work. For Sen, development is understood "as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy."<sup>294</sup> Such a process entails the removal of all constraints and causes of "un-freedom" such as poverty. As we have argued earlier, Sen demonstrates that our understanding of development should not be limited to economic wealth and the growth of the gross national product and other income related variables.<sup>295</sup> These do not necessarily translate into out-comes and the reality of life on the ground. For Sen, development should be concerned with enhancing the quality of life that people lead and the "freedoms they enjoy."<sup>296</sup> The wider conceptualization of poverty which we elucidated in chapter two epitomizes various forms of "un-freedom" or deprivations which undermine the dignity of the poor and reduce their quality of life. For this reason, the Church is called to affirm human dignity and to bring its prophetic voice to bear upon any form of injustice and poverty in order to uproot them to allow everyone to

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<sup>291</sup> Ratzinger, "In the beginning..." , p.45.

<sup>292</sup> Roger Aubert, *Catholic Social Teaching: An Historical Perspective* (Marquette: Marquette University Press, 2003), p.245.

<sup>293</sup> *Pontifical council for justice and peace*, p.115.

<sup>294</sup> Sen, *Development as Freedom*, p.3.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

be a full human being.<sup>297</sup> In this way the Church fulfils its commitment to the theological axiom of the “option for the poor.”

#### 4.4.4. The option for the poor as a call for Christian commitment

The Bible is full of practical examples in which God showed preference for the poor and marginalized. In the Old Testament tradition for example, God is portrayed as the God of justice, the just judge, the avenger and the *Go'el* of the poor.<sup>298</sup> In the New Testament, Jesus also took a clear stand to identify with the poor and downtrodden of society to whom he had come to announce the good news of salvation (Lk 4:18-19). The Church's option for the poor is therefore an embodiment of Jesus' own mission which should inspire practical action in order to ameliorate the conditions of the poor. In the encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Pope John Paul II stated that ignoring the reality of the poor and failing to act accordingly “would mean becoming like the rich man who pretended not to know the beggar Lazarus lying at his gate.”<sup>299</sup> The Church therefore cannot afford to stand aloof in the midst of poverty and turmoil, it is called to embrace the multitudes of the hungry, people living with HIV, the homeless, and those without medical care and to restore their hope for a better future. The option for the poor entails a rejection of bad social structures, legal systems and cultural norms which subject the poor, especially women and children, to perpetual poverty and exploitation; it is in fact an “option against sin.”<sup>300</sup> To demonstrate its commitment to the “option for the poor,” the Church should set up appropriate structures which will liberate and empower the poor to take ownership of their destiny with dignity and confidence. It is our argument that a contextual model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” can be a practical tool to achieve this. It is imperative that the agency of the poor is recognized and promoted in any social action which is aimed at transforming their conditions.

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<sup>297</sup> Francisco J. Silota, *The Commitment of the Christian Community to the poor in the era of globalization*, (Harare: Kolbe Press, 1999), p.8.

<sup>298</sup> Samuel O. Dean, *A theoretical reflection on concepts of poverty towards an appropriate development framework for the Church in its development ministry among the poor* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal, unpublished thesis, 2002), p.42.

<sup>299</sup> *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no.42.

<sup>300</sup> Dorr, *Option for the poor*, p.243.

#### 4.5 The poor as agents of social transformation

In our wider conceptualization of poverty in chapter two, we enhanced our discussion with Sen's understanding of development "as a process of expanding real freedoms that people enjoy."<sup>301</sup> At the heart of Sen's notion of "development as freedom" is what he refers to as "free and sustainable agency"<sup>302</sup> which plays a pivotal role and drives the process of social transformation. Freedom is paramount to the development practice and without it, the agency of the poor is inhibited and genuine development is severely compromised. Therefore, Sen supports the process of development which is "agent-oriented" and which is based on the understanding that, "with adequate social opportunities, individuals can effectively shape their own destiny and help each other."<sup>303</sup> It is imperative therefore, that any development enterprise should allow the poor to act as subjects who make conscious decisions and act on them, in this way the poor affirm their dignity and live out their own vocations as "the principal agents of their own success or failure."<sup>304</sup>

Steve de Gruchy reminds us of the vocation of the poor to act in history and contribute to social transformation within the paradigm of their own social location.<sup>305</sup> We should not approach the process of social transformation being driven by the preconception that poor people have nothing and are unable to help themselves. They are "always engaged in strategies and struggles for survival, adaptation and freedom."<sup>306</sup> It is imperative that the agency of the poor is recognized as an essential resource and that the poor are given the opportunity to take charge of their destiny and drive their own agenda to its logical conclusion. Also within the tradition of the Church there has emerged a shift in understanding the role of the Church in the development practice. Pope Paul VI emphasized the importance of agency in the process of development when he stated that, "the people themselves have the prime responsibility to work for their own development."<sup>307</sup> This was a shift from the paternalistic attitude of the Church towards the poor, which also

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<sup>301</sup> Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (1990) p.3.

<sup>302</sup> Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (1990), p.3

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid*, p.11.

<sup>304</sup> *Populorum progressio*, no. 15.

<sup>305</sup> Steve de Gruchy, "Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation: Seeking some commonalities between theology and development", in *The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 117 (Nov 2003), p.20-39.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>307</sup> *Populorum progressio*, no.77.

underpinned Huss' approach to social transformation. The process of social transformation should not be about developing people; rather it should be about equipping the poor with appropriate skills and knowledge in order to participate fully in their own development. Christian M. Rogerson recognises that the greatest asset that the poor have is "their capacity for labour."<sup>308</sup> This "capacity for labour" needs to be harnessed through appropriate skills development and information, both of which are essential for poverty alleviation.

Our analysis of poverty and underdevelopment in rural KwaZulu-Natal revealed that the majority of rural households are female-headed and that women are the most affected by poverty for various reasons which we have already articulated. Therefore, the agency of women needs to be recognized and encouraged since it is often overshadowed by cultural prejudices and other social deprivations which stifle women's capabilities and amplify their vulnerability. Enhancing the agency of women in the process of development is a crucial step in the endeavour to address gender inequality which also contributes to the poverty of women in poor communities. Women suffer many forms of socio-economic and cultural deprivations, yet they use different strategies to survive with their families on a daily basis. There is an urgent need to expand the various forms of freedoms in the rural communities in order to enhance women's capabilities, so that they can also opt for the kind of life they value. Our contextual interpretation of Huss' model will therefore take into account the capacity of rural women to work and seek to utilize the democratic space of the post-apartheid era to empower them for self-reliance. With this in mind, the next chapter will focus on the contextual interpretation of Huss' model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts."

#### 4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the social teaching of the Church as our theological framework. The two encyclicals, *Populorum progressio* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, formed the premise of our discussion of poverty and integrated development. We looked at human dignity and the "option for the poor" as the key theological elements which motivate the Church to

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<sup>308</sup> Christian M. Rogerson, "Local economic development in post-apartheid South Africa: a ten-year research review," in *The development decade? Economic and social change in South Africa, 1994-2004*, Ed. Vishnu Padayachee, (2006), p.234.

engage with issues of poverty and underdevelopment. The agency of the poor was identified as an essential aspect in the process of social transformation; and in the context of rural KwaZulu-Natal where the majority of households are female-headed, the agency and empowerment of women is paramount. Our contextual interpretation of Huss' model, which is the subject of the next chapter, will take into account the situation of women in rural KwaZulu-Natal.

## Chapter Five

### Towards a contextual interpretation of Huss' model of social transformation

#### 5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to interpret Huss' model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts," in the context of poverty and underdevelopment in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal. The reality of poverty and underdevelopment in rural KwaZulu-Natal and other rural areas of South Africa which form part of the former homeland territories have already been discussed in this research. It was noted that poverty in KwaZulu-Natal is concentrated in the rural areas and is a legacy of the past. Our analysis also revealed that poverty in rural KwaZulu-Natal affects female-headed households the most due to socio-economic and cultural disempowerment of women. Thus women and girls are more exposed to other social ills such as violence and the HIV and AIDS epidemic. This shows that poverty and the HIV and AIDS epidemic are intrinsically linked and need to be addressed simultaneously by any development practice.

The situation of poverty in rural KwaZulu-Natal is also compounded by high levels of unemployment which also impact negatively on the lives of women. In addition we have analysed the efforts of the new government in the post-apartheid era to address poverty and the imbalances of the past. However, the gap between rich and poor remains significant and this shows that government alone cannot face up to the challenge: other stakeholders, especially the Church, which is strongly rooted in rural communities still have an important role to play in development practice.

In order to engage in practical action which will transform the condition(s) of poverty and underdevelopment at the grassroots level in the rural communities, it is imperative that the Church adopts a model which speaks to the situation on the ground and animates communities to take charge of their development processes. It is argued in this research that the model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" has the capacity to speak to the situation of the poor, hence our intention to interpret it in the context of poverty and underdevelopment in rural KwaZulu-

Natal. This chapter will therefore focus on the contextual interpretation of the model, taking into account the broad understanding of poverty.

## 5.2 Why a contextual interpretation of Huss' model?

The model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" was developed in a different socio-political and historical context from the present one. It was developed with the primary aim of empowering black people with new farming methods and various vocational skills in order to be self-reliant and to improve their situation in the context of the modern economy and colonialism. The model did not seek to address the structures of injustice and political disenfranchisement of black people during colonialism, rather it sought to tackle three key areas where poverty and underdevelopment were most conspicuous in black communities. The three areas were: poor housing and lack of domestic management skills, poor fields which led to poor harvests due to unproductive farming methods, and a general poor quality of life and social relationships due to what was perceived as "low standards of morality"<sup>309</sup> in black communities.

While the objective of the model was to improve the socio-economic life of black people, our analysis of the model revealed that this was to be done along the lines of "western civilization" and the Catholic Church's understanding of evangelization at the time. It is important for us to understand the historical milieu and mentality of white Catholic missionaries like Huss who had an inherently paternalistic attitude towards black people, but this should not create a bias against the value of the model. It is therefore imperative that a contextual interpretation of the model is given so that the model can speak to the reality of poor housing, poor fields and poor hearts in the context of today. The researcher sees the three key areas which the model sought to transform then, as remaining paramount to the process of social transformation today in poor areas of rural KwaZulu-Natal. Our contextual analysis of the reality of poverty in rural KwaZulu-Natal showed that poverty is evident in the homes, the fields and non-material aspects of human life. The model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" captures this reality and if it is contextualized, it can undoubtedly be used as a basis from which to ameliorate the conditions of the poor in rural areas.

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<sup>309</sup> Huss, "Effect of Race Contact on Europeans." *Southern Cross* 21 Sept. 1927, p.15.

The socio-economic and political metamorphosis which was set into motion in the post-apartheid era also does not allow the model to be applied as a straightjacket in today's South African situation. It is therefore essential that we interpret the model taking into account pertinent issues of gender equality, and the empowerment of rural women who are the most affected by poverty and whose economic opportunities have been restricted by patriarchy and social disempowerment. Our contextual interpretation seeks to liberate women from economic dependence on men, by advocating vocational training and skills development in order to empower rural women to benefit from economic opportunities and improve their conditions.

In the post-apartheid era progress has been made in stabilizing and growing the economy, as well as bringing about a democratic transformation of the state and various institutions of government.<sup>310</sup> Whilst the country has managed to achieve and sustain macro-economic growth and stability, not enough of these gains have trickled down to the poor in rural communities. The reason is that the government has used GEAR, a top-down approach, as an economic development model. This model has performed extremely well in the macro-economic sphere, while the poor on the ground, especially in rural areas have only benefited modestly. The poor in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal, like in other parts of the country, have benefited mostly from the security or safety intervention nets in the form of state pensions and grants.<sup>311</sup> While the system of state-provided grants helps to improve the financial situation of the poor, it does not empower the poor to be self reliant or to take charge of their lives. It can easily create a situation whereby the poor become dependent on government "hand-outs," and this will undermine their own dignity and capacity to work for their self betterment. It is therefore imperative to have a model of social transformation which will recognize the agency of the poor and empower them to be agents of change as well as architects of their own destiny. The agency of the poor is important in a people focused development practice as it allows the poor to drive

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<sup>310</sup> *The Natal Witness* 2 October 2008, p.4.

<sup>311</sup> There are five state-provided grants, three of which are in the field of support for children: The Care Dependence Grant (CDG) for caregivers of children with severe physical and mental impairment; the Foster Care Grant (FCG) aimed at encouraging support by non-kin of children whose parents are unable to care for them; and the Child Support Grant (CSG) which is intended for children who live in poor households. In addition, there is Disability Grant (DG) for adults with physical and mental disabilities. In some cases, AIDS patients with low CD4 counts also qualify for disability grant. There is also the Old Age Pension for elderly South Africans who do not have adequate means to support themselves (Lund, F. 2006:160).



the development process from the bottom to the top, and this enhances their dignity and self-esteem. To this end Paul Freire writes:

Every human being has an ontological vocation to be a Subject who acts upon and transforms his or her world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively. This world to which he relates is not a static and closed order, a given reality which man[sic] must accept and to which he must adjust; rather, it is a problem to be worked and solved.<sup>312</sup>

A contextual model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” has the capacity to empower the poor in rural communities to become conscious of their gifts which Huss identified as individual gifts of the head, hands and heart, as well as the gift of the soil which must be cherished and cared for. The model presents a positive image of life which can be attained through hard work and commitment. The model can also be used as a slogan to stimulate a positive response and motivate the poor to work for self-reliance and socio-economic betterment by building “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts.” For this reason, we recommend it for current applicability to the Missionaries of Mariannhill who work in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal. We shall now attempt a contextual interpretation of the model.

### **5.3.1 Building “Better homes” in poor rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal**

The model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” was not only designed to reform the socio-economic conditions of black people along the lines of “western civilization”, it also legitimized patriarchal culture which allotted more power to men and relegated women to the domestic sphere. The injunction to build “Better homes” was therefore the primary concern of women and it was enforced through women’s associations which became “instrumental in encouraging a gender-specific role for African women both within the various associations for women in the Catholic Church and within a vision of rural domestic life.”<sup>313</sup> The building of “Better homes” entailed, as we have noted already, improving the structure of the traditional huts which were built of rods and thatched with grass, but without windows. The structures of “Better homes” constituted “two types, either a perfect round style or a rectangular block with at least two small windows.”<sup>314</sup> It was the sole task of women to keep the home clean, and do all

<sup>312</sup> Paul Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p.14.

<sup>313</sup> Brouckaert, “*Better homes, Better fields, Better Hearts*”: *The Catholic African Union*, 1927, p.56.

<sup>314</sup> “The life of a Rural Native.” (Unsigned and undated article, Box 04: file 2) Mariannhill Monastery Archives.

domestic chores such as caring for children, fetching water from the river or well, collecting firewood and even reaping crops during harvesting time.<sup>315</sup> To improve their skills of home management women were taught domestic skills such as “cooking, knitting, sewing and gardening.”<sup>316</sup> The model clearly reinforced the inequitable distribution of work between men and women, and as a result, women were overburdened with work in the family while men did the minimum. Women are still subjected to the same conditions today in traditional rural communities.

Our contextual interpretation of the component of “Better homes” seeks to establish an equilibrium and abrogate gender specific allocation of duties within the home. The patriarchal tradition of assigning domestic chores to women and girls fuels gender imbalances both in the family and in the broader society. Gender inequality which is sustained by cultural practices in the home makes girls and women feel less important and powerless. As a result, women and girls have to depend on men for protection and economic support. In poor rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal where traditional culture is strongly guarded and practiced, women and girls suffer the most from both poverty and male violence. It may not be easy to address the issue of gender equality in traditional rural communities in which patriarchy is entrenched, but the model has certainly to integrate gender equality as part of building “Better homes.” The Constitution of the new South Africa has set out the “mandate of the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) to promote respect for gender equality and protect, develop and achieve gender equality.”<sup>317</sup> The building of “Better homes” provides the opportunity to promote gender equality at the family level, which is the foundation of society. The fact that the majority of households in rural KwaZulu-Natal are female-headed, presents women with an opportunity to be in the forefront of teaching and promoting gender equality at the family level, as part of children’s upbringing. This is an approach which starts from the primary root of society, the family. However, the reality that the majority of rural households are female-headed challenges the traditional understanding of family as consisting of father, mother and children. This traditional understanding was also the

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<sup>315</sup> “The life of a Rural Native.” (Unsigned and undated article, Box 04: File 2) Mariannhill Monastery Archives.

<sup>316</sup> Brouckaert, “*Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts*”: *The Catholic African Union*, 1927-1939, p.56.

<sup>317</sup> Adila Hassim, et al. *Health and Democracy: A guide to human rights, health law and policy in post-apartheid South Africa*, p.53.

viewpoint of Huss: hence he highlighted that part of the woman's duty of building a "Better home" was to look after her husband and children.<sup>318</sup>

In the African worldview family is more than father, mother and children, "it includes grandfather and grandmother, together with the children of our brothers and sisters, etc."<sup>319</sup> This is the notion of extended family which is still strong in traditional rural communities. This understanding of family provides a network through which the respect for gender equality can be promoted by women who head most of the rural households. But in order to embrace this task, rural women will need to be liberated from socio-cultural practices which disempower them and keep them trapped in the "iron cage" of male domination. Women will therefore need to be equipped with appropriate knowledge of gender equality and their human rights. In this regard, the Church can demonstrate its commitment to the "option for the poor" by providing a safe space for women to interrogate systems and cultural norms which violate their human rights and dignity. Issues which constitute gender inequality and violation of individual rights are key to the empowerment of rural women, most of whom lack access to such vital information.

The building of "Better homes" in the context of rural KwaZulu-Natal should also seek to create a good home environment which nurtures and sustains good relationships within the family and among neighbours. It is the author's contention that a good home environment is imperative for the building of "Better homes." If the family environment which is the vital cell of society is not conducive, it will be difficult to expect society at large to prosper in terms of respect for human dignity and well being. In this respect, Pope John Paul II, in the context of a Catholic traditional understanding of family writes: "The fostering of authentic and mature communion between persons within the family is the first and irreplaceable school of social life, an example and stimulus for the broader community relationships marked by respect, justice, dialogue and love."<sup>320</sup> This statement by the Pope affirms the imperative of a conducive home environment as a prerequisite for "Better homes" and also better societies. According to the findings of the Canadian Medical Association Journal, "27.5 per cent of children who suffer parental violence or

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<sup>318</sup> Brouckaert, "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts": The Catholic Africa Union, 1927-1939, p.56.

<sup>319</sup> Ngila M. Muendane, *I am an African: Embrace your identity, escape victimization*, (Buccleuch: Soultalk CC, 2006), p.59.

<sup>320</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), no.43.

physical abuse are at great risk of becoming abusers of their own intimate partners as well.”<sup>321</sup> These findings consolidate our argument that the building of “Better homes” should also entail the creation of a positive home environment which will impact positively on the development of children and prepare them to become good and responsible citizens.

This emphasis should not, however, detract from the need for decent shelter or houses which is still prevalent in rural KwaZulu-Natal. What was considered as “Better homes” by Huss during the colonial era does not qualify for a “Better home” today. In research conducted by the Institute of Natural Resources, entitled “Implications of Poverty for Black Rural Women in KwaZulu-Natal”, it is stated that many rural women express their desire to improve the quality of their houses, which they cannot do because of the lack of adequate income. The poor quality of houses or lack of decent shelter adds to the burden of poverty already experienced by rural women. The situation is worse for those households which are headed by women as they have limited sources of income. Therefore, the creation of a positive and conducive family environment should be done in the context of a good house which is an essential component of a “Better home.” There cannot be a “Better home” without a decent and proper shelter to house the family. This contributes to the dignity and self-esteem of the poor.

Huss’ explication of the “Treasures of Africa” challenges us to recognize the individual gifts that people who are perceived as being poor have at their disposal. To this end, Huss identified the individual gifts of the head, heart and hands<sup>322</sup> which could be developed and used by individuals and communities to uplift themselves. The model can empower rural women and men with skills to build “Better homes” for themselves. To do this, the model will need to address and promote vocational training in areas such as building, sewing, knitting, handcraft and artwork. The work of brick laying or building should not be reserved for men only as women can also become competent brick layers if they are trained. Such skills are necessary for women to acquire in rural areas so that they can build their own houses and save money for other necessities. At Koko village in Kroonstad, a group of four women are reported to have organized themselves and built their own houses after being disappointed by the government’s failure to build houses for the

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<sup>321</sup> *The Sunday Times* 5 Oct. 2008, p.5.

<sup>322</sup> Gifts of the head include the intellectual capacity to learn and master skills, gifts of the hands include the works which can be done by hands such as artwork, painting, handcraft etc, gifts of the heart were identified as kindness, hospitality, sociability, patience and humour.

poor.<sup>323</sup> This demonstrates that women can build better houses for themselves if they are trained and work together. This is the kind of agency which the model seeks to encourage in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal.

### 5.3.2 Building “Better fields” in poor rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal

Apart from identifying “individual gifts of the head, gifts of the hands and gifts of the heart” which black people were blessed with, Huss also identified the soil as the greatest treasure of Africa.<sup>324</sup> With these treasures, black people did not need any material assistance from outside, they only needed to be taught how to tap, develop and harness them for social service and self-reliance. However, the reality on the ground was that the fields of black people were poor because of lack of “scientific” knowledge of modern agriculture and damage done to the land by soil erosion. As we have seen in our analysis of Huss’ model, the unproductive farming methods resulted in insufficient food being produced for the black population and this posed a great threat to food security. The only solution to prevent the treasure of the soil from being wasted was to build “Better fields” by empowering black people with modern knowledge and skills in agriculture which included learning about “the soil, manure, seed selection, planting and weeding.”<sup>325</sup> The result of building “Better fields” was improved food production for the black population and the formation of various co-operative schemes and Catholic Farmers Unions.<sup>326</sup> The important thing is that black people were empowered with appropriate farming skills to produce enough food for their families and even to participate in the modern agricultural economy.

In the context of poor communities in rural KwaZulu-Natal, our analysis showed that rural people have access to the land and do make efforts to grow their own food. The predicaments of many households have been the lack of income to hire tractors for ploughing, and to buy farm implements such as fertilizer and seeds. Consequently, not enough food is produced from the fields and this means that more money is needed to spend on food. This puts a lot of pressure on

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<sup>323</sup> Sobuwa, Yoliswa, “Sisters do it for themselves! Women grow tired of waiting for lazy officials.” *Daily Sun* 18 Nov. 2008, p.8.

<sup>324</sup> Huss, “Treasures of Africa.” *Southern Cross* 15 Aug 1928, p.7.

<sup>325</sup> Huss, “Native Agriculture.” *Southern Cross* 16 Nov 1927, p.16.

<sup>326</sup> Gamble, *Mariannhill: A Century of Prayer and Work*, p.172.

women who head the majority of rural households in KwaZulu-Natal. The regular increase of food prices and other basic commodities also increases the risk of malnutrition in rural households of KwaZulu-Natal. It is the author's assertion that food security in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal can improve if the poor could be empowered to grow sufficient food for their families. The situation makes the endeavour to build "Better fields" more urgent. It is the poor themselves who have to drive the agenda of building "Better fields" in their constituencies, but they will need to be provided with access to vocational training in effective methods of farming suitable for their situation.

Women who play the primary role of combating hunger in most rural households need to be the main beneficiaries of any programme that empowers rural people to grow their own food. The model should therefore aim to empower rural people with knowledge and appropriate farming methods to enable them to produce their own food. Short courses could be organized to teach rural people effective farming methods, and these could also be enhanced with farm demonstrations and agricultural shows<sup>327</sup> designed to motivate rural people to engage in farming. It is imperative to empower the poor with appropriate skills of farming so that they can exercise their agency and take charge of their own food production. The model could also encourage the formation of co-operatives so that rural people can pull their resources together in order to provide mutual support for each other. When the poor organize themselves into co-operatives they build a corporate strength which they can use to obtain necessary resources such as tractors, fertilizer and seeds which might not be available in their community. The Department of Land Affairs could then be lobbied to extend its programmes of rural development and poverty alleviation to the remote rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal to build on the foundation already put in place by the poor themselves.

Some rural communities in other provinces such as Mpumalanga, Limpopo, North West, Free State and Eastern Cape are benefiting from the programme of Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation, which is spearheaded by the Department of Land Affairs.<sup>328</sup> In these provinces, the

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<sup>327</sup> Farm demonstrations and agricultural shows were used during Huss's time as practical ways of teaching new farming methods to black people. They can still be adopted to today's situation of rural KwaZulu-Natal.

<sup>328</sup> "Contributing towards rural development and poverty alleviation". *Mail and Guardian* 27 June to 3 July 2008, p.19.

land reform programme has contributed to rural development and poverty alleviation by improving the quality of life and creating employment for poor families. In a sense, "Better fields" already exist in these provinces. The same can be achieved in rural KwaZulu-Natal as long as the poor are at the forefront of that process.

### 5.3.3 Building "Better hearts" in the rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal

Our analysis of Huss' understanding of the creation of "Better hearts" established that the focus was on raising the moral standard of black people, which was perceived as being low in comparison to that of the whites, and on converting them to Catholicism.<sup>329</sup> This was to be achieved through a "sound" Christian and religious education. It appears that the intended objective was to develop the moral fabric of society, build good social relationships and encourage co-operation amongst black people. This was despite the fact that Huss had already identified what he called "qualities of the African heart," which he listed as: kindness; hospitality; sociability; humour and patience.<sup>330</sup> It seems that these qualities alone did not qualify for "Better hearts," they needed to be elevated to an acceptable level with the aid of Christian and religious education. This seems to have been the common attitude of white Catholic missionaries towards black people at the time. However, without undervaluing the importance of morality in development enterprise, it is not the core of our contextual interpretation of the notion of "Better hearts." We propose that the notion of "Better hearts" in the context of poverty and underdevelopment in rural KwaZulu-Natal should be based on the premise of the wider conceptualization of poverty, which includes its non-material aspects. These non-material aspects of poverty, as defined by the UN, include for example: "lack of participation in decision making, violation of human dignity, powerlessness, and susceptibility to violence."<sup>331</sup> In addition, non-material aspects of poverty include a denial of human rights and deprivation of socio-economic opportunities to the poor.

In our analysis of the causes of poverty in rural KwaZulu-Natal we established that patriarchal culture and some traditional practices such as *lobola* and polygamy contribute to the

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<sup>329</sup> Huss, "Effect on Race Contact on Europeans." *Southern Cross* 21 Sept 1927, p.15.

<sup>330</sup> Huss, "Treasures of Africa." *Southern Cross* 15 Aug 1928, p.7.

<sup>331</sup> Lister, *Poverty*, p.13.

disempowerment of rural women, hence the prevalence of poverty in female-headed households. This means that women's participation in decision-making either within the households or in the public domain remains minimal, indicating that most women's human rights and dignity are violated when women are excluded from participating in decision-making in the public domain. These cultural practices convey the message that women are inferior to men, and such attitudes remain prevalent in traditional rural settings where women's subordination to men is still regarded as a norm. The danger of such a situation is that women and girls are more often exposed to the risk of HIV infection due to their powerlessness and economic dependence on men.

The creation of "Better hearts" in the context of rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal should therefore focus on reforming those cultural norms and practices which reinforce gender inequality by allotting more power to men. The establishment of the Commission for Gender Equality, whose mandate is set out in section 187 of the Constitution<sup>332</sup> of the Republic of South Africa, is a step in the right direction and such information can add value to the endeavour to create "Better hearts" by promoting gender equality and emancipating women from male domination in rural KwaZulu-Natal. The creation of "Better hearts" can also be achieved through the promotion and defending of human rights. Human rights are "to be found in the dignity that belongs to each human being."<sup>333</sup> Human rights are inherent in human life and are equal in every person, and this renders them inviolable. According to Pope John Paul II, "human rights correspond to the demand of human dignity and they apply to every stage of life and every political, social, economic and cultural situation."<sup>334</sup> If they are upheld and promoted they can contribute to the good of both individual and society. However, to every right there is also a corresponding duty and this entails that, "in human society to one person's right there corresponds a duty in all other persons: the duty, namely, of acknowledging and respecting the right in question."<sup>335</sup>

The above understanding of human rights is essential for the creation of "Better hearts" and it can widen the space for women to participate in decision-making in the rural communities. It is

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<sup>332</sup> Adila, Hassim et al. *Health and Democracy*, p.53.

<sup>333</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, no.27.

<sup>334</sup> John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace* (1999), no.3.

<sup>335</sup> *Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace: Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, p.87.



my contention also that social relationships built on the respect of the rights and dignity of every human being can also build up the good moral fabric of society. A contextual interpretation of Huss' model of "Better hearts" should therefore integrate and promote the aspect of respect for the rights of every person and human dignity. As we pointed out in chapter four, human dignity is central to integral development and it should underpin all social relationships because every human being, whether male or female, bears the image and likeness of God equally. The human person is also created in freedom, and it is in freedom that every person should pursue and execute their capabilities in order to find their full expression. The model should seek to rid society of structures, systems and cultural norms which violate human rights, human dignity and the fundamental freedoms of individual persons. Additionally, social ills such as crime, rape and violence against women and children point to the extent of social degeneration and the lack of respect for both human rights and dignity of women and children. The creation of "Better hearts" can help restore hope in the goodness and sacredness of every human person who bears the image and likeness of God. In addition, the creation of "Better hearts" can help establish relationships which sustain life; relationships based on mutual respect and justice; relationships that are based on equality and acknowledge the dignity of both men and women in society. The absence of these relationships will point to the reality of "poor hearts," which in turn yield acts of injustice and various forms of violence against humanity.

#### **5.4 "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" and the Missionaries of Mariannahill**

The three components of the model: "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" are not to be considered independently from each other, they are interlinked and they should reinforce each other. Poverty in any of the three components will necessarily impact on the others and cause an imbalance in the individual, household and society. The model therefore seeks to address all facets of human life and achieve integral human development which also includes the spiritual aspect of human life. Spiritual development should be central to the notion of building "Better hearts" which should translate into integrated Christian way of life. For this reason, we recommend that the Missionaries of Mariannahill should revive Huss' model and use it in their mission work in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal. Sodalities which exist in the Catholic Church such as St. Annes, the Sodality of the Sacred Heart, and St. Joseph's Association offer a unique network of support to both Catholic women and men on a social and spiritual level. These

sodalities are essential for the development of "Better hearts" in the rural communities as they provide the platform and opportunity for both men and women to develop their Christian faith and be formed by the Gospel values of love, justice, charity and respect for the dignity of human life.

In KwaZulu-Natal, the Missionaries of Mariannhill work in the Diocese of Mariannhill and Umzimkhulu Diocese, both of which are largely rural. As we have shown in chapter two of this study, poverty is concentrated in rural communities which fell under the homeland areas. These rural communities are characterized by high unemployment rates and high HIV prevalence due to poverty and underdevelopment. The work done by the Missionaries of Mariannhill in these rural areas concerns pastoral care. That is, the work focuses mainly on the spiritual aspect of human life which is important, but which cannot be addressed alone at the exclusion of other equally important aspects. Hence Huss pointed out that, "It is useless to affirm the dignity and the vocation of the human person without working to transform the conditions which oppress the person, without ensuring that he or she may be able worthily to eat his or her bread."<sup>336</sup>

There is, therefore, an urgent need for the Missionaries of Mariannhill to rethink their approach to mission work in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. The contextual version of Huss' model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" can help the Missionaries of Mariannhill to revive their tradition of integral approach to mission work and also strengthen their response to poverty. This will ensure that the socio-economic conditions of rural people are addressed together with their spiritual life. The model will help empower the poor with appropriate skills in order to improve the quality of their houses, grow their own food and participate in the economy with dignity and confidence. Women, who head the majority of households and who are the most affected by poverty, unemployment and the HIV and AIDS epidemic, can be empowered to be economically independent by this model.

The Missionaries of Mariannhill should also revive the idea of the social courses which Huss used to promote his model. The social courses can be designed together with the poor to fit their situation, and focus on the relevant skills which the poor can use to be both self-reliant and be

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<sup>336</sup> Quoted in Schimlek, *Against the stream*, p.56.

able to seek employment. The social courses can also provide a good platform from which to address the problem of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in the rural areas. Experts from the Health Department, social workers, and people living with HIV can be resourceful in terms of taking HIV and AIDS programmes to the rural areas and empowering rural people through the social courses.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have looked at the reasons why a contextual interpretation of the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” is needed. We argued that the situation of poverty and underdevelopment in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal requires a model which speaks to the people at the grassroots level and empowers them to exercise their agency by actively engaging in processes which seek to ameliorate their conditions. We have argued that a contextual model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” has the capacity to motivate and empower the poor in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal with appropriate skills which they can use to be self-reliant. As we interpreted the model in the context of rural KwaZulu-Natal, it became clear that the model can benefit women who head the majority of households in this region and empower them to be self-reliant in terms of food production, economic leverage and exercising their rights to participate in decision-making in rural communities. We also argued that the contextual version of the model can enhance the Missionaries of Mariannhill’s response to the challenge of poverty and underdevelopment facing them in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. We pointed out that the social courses which were used by Huss to promote the model could be revived and adapted to the current rural situation, and be used to promote the model to the rural people today. The next chapter will conclude this research.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusion

By way of concluding this undertaking we shall present a summary of the study and thereafter draw the threads of the argument to closure. The first chapter introduced us to the study and stressed the material and non-material aspects of poverty as a major thrust of the research paper. Bernard Huss was introduced as the major player in the research and his model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" was also explicated as a holistic tool to achieve socio-economic and spiritual development.

Chapter two of the study examined the wider conceptualization of poverty as well as its relation to the social, cultural and historical contexts of South Africa. The researcher pointed out that the broader conceptualization of poverty has been enhanced by insights from the work of Amartya Sen which has influenced the international community to shift its understanding of poverty from income deprivation and rather focus on human "capabilities" and human rights concerns. It was argued that poverty affects female-headed households the most due to the fact that women are both socially and economically disempowered by patriarchy. In addition, it was argued that the task of addressing poverty cannot be left to government alone but that the Church, as a key stakeholder in society, has a role to play in alleviating poverty.

Chapter three looked at the person of Bernard Huss as a major player in the research. His early involvement in missionary work particularly at Keilands and his response to the poor farming methods of black people were examined in this chapter. Huss' tenure as principal of St Francis College and his efforts to improve agriculture were discussed in detail. Various approaches which he employed to promote his model, such as the social courses, co-operatives and associations under the auspices of the CAU were also discussed in detail. Further, the chapter examined the ideological framework which seems to have inspired and influenced Huss' involvement in the socio-economic and political activities of black people.

Chapter four discussed the social teaching of the Catholic church as a theological framework of the study. The two encyclicals, *Populorum progressio* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* formed the

premise of the discussion of poverty and integrated development. Human dignity and the “option for the poor” were identified as the key theological elements which motivate the Church to engage with issues of poverty and underdevelopment. In addition, the agency of the poor was identified as an essential aspect in the process of social transformation; and in the context of rural KwaZulu-Natal where the majority of households are female-headed, the agency and empowerment of women is paramount.

Chapter five has looked at the reasons why a contextual interpretation of the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” is needed. We argued that the situation of poverty and underdevelopment in rural KwaZulu-Natal requires a model which speaks to the people at the grassroots level and empowers them to exercise their agency by actively engaging in processes which seek to ameliorate their conditions. We explicated that a contextual version of the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” has the capacity to motivate and empower the poor with appropriate skills which they can use to be self-reliant. Further, we argued that a contextual version of the model can enhance the Missionaries of Mariannhill’s response to the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment facing them in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. The social courses which were used by Huss to promote the model could be revived and adapted to the current rural situation, and be used to promote the model to the rural people today.

The study has attempted to give a contextual interpretation of the model of “Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts” which was created by Bernard Huss to address the socio-economic poverty of black people during colonialism in South Africa. His liberal outlook led him to diagnose the causes of poverty of black people in the context of racial discrimination and political disenfranchisement. He created the model to empower black people with knowledge about household maintenance, scientific methods of farming so that they could be economically uplifted and become self-reliant, and provide moral guidelines to enable them to live in harmony and dignity. Great efforts were made to promote the model through the avenue of social courses and the formation of various associations and co-operative schemes to encourage mutual support and co-operation among black people. We noted in our analysis of Huss’ approach the fact that he tended to be prescriptive and paternalistic in his attitude towards black people. The attitude of paternalism towards black people seems to have been inherent among many white Catholic priests at the time. For this reason, Huss and the Catholic Church failed to appreciate the

initiatives of black people who tried to organize themselves to respond to the hostile and racially defined political landscape during colonialism. Huss accused black organizations such as the ICU of being affiliated and influenced by Russian communism which he perceived to be anti-Christian and anti-Christ. Consequently, the CAU was formed to counteract the activities of the ICU. Using the model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts," the CAU "played an important part in the religious and economic life of the Blacks during the 1920s and 1930s."<sup>337</sup>

The study established that the model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" was aimed at reforming the lives of black people along the lines of western "civilization" through education and religious instructions. The basic idea seems to have been the elevation of the standards of living amongst black people to make life better, hence "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts." The present study is premised on the viewpoint that despite its paternalism the model has value and can contribute to the development praxis and discourse of today.

Poverty and underdevelopment in rural KwaZulu-Natal were analyzed in the study, and the social, cultural and historical dimensions of poverty were located within the paradigm of the colonial and apartheid history of South Africa. Due to the discriminatory and segregation policies of both colonialism and apartheid regimes, poverty is a black problem and is concentrated in the former homeland areas. The new democratic government has made efforts to democratize the state and government institutions, as well as address poverty and inequalities. However, due to the top-down model it has employed, the benefits of economic growth have not trickled down to the poorest rural communities. There is a need for a model which seeks to empower people and reform society from the grassroots level. It is for this reason that a contextual interpretation of the model of "Better homes, Better fields, Better hearts" has been attempted in this study. The model has the capacity to speak to the poor and to build on their agency and local resources. It has the capacity to address both the material and non-material aspects of poverty. Women who are the most disadvantaged and who suffer all forms of poverty can be empowered by the model to become economically independent and liberated from both social and cultural systems and norms which keep them subordinated to men. The contextual interpretation of the model recognized the agency of the poor, especially women who head the majority of rural households, as an essential element of development practice. It is the poor who

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<sup>337</sup> Brain, *Catholics In Natal II, 1886-1925* (1982), p.273.

have to develop themselves, and they need to be empowered with appropriate skills in order to drive their agenda to its logical conclusion.

The study has recommended that the Missionaries of Mariannahill should revive the model and use it in their mission work to empower the poor with appropriate vocational skills so that they can work to be self-reliant and improve their opportunities in the job market. It was argued that the model can help the Missionaries of Mariannahill to provide a practical response to the call of the "option for the poor." Whilst it is not possible to carry this study further, it is clear that more theoretical work needs to be undertaken in order to enhance and to shape the model from the grassroots level. It is imperative that the model takes the assets, knowledge and experiences of the poor into account. Therefore, further research needs to be done in order to include the voices of the poor and marginalized into the model. It is crucial to give the poor the opportunity to articulate their understanding of the three key components of the model. The input of the poor, especially women will add value to the model. The component of "Better hearts" as addressing the non-material aspects of poverty also needs further research and conceptualization. For example, what would constitute "Better hearts" in the context of poverty, stigma and discrimination, violence against women and children, as well as the HIV and AIDS epidemic? These are important issues which should be addressed by the model. Nevertheless, the study has accomplished its objectives and demonstrated the relevance of Huss's model for the Missionaries of Mariannahill today.

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