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# The Kingdom of Heaven versus the Kingdom on Earth: Christianity and the Displacement of Africans in *Black Anger*

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by

**Sinkwan Cheng**

**University of California--Irvine**

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1. In his book *Black Anger*--a "psychoanalytic biography" of John Chavafambira--Wulf Sachs describes a meeting held by African elites in the early twentieth century devoted to discussing South Africa and its colonial government. During the meeting, a "calm and dignified" speaker points out that "God did not measure out the heart and brain according to the color of a man's skin . . . all men--blacks as well as whites--are equal before God" (161-62). However, at a later point of the story, John Chavafambira, the protagonist of the story, complains to Sachs that the missionaries who espouse the equality of all humankind in the Kingdom of Heaven also "helped to take away the [Africans'] land" (189). At a gathering with his fellow black Africans, John launches a similar protest:

The white people came to our country, it is the natives' country [he was emphatic about it], took everything away from us--the land, the cattle--and made us work. We cannot move without a pass, have to pay taxes; and they have given us Jesus. (106)

It seems there are two "faces" to Christianity. On the one hand, it sanctions the Africans' struggle for racial equality; on the other, it helps legitimize white oppression of blacks (such as pass laws and the appropriation of African land and resources). This contradiction is usually attributed to hypocrisy (see Comaroff). In Foucauldian terms, the Christian "truth" is merely an instrument of colonial power. In fact, this is the conclusion

reached by one of the visitors at John and Maggie's residence in Johannesburg. "Because the priests are white people," the visitor observes, "when they talk to Christ they must take the white people's part." John agrees: "Just as the magistrates in the court take the white man's part" (109).

2. This conclusion is prevalent in contemporary post-colonial and cultural studies scholarship. In *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, John and Jean Comaroff observe: "The [Christian] mission was to establish [Christianity] at the heart of the indigenous social order, beside the ruler--just as church and state stood side-by-side in Britain":

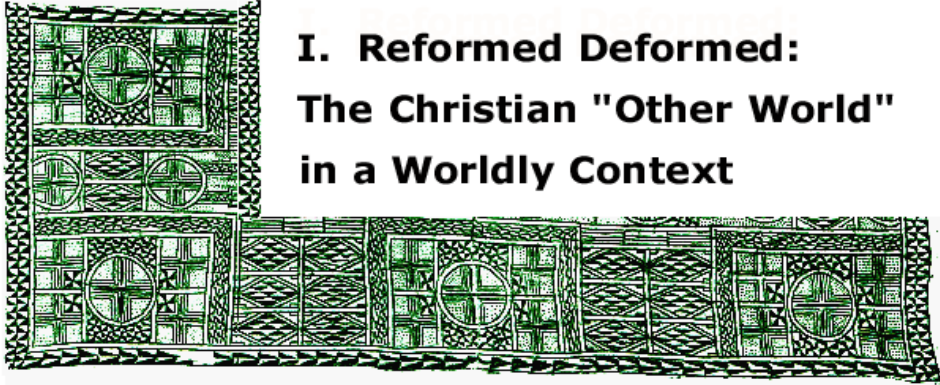
The savage would "willingly [become] subject to His Government" (Northcott 1969: vi) and to the cultural empire of European Protestantism. Over the long run, these gentle soldiers of God's Kingdom were to prove themselves every bit as effective, in making subjects, as were the stormtroops of colonialism. (Comaroff I, 200)

When it comes to the subject of religion and colonialism, most critics, like the Comaroffs, focus on the interpenetration of "truth" and "power" in the colonial project and its aftermath. Their focus is hence often "the colonization of consciousness and the consciousness of colonization" (Comaroff I, xi).

3. However, neither Christian doctrine nor the historical development of Christianity allows an easy alliance of Christianity with the interests of the dominant power. The Bible admonishes: "Woe unto you that are rich" (Luke 6: 24) and "Blessed be ye poor" (Luke 6: 20). The Bible also makes explicit that God "hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor" (Psalms 68: 10), and that "the righteous considereth the cause of the poor" (Proverbs 29: 7). Christ's mission, in short, is to identify with the poor and the oppressed. Hence Nietzsche's association of Christianity with "slave morality." The message that the Christian God is the God of the oppressed was enthusiastically espoused by Christians of the earliest phase who were persecuted in Rome. In recent history, a similar line of argument has been rigorously championed by the black theology of liberation in South Africa. In both cases, the church come down militantly on the side of the poor and Christian doctrine was employed to subvert the power and authority of the state (Sparks 281). Bishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu, for example, declared in 1981 in front of the commission of inquiry into the affairs of the South African Council of Churches that "The God of the Exodus is subversive of all situations of injustice." "We are involved with God to set us free from all that enslaves us and make us less than what He intended us to be. . . . I will demonstrate that apartheid, separate development, or whatever it is called is evil, totally and without remainder, that it is *unchristian* and *unbiblical*" (my italics).<sup>[1]</sup> For Tutu and other liberation theologians, as Sparks points out, "the story of Exodus is a paradigm, not for the liberation of a chosen people, but for all who are oppressed. In this sense it is the *oppressed and underprivileged* everywhere who are chosen, who are the children of Israel" (Sparks 291; my italics).
4. This is to say, while there are cynics who simply appropriate Christianity and use it "pathologically" (in the Kantian and Lacanian sense) in the service of the Western colonial enterprise, there are also Christians who genuinely believe that "The Spirit of the

Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Luke 4: 18). It is obvious how a "pathological" use of Christianity can easily transform it into an apparatus for legitimizing the colonial state, but the case is far more complicated with those sincere exponents of Christian morals. Christianity, of course, has motivated many charitable acts toward the Africans. Scholars such as G. C. Oosthuizen, Allister Sparks, Lyn S. Grayhill, Johann Kinghorn, Martin Prozeksy, and Charles Villa-Vicencio offer ample documentations on that point.<sup>[2]</sup> Even John Chavafambira, who is so bitter against the missionaries in *Black Anger*, has warm memories of "the kindly missionary" (75). So does his fellow African, the "educated, cultured" N'Komo, who "speak[s] gratefully about the work of the Eduletini Mission in feeding the Blacktown children of school age, left out of the government program of providing tuppence-a-day lunches in the schools" (296). However, the pure, non-pathological Christian doctrines which impel these acts of charity can also produce pass laws and other sadistic colonial policy, as John Chavafambira articulates so eloquently both to Sachs and at the meeting with his fellow black Africans. To draw an analogy from Lacan's "*Kant avec Sade*," the purity of the categorical imperative commanding the strictest moral behavior can also enjoin sadistic *jouissance*.<sup>[3]</sup>

5. Instead of adding yet another piece to the already existing bulk of scholarship on the "pathological" alliance between Christianity and the colonial state, my study of religion and colonialism will focus on a more challenging question: namely, how a "non-pathological" or "pure" form of Christianity can still end up giving Africans pass laws along with Jesus, and taking away their land while offering them the kingdom of heaven. <sup>[4]</sup> My essay, in other words, will be devoted to a close scrutiny of Christianity in its *pure* and *disinterested* form. It will examine what it is *internal* to Christianity that can *potentially* pervert it from its own "truth." My point is, even before we can talk about the complicity between Christianity and colonialism, we must first confront the question: what kind of mechanism is there *internal* to Christianity that allows these *external* corruptions to occur *in the first place*? A great deal of effort has been devoted in current cultural studies and post-colonial writings to exploring the symbiotic and mutually exploitative relationship between Christianity and state power. But these studies leave unanswered the question *how Christianity--originally a religion of the oppressed--can, in certain historical circumstances, play itself into the hands of the oppressor*. To translate this problematic into Lacanian terms, the Church's discovery of its own role in furthering the cause of colonial power can be seen as a case of the subject encountering the truth of itself from its other in inverted form. Yet one crucial issue still needs to be addressed: *how does that inversion come about*? Using Wulf Sachs's *Black Anger* as my point of departure, I will address these issues by focusing on the role played by Christianity in the colonial government's brutal displacement of the natives from their land. My analysis will draw significantly from Hegel's diagnosis of the "perversion" of the Kingdom of Heaven when it departs from ethics-as-praxis and creates an abstract moral system. This distinction follows the well-known Aristotelian-Hegelian definition of ethics as a practical way of conducting one's life and a direct engagement with human affairs and the social-political world, as opposed to morality which is an abstract system of codes and formal principles.



## I. Reformed Deformed: The Christian "Other World" in a Worldly Context

6. Let me begin by focusing on the opinion voiced by John on religion and politics in a meeting he holds with his fellow Africans:

"We used to talk a lot about Christians. Even now we do. We don't think a lot of Christians. We don't believe in Jesus. We used to pray in olden times to our native god, and to the *midzimu*, for rain. It always helped. Now we pray to Jesus and rain never comes. We have no corn, no land, nothing. We all hate the Christians; they talk, talk, and nothing comes to us from it. I am only waiting to go home and learn how to pray to our god and will never pray to Jesus, and won't be a Christian any more. I became a Christian when I was quite small. I was still stupid. My mother was a Christian and also my second father, and all the children were baptized. My children were not baptized and never will be. My father also does not believe any more in Christianity. He became a native doctor. The Christian priests are even so bad [he probably meant stupid] that they are against native doctors and native medicines. When a missionary comes to our houses at home, they chase him away. Nobody wants to talk to them. In the kraals nobody wants to be a Christian any more. Why should they be? [And here he became rather agitated.] The white people came to our country, it is the natives' country [he was emphatic about it], took everything away from us--the land, the cattle--and made us work. We cannot move without a pass, have to pay taxes; and they have given us Jesus. We don't want him. . . ." (Sachs 106)

For John, Christianity is a religion of *abstract* and *empty* talk. Instead of responding to the needs of the Africans, the white man's religion leads blacks into further destitution. Jesus, unlike the *midzimu* (ancestral spirit), never responds to the Africans' supplication for rain. Instead of offering them help when they are faced with illness and disasters, the Christian priests attack the native doctors and medicines which provide the main source of healing for the Africans. Christianity is even implicated in the white oppression of the blacks in such phenomena as pass laws, tax collection, and the white man's seizure of the Africans' land and other resources.

7. Even though most Europeans would share Wulf Sachs's skepticism toward the African spiritual beings and spirits, it is not surprising that John, like his fellow Africans, should still trust the powers of the *midzimu* rather than Jesus. In African societies rain is regarded as a great blessing, since the entire livelihood of the people depends on it (Mbiti

234). However, the Christian missions condemn rainmaking not only because it is a "vile imposture" and a form of pagan worship (see Chidester 40; Comaroff I, 209-13), but also because Christianity prioritizes the "true bread from heaven" above the bread on earth (John 6: 32, 58). Jesus admonishes the people "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (St. John 6: 27). Following the spirit of Jesus, Paul urges that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink" (Romans 14: 17). It is not surprising that the Africans are sceptical about Jesus's power to grant rain, since Christianity downplays the importance of life and nourishment on earth in the first place.

8. What the Christians have ignored is not merely "the complexities of [African] ontology"<sup>[5]</sup> in the ritual of rainmaking, as the Comaroffs tell us, but also the *ethical* dimension of this ritual--in which the bonds of the Africans to their ancestors and the ancestral spirits' direct intervention into the present generation's daily lives and conduct are visibly reaffirmed. This ethical dimension, which has escaped the notice of the Comaroffs, is yet evident in the details of their report:

The *ancestral rainpots* of the chief might have stored the essence of his ritual potency, and rainmakers might have known how to release that essence in order to activate the clouds. But their power was said to work only when *the community was in a state of moral rectitude*, a state of "coolness" (*tsididi*). Any breach of proper relations among humans, or between them and the nonhuman realm, might pollute this order, generating heat and drying up the rain. The ritual expert was the mediator between the living and the potent dead. He "made" the rain only insofar as he ensured that the condition of the social world met the requirements of *ancestral beneficence*--in particular, by removing the pollution that closed up the heavens. (I, 210; my italics)

The rainmaking ritual is crucial to reasserting communal values and ethical bonds which include both the living and the dead. The dead, far from being forgotten, play a major role in the physical, moral, and spiritual well-being of the community. The presence of the dead is strongly felt as they oversee the direct and immediate relationship between the moral and physical well-being of the community. They punish any breach of propriety or ethics by refusing rain to the living. The ethical and the physical, the dead and the living, exist in strict *continuity* with each other. This heavy emphasis on kinship, ethics, and communal life is a far cry from Christ, who taught that all ethical bonds--both the family, natural ethical life, and politics, public ethical life--are superseded by the duty owed to the Kingdom of Heaven. To a youth who wishes to delay the duties of discipleship until he has buried his father, Christ says, "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead. . . . He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 8: 21-22 and 10: 37).

9. Christianity as an "*other-worldly*" religion thus abstracts morality from its grounding in a concrete ethical context. This abstract moral system has the advantage of liberating individuals from external *worldly* authorities, and as such constitutes everyone as pure, formal subject, "equal before God."<sup>[6]</sup> As Hegel points out:

The [Christian] subjectivity which has come to understand its infinite worth has thereby abandoned all distinctions of authority, power, position and even of race; before God all men are equal. It is in the negation of infinite sorrow that love is found, and there, too, is found the possibility and the root of truly universal right, of the realization of freedom. (*Religion* III, 105/II, 303; translation adopted from Rose 115)

This abstract morality, in other words, should make it possible for the Africans to contest colonialism. This is why the "calm and dignified" speaker at the meeting of African elites makes his appeal for justice in Christian language: "God did not measure out the heart and brain according to the color of a man's skin . . . all men--blacks as well as whites--are equal before God" (161-62). [7] How, then, does the same abstract moral system used to contest colonialism also make possible the justification of this enterprise? According to the same speaker in *Black Anger*, this inconsistency is simply a product of the lies and hypocrisy of the white politicians who manipulate Christianity at their convenience in the interest of their domination:

The white politicians are telling lies, they are hypocrites when they talk of civilization. . . . God did not measure out the heart and brain according to the color of a man's skin. I don't think the white people really believe in the inherent inferiority of our race. That statement is but a salve to the white conscience. For consider: the same white people teach us that all men--blacks as well as whites--are equal before God, when they want us to become Christians. It is only when we want more money, better work, better opportunities that our black skin becomes such a hindrance to us. (161-62)

In my view, however, the fact that politicians can manipulate Christian doctrines to support their cause at their own convenience has to do with a potential for contradictions *internal* to the abstract moral system of Christianity in the first place. By separating the City of God from the City of Man, by opposing the kingdom of heaven to the kingdom on earth--evident in Christ's admonition "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's"--Christianity abstracts itself from both just and unjust politics, and as such makes itself susceptible to the manipulations of both. [8] It leaves itself wide open to conflicting interpretations and political manipulation precisely because "subjectivity, as God and as man, has no determination in it" (Rose 116). By abstracting itself from concrete ethical and political circumstances, Christian doctrine has justified both the evil and the just acts committed in its name. [9]

10. When the Church finds itself in a corrupted polity, it can be rendered powerless to contest evil by the divorce of the Kingdom of God from the Empire of Caesar. Of course, the separation of the City of God from any specific ethical and political structure makes possible the abstract universality of Christian freedom. But this is a freedom so purely formal, universal, and so other-worldly that this "freedom for all" cannot be realized in any particular state. The Church and Christian freedom can thus exist alongside the violation of freedom and justice in the human world. The idea that all human beings are equal before God does not guarantee that they are equal in front of any worldly political structure, if one were to take seriously Jesus's injunction "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Nor does this "cosmopolitan idea of freedom" have much



power to reaffirm the freedom of the human individuals in specific political and social circumstances, since this notion of freedom does not "[recognize] ethical life as divine, as true, but rejects it as corrupt and remains in the agony, the passion, of religious and political dualism, of religious separation and political domination" (Rose 116). Even worse, the Christian notion of the spiritual freedom of all human beings helps gloss over inequality in social and political reality by *re-presenting* and *re-producing* that inequality in terms of the merely formal or external equality of all in worship, and in the equal right of all to serve (the white man's) God. This way, "the religion which is potentially the realization of substantial freedom . . . becomes the religion of real bondage, a religion of political misrepresentation" (Rose 114, 116).

11. Despite Christian theology's other-worldly, "politically neutral" stance toward this world, the existence (and prosperity) of the Church is determined by the particular social and political context in which it operates. This context, as Hegel points out, consists of privileges and rights which are not encoded in abstract, universal law but are based on the "laws" of the particular state in question (*History* 345/417-18). The property of the Church, its legal power and much of its spiritual authority, depend on this political base. The Church becomes necessarily implicated in the state order in which it is established, since the Church's own power and authority are made possible by the power and the law of the state in the first place. As Gillian Rose explains: "to act is to act in the world on the basis of desire and goals. Hence the very individuality which virtue claims it wants to harness is exercised. In this way non-worldly virtue preserves its enemy--its own desire, pleasure and action, its individuality, in the world" (170). In Hegel's words:

[Abstract] virtue . . . is conquered by the "way of the world" because its purpose is, in fact, the abstract, unreal *essence*, and because its action as regards reality rests on distinctions which are purely nominal. It wanted to consist in bringing the good into actual existence by the sacrifice of individuality, but the side of reality is itself nothing else but the side of individuality. (*Phenomenology* 233)

In its attempt to carry out its vocation, the Church finds itself re-formed by the preconditions of its own power--that is, by the power of the state (Rose 164). Which is to say, the Church becomes re-formed by the ethical and political state of affairs which it fails to acknowledge. The paradoxical consequence of this bad faith is that it necessarily recreates and reaffirms the very state of affairs which it seeks to transform.<sup>[10]</sup> In the process of establishing itself as an *outside*, otherworldly authority on the *inside* of the state, the abstract moral system of the Church, far from having the power to reform the social order, ends up being "re-formed" or, better yet, "de-formed" by the specific *content* of the political order (Rose 164). Interestingly enough, Hegel uses the term "inversion" to describe this false "reconciliation" between the "alien spirit" (the Church) and the world. This "reconciliation" is itself the result of the unity of a misrepresenting consciousness and a lawless world:

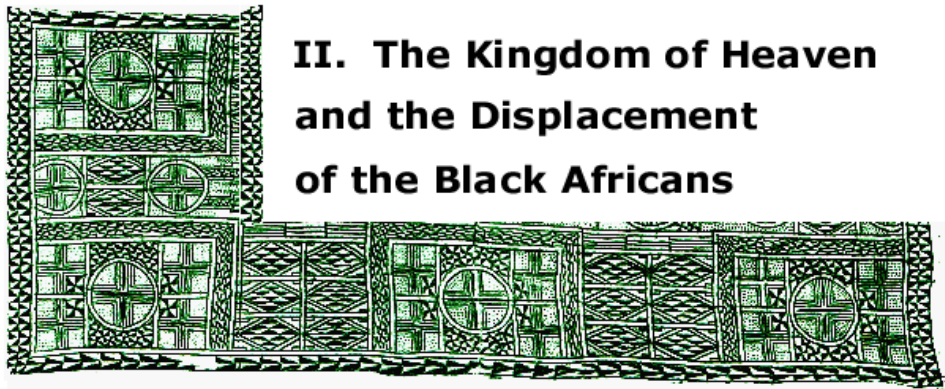
It is this absolute and universal inversion and alienation of the actual world and of thought; it is *pure culture*. What is learnt in this world is that neither the *actuality* of power and wealth, nor their specific *Notions*, "good" and "bad," or the consciousness of "good" and "bad" (the noble and the ignoble consciousness), possess truth; on the

contrary, all these moments become inverted, one changing into the other, and each is the opposite of itself. . . . *The thoughts of these two essences, of "good" and "bad," are similarly inverted in this movement; what is characterized as good is bad, and vice versa* [my italics]. (*Phenomenology*, 316-17/385)

12. We can see here the reason why the Church is capable of lending support to the colonial cause even as it inculcates the practice of Christian virtues. This is how the Church can side with the oppressor even as it claims without any conscious duplicity to be doing otherwise. This is how, in Lacanian terms, the Church receives the truth of its own message from its colonial other in its *inverted* form. In Hegel's formulation:

From a *formal* standpoint, everything is *outwardly* the reverse of what it is *for itself*. . . . The honest individual takes each moment to be an abiding essentiality, and is the uneducated thoughtlessness of not knowing that it is *equally doing the reverse*. (*Phenomenology*, 317/385; my italics)

13. It is therefore no accident, as Gillian Rose points out in her reading of Hegel, that "the history of the Christian religion is the history of its relation to secular power and to ethical life, and this history is the history of the perversion of the Christian ideal of freedom." Long before colonialism, Christianity had already been involved in a whole series of corrupted worldly powers, such as the Roman institutions and the feudal property forms and political institutions.[\[11\]](#)



### A. Christianity and African Religions: Land as Profane and Land as Sacred



14. The moment when the truth of the Christian "Kingdom of Heaven" gets returned to itself by its colonial other in its inverted form materializes concretely in the missionaries' role

in "giv[ing] a new religion, but help[ing] to take away the land" (189). John's indictment of this double role bears repeating:

The white people came to our country, it is the natives' country [he was emphatic about it], took everything away from us--the land, the cattle--and made us work. We cannot move without a pass, have to pay taxes; and they have given us Jesus. We don't want him. (106)

John's association of the missionaries with the loss of land and the imposition of the pass law is by no means merely arbitrary. Since Christianity valorizes the Kingdom of Heaven at the expense of the kingdom on earth, any land not associated with the Christian God is not considered sacred, and is grouped with other worldly goods that can be bought and sold in the market. This contrasts markedly with the African worldview, in which land is sacred and communal--and individual ownership or sale of land is unknown. The Christian redefinition of land as secular, as individual property rather than the very embodiment of the community itself, lays the legal and conceptual groundwork for the alienation of land from the natives and its acquisition by the colonizer.

15. By *placing* its primary reality in the Other World, Christianity hastens the *dis-placement* of the Africans from their world. By downplaying the importance of ethical bonds, the Christian missionaries fail to appreciate that for the South Africans, land and community are inseparable, woven together as they are in the matrix of tribal society. Unlike Christians, the natives do not separate the sacred from the ethical and the communal. The following account by Allister Sparks reveals how the land is the source of both the sacred and the ethical for the South Africans:

The land was revered in ritual, it held the bodies of the tribal ancestors, it was the concentration of the tribe itself, the thing that gave it life and substance and security and identity. It could not be owned individually. It was held by the tribe collectively and vested in the chief, who could allocate its use but not its title. (20)

Land is sacred for the Africans precisely because it is closely related to, instead of being the opposite of, "worldly concerns" such as livelihood and ethical ties. Even the dead are tied to the land and communal life instead of being transported to the Other World. The subsistence economy among the natives creates an intense, lifelong passion for land, because "land means security" (Sparks 20). This form of economy and the need to stay close together for survival also produce a strong communal spirit--a communal bond sanctified and secured by the land itself.

16. Christianity, on the other hand, has a very different politics regarding land which renders the missionaries rather insensitive to the social disruption and psychological trauma caused by the dispossession of land to the natives. From its inception, Christianity has been a religion "on the road." It is not an exaggeration to call the Biblical narrative a long history of exiles, beginning with a lost paradise and the long human struggle to regain paradise. This constant motion is further complicated by the movement of Christianity from Judaism into a world religion, from a closed world with only local significance to a

religion determined to reach out into the entire world and incorporate it within the universality of Christian Truth. The Bible presents us with scene upon scene of expulsions, expansions, and returns to the Promised Land. This ceaseless motion does not even stop at death. The Christian soul must still journey from the human world to Heaven or Hell. The Christian religion is hence a religion of hyper-motion, continuously motivated by its multiple stories of spiritual as well as physical quests and conquests.

17. African religions, by contrast, both reflect and enhance the intense bonding of their adherents to their land. The role of religion is precisely that of ensuring its members their *place* in, rather than their *dis-placement* from, the land. For Africans, it is this assurance that relieves them of their anxiety about the future, since people will not be displaced from their community even when they die. As Wulf Sachs points out,

When people die, they become *midzimu*, and continue to live in the places in which they lived in the flesh. They actually continue to live, only in a different way, and are in constant and intimate contact with the living. The dead and the living form a chain which must not be broken. (107)

In other words, the idea of "departing from this world" is foreign to the Africans, even when they die. By ritualistically reaffirming the tribe's bonds to the land, African religions provide solace and security not only to those about to die. They also guarantee the living the continuous blessings of their elders. John Chavafambira, for example, continues to benefit from the support and guardianship of his parents after their death. Wulf Sachs reports:

Father and mother, though dead, remained accessible to him [John] whenever he was in need of them. They were as omniscient as God, but in a concrete and tangible form. The *midzimu* even lived in their former huts in the kraal, according to John's conception. (21)

Although dead, John's parents remain in his vicinity, since they "even [live] in their former huts in the kraal." This contrasts dramatically with both the Western concept of the dead as "irretrievably gone," and God (the Father) the only Protector of humankind presiding in the kingdom of Heaven which is absolutely divided from the human world, and whose face no human being can see.

18. Land, in other words, is that which holds the African communities together through generations and helps them survive trauma and disasters. Land is sacred and "revered in rituals," since it "[holds] the bodies of the tribal ancestors, it [is] the concentration of the tribe itself," and "the thing that gave it life and substance and security and identity" (Sparks 20). Within tribal cultures, land is absolutely inalienable and cannot be brought or sold. By imposing on the Africans the notion of the "reality" of the Other World versus the "vanity" of this world, the Christian missionaries, as John points out, have helped glossed over the anguish of the Africans when being displaced from their land (189). Sachs's description reveals the trauma the Africans experience when facing the prospect of losing their land:

To leave the soil from which they had sprung, where the stones, the trees and the flowers, the very blades of grass, spoke to each one of his life, his childhood games, his loves, his work! To tear them away would be to leave a bleeding wound on them and in their land; to rend a man from the land on which his ancestors had lived and in which his parents were buried was to commit a crime screaming to heaven for vengeance. (253)

Already lacking a spirit of acquisitiveness due to their subsistence economy (Sparks 20), the Africans are further demoralized by this cruel displacement. As Sachs puts it, "Life in the kraal became paralyzed. The land were left untended. Why till fields that at any moment they might be ordered to leave?" (253).

## **B. The Politics of World Religion versus Tribal Religion**



19. Christianity plays a role in the alienation of the Africans from their land in yet another way. Christianity is a world religion, whereas African religions are tribal and local. For Africans, religion provides the rituals through which individuals become integrated into the community. Every tribal religion is "bound and limited to the people among whom it has evolved," and as such confers upon the tribe its own unique identity. Members of a tribe would fight to defend the land which holds the identity, substance, and ancestral bodies of the tribe. However, they would not fight to take over the land of other tribes just to convert them to their own tribal religion.<sup>[12]</sup> This orientation toward self-preservation rather than expansion can be seen in *Black Anger* when Sachs is told that tribal medicine is not only useless against white men but sometimes even useless beyond one's tribe. Devoid of a concept of history "moving `forward' toward a future climax, or towards an end of the world" (Mbiti 29), the Africans focus on the past and the present rather than the future (Mbiti 28), desire security rather than change, stability rather than movement, conquest, and expansion. By contrast, Christianity as a world religion has as its goal the conversion of the entire world to its own God. Christianity's messianic hope and apocalyptic vision of the Last Judgment renders this mission all the more urgent. To assert itself as a universal religion, Christianity needs first of all to universalize itself actively and to expand beyond its own geographical domain in the world. The Christians' will to bring God's universal grace, ordering, and reason to the Dark Continent plays an important role in rationalizing Western colonialism, at the same time as these non-Western "others" come to be known and possessed within Christian universality. At the theoretical level, there is nothing wrong with *dis-placing* the Africans from their own land since Christianity is *re-placing* them in the Kingdom of Heaven--supposedly a much better Kingdom, and the only "true" Kingdom. <sup>[13]</sup> The fact that the missionaries "[have] given a new religion, but [have] helped to take away the land" (Sachs 189) hence does not necessarily give rise to any moral contradiction.

## C. Heaven and Hell: Displacing and Re-placing the Natives



### 1. The Racial Politics of the "After-World": Heaven and Hell

20. "Why had God made such a difference between people? Why could all men who had white skin have dresses and money and go to the cinemas?" (Sachs 135). Ironically, John is thinking these very thoughts when he suddenly finds himself arrested for being in the streets without a special pass at eleven p.m. In his meditations, John associates the laws restricting black presence throughout the land of South Africa with the ultimate Law-Giver in the Christian Bible--namely, God. In other words, John is clearly establishing a close connection between Christianity and racial segregation.
21. Despite Christianity's separation of the Kingdom of God from the Kingdom of Caesar, the connection John establishes between Christianity and racial segregation is not entirely irrational. With the religious geography of Heaven and Hell all people are extracted from their respective "place" in their original social and cultural contexts, and reassigned another "place" in the Christian Kingdom, along a faultline strictly dividing the believers from the pagans, the (morally) superior from the inferior, the saved from the damned. The Land Act and pass laws in South Africa bear a structural resemblance to Christianity's project of "deterritorialization and reterritorialization." These laws remove everyone in South Africa from their original national and social contexts, and reallocate them to new physical and social spaces. This new geography creates a faultline dividing whites from blacks--allowing a re-definition of "rightful owners of the land" and "aliens" along lines of racial difference. Both Christianity and the South African colonial government, in other words, involve their subjects in a project of "deterritorialization and reterritorialization." Some interesting phenomena arise when these two projects cross paths at some point. The complex intersection of religion, place, and race draws our attention to questions such as: how does the Christian topography of the After-World (Heaven and Hell) reproduce and reinforce the racial hierarchy? How does the concept of Heaven and Hell take part in the constitution and revision of racial identities? How do the placing of humankind in Heaven and Hell according to their moral status, and the demarcation of land on earth between whites and blacks, the civilized and the sinful/the criminal, overlap each other?
22. Christianity's project of deterritorializing and reterritorializing human beings according to their moral status is on the face of it subversive of the racial geography, since "God did not measure out the heart and brain according to the color of a man's skin. . . . [A]ll men--blacks as well as whites--are equal before God" (Sachs 161-62). However, as Gillian Rose points out, "the predominance of specific social relations"--colonialism in the case of South Africa--"changes the meaning of the [Church's abstract] re-forming intent,

changes it into a reinforcement of that order in all its lawlessness and barbarism" (164). Heaven and Hell as they "exist" abstractly in the Other World, dividing the virtuous from the sinful, the saved from the damned, can easily be appropriated to separate the racial categories of whites and blacks. After all, the believers--those who are saved--are by and large white, whereas Africans are mostly pagans. Hell is mainly for the dark-skinned, since they are *midzimu*--and idol-worshippers--and as such are evil and ungodly.

23. Just as God separates the sinful from the virtuous, the white colonial government of South Africa uses "moral" categories as one of the grounds for segregating the blacks from the whites. Pass laws, for example, are instituted to exclude "undesirable Africans likely to be a menace to the white community" (Sachs 135). The white colonizers also condemn Africans for being rapists and criminals; it is for the sake of "protect[ing] their mothers and sisters," so they claim, that "the Africans must be kept down" (Sachs 162).<sup>[14]</sup> This is to say, the colonial government appeals to moral categories to legitimize racial segregation--moral categories which are easily translatable into sociological categories such as "good citizens" versus "criminals" used to legitimize racial segregation. Even though the Kingdom of Heaven is in principle open to all who are righteous, the white Kingdom on Earth has decided that the virtuous and the vicious are divided along the racial lines of white and black. Since the Church must exist and operate in a specific human, political context, the Bible's attempt to re-form the world can easily get de-formed by that world. Christianity's abstract morality is vulnerable to co-optation by the secular world's political agenda. The Bible's admonition "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19: 24) can easily get rewritten as "it is easier for a *white* camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a *black* man to enter into the kingdom of God." The Kingdom of Heaven not only hides the race issue but further advances the white race as morally superior and as God's favorite precisely in its (non-pathological) focus on people's spiritual merits instead of earthly attributes such as racial heritage.
24. As a result of the South African colonial government's determination to separate out the "evil elements" in the population who are "likely to be a menace to the white community" (Sachs 135), the Land Act was passed in 1913 (Sachs 160), restricting the acquisition of land by blacks--who comprise about 70 per cent of the population--except in designated "reserve" areas that constituted roughly 13% of the entire country (Festenstein and Pickard-Cambridge 73, Lipton 18).<sup>[15]</sup> The land assigned to the natives were not only insufficient in quantity but also mostly poor in quality. Even worse, while the natives were ejected from land assigned for European occupancy, white men were not compelled to remove from land allocated to Natives. The state also discriminated in the allocation of state services: "of the taxes paid by Natives a proportionate return does not come back to them in the provision of educational facilities and similar advantages" (Oldham 172). At a stroke, the indigenous black population were transformed into aliens in a country that now belonged only to whites (Sparks 136). The black South African writer Sol T. Plaatje describes the blacks' "exodus" from their homeland: "South Africa has by law ceased to be the home of any of her native children whose skins are dyed with a pigment that does not conform with the regulation hue" (83).
25. While the Christian topography of Heaven and Hell displaces the blacks from their tribal communities on earth to their "proper place" according to the universality of Judgment before God, the Land Act and the pass laws also displace the natives from their kraals to

their "proper place" in the "world court of universal humanity"--the secular, enlightenment analogue of Christian universality. The Land Act allow the natives to stay in town only if they are servants of white men. When Sachs and John arrive in Johannesburg from Manyikaland, Sachs cannot consider hosting John because the latter is not registered as his servant:

He could not stay in my home; the law prohibited any African to remain on the premises of a white man unless registered as a domestic servant.  
(276)[16]

In fact, as Sparks points out, the Land Act has much to do with entrapping the blacks as virtual slaves for the whites. It was by "prohibit[ing] the further purchase of land by blacks, put[ting] a stop to the tenant and sharecropping systems," thereby removing the natives' "foothold of independence" that the Land Act succeeded in pouring "nearly a million blacks back into the captive labour pool" (Sparks 141):

The Land Act had created a landless peasantry and forced it to become a captive labor force; a complex set of pass laws had prohibited the blacks from moving about to selling their labour on a free market and classified those who were unemployed as vagrants; the Master and Servants Act had made the breach of a labour contract a criminal offence; and the Mines and Works Act prevented blacks from doing skilled work in the mines. Together this body of laws had set up the framework for a system of exploitative racial capitalism, much of it put in place by previous administrations which the English had supported. (Sparks 191)

This is to say, the Land Act not only reassigns the Africans a new physical space. It also "reterritorializes" them to a new social space. From being chiefs or members of their tribal communities, they move to the station of black slaves serving white men. This reallocation process is made possible by the displacement of the blacks from their local attachment to "universal humanity." The injustice of this racial inequality can be glossed over by *re-presenting* and *re-coding* inequality on earth as spiritual equality of all in front of God. This is indeed one way how the abstract "spiritual freedom and equality" of Christianity is vulnerable to the exploitation of the colonial state. This ideological re-coding process, however, is reversed and *de-coded* by black writers such as Frantz Fanon, who exposes the racial inequality behind Christianity's "spiritual equality." In "The Woman of Color and the White Man," Fanon tells a story which illustrates how the complex of racial-social hierarchy can be reimported back to a Heaven which theoretically has erased all inequalities:

One day St. Peter saw three men arrive at the gate of heaven: a white man, a mulatto, and a Negro.

"What do you want?" he asked the white man.

"Money."

"And you?" he asked the mulatto.

"Fame."



St. Peter turned then to the Negro, who said with a wide smile: "I'm just carrying these gentlemen's bags." (49)

Fanon demystifies the supposedly equal right of all races to enter the Kingdom of Heaven by revealing how social hierarchy is smuggled back into God's kingdom along racial lines. Just as the Land Act allows black men "to drift into the towns where they could stay only if they were going to serve the white men's needs" (Sparks 137), Fanon's black man is allowed into Heaven only because he is there to carry luggage for the white man and the mulatto. In fact, the "Negro" should feel grateful just for being made the white man's valet. Had it not been for his obligation to follow his master and carry his luggage, even after his death, he would never have had the chance of setting his foot in the Kingdom of Heaven.

26. To ensure that blacks are constantly reminded of their "proper place," the white colonial government implements a long list of pass laws. Sachs provides us with the following inventory:

Every African man must be in possession of a pass. Without it he cannot look for work, travel, move from kraal to town or appear on the streets between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. The police have the right to demand a pass from any African and it is *an offense to refuse to produce it*. In Transvaal an African man must on various occasions carry, in all, eleven passes issued by the authorities, who have discretionary powers to refuse an African the required pass.

The eleven passes are: A pass that entitles the African to travel, enter, or live in the province. A pass from the employer that has to be registered with the police every month. A pass from the owner of his kraal-land. A permit to enter an urban area. A permit to seek work. A service contract. A permit to live in specific parts of the town. A visitor's permit if the African is on a visit to his parents or relatives. A lodger's permit if he hires a room. And, finally, the curfew pass, given by the employer, that entitles the African to appear on the streets between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. (96; my italics)

Note that any native's *refusal* to produce a pass to the police is construed as a criminal offence. The word "refusal," however, is misleading. Later in the book, we find that a native's mere *negligence* with his passes constitutes sufficient grounds for his/her arrest and prosecution. John, for example, is arrested for walking on the streets at eleven p.m. without a special pass:

He realized that he was in Eloff Street, the main artery of the town. Beside him was drawn up a yellow van, netted as if for the transport of poultry. Without ceremony or explanation, he was hustled into this dreaded "pick-up van," used for collecting Africans who were drunk or were without passes or specials that would entitle them to be in the streets after nine at night, or any undesirable Africans likely to be a menace to the white community.

Only at the police station did John realize his crime. He had been in the streets at eleven p.m. without a special pass; and for the next thirty-six hours he was imprisoned in a cell with many others as unfortunate as himself. (135)

Natives who neglect their place redefined for them by their white masters are immediately transformed by their masters' law into a "criminal." The power of the white colonial state, the helplessness of the black natives, and *the "proper place" of the blacks*, are ritualistically reaffirmed in a most dramatic manner at the moment of accusation. The accused finds himself/herself wrenched from his/her "African" sense of life, his/her "stereotyped" identity as a black being immediately intensified from a "born" sinner to a "born" criminal, from the damned to the condemned. Any slight negligence gets instantaneously transformed, first into criminal behavior, and then into a "reconfirmation" of criminality as a racial identity. The construction of the native individual as a criminal is inseparable from the construction of the criminal both doctrinally and culturally as a racialized person.

27. Just as pagans who don't submit themselves to the law of the Christian God are judged a peril to humanity and hence members of the "damned," blacks who don't properly obey pass laws are immediately criminalized as "undesirable Africans likely to be a menace to the white community" (Sachs 135). Despite Christianity's separation of the Kingdom in Heaven and the Kingdom on earth, it is obvious that the former reflects and shares the latter's racial political geography. In both cases, they remove the natives from their original context only to reassign them their "proper places" after subjecting them to the Judgment of "Universal Truth" as the white man possesses it. Blacks are allowed into heaven, just as they are allowed into the cities, but they are constantly reminded that they do not really belong there and that the sole reason they have been allowed in is to serve the white man.
28. In either this world or "the Other World," natives will be severely punished should they not learn their places. Sparks tells us, for example, "[w]hen blacks first began arriving in Johannesburg a Transvaal *Volksraad* law prohibited them from walking on the pavements and required them to doff their hats off to white women on the street":

That fell away, but the attitude behind it remained--the belief that the black person should know his place, that he did not really belong in the city and was there only to serve the white person's needs, that every black person was potentially available to do the white's bidding. (142)

The seriousness of the South African government in enforcing this kind of "slave morality" through their racial geography is evident from the miserable fate of those blacks who either out of negligence or ignorance demonstrate that they do not "know [their] place." John Chavafambira, for example, is haunted from time to time by dreadful memories of "a young native boy beaten by his employer, a garage foreman, or a native woman thrown off the pavements because she did not give way quickly enough to a European, the continuous interference of the police, and the prisoners who were escorted daily from the court to the jail" (76). Through his mistress Edith, he discovers that this

master/slave geography is more extensive and inescapable than he thought. Edith tells John that the color bar "was applied not only in respect to work, but even in pleasure":

One who was not white could not ride in a tram, nor enter a tearoom or restaurant, nor travel in a decent coach in the train, nor visit the theater or movies--save for the few dirty, tumbledown movies, vermin-infested and uncomfortable, that were open "for natives only." (78)

These, as Edith explains to John, are part of "the evil of transition from the kraal to the town"--of the transition from the Africans' traditional tribal religion and custom to Western religion and law (78).

29. Of course, many Europeans have been sympathetic to the plight of the natives. Yet from the black Africans' point-of-view, the whites who offer the natives verbal sympathy are like the door of the Christian's Kingdom of Heaven: both of which are open to the natives principally on an abstract level. As soon as the situation demands an application of these abstract ideas to reality, the story often takes a different turn. Tembu, a friend of John's and an African intellectual, gives the following account of his visit to a "liberal" European: "We discussed the new native bills that, by abolishing the Cape franchise, are depriving us of the last vestige of human rights. Our host was indignant in his protest." However, "while we talked I had need to leave the room":

You know. Our host took me to the servants' quarters outside, to a dirty, foul-smelling latrine. On our way there we had to pass a similar place in the house. It was clean, well kept, not like the other. (Sachs 223)

Tembu ends this episode by addressing Sachs, who prides himself as a "white"[\[17\]](#) liberal eager to help the Africans: "I ask you, Doctor: What are we to think?" (223).

30. So, where exactly are the "proper places" for the blacks in colonial South Africa? According to the white man's racial geography, it seems that the most appropriate places for blacks are the same as those fit for animals. Sachs himself provides several descriptions of places "reserved" for natives only. Sachs's figurative language emphasizes the way these places dehumanize the natives. Upon John's first arrival at the Johannesburg Station, he and his family get squeezed into the small portion of the long platform for non-Europeans "like cattle into a dip" (70). The "pick-up van" used for collecting Africans drunk or without passes is "netted as if for the transport of poultry" (135).
31. If only human beings are made in God's image and are "qualified" for God's redemption scheme, then the proper place in the After-World for the black men--who are not quite human--is likely to be that of Hell. The natives suffer from all kinds of indignities and discrimination both in their work place and the public sphere generally. Even their residential space offers no respite: if anything, it is their residential environment which sounds, looks, and smells most concretely like Hell materialized on earth. In *Black Anger*, the "accommodations" John manages to find all have a nightmarish quality. After John returns to Johannesburg from Kroonstad, for example, he tries looking for a room:

"This was more difficult than he had anticipated, for hundreds and hundreds of natives were being expelled each month from one or other urban locality, and one wanted to go to the townships and locations outside the town." The Land Act deprives the natives of any living space appropriate for a human being. After much difficulty he got a room in Swartyard (116):

Swartyard was a triangular area of about a thousand square yards where stood a hundred or more ramshackle rooms, built of corrugated iron and thin wooden planks. The rooms were built in three or four rows, with very little space between, and intersected by three narrow alleyways. Two huge garbage bins, serving the whole yard and constantly overflowing, flanked the narrow entrance. From them an unbearable stench permeated the whole place. There were six latrines, in a shocking state of neglect and disrepair, and totally inadequate for the five hundred souls that used them. The children did not bother to use them, as the alleyways inside and the pavement outside showed. In dry weather the yard was littered with refuse; in the rains the place was a quagmire. Repeated requests by the inhabitants themselves, and by the health inspector, that the area be cemented remained unheeded. In the whole yard there was one solitary tap of running water. (117)

John's residence in Blacktown is in no better condition. In addition to being extremely unsanitary and dilapidated, the ghetto is surrounded by a spiked fence and patrolled by black guards to ensure the seclusion of this native Hell from the outside world:

Everything looked especially dreary on the Sunday morning in September 1940 when, summoned by John, I came to Blacktown. I had just come through the noisome stench of sewerage farms that adjoined the location. The stench was still in my nostrils when I was stopped at the high gates to Blacktown, and my entry permit was demanded by the uniformed black guards who stood there. No one--black or white--who did not live inside those spike iron fences could enter Blacktown. . . .

In the dust and wind of that Sunday morning the dirty rows of brick houses, scattered in colorless uniformity along streets that bore no names, looked forlorn. The small square windows looked like the expressionless eyes children draw. Nothing to break the monotony; not a shop window, a building, a blade of grass. No pavements, no gardens. Broken taps leaked and made great ruts in the sandy streets. No one cared to repair them. (295)

32. The colonial government persists in subjecting the natives to these dismal living conditions in order to create and maintain for the white men a reservoir of cheap, exploitable labor. As Allister Sparks points out, withholding land and living space from the natives "was the start of the most comprehensive system of labour coercion on a racial basis that has been devised since slavery" (141). The colonial government's inhumane strategy of extracting cheap labor from the natives by depriving them of secure, decent living space can be seen even more strikingly in the way they handle black workers during the first few years of World War II:

In the first few years of the war, all the unemployed--black and white--were swallowed up by the army and the war industries, and there began an exodus from the kraal and Native Reserves of countless Africans seeking the fabulous new prosperity rumored to be awaiting them in the cities. They came, they found work, they earned wages, but there was nowhere to put their heads, no shelter for their children and their few miserable possessions. (Sachs 311)

The blacks are deprived of their most basic securities in life. The net result of this forced housing shortage is that blacks are left without means to gain independence from their white masters. Without shelter for their children, there is not even much hope for future generations. Sachs goes on to describe the callousness of the government's reaction to the natives' situation:

The Locations were already overcrowded beyond all possibility of absorbing any newcomers. The factories had no compounds, as did the gold mines, where they [the native workers] could live. The government made no move to house the tremendous new population, much as it needed the labor. They let it go at hoping that somehow, somewhere, these thousands would squeeze themselves into the elastic limbo of the locations. Blacktown, soon overwhelmed by the influx, could hold no more. (311-12)

Even in the face of this emergency, government regulations, "which had always forbidden blacks to build houses for themselves, were not relaxed" (312). Finally, "the need of the homeless was too great, too urgent. They could not wait until the ponderous machinery of government would begin to move, but took things into their own hands":

Overnight, a mushroom growth of beaverboard, straw, packing cases and canvas shelters sprang up in the empty fields bordering on Blacktown. This was what came to be known as Shantytown. (312)

Much as the abstract Kingdom of Heaven remains insensitive to human sufferings on earth, the colonial government also abstracts itself from, and remains indifferent to, the pain their policies inflict on the natives. In the end, the ocean of human misery overflows both the abstract Christian rhetoric of the unimportance of life on earth and the inhumane colonial regulations and rules: the natives "[take] things into their own hands" and bring forth their own little "kingdom" on earth--Shantytown.

33. It is under these living conditions that the black Africans sweat and toil for their white masters. They do not have to wait for death to go to Hell. The moment they were born, they were born into a Hell constructed for them by the white government. Every "place" they are assigned to--be it work place or living space--is Hell. And the alternative to Hell at work and at home is prison--which is just another Hell. More absurd still, the Africans are forced to pay exorbitant rents for living in "places the white landlord would not think fit for his beasts" (160).
34. The irony is, Hell is obviously not the "natural dwelling place" for the natives, since they never feel "at home" there. Sachs recounts how, at a gathering of educated Africans, one

speaker voices his grievances about the Africans' homelessness resulting from the infamous Land Act and Urban Area Act:

"Where are we to live? In 1913 they passed the Land Act, by which they drove us from the land, our natural dwelling place. Now they have passed the Urban Area Act, and tell us to get out of the towns and go back to the land we do not possess. We stand between the devil and the deep sea. What are we to do? Where are we to go?" (Sachs 160)

The speaker talks about being trapped "between the devil and the deep sea." It is evident that Hell is not what the speaker would choose for an abode. But the Christian valorization of "the abode in Heaven" makes it impossible to answer the question "What are we to do? Where are we to go?" by diverting people's attention from the real suffering of those who have been deprived of a human abode on earth. The Christian "utopia" or "no-place" desensitizes people toward the plight of those who have been totally *dis-placed*. In reality, the natives have been so completely alienated from their own soil by the Land Act that over the course of the following sixty years they are gradually transformed into "foreigners" in their homeland:

The stunning oxymoron "foreign native" found its way into South Africa's political vocabulary and over the next sixty years the concept was to grow and fructify into an attempt to turn all blacks into de jure as well as de facto foreigners by denationalizing them and making them citizens of independent "homelands." "The goal," declared Cornelius Mulder, cabinet minister in charge of black affairs in 1976, "is that eventually there will be no black South Africans." (Sparks 136-37)

35. Instead of saying that the natives naturally belong to Hell, it would be more accurate to say that they have been dis-placed from their homeland to Hell. The natives' grudges do not stem from an evil black nature, but from the anguish of being robbed of their natural dwelling place--that is, their tribal lands. For example, when John is forced to leave his residence in Swartyard, he reveals in a fit of outrage that what the blacks desire the most from the whites is the restoration of their stolen land:

"You say the white people want to help us. Who will believe it? Who will believe the white devils? Tembu was right. The devil is not black; the devil is white like all of you. The white people want to suck our blood, and throw us away. You say they want to help us, but I say they want to get rid of us! Well, let them give us back our land, then we will gladly go away, live by ourselves, away from you all. We don't want white devils." (168)

Significantly, John, following Tembu, says that the devil is not black but white. It is the white man who has created Hell for the black humanity. The "white devils" claim that "they want to help us [the blacks], but I say they want to get rid of us"--just like the missionaries "who had given a new religion, but had helped to take away the land" (189).



## **2. "Mis-placing" the Body, "Mis-placing" the Mind: Christian Civilization and a New Form of Madness in Africa**

36. Christianity's substitution of the Other World for the Africans' worlds brings along with it a series of other substitutions: such as individual salvation for tribal destiny, "the Savior" Jesus for tribal land,<sup>[18]</sup> and the "universal Truth" of Christianity for the concrete day-to-day truths of native life. Significantly, when the missionaries displace black Africans from their local material worlds into the Other Worldly consciousness of Christianity, they also inadvertently displace a number of natives from sanity to insanity.
37. What the "non-pathological"<sup>[19]</sup> Christian fails to appreciate is that Africans can no longer experience their humanity once they are displaced from their local communities. John S. Mbiti movingly describes how, for his fellow Africans, "to be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community":

A person cannot detach himself from the *religion of his group*, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security, his kinships and the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence. (3; my italics)

To be displaced from one of these corporate elements is, in Mbiti's words, to be "out of the whole picture"(3). To be removed from one's tribal community and religion amounts to an "excommunication from the entire life of society" (Mbiti 3). It means being cut off from the source of one's life, security, and identity. When the Church displaces the Africans from their tribal religion and community to the abstract Kingdom of Heaven, it causes no less social disruption and psychological trauma than the colonial government does when it advances in its settlement and dispossesses the tribes of their land.

38. When Christianity cuts the natives off from the roots of their humanity, there are two possible consequences: The natives either find some ways of relating Christianity back to their *midzimu*--in other words, filling up Christianity once again with earthly, "pathological" content and "local color"--or else they totally lose their sense of reality and end up in the asylum.
39. At the meeting held by the African elites, one speaker asks accusingly, "Why do they want us not to talk to our *midzimu*?" (Sachs 107). Despite this prohibition, however, the natives often involuntarily associate the Christian saints with their *midzimu*. One speaker mentions, for example, that when he goes to the Catholic Church, "I look at all the statues. I like to look at them and think they might be my *midzimu*" (Sachs 107). John applauds this remark and relates that he himself cannot distinguish the face of Virgin Mary from his mother:

"Yes, that is right," John remarked. "The same happens to me in my church. I pray, I think of my *midzimu*, and the faces change even if I don't close my eyes. The woman with the child turns into my mother, Nesta." (Sachs 107)

It is clear that the "Universal Mother" cannot exist for the natives unless they tie her to their own mothers. By translating the Universal Mother back into specific human mothers, the natives reestablish within the supposedly universal religion the local community ties that allow them to maintain their sense of identity.

40. Not all black Africans have equal success at finding a compromise between the two worlds. Another participant at the meeting, for example, is worn out by the conflicting demands of Christianity and the *midzimu*:

"I am also a Christian," the stranger said. "I belong to the Apostolic Church. But my *midzimu* are angry with me because I don't kill any goats to them, and the minister talks of hell where I will go if I remain a heathen. I want so much to know what is this heaven and what is this hell." (Sachs 107)

On the other hand, he is plagued by this new cosmology of Heaven and Hell that Christianity has substituted for his tribal world. His anxiety is further aggravated by his inability to understand the Hell destined for him by Christianity should he persist in being a heathen sinner:

"They say if you make a sin you go to hell," the stranger interrupted again. "I would like to know what it is, hell." His face was stubborn and dull. Fear of hell seemed to have drained all life out of him. (Sachs 107)

In addition to the "horror stories" of Hell told by the missionaries, the speaker also suffers from misgivings created by Christianity's displacement of "truth" into the After-World. This displacement removes the foundations of the Africans' sense of "reality." The grounds of their ontology as well as their epistemology disappear as a result, and with it the concrete ethical frame through which they perceive themselves and the world. This in itself is sufficient to cause psychological and even mental problems. The fact that the Other World cannot be tested against any external, empirical referent further exacerbates tendencies to dreams and delusions. When John and Sachs visit the asylum, the patients who make references to religion all suffer from Christian "visions."

41. One patient, for example, suffers from the hallucination that God appears to him every night in the asylum commanding him to sleep with his mother:

". . . My father wants to poison me. I have been fifteen years in this hospital and every night God and judges standing in the sky force me to sleep with my mother." (Sachs 186)

Sachs, of course, takes this to be yet another proof of the "universality" of the Oedipus Complex (186-87, 170-74). What escapes his notice, however, is the fact that the Christian God intervenes from *the Other World* ("*the sky*") commanding the patient to violate his ethical ties with his mother *in this world*. The patient's hallucination, in other words, can well be caused by Christianity's violent displacement of the natives from the ethical world to the Other World. The heavy priority Christianity places on the duties to the Other World means these commands have to be obeyed *even if this entails violating* ethics, as in the case of Christ's admonishment to the youth who wishes to delay the duties of discipleship until he has buried his father: "He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me." Read as a case of ethics being sacrificed to the commands from the Other World, what the patient is suffering from is anything but a pathological sexual desire for his mother. Rather, he is being held captive by "a purely



formal imperative: obey, because you must!" (Zizek, *Sublime* 82). In Lacanian terms, he is seized by a *disembodied* voice ("Kant with Sade" 60-81)<sup>[20]</sup> which commands him to obey orders and do his "duties." Which is to say, he is reduced by this "Voice Over" to being a mere "executioner of the will-to-*jouissance* of the Other" (MacCannell 82). To borrow Zizek's formulation, the patient becomes a "pure function" of the will of the "big Other" from the "Other World" (see Zizek, "Limits").

42. Interestingly enough, the Voice plaguing the patient comes from "the sky," disembodied from any social-ethical-political context. As such, the patient is responding "to the *jouissance* of the Other as *voice*, rather than to the Other as *speech*" (MacCannell 69). Juliet MacCannell explains this important Lacanian distinction:

Speech . . . is defined as the symbolic pact, the social contract that divides us from each other as mutual aggressors: "Speech is always a pact, an agreement, people get on with one another, they agree--this is yours, this is mine, this is this, that is that," writes Lacan. The signifier determines the unconscious relation of the subject to enjoyment (*jouissance*). *Voice* is already *object a*; the embodiment or bearer of a "principle behind the law." It took shape in Lacan's discourse as one of the four fundamental *object a* (gaze, voice, breast, feces) around which the fantasy that structures drive circulates. (69-70)

Christianity's emphasis on the Other World at the expense of this world amounts to disembodiment of the voice from the "symbolic pact." As the patient is being displaced by Christianity from his tribal world to the Other World, he is also being displaced from his "social contract." Lacking an ethical framework, the patient is foreclosed from the symbolic order. His hallucination, in other words, shares a cause similar to Judge Schreber's.

43. The fact that this patient's illness is caused by Christianity's collective "displacement" of the Africans from their local worlds to the Other World is evident from the fact that other patients at the asylum show similar symptoms. Barolow, a Xosa boy, suffers from the following religious delusions:

"Christ came to me last night," he [Barolow] proclaimed in his monotonous singsong voice. "He told me that I was chosen to punish all the white people."

He glanced furtively at John, then looked away, plucking nervously at his clothing. Still without looking at John, except with an occasional sly glance, he went on to say that he was a saint. Everyone else had committed great crimes. With a sudden entirely irrelevant and disconcerting smile, he assured John that he was Satan, too. Satan was his dead mother. This place was Sodom and Gomorrah; a place of judgment. He was God and Satan. He was their son. (Sachs 185)

Like the previous patient, Barolow encounters God as a Voice of command. Barolow's "mission" to "punish all the white people," like the other patient's "duty" to commit incest, is not "pathological" (in the Kantian and Lacanian sense). In both cases, the patient is only acting as the executioner of the Other's will-to-*jouissance* (Lacan, "Kant

with Sade" 59). Far from being motivated by earthly or personal interests, both patients find themselves called on to sacrifice their own will without asking the meaning of the acts they are commanded to execute. Their visions and actions do not make any sense--they look crazy--precisely because this senselessness is built into the nature of the Drive that is commanding an ob-scene *jouissance*--a *jouissance* smuggled in through the back door after the "sadist executioner" has renounced his/her own enjoyment. Slavoj Žižek describes the Voice's injunction-to-*jouissance* as follows:

In other words, renounce enjoyment, sacrifice yourself and do not ask about the meaning of it--the value of the sacrifice lies in its very meaninglessness; true sacrifice is for its own end; you must find positive fulfillment in the sacrifice itself, not in its instrumental value; it is this renunciation, this giving up of enjoyment itself, which produces a certain surplus-enjoyment.

This surplus produced through renunciation is the Lacanian *objet petit a*, the embodiment of surplus-enjoyment. (82)

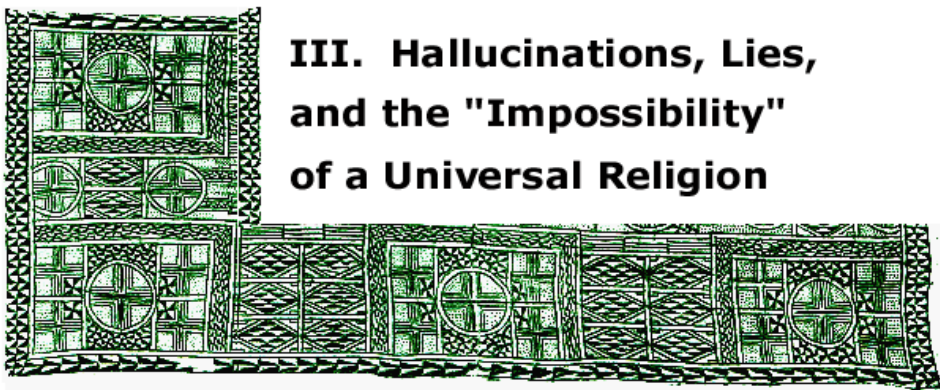
It is this *objet petit a* that MacCannell has in mind when she observes that "Kant founded ethics on a nonpathological basis--and unwittingly empowered the Thing (*das Ding*)" (72). Similarly, lurking in the pure, disembodied, non-worldly voice of the Christian God is precisely this *object petit a* that is "present as cause in and of all Drive" (MacCannell 72).

44. This ob-scene *jouissance* that inhabits Christianity's non-pathological, non-worldly moral system sheds important light on the split internal to the "pure" form of Christianity which has brought both humanitarian charity and colonialism to the Africans. When Barolow gets displaced from his tribal religion to Christianity's non-pathological Other World, he also assumes this split internal to Christianity and perceives himself as both a saint and Satan, both God and Satan (Sachs 185).<sup>[21]</sup> At one point, he even calls himself the "son" of God and Satan. This indicates how the "pure" form of Christianity which commands virtuous acts can also command an "impossible enjoyment" on the part of both the white colonizers and their recent converts from heathenism. It is not surprising that the missionaries who give the black Africans Jesus also give them pass laws. It is no more surprising that the Voice which commands the natives to renounce their "pathological" ties for the Kingdom of Heaven also commands them to commit incest and "punish the white people." *The law coming from the disembodied Voice in Heaven, it turns out, is a sadistic law.*
45. The impossible split dividing "non-pathological" Christian morality from itself--God the Merciful Father being also the Sadistic Father--is enough to cause psychological and mental disturbances. John's association of the natives' insanity with Christianity hence should come as no surprise:

John remarked to me [Sachs]: "The Christian religion muddles some native brains. I hear so much silly talk when these people think they are God, Jesus Christ, or Satan. But I have not heard a single one imagine himself to be Mwari or a *midzimu*. (Sachs 185)

The Africans' own religions do not cause the same kind of pathology precisely because they are grounded in a specific social framework that "[divides] us from each other as mutual aggressors" and "[works] the distance between object and other" (MacCannell 69-70). The Africans thus suffer from a double trauma when being removed from their native religions to Christianity. In addition to being plagued by the "sadistic superego" of the new religion, they have to suffer the shock of being forbidden contact with their *midzimu*.

46. This way, Christianity's abstract Kingdom does more harm than good to the Africans' spirit and psyche. Instead of giving people universal truth, it ends up imprisoning them inside private hallucinations and mental institutions. These hallucinations, however, contain a version of truth. The "untruth" of the mental patients' perceptions paradoxically reflects the "truth" about Christianity. Basically, people are classified as mental patients when they are trapped inside their private delusions which make no reference to the outside world. Since Christianity locates "ultimate reality" in the After-World, it seems that Christians would not be bothered by a disconnection between one's ideas of the After-World and this world. In fact, the less the After-World looks like this world, the more transcendent and the more true it asserts itself to be. This sometimes makes it difficult to defend Christianity against the charges of being either a religion of delusions or a pack of lies. In other words, in the madness of its colonial other, Christianity receives its own truth in its inverted form.



47. Let us return to John's statement with which this essay began:

We don't believe in Jesus. We used to pray in olden times to our native god, and to the *midzimu*, for rain. It always helped. Now we pray to Jesus and rain never comes. We have no corn, no land, nothing. We all hate the Christians; they talk, talk, and nothing comes to us from it. . . . The white people came to our country, it is the natives' country [he was emphatic about it], took everything away from us--the land, the cattle--and made us work. We cannot move without a pass, have to pay taxes; and they have given us Jesus. (106-7)

John's speech amounts to denouncing Christianity as a *false* religion: Christianity lies to the Africans, so that when Christianity replaces their *midzimu* with Jesus, "rain never comes." Christians are empty talkers; they "talk, talk, and nothing comes to us from it."

They even help cheat and rob the Africans of their land and give them nothing in return but an empty idol, Jesus Christ, who either does not or cannot listen to the Africans' sufferings and pleadings.

48. By contrasting Jesus to the *midzimu*, attesting to the impotence of the former versus the power of the latter to grant rain, John undermines the ability of the Christian God to respond to the physical-emotional-spiritual-communal needs specific to African tribes. Africans turn to God for matters such as rain, land, and corn. As Mbiti tells us, their "acts of worship and turning to God are pragmatic and utilitarian rather than spiritual or mystical" (6). Which is to say, for the Africans *there is no universal After-World for the entire humankind--a God is no God if S/He cannot address the pressing needs of people in the concrete "this world."* I would like to conclude my essay by considering whether there is any legitimacy to the accusation John and his fellow Africans bring against Christianity when they fault the "universal" Christian God for being a false God and the Other World of "universal brotherhood and equality" for being a lie.
49. The Bible promises explicitly that "Truth shalt set you free" (St. John 8: 32). In the case of the Africans, this "universal" Christian truth is given to them along with the political power that makes them slaves in the "court" of "universal humanity." "Universality" has measured the Africans to be morally, mentally, and physically inferior when they are placed next to the "superiority" of whites. God has made all men equal before Him in the Other World (Sachs 162), but at the same time He has "made such a difference between people" in this world (Sachs 135). "Universality," in other words, has set the Africans free in the next world but made them slaves in this world. The contradictions between the two, however, will not appear so incomprehensible if one is mindful of how a certain obscene Voice can speak in the name of universal truth or world religion commanding the Africans to enjoy their freedom: this disembodied Truth from the Other World commands the Africans to be free from all worldly ties, so free that they are left without land, without food, without their communities, and without their *midzimu*.
50. The damages suffered by the Africans under the "aegis" of the "universalism" of Christianity, however, cannot be attributed completely to "Christian hypocrisy." The notion of a universal truth as a regulative *ideal* or a normative *idea* can serve as the basis for democracy and equality--as in liberation theology's argument that all human beings, regardless of skin color, are equal before God. The universal, however, is universal only insofar as it is regulative. In Lacanian terms, the universal is the universal as long as it persists as an empty space resisting any positivization--that is, the filling in of any particular content. Only thus can it render impossible the attempt of any specific content to totalize itself as the universal. The universal, in other words, is an "impossible (but necessary)" object. In Lacanese, the universal is the lost object which is irretrievably lost, the unknown object which must remain unknown. The moment this object becomes positivized as an actual object, it gives rise to an *excessive jouissance*. The reason is, the universal, *qua* the universal, must contain no "exceptions" and no excess. The universal can be positivized into a corpus of laws only by *exceeding* (and hence negating) itself as the universal by way of a supplement or an excess. It can be "universally" applied only because this "universality" carries within it an *excessive jouissance*--a surplus of energy redirected as "special" treatment reserved for the colonized--the "exceptional" case to "universal humanity." In *Black Anger*, this *excessive jouissance* is evident in the white

men's justice (supposedly universal)[22] which inflicts a poll tax on the Africans in *excess* of the taxes imposed on "all citizens." This excessive *jouissance* is also the "Voice Over" commanding the enjoyment of the police--the sadistic executioners in South Africa to whom the Africans in their meetings frequently make references:

"The white people say the devil is black, but we have no devils in our religion. To us, the devil appears to have a white skin." The audience applauded, and John looked pleased. One speaker dealt with the iniquity of the poll tax, by which all native men had to pay a pound a year from their meager earnings, *apart from* other indirect taxes paid in common with all citizens. Unemployed men, who could not pay, were hounded out of their rooms & thrown into prison. . . . A funeral procession had been held up by the police and the mourners arrested for not paying their toll tax, the corpse being left in charge of a woman. (Sachs 159-60)

It is precisely this "excess" which the universal incorporates into itself as it becomes positivized as "an effective system of concepts" that concerns Etienne Balibar when he warns of the relationship between universalism and racism:

[A]s soon as universalism *ceases* to be a mere word, a would-be philosophy, and becomes an effective system of concepts, it necessarily incorporates in its very center *its opposite*, I would even say its *extreme* opposite. The *logos* itself is not to be defined without being conditioned by an anthropological and ontological hierarchy. (197)

This excessive *jouissance*, according to Zizek, is the "radical, absolute Particularity" as it hides within the "Universal"--the "radical, absolute Evil" that inhabits the "Supreme Good":

This is the Hegelian logic of "reconciliation" between the Universal and the Particular. The most radical, absolute Particularity is indeed that of the Universal itself as far as it has a negative rapport of exclusion towards the Particular: in other words, in as much as it opposes itself to the Particular and excludes the wealth of its concrete content. And this is how one should also take the Lacanian thesis according to which Good is only the mask of radical, absolute Evil, the mask of "indecent obsession" by *das Ding*, the atrocious-obscene thing. (98)

The moment when the universal is established as the universal law marks the birth of the "outlaw"--"a certain reality of violence which coincides with the act itself of the establishment of the law" (Zizek 95).

51. In other words, when John Chavafambira and his fellow Africans suffer under the political consequences of the "white men"'s "universal" Christian God and the Christian Other World of "universal brotherhood and equality," what they are suffering from is not necessarily the conscious hypocrisy of the white Christians. Rather, by insisting on the Christian truth as the universal truth, its proponents inadvertently hide the split between *le sujet d'énoncé* and *le sujet d'énonciation* (see Lacan, *Seminar VII* 82-83). As Lacan jokingly points out, "My fiancée always comes to the rendezvous, because if she misses

the rendezvous, I will no longer call her my fiancée" (*Seminar II*, 343).<sup>[23]</sup> The colonial version of this dictum can be formulated as follows: Christianity is the universal religion for all human beings, because those who do not or are "not capable" of participating in it are not really human.<sup>[24]</sup> As such it becomes legitimate to use *exceptional*, *excessive*, and even *inhumane* measures against them.

52. One consequence of this is that the abstract truth of Christianity meets different kinds of resistance among the Africans. Apart from explicit rejections of Christian religion as a whole, more subtle forms of resistance take place among the converts themselves. For example, when the natives think they see their *midzimu* in the Christian statues (Sachs 107), or when they see their own mothers' faces in the face of Virgin Mary--the "Universal Mother" (Sachs 107)--they are experiencing the return of the concrete and the particular disrupting the abstract, universal Christian truth. Unconsciously, the natives in the Church are already resisting displacement from their concrete, tribal religions into the abstract Christian Kingdom of Heaven, since the concrete faces of their own mothers and *midzimu* inevitably return to disrupt their Christian worship. Some Westerners (including Sachs) rationalize this as a sign of the Africans' incapacity for comprehending abstractions and for thinking on a general, universal level. But it could just be as well that the natives' "incapacity" gives the lie to "universals" by realizing it as a symptom of the impossibility of "universal truth" or "world religion." Following Hegel's argument about the interdependence of consciousness and the world, the natives' resistance to being displaced from their concrete, daily world to an abstract "After-World-For-All" would impact their political stance--and bear on their refusal to be dispossessed from their land by the "globalization" project of Western colonialism.

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## Notes

1. For a well-written account of the history of Christianity's war against apartheid in South Africa, see Sparks 281-97. For more detail, see *Religion and Resistance Politics in South Africa* by Lyn S. Grayhill and *Civil Disobedience and Beyond* by Charles Villa-Vicencio. [Back](#)
2. See, for example, *Religion, Intergroup Relations, and Social Change in South Africa* by G. C. Oosthuizen, et al., *The Mind of South Africa* by Allister Sparks, *Religion and Resistance Politics in South Africa* by Lyn S. Grayhill, "Modernization and Apartheid: The Afrikaner Churches" by Johann Kinghor, and *Theology and Violence and Civil Disobedience and Beyond* by Charles Villa-Vicencio. [Back](#)
3. See especially Sparks on the ambiguity in Christianity regarding obedience and resistance to state authority--colonial injustice in particular. [Back](#)
4. Christianity, of course, has done many good things for the Africans. See the many documentations and discussions in, for example, *Religion and Resistance Politics in South Africa* by Lyn S. Grayhill, "Modernization and Apartheid: The Afrikaner Churches" by Johann Kinghorn, *Religion, Intergroup Relations, and Social Change in South Africa* by C. G. Oosthuizen, et al., *Christianity amidst Apartheid* by Martin Prozeksy, *The Mind of South Africa* by Allister Sparks, and *Theology and Violence and Civil Disobedience and Beyond* by Charles Villa-Vicencio. However, as Lacan points out

in "Kant avec Sade," the purity of the categorical imperative commanding the strictest moral behavior can also enjoin sadistic *jouissance*. In a similar manner, the pure, non-pathological Christian doctrines which impel various acts of charity can also produce pass laws and other sadistic colonial policy. [Back](#)

5. Edward Evans-Pritchard is well-known for discerning that "criteria of technical efficacy are culturally specified, and that established knowledge is not easily falsified by arguments or evidence external to its (tauto)logical structure. What the churchmen took to be definitive disproofs of the '[native's] vain pretensions' in no way undermined [the natives'] ontological assumptions" (see Comaroff I, 212). [Back](#)
6. It takes only one more step to get from this subject to the subject of Enlightenment as Kant describes it--that is, a subject who stands equal with all other subjects before reason and as such is not to be judged by its birth, rank, or any external criteria. [Back](#)
7. This argument has in fact been used again and again in the natives' struggle against the colonial government. For details, see *Religions of South Africa* by David Chidester (Ch. 7), *Religion, Intergroup Relations, and Social Change in South Africa* by G. C. Oosthuizen et al., *Christianity amidst Apartheid* by Martin Prozesky, *The Mind of South Africa* by Allister Sparks (Ch. 7), and *Civil Disobedience and Beyond* and *Theology and Violence* by Charles Villa-Vicencio. [Back](#)
8. Activists such as liberation theologians would highlight other parts of the Bible in their interpretations. But their choice of texts does not supersede the fact that for Christianity, the ultimate reality resides in the Kingdom of Heaven and not the Kingdom on Earth. When the state of affairs in the latter contradicts that of the former, the "reality" of the latter is always deemphasized.

*One strong proof of this abstractness in Christianity is precisely the fact that Christianity has been enlisted by both the oppressors and the oppressed to justify their respective causes.* It is the abstract Kingdom of Heaven, rather than the concrete kingdoms on earth, that allows its various interpreters to fill in their own *content* at will, so long as it remains consistent with the *formal* requirement of Christian morals--namely, that his/her understanding and conduct are dictated by God's will, rather than his/her human will. This is of course a circular argument, not unlike Lacan's joke that "My fiancée always comes to the rendezvous, because if she misses the rendezvous, I will no longer call her my fiancée" (*Seminar II*, 298). This circularity itself is a symptom of the abstractness of the Christian argument, in that it justifies its own consistency with reference to nothing but itself. Hegel's critique of Kant's abstract moral system also provides a relevant critique of this abstractness in Christianity. For Hegel, the problem with any abstract, purely formal system of morality is that one can be totally consistent on the formal level, and still be unethical. [Back](#)

9. By abstracting itself from the world, Christianity by no means remains simply morally neutral. Morality abstracted from external reality is already a negation of morality, since it is the struggle with nature and sense that is the source of our moral nature. Hegel's criticism of a concept of morality which bears only a negative relation to nature--itself an implied criticism of Kant--is also pertinent to our understanding of the problem of Christianity in prioritizing the "Other World" above "this world":

The moral consciousness attributes its imperfection to the fact that in it morality has a *positive* relation to Nature and sense, because it holds that an essential moment in morality is that it should have a *negative*, and *only* a negative, relation to them. The pure moral being, on the other hand, because it is above the *struggle* with Nature and sense, does not stand in a *negative* relation to them . . . a pure morality that was completely separated from reality, and so likewise was without any positive relation to it, would be an unconscious, unreal abstraction in which the concept of morality, which involves thinking of pure duty, willing, and doing it, would be done away with. (*Phenomenology* 381; 461-62)

The result of this merely negative relation to this world is ethically and politically dangerous. As Gillian Rose points out, "if we refuse to know nature as the realm of the actualization of our actions, we become incapable of making moral judgements about ourselves or others. If 'morality' is essentially 'imperfect' and unrealizable, then there is no basis for distinguishing between moral and immoral individuals" (178). [Back](#)

10. In Hegelian terms, Christianity relates to the world as an "alienated spirit." [Back](#)
11. See Hegel's *Philosophy of History* and *The Phenomenology of Spirit* for his discussions of the connection between Christian religious civilization and Christian political barbarity at specific historical periods. [Back](#)
12. In *African Religions and Philosophy*, John S. Mbiti relates that "there is no conversion from one traditional religion to another" in Africa (5). [Back](#)
13. The West even believes that by "rais[ing] the mass of the people of Africa to a higher plane of civilization," it should "deserve the gratitude of the silent and ignorant millions" (Lugard 546-47). [Back](#)
14. In fact, the white masters often create the very thing they condemn. Overcrowded living conditions among black workers--created by the Land Act--give rise to social pathologies such as rape, which are rare in tribal cultures. The white men's condemnation of the blacks as rapists and criminals is hence a self-fulfilling prophecy. The speaker at the meeting of African elites, for example, challenges the white men's assumption about the blacks as follows:

Because cases of rape occur when thousands of young Africans are herded together in towns and mines without their women, does this prove their [the white men's] theory [that black men desire white women]? . . . Whenever you get masses of men segregated together you get masses of these incidents, irrespective of color. Are the white men guiltless when they are alone among the Bantu, away from their white women? How many antive women have they not violated in such circumstances? The million people of mixed blood in Cape--do they not come out of such acts of violation? (162)

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15. This Act is known as the Black Land Act, no. 27 of 1913. The areas assigned to the blacks originally totalled "about 10,5m morgen (about 9m hectares); further areas were added later and some were excised" (Festenstein and Pickard-Cambridge 73). [Back](#)



16. As a result, John ends up going to "Nandi township, a slum for blacks." The blacks who refuse their place in the black slums will find themselves "re-placed" again, this time in jail (Sachs 71). Whether the natives take their "proper place" in the black slum or not, it seems that they will end up in jail sooner or later. If they don't stay in the black "reserves," they will be put in jail. But staying in the black slums means becoming targets of police harassment, and hence they still/again easily end up in jail. John, for example, is arrested in the "lower depths" (276) for possessing a bicycle chain given to him by Sachs, an item considered a "lethal weapon" by the police (277). The "proper place" for a black seems always to be the jail--the place of the condemned--just as the "proper place" for a black in the "next world" will most likely be the place reserved for the damned. [Back](#)
17. Sachs is Jewish, but he keeps referring to himself as "white." [Back](#)
18. The reference is to John's complaint that "The white people came to our country . . . took everything away from us--the land, the cattle . . . and they have given us Jesus" (106). [Back](#)
19. It is not surprising that Lacan associates the non-pathological "*Thing*" with the "inhuman." See his "Kant avec Sade" and *Seminar VII*. [Back](#)
20. Lacan's association of drive with the disembodied Voice is thematized as "the voice over" by Joan Copjec. See, for example, her "Locked Room/Lonely Room: Private Space in Film Noir," in *Read My Desire*. Both the disembodied Voice and "the voice over" are very appropriate terms for referring to the Christian God's Voice from the Other World. [Back](#)
21. Interestingly enough, this internal split is a sign that Heaven and Hell are not so clearly divided as the Church would like them to be. [Back](#)
22. Legal theorists and legal anthropologists such as Peter Fitzpatrick and Sally Engle Merry have pointed out that Western law is always referred to as "law" because of its "universality," as opposed to the laws of the colonized which always carry a national or cultural qualifier (for example, "Indian" law, "Chinese" law) since they are supposed to be only applicable to the local and the particular. [Back](#)
23. The French original goes as follows: "*Ma promise vient toujours au rendez-vous, car quand elle n'y vient pas, je ne l'appelle plus ma promise.*" [Back](#)
24. The definition of "human being" is reduced to his/her function as a Christian believer, or, in Zizek's terms, "the reduction of the subject to an abstract determination" (Zizek 96). [Back](#)

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