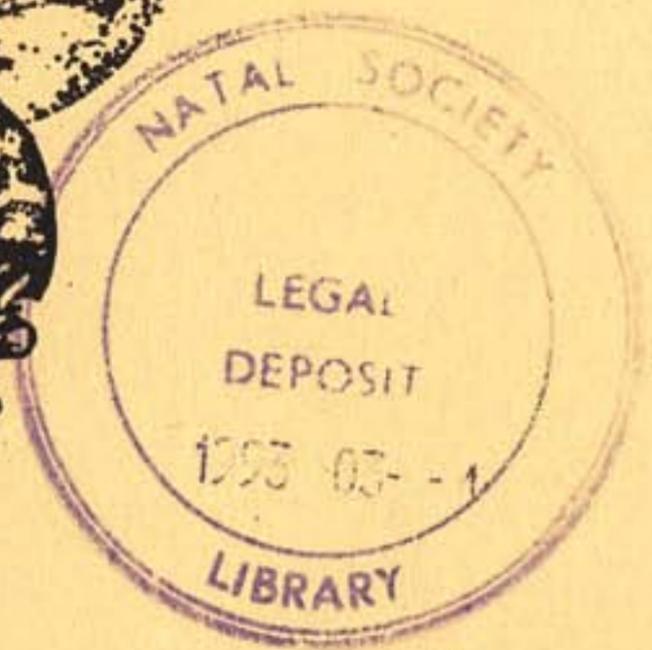


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EDITORIAL

We are again offering you an assortment of articles which we hope you will enjoy reading and be eager to enter the discussion of the issues that are raised by the respective authors.

In the first article that was read at a conference of African theologians in Harare, the author revisits the discussion on culture in contemporary African societies, especially as it relates to the bible and the Christian church. We regard this issue as very pertinent in view of the impact of what is called the materialist reading of the bible that is gaining ground in biblical scholarship circles. One of the areas that are exposed by this method of reading the biblical text is the culture of the different biblical communities. If an understanding of their cultures is important for a better understanding of those communities in much the same way that an understanding of our cultures is important in an effort to understand us as modern people, then we have to ask how those cultures relate to one another. This article helps us in that regard.

The next article is a contribution to the current christological debate from an African and Lutheran perspective. In it the author specifically deals with the human suffering that characterises the present condition of a great section of the globe. In a world that seems to have developed many different means of minimising if not totally eradicating human suffering, it is ironical that human suffering seems to increase. In such circumstances we have to deepen our understanding of suffering, reformulate our theological questions pertaining to it and search for better ways of dealing with them theologically. This article does exactly that. The third article grapples with one central question in the socio-political discussions on the future of South Africa, namely the impact of blackness in the overall future identity of South Africans. Many people are saying that if you wish to construct a non-racial society, you should bury your individual or group identity. The writer of the above article seems to differ with this view. He believes that the contrary should be acceptable, namely that each group should explore the hidden wealth of its culture and use it as contribution to the construction of a just and free society. The last paper is a very interesting interpretation of biblical texts dealing with Moses' wife.

The intention of the author is clear. She wants to show that racism can be traced back to some biblical portions and that wherever it manifests itself, it is rejected as contrary to the will of God.

Discovering Culture and its Influence in the Bible.

By Dr Takatso Mofokeng¹

Our contemporary historical period.

We are meeting in Zimbabwe, the second but last addition to the family of African nations that entered the long history of national self determination 32 years ago. When these nations of ours entered this history at the occasion of political independence, various choices were open to them. These options were:

1. To return to the "African" past which had been viciously interrupted and reintroduce it;
2. To continue their "colonial" present, which had been violently imposed and maintained at gun point or
3. find new forms of African structured existence, be it in the political, social, economic, cultural and religious life of their people.

We should be mindful of the fact that at that moment of the birth of African nations as republics and kingdoms, class formation and unequal distribution of power was already a matter of fact and not fiction. Classes which were destined to inherit power- political, economic and social- due to their proximity to colonial centres of power and the colonial masters already existed. In some situations these people were called *bwana* (boss), the name for their colonial masters even before the unceremonious departure of the **foreign *bwanas***. While their material conditions of existence enabled them to gain valuable knowledge and skills, and protected them from naked forms of oppression, they also made them, as a class, more vulnerable to co-optation into the universe of ideals and interests as well as thought patterns of the expelled *bwanas*. They were more conditioned than many of their compatriots to choose well known, comfortable and enjoyable models of political, economic,

¹Mofokeng is a Senior Lecturer, Department of Systematic Theology and Social Ethics, University of South Africa.

social and religious arrangements than reject them. And indeed when choices were actually made, they were made in such a way that the ground was laid for the present reality of political oppression of the working people, defenceless genders and powerless races. Firm ground was laid for national impoverishment by rich nations of the world and economic exploitation of the workers by the national petit-bourgeoisie in our countries. Hence the situation in which almost all towns and cities of Africa are surrounded by huge squatter settlements where fellow human beings live in humiliating conditions of abject poverty and squalor.

The **church *bwanas*** fared no better than their counter parts in secular power structures, in their use of power. They victimized and intimidated fellow clerics of the lower echelons of their church institutions and suppressed free religious expression and creativity of the African laity.

All the above powerful people in our societies banded together in their struggle to secure the subservience of their people as well as their hearts and minds and used the enormously powerful and effective combination of coercive, cultural and ideological weapons against the disgruntled armies of industrial workers, peasants and students.

What is of immediate relevance to us as Third World Theologians is that cultural and religious weapons which we fashioned and packaged elsewhere were and are still being used against the poor, females and black people and for the advancement of the material and ideological interests of the powerful classes, genders and races in our countries. As cultural-theological workers, we cannot completely exonerate ourselves from blame. We may as individuals, but certainly not as a class, because it is our fellow theologians who make and use these weapons in our name. This is the reason why Marx used to call priests and theologians the **religious police** of the church. We share responsibility for whatever happens in nations where Christianity is the dominant religion because **we determine the texts** (including biblical ones) that are suitable for use in the religious practice of our people. We also determine suitable and effective **uses** as well as suitable and effective **strategies** and **language**.

When I carefully look at the social situation in Africa today, I dare to say that as cultural and theological workers our moment of **KAIROS** has arrived. We have been discovered and identified as people who stand in the middle, the **crucial middle**, with valuable instruments that, if made with the right material, made well and used well and at the right place can make a difference in the escalating struggle of oppressed blacks, downtrodden genders, exploited and impoverished workers and peasants in Africa. We have all witnessed how religion and culture of these classes and people are coopted, commodified, commercialised and also used as means of upper class entertainment. We have also witnessed their angry awakening and struggle to claim justice and liberation and have to respond as cultural-theological workers of the crucial middle ground. When we do respond, and this we cannot postpone for even one day or delay anymore because as M.L. King Jr. once said "Justice delayed is justice denied". We have to be guided by Jesus Christ's choice and commitment in our swift and appropriate response. He chose the side of the poor, the weak, the humiliated and the marginalized. As such the choice has already been made for us and we have to live and work it out.

How do we live and work out our choice?

Various options lend themselves to us. We have to become **organic** cultural-religious workers and no longer **soft and safe middle ground** cultural-religious workers because it is only from within their vulnerable midst of the victims of our societies that we shall be able to see and hear the textual choices which they make when they open the biblical text. We shall consequently learn to leave out the texts that hurt and humiliate them, simply because the oppressed say that they are being hurt and humiliated by them, and not because we believe it or not or because what they say has any scientific backing. In the company of the victims of society, theologians also get to know those texts which are open to an abusive interpretation whether they pertain to economics, politics or the social structure. Our location inside the organized struggle of all victims of our societies should develop and strength our emotional sensitivities and intellectual awareness of the religious text of the victims and their preferred uses and interpretations and not ours. This is indeed a tremendous and almost impossible

challenge because it touches very directly and deeply on the deepest (raw and most sensitive) nerve of our academic training-**objectivity and scientific rigor** in our pursuit of the truth. But I personally don't see a contradiction between this on the one hand and commitment to the struggle of the victims of our societies on the other. What I find amazing is the following: We acknowledge very easily and without any hesitation or difficulty that the African **cultural text** (witten and unwritten) itself is problematic. We also easily and quickly acknowledge that the African cultural textual **usages** are often problematic. We easily acknowledge that the **strategies** of its usages are problematic. As far as our Christian **religious text** is concerned, we are prepared to concede that there may be some problems in all the above mentioned areas except with the text (the bible) itself and we do this in spite of all the evidence that comes from its victims who say that there are texts that hurt and humiliate.

What our resistance means.

If we persist in that refusal and do so in a situation in which some classes, people and groups in society are not being hurt by those texts while many others are, then we are throwing our power as cultural-religious workers on the side of the text and its intentions of selective hurting. And that hurts even more! We are colluding with it in its own practice of selective hurting and humiliating. If in addition to the text as an aggressive agent, there are in Africa a community of cultural workers, who use or interpret that text in such a way that it hurts and humiliates sections of our people, that practice will be tantamount to an undisguised choice to side with the theological intentions of those theologians and religious bwanas who hurt and humiliate people who are already in pain. As a matter of fact we for our part cannot believe that this could be a deliberate intention of theologians. If it does happen nonetheless, we must ask a further question as to why that persistence.

Why resistance?

As far as we are concerned, there are four or more possible explanations of the above resistance to taking a critical distance from the biblical text:

It could be due to our own individual ideological interests which are served by our resistance or collusion. Here an ideology would be "the desire by the dominant classes to gain hegemonic control of other classes through a rationalising universalisation of what are in effect sectional class interests" (James Joll in Mosala p. 18)

It could also be due to our immediate or long term material interests which would be threatened by our change of choice if this can become public knowledge, i.e. we would not move up the social ladder to join the ruling classes in our societies and churches. It could also be due to fear for actual intimidation based on actual experiences of those around us. Or lastly, it could also be sheer dishonesty, a possibility which is very remote.

On the other hand if we do acknowledge the existence of problems surrounding our biblical text as we readily do to those surrounding the African cultural text, including the unwritten traditional text, the question facing us is where do we go from here as trained cultural workers?

It stands to reason, as we have already established, that culture is a powerful social instrument in modern society. Its power during our time is enormously enhanced when it is combined with that of religion because religion tends to sacralize it, turning it into a religious culture and thereby elevates it beyond social scrutiny and critique. This is, of course, not a new phenomenon. Cultures of many societies of the past were elevated beyond human critique and operated as powerful religious cultures that were harnessed and deployed by opposing social classes and groups to advance their class interests. That was also the case with the cultures of biblical communities whose stories are recorded in the bible as we shall argue in this paper.

It is however, not an easy task to discover the sacralization and concrete operations of the cultures of biblical communities due

to/because of theological prejudice or straightjacketing that we have been subjected to in the course of our Western theological training. We have been trained, most if not all of us, to believe and have accepted that the bible is a religious document that should only be read theologically and not historically and materialistically. In some worse cases, some of our African theologians have even accepted the Calvinist mystifications of the hermeneutical process among which is one that the bible as the 'Word of God' interprets itself. And that, as the "Word of God" it can only be read uncritically and obediently by all Christians, especially the 'theologically initiated'. We have not done much to question the underlying Western liberal assumptions of that position namely that unity and uniformity as far as the approach to the bible is concerned, are normative only in so far as they advance the material interests of bourgeois society. That belief which betrays collusion with religious ideologues of Western capitalist societies, has consequently blinded us to, among other things, the presence and operations of culture in the social life of biblical communities. In some cases it has rendered us incapable of identifying cultural elements in the bible as cultural elements (and not theological teachings) and seeing how they operated to the good or bad/disadvantage of the communities in question. What is worse still, we as committed theologians are consequently unable to derive maximum benefit from that observation to be better able to address cultural dilemmas that retard the liberation struggles of the poor and the oppressed in our own societies.

What is even more difficult, is to determine the elements in the cultures of biblical communities which were used as ideological weapons of struggle by the opposing classes or groups in those ancient societies. The cause of this difficulty is ideological and analytical. It lies in the deliberate refusal by most liberal biblical scholars to admit that Marx was factually right when he stated that "the history of human societies is the history of class struggle". Many biblical scholars completely refuse, in the face of overwhelming evidence, to acknowledge that human societies, including biblical ones, have always been structured along class lines, that those classes have always pursued their class interests and lastly, that in the cause of pursuance of such class interests, class struggles ensued. Their refusal, we contend, is not for the

sake of the truth. It is firmly based on the significance which they attach to social unity and tranquility as a safeguard of the ideological hegemony and material dominance of the powerful in society, the religious ideologues of whom they are. That refusal we can forgive. What we find hard to forgive is the unconscious and sometimes deliberate collusion of African theologians in this matter, because their resistance hampers the emergence of a more adequate and incisive social analysis that is able to penetrate the hidden depths of modern societies and unearth their inherent structures, institutions, practices and mechanisms of rampant oppression and exploitation.

The solutions to these above mentioned problems, one hermeneutical and the other analytical, will put us in a position, as African theologians who come from societies where religious cultures are frequently invoked, especially by the rich and the powerful who incidentally control the church, as ideological weapons in social struggles that are still raging in our societies, to intervene creatively and meaningfully. Many theologians of oppressed segments of our modern societies have come to recognize that, without effecting a hermeneutical break with dominant liberal hermeneutics and making a new hermeneutical beginning, no liberative theology is possible. This has been the case with Black Theologians, Latin American Liberation Theologians and Asian Liberation Theologians. As far as culture is concerned, it is Feminist and Womanist Theologians especially, as representatives of people whose oppression is among other things, grounded on and entrenched in patriarchal and male dominated cultures who keep hammering on the necessity of a new hermeneutic in their theological quest.

Having said that, we hasten to acknowledge that some African theologians, especially biblical scholars, have made an enormous contribution in the task of lifting out cultural elements in the bible and used them in their theological constructions. We are thinking here of Kwesi Dickson in his "Theology in Africa", John Pobee in his "Towards an African Christology", Mercy Odoyoye, Sister Theresa and many others. The weakness of their work lies, however, in the analytical area. They still perceive of African culture as monolithic, classless, genderless and struggle-less and

consequently fall short in their attempt to adequately resource the struggles of oppressed and struggling classes, races and genders in our societies. They end up arming little David, the peasant, with king Saul's unsuitable weapons, to use a biblical metaphor.

It is our intention in this paper to explore a way in which we can solve this twofold problem i.e. a hermeneutical and analytical problem by going beyond the above mentioned African approaches.

A hermeneutic for a Christian culture

We wish to open our search with an assumption that the biblical text is itself a product of struggle, a site of struggle and a record of class struggles. It is an open secret that the determination of which books were to be included in our contemporary bibles went through a fierce struggle which ended in a partial stalemate, hence the two bibles. This issue we elect not to address due to the enormity of the issue and the brevity of time at our disposal. It is also a fact that the biblical text provides a picture of struggles which raged during ancient times and that the writers of these stories decided on the actual presentation of those struggles, hence the existence of different and sometimes even conflicting traditions of the same story, and also that in their choices they influence the final story as presented to the contemporary readers as well as their reading of it. In other words they chose sides in the events they reported about and move us to adopt their choices. This is an important issue to note, but in our present paper we shall not deal with it.

What is of immediate interest to us and which we wish to address, is the fact that we cannot read the bible without noticing that in it, we are dealing with people who are organized socially, economically, politically and religiously and that in the organization of their societies, conflicting classes or interest groups emerged. We can take the famous text of 1 Samuel 10 on the emergence of the monarchy in Israel as an example. What is very evident to an analytical materialist reading of this text is that the emergence of the monarchy was also the point of the crude emergence of social classes in Israelite society of that time. To this fact one should add

that these classes continued to exist in Israel until and after the time of Jesus in the 1st century A.D. As I.J.Mosala puts it: " In other words, the Bible is rent apart by the antagonistic struggles of the warring classes of Israelite society in much the same way that our world is torn asunder by society's class, culture, racial and gender divisions." (Mosala I.J.1989,p16)

We cannot assume, however, that every one of us will see the same things in our reading of the bible or even the above mentioned text. A way of textual approach and reading that will ensure that we do is required. In our case we align ourselves with Mosala. He gives us a clue to what appears to be a good method in the above quotation when he says:"in the same way in which our world is torn asunder by society's class, culture, racial and gender divisions". In other words, our starting point is an analytical reading of our world in order to acquire epistemological lenses and concepts before we encounter the world of the bible analytically. It is these lenses which will hopefully enable us to discover ancient equivalences of contemporary social phenomena like classes, genders and cultures in antagonistic relations and conflict. They will hopefully enable us to go further and discover the biblical class counterparts of modern classes and relate the former classes, their interests and struggles to those of contemporary African societies. We will in other words be in a position to relate the modern working class to the biblical working class, the modern peasantry to the biblical peasantry, their interests, cultures and struggles. The same will apply to the ruling classes of both historical periods, their interests and struggles. As Mosala says: " The process of a liberating biblical hermeneutical appropriationbegins with a critical appreciation of the history and culture of the hermeneuticians." (I.J.Mosala 1989, p.99) This is the first step in the hermeneutical process we are describing. The other step which is equally important and constitutes the converse of the former, consists of our critical appropriation of the histories and cultural struggles of biblical communities for contemporary cultural struggles.

To be concrete, in our dealings with biblical material we have, for our part as South Africans, to relate for example, the story of the contemporary exodus of Black South Africa to that of the Exodus

of the Hebrew slaves in Pharoanic Egypt as Black Theologians currently do and discern the inherent dynamics and mutual enlightenment and resourcing of one by the other. On the other side, we have to relate the cultural practices of the S.A.rulers and relate them to those of the ancient Pharaohs of Egypt in order to discern the commonalities and differences which are existent between them and are worth knowing by those who are engaged in cultural resistance.

As it has been made clear in Harry Nengwekhulu's paper, that in every class society, each one of the opposing classes invokes culture even religious culture in the struggle not only for material interests but also for ideological supremacy or hegemony². It is the tendency of ruling classes especially, to elevate their culture and selected elements of the culture of the underclasses to the status of national culture that has to be accepted as normative culture. This is true not only of modern ruling classes but of biblical ruling classes as well. It is also the practice of oppressed classes that have gained a certain level of class consciousness to struggle to retain subversive elements of their own working class culture or peasant culture at the displeasure of the ruling classes and to use it in their own struggles. In other words, these classes and groups refuse to surrender all social space to the cultures of ruling classes and instead work hard to win some of that "national" space for their cultures. This is true not only in our modern societies but in biblical societies as well. The story of the struggle for land between king Ahab and Naboth is the case in point. (1 Kings 21) In this tragic story, both Naboth and Ahab invoke a cultural practice either to protect or acquire that piece of land. In the case of Naboth the basis of his refusal to yield to the king's request that later appears to be a demand, is the cultural practice that was intended to protect the poor and weak in Israelite society against the greed of the rich and the powerful. It stated that land was inalienable and should remain inside the family throughout all generations. This cultural practice was reinforced by an invocation of religion-' The lord forbid....' (v.3). In his response Ahab

²H. Nengwekhulu's paper entitled: "The dialectical relationship between culture and religion in the struggle for liberation" appeared in Vol. 4 No 2, Nov. 1990 of this Journal.

through his wife, also invoked a religious cultural practice that linked the rule of kings with the divine. Jezebel, the queen, wrote in a charge sheet against Naboth: 'You have cursed God and the king.'(v. 10) We can see that in this uneven contest for land, one cultural practice has been elevated to 'national' status hence its greater weight over against that which protects the weak and the poor. That notwithstanding, Naboth, the peasant from Jezreel, still used the culture of the poor as a defensive weapon against ruling class cultural attack, albeit unsuccessfully. It is also noteworthy how the ruling classes became the ones that determined and enforced the dominant or 'national culture' and in this case in favour of their classes. It is the 'elders and nobles who dwell in the city' (v.11) who organized the court hearing and formulated the charge as well as executed its findings. (v.13) This story is to my mind a clear case illustrating the point that class struggle was also waged at a cultural level. Before we are accused of selecting an isolated story and making a principle from it, we wish to contend that in fact the entire liberative strain in the Old Testament which is represented by the Exodus-Sinai tradition as opposed to the David-Zion tradition operates from the premise that the culture of the oppressed is a legitimate instrument of struggle. It is in this afore mentioned tradition that the radical prophets of the Northern Kingdom struggled against the royal house of David in the Southern Kingdom.

We can also trace continuity of the same strain in the New Testament, especially in the gospel stories. Here again, the story of the gospel story of the feeding of the five thousand by Jesus in Mark 6:35-44 constitutes a clear example of a discourse of cultural struggle, this time in the economic arena

In the above mentioned story we find a struggle between two cultural practices. One is a culturally established practice of sharing whatever one has, which was still entrenched in the rural areas of Palestine during Jesus' time. The other is an equally strong if not stronger cultural practice of individual and exclusive ownership of the means of livelihood which was entrenched in the ruling class introduced and dominated money economy that was based in the urban centres of 1st century Palestine. According to the former cultural practice, you eat by belonging while according

to the latter, you eat through buying. The former practice was, as we said above, strongest in the peasant communities. It was however threatened by the dominant money economy based culture which was encroaching rapidly into the rural areas and pushing it back more and more. The fact that the disciples who come from the rural areas of Galilee act, at least in this story, as agents of the dominant culture illustrates the point. On the other hand, the fact that Jesus successfully asserted the legitimacy and relevance of the culture of sharing also illustrates the resilience of that threatened rural culture in that struggle for supremacy between the two economic systems. It is further important to note the sacralization of the cultural practice of the rural peasantry through the prayer of Jesus. This gives it greater legitimacy among those who have to struggle for survival. It also gives their economic struggle itself a sacred legitimacy in a religious atmosphere where the struggle for God was at a climax during the time of Jesus.

It is in the Gospels especially that the struggle for cultural hegemony is more pronounced and explicit and was fought at all levels of human existence-social, political, economic and religious between the Jesus community on the one hand and the temple based ruling classes on the other hand. F.Belo, M. Clevenot, S.Rostagno, Ched Myers and other christian materialists have done a very extensive job in their attempt to addresss this struggle for hegemony which impinged very deeply and directly on the concrete life of people. In that struggle, as F. Belo sees it, the contest was expressed in terms of what should be at the centre of society. In the case of the Jesus community, liberation of human life especially that of the marginalized should be the determinant in all social, economic, political and religious practices while in the case of the ruling classes the preservation of the existing social order was the primary concern, hence their insistance on an unbending and rigid upholding of the religious law in all situations. The conflict for these opposing views and cultures characterize the entire encounter between the Jesus community and the temple based religious ruling classes. This is the conflict that ended like in the case of Naboth, in the victory of the powerful and the execution of Jesus on the cross.

In the case of Jesus and his community, the conflict was not simply

over culture as such. It was generated by the realization on both sides of the connection of and impact that culture has on the thinking, attitudes and actions of people in society and that the one who controls it, can use it as a formidable instrument.

We are not unaware of the ideological critique that has been levelled at this approach. It has been accused of reading into or imposing modern phenomena on the bible. An even more serious accusation is that of an ideological bias towards Marxism. To the first accusation we can say that it is based on the denial, which we don't share, of the continuity element in human history i.e. that the history of biblical communities has no material connection to the histories of contemporary societies. If this were true, we would then pose the question why we have to concern ourselves, as modern people, with the bible at all, if no material connection exists between our societies and those described in the bible. We, for our part, affirm the existence of continuities and discontinuities in the entire human history. And as a way of accommodating the finer differences that result from obvious historical development, we have spoken of equivalences instead of identicalities. As far as the second accusation is concerned, i.e. that of ideological bias towards Marxism, Marguez J. Bonino has provided what to us is an adequate answer which we shall not repeat. (M. Jose Bonino 1975) We hope that it suffices for us to say that no hermeneutical approach is free of ideological contamination and that we consequently have to make a choice that is dictated to by our organic connection to the struggles of oppressed people in our communities as well as by our earnest desire to be obedient to the imperatives of the gospel, to side with the least of Jesus' brothers and sisters in the world today. To us the above satisfies that criteria.

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THE CROSS AND THE SUFFERING OF HUMAN DIVISIONS

By Prof. Simon S Maimela¹

Introduction

It is indeed a great honour for me to have been invited to write this paper on one of the most fundamental concepts in Christian theology, namely, the cross and its implications for human suffering of divisions on the basis of race. However, I must also confess that it was with mixed feelings that I agreed to speak on this theme because, for us as black South Africans, the questions of the cross and suffering are not issues that we can discuss in an abstract and theoretical way. For black people the cross and suffering are experienced daily as a concrete and existential communal way of being in the white dominated world. Indeed, for black South Africans, who have been subjected to untold white racial hatred, contempt and wanton violence simply because of their blackness, the theme of the cross and suffering raises the problem of theodicy, namely: How is God really there amidst black oppression? How can God be justified before black suffering which has been going for such a long time?

Perhaps no one has expressed better this perplexing feeling of apparent abandonment by God, which blacks have again and again experienced when they are unable to discern God's presence in the midst of white racial oppression than, Karl Goerdeler, a German conspirator against Hitler who, shortly before his execution, wrote:

In sleepless nights I have often asked myself whether a God exists who shares in the personal fate of men. It is becoming hard to believe this. For this God must for years have allowed rivers

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of blood and suffering, and mountains of horrors and despair for mankind to take place... He must have allowed millions of decent men to die and suffer without lifting a finger. Is this meant to be a judgement?... Like the psalmist, I am angry with God, because I cannot understand him.... And yet through Christ I am still looking for the merciful God. I have not yet found him. O Christ, where is truth? Where is there any consolation? (cited in Mcgrath 1985:179-180).

Black South Africans can easily identify with the sentiments expressed by Goerdeler as he languished in jail awaiting his appointment with death at the hands of Hitler's executioners. For the cross and suffering are for us historical and given realities because we exist as victims of ongoing and, indeed, a long "Good Friday" of racial oppression and domination at the hands of white Christian settlers (Maimela 1985:85). But what is particularly painful in all this is not so much that black people have been experiencing this seemingly unending, long Good Friday but the fact that racist white Christians attempted to abuse the theology of the cross by encouraging their black victims to carry the cross of suffering with dignity and without complaint as Jesus Christ carried his (Buthelezi 1975:46). Indeed, we cannot but agree fully with Moltmann (1974:49) when he perceptively writes:

The church has much abused the theology of the cross and the mysticism of the passion in the interest of those who cause the suffering. Too often, peasants, Indians and black slaves have been called upon by the representatives of the dominant religion to accept their sufferings as 'their cross' and not to rebel against them. Luther need not have recommended the peasants to accept their sufferings as their cross. They already bore the burdens their masters imposed upon them. Instead, a sermon on the cross would have done the princes and the bourgeoisie who ruled them a great deal of good, if it was aimed at setting them free from their pride and

moving them to an attitude of solidarity with their victims.

Therefore, even as I accept the biblical proclamation that the birth, life, suffering and death of Jesus Christ on the cross as well as his glorious resurrection provide the ultimate answer to all human suffering, I cannot for a moment forget that the theology of the cross is a double-edged sword which could either be a blessing or a curse. All depend on who is talking about it, to whom it is addressed and whose interests it intends serving. For it could be a source of solace if it is proclaimed that Jesus suffered and died on the cross as an expression of God's solidarity with the poor and oppressed, taking their side, accompanying them in their search for their humanity, and assuring them that the crosses they bear at present will not be in vain but will be rewarded with victory -- in the same manner that Jesus triumphed over evil by his resurrection from the dead (Maimela 1985:83; 1987:105-108, 114-120). But it could also be a curse if the theology of the cross is used as the "opium for the people" produced by those who have caused the suffering with a view to encouraging the victims of oppression to accept, in a fatalistic resignation, their suffering under oppressive social structures as their fate, a way of life. Yet, as Buthelezi (1975:9) correctly points out, an endurance of such suffering, which cripples the initiatives of the oppressed groups that are aimed at overcoming of it, serves no meaningful or redemptive purpose other than to cultivate a "cult, a form of idolatry and a sabotage of the design of God for the victims". Therefore, while the carrying of the cross and Christian suffering for the sake of our fellows is unavoidable in Christian life, it is absolutely essential that two kinds of suffering should be distinguished in theological discourse. On one hand, there is what could be referred to as an oppressive suffering, one which is not just due to the fateful cruelty of nature but is human made. In racial societies this form of suffering deliberately designed by the dominant white group in such a way that blacks would be perpetually be dominated, exploited and humiliated when they are denied the political, social and economic opportunities. On the other hand, there is redemptive suffering. This form of suffering is one which Christians take upon themselves after the model of Christ's suffering. Here suffering is not an end in itself but one suffers in order to realize the

well-being of one's fellow human beings. It is suffering which flows out of love for others and is taken upon by Christians who might resolve to realize some objectives which lie beyond suffering. Looked at from another angle, such a redemptive suffering is an expression of power over one's own suffering because it equips one to set aside one's own security and self-interests in order to serve the interests and security of one's fellow human beings. In South Africa, we have examples of such redemptive suffering exemplified by modern "martyrs" such as Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe and Steve Biko who set aside their security and comforts by sacrificing themselves for their oppressed black masses. Their sacrifices and suffering are redemptive because they were meant to serve a higher cause beyond suffering itself, namely: the liberation of the oppressed blacks (Buthelezi 1975:8-10).

In the light of the foregoing, any theology of the cross which tries to turn human suffering, which in the first place is evil, into to some sort of virtue which is an end in itself must be rejected because it is highly oppressive for those it tries to train to regard as normal the state of being victims of evil and human oppression. Put somewhat differently, the theology of the cross, like every other theology, has been and is always open to distortion and misuse depending on who uses it and for what purposes. Over against this possible misuse of the theology of the cross, it is my contention that the cross must be understood as a symbol for the real human suffering and the crosses which are borne by the people of colour in racist societies -- both of which must be overcome by those who take upon themselves the Christian suffering after the model of Christ's suffering in order to save humanity from sin and not to justify perpetual oppressive suffering on theological grounds.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

It is generally acknowledged that St. Paul was the first theologian to construct and use the theology of the cross to express his rejection of all kinds of human exaltation which often tempts them

to try to use reason and works to justify themselves before God. Thus, in the same way in which he developed the doctrine of justification by faith in critical opposition to the doctrine of justification by works in Romans 1:17ff, Paul developed the theology of the cross in 1Corinthians 1:1ff against human wisdom and indirect knowledge of God that might be gained from human contemplation of God's works of creation.

Taking his cue from St. Paul, Luther formulated the theology of the cross in its explicit form in 1518 in the Heidelberg Disputation. In his most important statements in theses 19 and 20 Luther, laying perimeters within which a person may rightly be called a theologian, writes:

That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross (WA 1, 362, 12-13, 30-31).

In formulating the theology of the cross Luther wanted to achieve twofold purposes: First, Luther uses theologia crucis to oppose what he referred to as a *theologia gloriae* which he identified with scholastic theology. In his view, the theology of glory was nothing but a theology of human self-exaltation because it propounded a wrong conception of human righteousness and what human beings must do in order to become justified before God. Rejecting the theology of glory which encourages the attitude of human pride and all striving after work righteousness as humanity's way to attaining salvation, Luther writes: "He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without works, believes much in Christ" (WA 1, 364). Secondly, the theology of the cross, as opposed to theologia gloriae, was formulated by Luther to express the Reformation insight about the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ in and through whom God deals mercifully with sinful humanity as the crucified and hidden God. For it is in the "humility and shame of the cross" (LW 31, 53) that God unconditionally accepts the sinful humanity, by virtue of the fact that our righteousness was achieved through the cross of Jesus and is now communicated to the sinner through the forgiveness of sins, the forgiveness which

Jesus Christ earned for the sinner by his vicarious suffering and death (Pannenberg 1988:163).

In other word, the most deepest and central questions that Luther wrestled with, when he formulated the theology of the cross, were the age-old questions which humans keep asking: What must we do to be saved? How can sinners be justified before a righteous judge? Luther's answer was that the true knowledge of God which is apprehended via the suffering and the cross of Jesus has nothing to do with human wisdom, indirect knowledge of works creation and ethical works, but has everything to do with what God wants to give and to do in order to deliver humanity from sin and death and thereby save them. That is, sinful human beings become just and righteous not by developing an attitude of priding oneself in one's lawful behaviour or laying claim to superior wisdom both of which have no use for the cross of Christ, but by faith in the crucified Christ. For the truth of the matter is that "nobody finds salvation within oneself: it comes from outside, without any condition from our part, without any merit, gratuitously and freely granted" (Vercruyssen 1989:50) to those who through faith accept God's forgiveness of their sins. Indeed as Luther (LW 31, 351f, WA 7, 54f) with deep insight points out, the salvation of the sinner is possible only because:

through a sweet exchange and a royal marriage, God takes our humanity with all its weakness, temptation and sinfulness and makes us share in God's justice, grace and life.

It is because Jesus was crucified for us that he is now the only mediator between God and sinful humanity. Therefore, to know Christ is to know the cross and to understand God under the crucified flesh. To sum up: just as Paul contrasted the wisdom of this world and the folly of the cross and, in parallel with this, contrasted the righteousness by the works of the law and the scandal of the cross, similarly Luther brought together the religious way to knowledge through contemplation of the works of God, and the moral way of self-affirmation through human's own works, and directed the theology of the cross polemically against both. Luther correctly saw that in so far as ethical works and religious

speculations are considered to be ways to God they have to be equally rejected. Thus by using the term *theologia crucis* in opposition to *theologia gloriae*, Luther has succeeded in unmasking the common root of both moralism and rationalism, namely, the human self-glorification and desire to attain personal righteousness by works or knowledge rather by faith in God's own action in the cross of Jesus (von Loewenich 1976:18-24). As the theologian of the cross, Luther recognized that the solution to human quest for salvation lay not in self-glorification through human knowledge and virtue but in the knowledge of God via the suffering of Christ. This knowledge of the "crucified and hidden God" is capable of effectively destroying human pride and self-deification. Moltmann's perceptive comments in this connection are helpful and worth recalling and we shall quote him at length:

The knowledge of the cross is the knowledge of God in the suffering caused to him by dehumanized man, that is, in the contrary of everything which dehumanized man seeks and tries to attain as the deity in him. Consequently, this knowledge does not confirm him as what he is, but destroys him. It destroys the god, the miserable in his pride, which we would like to be, and restores to us our abandoned and despised humanity. The knowledge of the cross brings a conflict of interest between God who has become man and man who wishes to become God. It destroys the destruction of man. It alienates the alienated man. And in this way it restores the humanity of the dehumanized man.... The knowledge of God in the suffering of Christ destroys man who abandons his humanity, for it destroys his gods and destroys his supposed divinity. It sets him free from his inhuman hubris, to restore his true human nature. It makes the *homo incurvatus in se* once again open to God and his neighbour and gives Narcissus the power to love someone else (Moltmann 1974: 70-71).

HUMAN RACIAL DIVISIONS AS A THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM.

The diversity of human race and their different cultural manifestations in themselves have not always been and need not be understood as problematic in the church when they are accepted as gifts that the Creator has endowed human beings for their

mutual enrichment. This was certainly true in the early church which was an ethnic and social admixture of different races that reflected the pluralism of the Hellenistic world. This healthy coexistence of different races in the Church of Christ in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Gal.3:28), because they are one in Jesus Christ, did not last for long for many reasons. Among others, one need to mention but two important ones. First, the church underwent a major transformation during the Constantinian era, when it reflected a change from being a scarcely tolerated and often persecuted minority missionary movement into an established, official institution with the power to determine life within its members as well as in society. Once the Emperor became a Christian, he began to assert his power on behalf of the church when he opened the entire society for christianization (Driver 1986:29). In gratitude to Constantine, the church and its religious authorities were taken over and coopted by the ruling class which expected them to construct a theology whose purpose was to advance and legitimate the cause and interests of the Roman empire (Maimela 1987:134).

Secondly, the collapse of the churches in North Africa and Asia Minor under the assault of Islam transformed the church into "the church of the white nations, of the Christian Occident and Orient" (Gollwitzer 1979: 154) with dire consequences for the coloured people of the world. With deep insights, Gollwitzer (1979:154) points out that this transformation of the church from its ethnic pluralism into a western, white church offered:

the white people, endowed with the mobility and activity characteristic of the temperate zones and especially of that peculiar continent of Europe, an unheard of self-confidence which first "proved itself in the struggle against Islam and in the crusades, but then reached out over the entire globe in the age of great discoveries 'empowering' the Europeans to regard all non-christian people as destined by God for domination and exploitation. So the coasts of Africa and India were plundered by the Portuguese. The Pope

divided up the New World between the Spanish and the Portuguese. The Aztec and Inca peoples were destroyed in a manifold Auschwitz.

The upshot of what is being claimed here is that racial problems have their roots in the Constantinian takeover of the church and its subsequent christianization of the white nations which, during the modern European colonial period, resulted in a theological self-understanding of the western world that equated Christianity with western culture. Concomitant with this was the belief that those who belonged to western Christianity were superior to non-christians who happened to be the people of colour (Gollwitzer 1979: 155). Once religious privilege of belonging to the church of Jesus Christ who is Saviour and Lord of the universe had been transformed into the political, economic and social privilege of God's chosen people who happened to be white, it was a matter of time before social structures were created through which white people would enforce white supremacy and thereby subject the people of color to white plunder, domination, exploitation and oppression. It was during the European colonialization of Africa, Asia and Latin America that a colonial theology was developed to give religious sanction for slavery and sociopolitical and economic bondage to which people of colour have been subjected to in racist societies over many centuries up to the present (Gollwitzer 1979: 156-167).

Therefore, in order not to speak to you on the problematic nature of racial divisions in general, I want now to focus attention on the South African racial situation of which I speak as a product and victim, to illustrate how the Constantinian model of a triumphal church and state have worked hand in glove to create the racism from which we are still struggling to liberate ourselves from. The problem of racial division was exacerbated by the fact that a white colonial tribe which wielded all the political and economic power appropriated for itself the symbol of Israel in a sense that white people in South Africa were specially chosen by God for a mission in the world. Therefore, the whole group of white people *qua* people came to regard themselves as God's chosen race or anointed, called upon to govern and spread western civilization and Christianity even at the cost of fanatical persecutions of those who

are regarded as unworthy human beings, the so-called the heathens who happened to be the people of colour.

Because the Apartheid system of white racial domination has its origin during the British rule in the seventeenth century and was merely perfected by the Afrikaners in 1948, it is important that we discuss the phases of its development.

In the first phase, it were the British imperialists who undergirded their colonial activities by understanding the British people as the elect of God who felt called upon to a mission history of bringing freedom to humanity. This mission was expressed in political and messianic terms whose best representative, Cecil Rhodes, declared that 'only one race,' his own, 'was destined to help on God's work and fulfil His purpose in the world ... and to bring nearer the reign of justice, liberty and peace' because they as English people *qua* people approached God's ideal type (cited by van Jaarsveld 1964: 3-4).

Put simply, the British imperialism was underpinned by the belief that they were a "new" Israel chosen to fulfil a divine mission, and more importantly that their election was determined by their racial, cultural superiority over those they were destined to rule. Concomitant with this was that the British people had a certain rightness to be elected to dominate the world, to spread the British civilization even at the cost of intolerable persecution of the "heathens" who must be made British at all costs or die at the hands of the anointed ones and with the approval this domesticated British "God" (Maimela 1987: 8f, 30, 38). Commenting on the marriage between the throne and altar which enabled such a small island to rule over 500 million people during the height of its power, de Gruchy points out that there existed an inseparable relationship between God, the Church and the British Empire. As a consequence, de Gruchy (1977: 45) could with justification conclude that:

Few, whether Anglicans or Non-conformists, apparently found anything incongruous about the Union Jack coexisting alongside the Cross and Altar, even when tattered and blood-spattered

from encounters with the natives ... in the service of God and Queen.

Of course, de Gruchy's perceptive observations refer to the brutal British rule that managed to bring both the Boers and Blacks in South Africa to their knees by repressive forces, believing that the expansion of British imperialism and exploitation of the so-called inferior races were serving divine providential purposes of bringing the gospel and civilization to the 'pagans' and uncivilized Boers. In consequence, the God the British churches talked about was nothing but a fine and loyal 'English' God who regarded the Crown and the British people as 'his' anointed or chosen race called upon to govern and spread British civilization.

In second stage, the Afrikaners too coopted the Dutch Reformed churches to provide them with spiritual resources to meet the threat of British imperialism on one hand, and the black majority who through intermarriage would dilute their white group identity. In the process an Afrikaner nationalism emerged and the Church, wishing to have unquestioning loyalty and authority over the lives of its followers, was just too willing to wed itself to this Afrikaner nationalism. Just as the British had done before, the theology that was propounded by the Dutch Reformed church gave the Afrikaners a theological sense of being a chosen people with a mission, namely, to create a new "white" nation in dark Africa as a beacon of Christian civilization. The Afrikaner leaders became men of calling to fulfil God's will, and this was true from Piet Retief in the nineteenth century in his struggle against the British 'Pharaohs' to Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of Apartheid policy in the twentieth century in his struggle to prevent black majority from engulfing his "volk" (van Jaarsveld 1977: 17). Believing that part of their mission was to preserve the chosen white race in its pure form, and therefore that it is against the divine will to be cast into a melting-pot through interracial marriage, a leading Afrikaner, Dr. Mansvelt, in 1892 reminded the white race that:

.... after their having opened the way for the spread of the Gospel and civilization, I do not believe that Providence has destined (the

Afrikaner) to disappear from history without trace and to give it to others (cited in van Jaarsveld 1977:22).

It is against the background of the Afrikaners' understanding of their divine calling that Apartheid was formulated and carried out. Theology was used to underpin this ideology when it was argued that God has sharply divided human races and the Afrikaner's calling was to help this goal of permanent separation of races attainable, thereby prevent the admixture of races which would destroy 'western civilization' and the 'God-given' identity of the white race. Rationalizing their subjugation and oppression of black people, the Afrikaners argued that they have been placed in Africa by God and commanded:

... to act as the guardian, master and spiritual leader to the black man. To do that the white man has to have at his command the authority needed to uplift, christianize and evangelize the black man; the purpose is that the black man who is still a child from the point of view of civilization, shall grow and develop in due course in his own area, with his own language according to his nature and traditions (van Jaarsveld 1977:25).

Carrying out the policies of Apartheid which were believed to be in accordance with God's will the Afrikaners could, for a long time, not understand why the entire world faulted them for what they were doing in service of God. Here again, as in the British imperialism, we are confronted with a triumphal white nationalism and triumphal white church -- both of which have tried to create God in their own image, a God who is a loyal white-bearded Monarch who is giving 'divine' tasks and missions only to white people while at the same time this God is not bothered about the enormous suffering that the racial policy of Apartheid has subjected black people.

Put somewhat differently, the racial divisions that South Africans have suffered over the years are a product of European cultural

and religious triumphalism that has given rise to and feeds on the theology of glory, a theology which has to do with the "success motif" of Western Christendom which has forgotten its origin in the crucified Christ, by allowing Christianity to be transformed into a religion of the successful, and the mighty who exercise power to determine life both in church and society. This theology of glory has encouraged South African whites to develop an attitude of priding themselves as worthier persons than the people of colour by virtue of belonging to Western civilization and by being the elect of God to promote Christianity. Thus, unable to pass judgment on white humanity which has become proud and triumphant because of their alleged superiority of their cultural and educational achievements, the theology of glory has allowed itself to be used as an alibi for the justification of the concrete and unjust suffering of the people of colour in a world dominated by whites solely because of their colour.

Put somewhat differently, racial divisions have become a theological problem for the people of colour simply because racism is not merely a racial prejudice or negative attitude towards a person whose colour differs from one's own. Nor is racism merely a vague feeling of racial superiority in relation to other people. Rather racism is a social, political, economic and cultural system of domination which white people employ to exclude the people of colour on basis of race for the purpose of subjugating them. It creates beliefs and myths about the cultural and biological superiority of the dominant racial group in order to justify the unequal distribution of resources between the dominant and the dominated groups (Boesak 1983: 3). It exalts a particular biological characteristic to a universal principle determining what it means to be human. Not surprisingly, the colour of one's skin and race become salvation principles, determining whether a person is declared justified or unjustified to enjoy certain economic, political and cultural rights and privileges. Because colour and race are salvation principles, it is not enough to be baptized after confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Rather a person is expected to possess yet another attribute, which in the nature of the case, must be reserved only for a select few. Hence, Apartheid was designed and practiced in such a way that the people of colour would be continually reminded that they are

unworthy persons, regardless of whether or not they are Christians, simply because they do not possess that extra attribute, namely: white skin. The consequence of elevating the genetic and factors of race into the criterion of determining between the worthy and unworthy, and between the superior and inferior human beings has been devastating for the people of colour who were made to feel inadequate. Condemning the negative effects of the *Apartheid* system on the blacks, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1983:46-47), with deep insight, writes:

Apartheid is intrinsically and irredeemably evil. For my part, its most vicious, indeed its most blasphemous aspect, is not the great suffering it causes its victims, but that it can make a child of God doubt that he is a child of God. For that alone, it deserves to be condemned as a heresy. Real peace and security will come to our beloved land only when *Apartheid* has been dismantled.

At the same time, *Apartheid* system taught whites, regardless of whether or not they are Christians, that they deserve a particular life-style and enormous political and economic privileges which are due to them by some natural right: that is, by virtue of their right colour.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

As much as it would be unacceptable to try to transform Luther's into a modern theology of liberation, it would be unfair to expect Luther's theology of the cross to give answers to the problems of the suffering of human divisions which modern racism has brought sharply into focus (Featherstone 1988:50). For even though Luther knew something about ethnocentrism and a vague human feeling of superiority over others, he certainly knew nothing about racism as a system of domination and attempts of the apostles of racialism of trying to transform race and colour into salvation principles that would compete with God's saving work in Christ. Nonetheless, I believe that Luther's theology has some relevance and can shed some light on the problem of human division as we

have come to know it. Indeed, I am persuaded that if Luther were living in a racist society that oppress and exploit others solely on the grounds of their colour, his theology of the cross and doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone would have forced him to make a preferential option for the downtrodden. Indeed, Luther's keen sensitivity to the many crosses and humiliations, which millions men and women have suffered throughout the world, led him to speak of the God of the poor and the humble (*Deus pauperum/Deus humilium*) in his Commentary of the 50th Psalm. Here he speaks of God's preferential option for the oppressed and express the solidarity God with the humble and the poor who, unlike the powerful and proud who are smug and secure, are aware that they are nothing before God (Vercruysse 1989:10). Therefore, Luther's theology of the cross which rejects human self-glorification of work righteousness or self-deification, on the grounds of race, sex and class, can meaningfully address human suffering of divisions.

Our discussion of white racial domination in South Africa leads to conclude that all the talk about divine election of white people, on the basis of which their domination of the people of colour has been justified, is nothing but an attempt to theologize politics and thereby transform politics into an instrument of self-justification, self-salvation, and self-preservation for the white people. Put simply: *Apartheid* has taught whites to take their lives and future into their own hands, and to believe that through some human wisdom and work they can save themselves in the face of real or imaginary dangers that the black majority posed for them. In so doing, the system of racial domination was transformed into an idol that would give white people life rather receive it from the true God, the Creator of life.

Over against the wrong conception of how persons can become righteous, the theology of the cross reminds us all human beings are unworthy, unacceptable and sinners before the righteous God, and therefore that no race or group is any better than another. Therefore, instead of pleading one's racial worthiness, all human beings are challenged to confess that daily need God's grace and mercy through which the righteousness of the Christ, the Crucified, is communicated to them. Directing itself against human concern

for self-deification through knowledge and works, the knowledge of the cross of Christ destroy all human hubris and the divinity that is presumed to reside in the so-called superior races. For the cross compels the sinful humanity to discover that all human beings equally live by God's grace which challenge them to forgive and thereby be reconciled to one another.

While my brief was that of discussing the cross and its implications for human suffering of divisions on the basis race, I trust the conclusions we have drawn are applicable to other problems of human suffering of divisions such as class domination, sexist domination, and denominational divisions that have prevented Christians from reconciling themselves to one another.

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BLACK POWER AND JUSTICE

By Dr David Luka Mosoma¹

Introduction

An attempt to relate Black Power and justice may sound incongruous to most of you because of the negative connotation attached to the term Black Power. In the white community Black Power was referred to as *swart gevaar* or Black danger. This reactionary attitude considered Black Power as evil and consequently the weapon of death. As Cone correctly states, "Black Power is the power to say No; it is the power of blacks to refuse to co-operate in their own dehumanization."² Correspondingly, Black power says Yes to liberation, freedom and justice.

This paper attempts to show that Black Power is not anti-thetical to the virtues of justice. In short, Black Power positively construed is rooted on justice because it quests for the liberation and freedom of the enslaved, exploited and oppressed humanity. That is to say, justice is the ultimate goal of Black Power.

Black power did not emerge *ex nihilo*. It was forced into existence by the existential political conditions created by white power: the dominance of white people over black people. In order to fully comprehend the transformational character of Black Power, we need to examine the practice of each of the respective forms of power: Black Power and White Power.

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²James H. Cone, Black Power and Black Theology, pp. 39-40

Black Power and White Power

These are two forms or types of power. In any socio-economic and political contexts where black and white people encounter each other these forms of power exhibit themselves. One form of power aims at liberation while the other aims at domination and oppression. Consequently, one form of power strives for freedom and justice while the other form enforces human exploitation and degradation. For this reason, these forms of power cannot be both rooted on justice. Liberation always almost aims at the actualisation of a just social life while domination and oppression result in social disintegration and human suffering. What makes power acceptable is both the goal it serves and practice leading to that goal. If the goal is social justice, then appropriately power would exhibit itself in the praxis of human liberation. If the goal of power is social and political domination, discrimination, political oppression and economic deprivation would be the end products. To be sure, power could be either good or evil.

These forms of power enable us to discern that power may either be used to promote unity with an attended equality or disintegration expressed in disunity, oppression and inequality. Reflecting on the impact of power in the American society, Tinder writes:

"Power may be used to separate human beings and to bring them together, as is exemplified in the policies of racial discrimination and integration in America; it may support inequality, as when special tax benefits are accorded to the wealthy; and it may support equality, as is done in many countries through the system of national health care...."³

Similarly Wartenberg employs dual distinction in his understanding

³Glen Tinder, Political Thinking: The Perennial Questions, Fourth Edition, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1986), p. 81.

of power: "power over" and "power to." The appropriation of this dual category of power cast light in our analysis of the nature and practice of Black Power and White Power. Clearly, "power over" and "power to" exist in one single practice of either Black Power or White Power but what happens is that in Black Power, "power to" dominates while in White Power, "power over" dominates.

White Power: "power over"

Wartenberg defines "power over" as "the ability of one human being to control another."⁴ This type of power is characterised by command over others and dominion and oppression of others. That is to say, "power over" is inherently a form of domination and does not offer authentic vision for societal liberation. Similarly, Boesak, defines "power over" as "either the ability to force one's will on others, or as the ability to confine others to a certain patterns of behaviour." He concludes, "power over others is essentially an estranged power."⁵ Tillich makes a close connection between power and justice. He asserts, "power and justice are one in the divine ground, they shall be one in human existence."⁶ Therefore, an estranged power means that form of power which is rooted neither in justice nor in divine ground.

In his seminal essay, "Why Black Theology, Helmut Gollweitzer passionately describes the genesis of White Power. He regards Christianity as the source of White Power as it provided the type of religious consciousness that subsequently formed the fertile ground for "political and economic imperialism." Religious consciousness, he argued, led the the Spanish and Portuguese to establish colonial empires on "Christian" grounds. He continues,

⁴Thomas E. Wartenberg, The forms of power: From Domination to Transformation, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), p. 23.

⁵Allan Boesak, Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Black Power, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1986), p. 47.

⁶Paul Tillich, Power Love and Justice: Ontological Analysis and Ethical Applications, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 108.

"the reformation did not change a thing in the fate **white people prepared for the colored peoples of the world.**"⁷ In a footnote, he states that Germanic -Protestant was more so responsible for continued expansion of slavery and racist apartheid than the Roman Catholic culture. Further, Gollwitzer writes:

"For the white confessors of the faith, regardless of their particular Christian hue, the people of color were all destined for bondage, oneness in "Christ" might pertain to heaven, but certainly not on earth....The capitalist revolution of white christianized, Portestant peoples began its world wide victory and opened up a new age of slavery that even today--although in changed forms of enslavement-- has not as yet been terminated. Millions of people were treated as animals to be hunted and then as **beasts of toil.**"⁸

These words strike a familiar chord in the minds of black South Africans. We know too well the deforming and devastating practice of White Power embodied in the infamous and notorious system of apartheid. Apartheid should the understood as an example of "power over others" proper. Apartheid power was based on the philospny of divide and conquer, aimed at subjugating the indigenous communities. This form of power was grounded on distorted conception of justice. Justice meant what promoted white self-interest. Boggs attest to this fact when he says, "white power was built on the basis of exploiting the colored races of the world for the benefit of the white races."⁹ That is to say, for those who advocate White Power, skin-colour determines the measure of justice rather than any other human consideration. There is no

⁷Helmut Gollwitzer, "Why Black Theology?" in Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), p. 155.

⁸Ibid.

⁹James Boggs, Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Pages from a Black Worker's Notebook, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), p. 50.

guarantee that Apartheid's tentacles will be completely cut, because it is common knowledge that, while the apartheid edifice is gradually collapsing, it is now being replaced by another sardle form of white power: economic power. For example, the success of a loan application is dependent upon one's ability to provide collaterals in the form of immovable properties: house or land. If you accept the argument that for some time Blacks were not allowed to own property, the demand by banks for immovable property as a collateral is yet another extention of economic racism.

In addition, one of the challenges facing South Africa is the white monopolies which evidently epitomises the crudest example of white power. White monopoly exists "in all the principal centers of power in government, business, the professions....from board room to pulput, from the control of wealth to the writers of history, power has remained white...."¹⁰ For this reason, non-racial approach to the problem would not succeed because white people would cry reverse racism. Similarly, affirmative action would not do because it puts Blacks in a situation where they would have to depend on the genenosity of the white monopolies to determine the measure and limit of black advancement.

It is against this background that we should reflect on Black Power as a social phenomenon aimed at destroying white racist practices that hold people in bondage in society.

Black Power: "power to" and justice

The term Black Power was brought into currency during the Civil Rights struggle in 1966 by Stokely Carmichael "to disignate the only appropriate response to white racism."¹¹ Cone writes, Black Power means "complete emancipation of black people from white

¹⁰Daniel C. Maguire, The Moral Revolution: Christian Humanist Vision, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1986), p. 35.

¹¹James H. Cone, Black Power and Black Theology, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), p. 5.

oppression by whatever means black people deem necessary." For Cone, Black Power "is a humanising force because it is dark man's attempt to affirm his being, his attempt to be recognized as "Thou" in spite of the other, the white power which dehumanizes him."¹² The appropriation of Black Power thought was a turning point in the way in which Blacks acted politically. In the past, they acted, demonstrated, marched from a position of weakness. This idea forces Blacks to deal with the root-cause of their subjugation. This was a concerted effort, on their part, to move from a position of being acted upon to be subjects of history and shapers of their own destiny. Black Power means the black community's determination to act from a position of power in their struggle for liberation. This shift meant that Blacks were fed up to deal with the issue of rights, rather they were prepared to face the issue of power head-on.

In contrast to the idea of "power over others" characteristic of White Power, Black Power exhibits and exercises "power to" - power shared with others, empowering the community to create and achieve common good. That is to say, the concept "power to" should be understood as the human capacity to transform its social and political conditions. For our purpose, however, the term "power to" implies the transforming capacity of the oppressed community to realise its liberation objectives: the wholeness of economic and political life embodied in liberation and justice. Witvliet testifies, saying that through Black Power, black people seek "to liberate themselves from the inferior image that white society has imposed on them." He concludes, "Black Power is essentially concerned with the liberation of the black humanity, and this struggle is not only in accord with the gospel of Jesus Christ, but it is essentially the expression of the gospel."¹³

Black Power means the power of the black community or people power, striving "to build a society in which the spirit of community and humanistic love prevails--a community where brotherhood and

¹²Ibid., pp. 6-7.

¹³Theo Witvliet, A Place in the Sun: An Introduction to Liberation Theology in the Third World, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), p. 70.

sisterhood exist."¹⁴ Justice serves as a linchpin and guarantor of human well-being in such a community.

Liberation movements express their vision of community power differently. In rallies and political gatherings the words *Amandla* and the masses' response *Nga wethu* are used. These words serve as a reminder that political power belongs to the community rather than to the leaders. The idea of people power undermines traditional understanding that "the government has power; the people do not. The rich have power; the poor do not. Armed soldiers have power; hostages and unarmed citizens do not."¹⁵

In the same manner, the Pan Africanist group employs the words *Izwe Lethu* to signify land as an embodiment of power. For them, evidence of a genuine liberation lies in the acquisition and repossession of land. In contrast, the Black Consciousness movement locates power in Blackness: Identity and solidarity. The focus is on the ability of the black people to engage in a conscientious process of self-discovery of who they really are. This consciousness enables them to cultivate a positive self-image and self-respect--a necessary condition in the struggle to redeem their distorted and formed humanity.

It could be argued that a community of brotherhood and sisterhood which Black Power seeks to create is ostensibly rooted on justice. Black Power is essentially an expression of the gospel, as Witvliet claims, because it focuses on the actualisation of social justice which is an approximation of the divine will for humanity. The issue is, however, what form of justice does Black power aim to achieve? Black Power strives for a form of justice that is predicated upon the African axiom that says, *motho ke motho ka ba bangwe batho*, "meaning a person becomes truly human because of others. This ontogenetic self-affirmation serves as the foundation of African conception of justice without which no wholeness and

¹⁴Douglas A. Hughes, From A Black Perspective: Contemporary Black Essays, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970), p. 86.

¹⁵Carter, Heyward, Our Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality and Liberation, (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1984), p. 116.

fruitful social and political life together can be realised. An acknowledgement and affirmation of other human beings is crucial for contemporary society.

Since a person becomes truly human because of others, justice is, therefore, a cornerstone of human togetherness and of human existence, and is a permanent passion for socio-economic and political life. Ignorance about justice hurts people and destroys any sense of community. Black Power places human beings at the center of justice claims. The principle of human affirmation has theological roots. In support of centrality of **participatory justice** as a concrete way of affirming the humanity of others, Wogaman argues, "if we are, finally, brothers and sisters through the providence of God, then it is "just" to structure institutions and laws in such a way that communal life is enhanced and individuals are provided full opportunity for participation."¹⁶ Like Wogaman, Black Power advocates perceive justice as "the community's guarantee of the conditions necessary for everybody to participate in the common life of society."¹⁷

Maguire poignantly captures the essence of justice that Black Power purports to dispense in these words:

"Justice breaks the news to the ego that there are no solar gods in the universe of persons. Justice is the attitude of mind that accepts the others--all others--as subjects in their own right. Justice asserts that one's ego is no absolute and that one's interests are related.... Justice is thus the **elementary** manifestation of the other-regarding character of moral and political existence. The alternative to justice is social disintegration because it would mean a refusal to take others

¹⁶J. Philip Wogaman, Christian Perspectives on Politics, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p. 158.

¹⁷Ibid.

seriously."¹⁸

This a radical way of understanding justice because it seeks to make people the measure of justice rather than the material goods they are suppose to share. The refusal of the white people to share with Blacks the wealth of the land is at the core a refusal to accept the black humanity. Denial of people's worth is in the main a denial of justice. Maguire writes, "if we deny persons justice, we have declared them worthless." He continues, "to be perfectly consistant, if we deny justice to persons we ought to kill them because we have declared them worthless. Their liquidation would be in order."¹⁹

White power is known for its denial of justice to the majority of the people, thereby declaring them worthless. White people's denial of black humanity served as justification for their exploitation, oppression, torture and death. The central preoccupation of Black power is "to empower the oppressed to seize control of their destiny and to establish a new order of freedom and justice."²⁰

This discussion prepares the ground for some terse reflection on the concept of *ubuntu* as power beyond justice.

Ubuntu as Power beyond justice

To appreciate the justice-commitment of Black Power, we need to understand the cultural and religious formation of its thinkers. In the South African context most of the proponents of Black Power or Black Consciousness were shaped, in part, by the African traditional thought rooted in *botho* or *ubuntu*--a foundation for

¹⁸Daniel C. Maguire, The Moral Revolution, p. 4.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 4-5.

²⁰J. Philip Wogaman, Christian Perspectives in Politics, p. 53.

African concepts of equality and justice.²¹

If we accept the following notions of justice as plausible: (1) distributive justice in which justice is thought of as apportioning of particular virtues or goods in their proper share according to the rule of mathematical equality; (2) corrective/retributive justice which implies a mean between gain and loss; (3) utilitarian justice based on "the satisfaction of desires;" (4) and contractual justice which means that "the duty to act justly stems from the duty to keep a promise"²² to the terms of contractual obligations. Then, we have to consider the term *ubuntu* as power beyond justice because it expresses the quality of being human that form the character and disposition in people to act justly. In *ubuntu* we are not what we say but what we do. That is, what we do exhibits who we are. Aristotle once said, friends have no need of justice. Equally appealing to me: when you have *ubuntu* you have no need of Justice. Black Power accepts the view that the end of all human activity is *ubuntu*. This means that *ubuntu* is the highest end for which all else serve. Good life and happiness are rooted in togetherness--a virtue that expresses *ubuntu*. To be sure, *ubuntu* person is a just person. It could be argued that the depth of *ubuntu* contrains Black people from mounting any form of retaliatory action against the racist oppressors. Examples of Black people's rapproachment to and tolerance of their oppressors abounds in history. Zimbabwe and Namibia are fresh cases at hand. Black people did not go about killing whites, as they done to them, because of their postive self-understanding based on *ubuntu*. For instance in the 1970s, Blacks said, "we are black and beautiful" rather than black and ruthless. It is the beauty of the black humanity shaped by the quality of *ubuntu* which inspires justice-commitment of Black Power.

Arguably, the proponents of Black Power appropriate the biblical view of God's justice as resource for envisioning and reconstructing

²¹Mothobi Mutloatse, ed., Umhlba Wethu: A Historical Indictment, (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1989), p. 192.

²²James Sterba, Justice: Alternative Political Perspective, (Belmond, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company 1980), p. 29.

an alternative community. Maguire poignantly expresses an authentic form of justice in these words: "in the Bible, justice and love are hyphenated in the way that is "good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). Adding, the "partiality of biblical justice for the poor is unequivocal."²³ Furthermore, he reasons, "sometimes justice responds with holy anger in defense of the weak."²⁴ This way of perceiving justice and love sets the norm by which any power could be judged. *ubuntu* is a form of justice in relational practice. It is intolerant to injustice and it quests for a full actualisation of human personality; it militates against any form of power that negates and reduces human beings into cogs in the machines.

At the core of *ubuntu* traditional African concept is the refusal to condemn people as morally evil until proven so. In other words, lack of *ubuntu* renders one less human. For example, a murderer would be considered by the black community as a thing rather a person. The act of murder disqualifies one from the communion and fellowship of other humans. That is, what one does either enhances one's humanity or negates it. It is against this backdrop that the encounter between Black and White should be viewed. Blacks have almost always reserved the word person to individuals of character and moral uprightness. The skin-colour, racial and political affiliation of the person play no role in determining one's humanity in the black community. Hence the designation *umuntu* (person) and *umlungu* (white man) are crucial for Blacks. If two men are approaching, one black and the other white and then ask a group of Blacks who these men are. The immediate response would be *umuntu no mlungu* are coming. The men are identified in terms of **person** and *umlungu*. Umlungu means someone whose humanity or *ubuntu* is unknown. Once the humanity of *umlungu* has been verified and ascertained in the practical process of life together then he/she graduates from that distorted self-image to the status of *umuntu*. Clearly, the *ubuntu* concept forms the basis of genuine liberation in a community of justice where the individual's human dignity is enhanced and affirmed rather than repudiated.

²³Daniel C. Maguire, The Moral Revolution, p. 28.

²⁴Ibid., p.29.

In essence, the idea of *ubuntu* focuses on who we are and what we do because it is what one says and does that we are able to discern who the person is. As Hauerwas ably states, "...our doing only can be a reflection of (who we really are) our character."²⁵ That is to say, the person defines himself/herself in whatever he/she does. This means that the tools used in the creation of the *ubuntu* community aims at the recognition of the human dignity of all God's people. As Paul Freire says: "When men are already dehumanised, due to the oppression they suffer, the process of their liberation must not employ the methods of dehumanization."²⁶ For this reason, *ubuntu* humanises rather than denegrates those it sets out to affirm. To be sure, *ubuntu* concept makes character rather than skin-colour the criterion for determining one's humanity or one's "thingness." One becomes a thing by the way in which one "... fails to grant another person total human dignity and acceptance...."²⁷ Often, rejection of the human dignity of another is expressed by forms enslavement, domination and racial discrimination. The *ubuntu* person is always in constant struggle against forces and powers of dehumanisation and death.

In both Church and society, the *ubuntu* idea serves as an ethical norm for what Mothobi Mutloatse calls "...a universal and self-defining value which was on an ever-ending journey to eternity."²⁸ He continues, "the destiny of the norm and value was for forever to evolve in response to the challenges of huamn beings. The norm transcends race, colour, ethnicity, sex or station in life."²⁹ It is

²⁵Stanley Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer In Christian Ethics, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 33-43.

²⁶Paulo Freire, Padagogy of the Oppressed, (New York: Seabury Press, 1970), p. 53.

²⁷Calebo Rosando, "Black and Affican Theologies of Liberation: Marxian and Weberian Perspectives," in Journal of Religious Thought, vol. 42, March 1985), pp. 32-33

²⁸Mothobi Mutloatse, ed., Umhlaba Wethu, p. 191.

²⁹Ibid.

helpful to note that this understanding clarifies one of the misconceptions that Whites have had about Black power, namely that Black Power is Black racism in reverse, aiming at promoting hate for Whites. Cone refutes this charge, saying, "it is not the intention of the black man to repudiate his master's human dignity, but only his status as master."³⁰ The master status of Whites contradicts the *ubuntu* norm by creating hierarchies of power rather than providing the necessary conditions where each is a servant of another in a reciprocal and egalitarian manner. In this way, *ubuntu* promotes human interdependence, affirming the best in each one of us.

Ubuntu as love for neighbour

It should be noted from the onset that an appropriation of *ubuntu* traditional African concept should not be construed as romanticising the past, but as an appreciation of the contribution it can offer in the search for something new and better in society today. Further, *ubuntu* can serve as a bridge between African Christian religion and Western liberal thought, such as non-racialism, because of its breadth and depth. That is to say, *ubuntu* intersects with Christianity in its quest and commitment to human liberation. It envisions a community in which people strive for common human good. In such a community, the love of the self and of the neighbour are inextricably bound together in *ubuntu*, hence Mbiti's expression, "I am because we are, since we are therefore I am."³¹

The idea of human interdependence implied in this statement relates closely to Jesus' words: "Love the Lord with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourself." The love of God for which we are called upon to embody in our daily lives is not an end in itself; it has to be expressed concretely in the love and behaviour toward the neighbour. Without this corresponding act, any claim of God's

³⁰James Cone, Black Theology and Black Power, p. 14.

³¹John Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1969), p. 147.

love remains an abstraction. In the preceding statement, Jesus communicates one essential veracity: loving behaviour toward the neighbour is both an expression of faith in God and one's relationship to God in the neighbour. This means that one's self-understanding is crucial in how one relates to others. One's attitude and treatment of others demonstrates one's *ubuntu* or lack of it. One's faith in God or lack of it. Jesus locates love at the centre of human activity and relationship. It is not so much of what one knows as to what one does with what one knows. It is not a question of knowing the truth but rather the issue of doing the truth.

In conclusion, it should be clear from the forgone discussion that *ubuntu* virtue forms the basis for an authentic just community. It provides both the moral and theological premise for life together because in it, the sacred and the political belong together. One cannot claim to act justly in Church while one fails to act justly in the political arena. That is to say, life in Church has far reaching implications for the political and visa versa.

AND SHE BECAME "SNOW WHITE"

By Jacqueline Williams

In Numbers 12, "the woman Moses married" is not named. She is also not referred to as Moses' wife, but twice in Num 12:2 she is referred to as the "Cushite woman whom Moses married". This is the only place in the bible where she is mentioned at all. The issue at state here is not her role as a wife, but her race, her nationality, the identity of her primary community. The underlined issues in this narrative, which at face value deals with a power struggle between Moses and the duo Miriam and Aaron are firstly the uncleanness (wrongness, otherness in a negative sense) of black persons as understood Miriam and Aaron, and secondly the deity's utter contempt with such reasoning.

It is generally assumed that the Cushite "woman Moses married" as mentioned in Num 12:1-2 and Zipporah, whom we know to be Moses' wife, are the same person. This is an incorrect assumption, as the hebrew bible witnesses to two different women. The most obvious reason for the suggestion that they are two different women is geographical. Zipporah is mentioned in the book of Exodus, both directly and indirectly. Ex 2:16, implies her existence. "Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock". It also mentions that their father was named Reu'el. Zipporah is mentioned more directly in Ex 2:21. "And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah."

In verse 22 of the same chapter it informs us that Zipporah bore Moses a son called Gershom. Again she is mentioned in Ex 3:20 "... Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on an ass, and went back to the land of Egypt"... A few verses later (ex 4:24-26) Zipporah is mentioned again and this time she speaks in her own words. The narration goes thus: "At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin, and touched Moses' feet with it, and said. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me! So he let him alone. Then it was that she said, "You are a bridegroom

the Lord met him and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin, and touched Moses' feet with it, and said. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me! So he let him alone. Then it was that she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood, because of the circumcision.

In the history of exegesis the passage immediately above has been seen as very problematic and difficult to understand. There is no understanding of the meaning of the story, or the logic of the event. However what it clearly is saying to the reader is that in this case Zipporah acts instinctively to protect her family. She summed up the situation and within the context she found herself acting to save the life of her husband and that of her children. Zipporah is mentioned again indirectly in Exodus 18. This time Jethro the priest of Midian who is also known as Reu'el brings back to Moses, Moses' wife and sons. Ex 18:2-5 reads: "Now Jethro, Moses' father in law, had taken Zipporah Moses' wife, after he had sent her away, and her two sons of whom the name of the one was Gershom (for he had said "I have been a sojourner in a strange land."), and the name of the other Elie'zer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh). And Jethro Moses' father in law came with his sons and wife in the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God."

The Zipporah we have seen above comes from the land of Midian, this is located on the Arabian peninsula. The other woman mentioned in Moses' life is the "Cushite woman whom he had married." Cush according to biblical tradition is the land from which the southern most people known to the Hebrews come. It is also known as Ethiopia. This geographical reality and distance between Cush and Midian makes it difficult for Zipporah and the Cushite women to be the same person. We are therefore not dealing with a relationship between Zipporah and Miriam, but one between the "Cushite woman" and Miriam.

In the narrative all the main characters at one point or the other speak for themselves, except for "the Cushite woman". At no point in our narrative do Moses, Miriam, Aaron or the deity speak to the "Cushite woman" and Miriam. Within our narrative all the main

characters at one point or the other speak for themselves, except for "the Cushite woman". At no point in our narrative do Moses, Miriam, Aaron or the deity speak to the "Cushite woman" directly. This silence of the African woman in this narrative, and as well as the silence of the other actors in the narrative, about the "Cushite woman" makes it difficult to have any idea of her other than her Africanness. We therefore have to look at other scriptural witnesses for a better understanding of her position in this community and why this bitter attack on her identity by Miriam and Aaron.

There is an added difficulty in that there is no other scriptural witness to the relationship between Miriam and "the Cushite woman" that enlightens us to the kind of relationship between these two women. For us to understand Miriam's behaviour towards the "Cushite woman", we will look at some other place in the scripture where Miriam is dealing with a foreign woman in relation to Moses. This may help us understand Miriam's intentions and behaviour in our narrative. The most obvious relationship to examine is the one between the daughter of Pharaoh and Miriam.

Before we do as suggested above let us have a closer look at Miriam. Miriam's name comes from the hebrew root (mrh) which means "to be contentious". To be refractory" or "to be rebellious". Her name is more precisely linked to the hebrew word (mry) which is a masculine noun which means rebellion. Miriam's name therefore has the connotation in this case of a "rebellious person", but rather more accurately as "rebellious water". (yam in hebrew means water or sea).

In Exodus 1:15-2:1-11 we are made aware of the circumstances under which Moses was born, and also the way his family as a team made sure that he stayed alive. Three months after the birth of Moses it was impossible to hide him from the authorities. He was then put into a basket on the river. It was the duty of his sister to keep watch at a distance so that the family could know what would happen to the boy. Even though the narrative does not say it, it seem obvious that the sister's task was to see that no harm was done to the little boy. We assume that the sister of Moses as

mentioned in Ex 2:4 and verses 7-8 is the same person as Moses' sister Miriam. In Exodus 2 the sister is not named.

There is however no other tradition in the Hebrew bible that contradicts the assumption that the sister of the boy, in the basket, is the same person whom we know as Miriam, Moses's sister. What we can gather from the narrative is that she was a very courageous and intelligent girl. We see this when she went forward to show herself to Pharaoh's daughter, even though the action may have put both her and her brother's life in jeopardy. She goes forward towards pharaoh's daughter, but not without a plan. She thinks well and fast in situations of danger. Here we see a young oppressed girl taking initiative turning a moment of possible death into a moment of life. Scheming seems to be something that comes natural to her. This ability of the girl we become aware of when she suggested to the daughter of Pharaoh that the child's own mother be his nurse.

From a very tender age Miriam uses her initiative. Her sense of timing at this tender age seems to be well developed. The abilities she manifests to the reader in this story are the elements that suggest that she already was a fine leader. We see in this setting Miriam using the nature of the oppressor for the benefit of her family. She uses the feelings that a child stirs up in a person and in this case Pharaoh's daughter, in the interest of life for her brother. She also makes the suggestion for her mother to be the nurse to the child in the heat of the moment, so that Pharaoh's daughter does not get a chance to rethink her plan of adopting the child. If this was Miriam as a child, how much stronger as a grown woman? Note that in Exodus chapter 2 narrative Miriam is an oppressed slave girl, while the Pharaoh's daughter comes from the elite of the oppressor class. Pharaoh's daughter, an African woman, resembles the Israelites more in terms of features and skin colour than the people of Cush resemble the Israelites. We find a clue to this reality in Exodus 2:18-20. This passage is a discussion between Jethro the priest of Midian and his daughters about the identity of the stranger (Moses) who helped them at the well, they identify him as an Egyptian.

In Miriam's relationship with the Cushite woman we observe that

her situation in life has changed drastically. Firstly, she was not a slave any more, secondly she was a grown woman, and thirdly, she was one of the three top leaders of her community. The obvious issue in our narrative is, why does Moses have authority over Miriam and Aaron? We become aware of this question in the following: "...Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also'..." (Ex 12:2). In the case of Miriam, Aaron and Moses, they were all seeing themselves as authentic leaders, as chosen by the deity, and accepted by their community. (See Ex 12:2). All three of them were claiming that their authority over the people came from the same source, which entitled them to have the same standing in the Israelite community. From the response of Miriam and Aaron it becomes obvious that they felt they were not given the recognition they deserved. Something had to be done about this state of affairs.

When challenging an opponent it is advantageous to know his\her weak points. They therefore chose to attack Moses at his weakest point. His choice of wife. Now the two women whom we know to be Moses' wives are Zipporah the Midianite and the "Cushite woman" (Moses may have had more wives). Both of them were foreigners. One from the land of Midian and the other from the land of Cush. It seems clear then that Miriam and Aaron's objection was because Moses married foreign women. The woman from Cush was offensive to Miriam and Aaron because she was a black African woman. We stress here a black African woman, because the Egyptian princess in whose house Moses grew up, was an African. As noted above the national looks of Egyptians resemble Israelites in both colour and features. Which is also true for Israelites and Midianites. The issue being raised by Aaron and Miriam at this point is not that of being foreign, but black. It is a racist issue. This was not only the attitude of Miriam and Aaron. In choosing a "weakness" of Moses, so that people would question his authority, they had to chose something which would certainly have the necessary effect (to question Moses' authority) in the community. There had to be, in the larger community, a fair number of people with this disposition.

It is interesting to see the response of the deity to the conspiracy of Miriam and Aaron against Moses. The deed done by Miriam

and Aaron was grave enough to guarantee a physical manifestation of the deity's presence in the community. The deity calls all three of the leaders together and speaks to them. In the deity's words to Moses, Aaron and Miriam the deity affirms again that he\she has chosen Moses as his\her special representative. What is interesting in the discussion is that the deity does not mention the Cushite woman at all. The deity deals with the issue of authority. Yet if we look at what the deity does about the plot against Moses, we see the deity responding directly to the issue of the blackness of the wife of Moses. In Num 12:9 we are told that the deity's anger was kindled against Aaron and Miriam. Our narrative however does not tell us how the deity's anger was manifested against Aaron, but only how it was manifested against Miriam. The deity made that which Miriam was so proud of, a white skin, something to be despised. Miriam as "leprous, as white as snow". The deity gave her an illness that forced her separation from the community. She became unclean. That which was "as white as snow" became unclean, defiled and separated from the community and the deity. It is interesting in this narrative that the deity does not refer to skin colour in mere words, but in action, that spoke much more effectively. Differences are natural and created by the deity. If we use these differences to glorify ourselves to the detriment of others we are creating our own down fall.

We learn from this text that women, who are part of a racially powerful group, can use racial differences for their own positions of power in their communities. It becomes obvious then that talking about the idea of sisterhood, amongst women who form part of the group in power and those who form part of the oppressed group, is not in the interest of the oppressed, if the assumptions and behaviour of those women in power, are not challenged by the oppressed women. There should be a re-evaluation of the concept white. In our narrative this re-evaluation is forced on all concerned, by the leprous Miriam who is "as white as snow". The deity challenges the idea that "as white as snow" - as pure as snow" - morally pure - is chosen by the deity. It also challenges the idea that white is always right, always pure, and always holy. Holiness (to be set apart) for the deity's purpose is not an outward image, but obedience to the purpose of the deity, which is the liberation of the poor and the oppressed.

The other interesting issue our narrative raises, which could be interpreted in both a negative and a positive way, is the silence of the Cushite woman. It may be seen as, once more, those in power discussing the position of the oppressed without the oppressed having any input in the discussion. Those in power defining the powerless and making decisions for the oppressed according to the powerful's definition of the oppressed. Or it could be understood that racism is not a problem of the Cushite woman therefore she does not have to defend her own identity. She is who she is. She leaves those with the problem to deal with it.

BOOK REVIEWS

GUTIERREZ, Gustavo, The Truth Shall Make You Free, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990, v+204, R45-95.

This is an extraordinary book from the pen of Gutierrez. Unlike some of his other books which pursue a particular theme, this book was written both an apology and rebuttal. It is an apology in which Gutierrez tries to explain his theological standpoint and show that it is faithful to the Christian tradition. It is a rebuttal against his accusers who alleged that his theology was nothing but a political rhetoric dressed up in religious garb. In my view this is perhaps the best introduction to Gutierrez's theology which he wrote during one of the most difficult period in his life.

The book comprises of three rather long. The first chapter was written and submitted on May 29, 1985 as a "dissertation" toward a Doctor of Theology degree at the Catholic Institute of Lyons, where Gutierrez had studied theology. Instead of submitting the usual dissertation which comprises of one single piece of scholarship, Gutierrez was allowed to present several of his works such as *A Theology of Liberation* (1973); *Liberation and Change* (with R Shaul, 1977); *The Power of the Poor in History* (1983); *We Drink from Our Own Wells* (1984), and numerous articles. It was during the time the Vatican was harassing the exponents of liberation theology in Latin America, and Gutierrez was one of the victims of this theological witch-hunt and he and Leonardo Boff were at one time or another prohibited to write or publish theological works.

It was during this most difficult time that Gutierrez was offered the opportunity to present his theology at one of the most prestigious Catholic university. This chapter was meant to present the contents of the aforementioned books in a summary forms before a panel of Catholic academicians. In the response to the questions which was put to him by the examining committee, Gutierrez not only clarified some of the central thrust of his theological

proposals. Having adequately clarified the relationship between the traditional European theology and liberation which has often led to serious tensions and divisions in the church, the committee accepted Gutierrez's *apologia* and granted him the degree Doctor of Theology *summa cum laude*.

In chapter 2, Gutierrez goes into great detail examining the role of social science and its methodologies in theology. His concern was to clarify the role of Marxist analysis and to show both its possibilities and limits for theology. Above, Gutierrez has succeeded in demonstrating that the criticism that has often been levelled against liberation theology was unfounded and was based on a misunderstanding, if not outright distortion of liberation theology.

In chapter 3, Gutierrez boldly confronts and responds to the issues that were raised by the two Vatican instructions, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation" and "Christian Freedom and Liberation". While the former appeared to have spelt a death-knell to liberation theology the latter is conciliatory and does acknowledge some positive aspects in it. In responding to the issues raised, Gutierrez used the opportunity to clarify for both foe and friend alike some of the central insights of liberation theology by discussing such important themes such as the problem of truth claims in theological discourse, the nature of biblical truth and the doing of truth, the relation between theory and practice, orthodoxy and orthopraxis, faith and culture, truth and freedom, evangelization and liberation, the kingdom of God and history, and the role of the poor in the transformation of the world.

In my view this well written book is the best introduction to the theology of Gutierrez in particular, and to the theology of liberation in general, and should be read by all those who would like to seriously engage liberation theologians.

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ODUYOYE, Mercy Amba, MUSIMBI, Kanyoro R.A. (eds.): The will to arise - Women, tradition, and the church in Africa. Maryknoll. Orbis, 1992. 230 pp.

This book is an anthology of fourteen essays originally delivered at the first meeting of the Biennial Institutes of African Women in Religion and Culture - a project of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians - in Accra, Ghana, 1989. The anthology is divided into three parts: (1) Women in African culture, (2) African women and sexual practices, and (3) African women and the Christian Church.

In the first essay of Part I, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, discusses the role of women in rituals arguing that traditional Africa has always afforded women a lowly status; a practice which is being perpetuated by theologians, religions and churches today. Rosemary Edet believes that African traditional rituals involving women have both positive and negative aspects. Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, confining herself to the African rituals of birth and naming, argues that these two rites have significant similarities with the Christian ritual of infant baptism. Daisy Nwachuku of Nigeria discusses the results of a research project she undertook on the sensitive issue of the 'Christian Widow' in African culture, concluding that the church should intervene on behalf of the discriminated African widow by providing spiritual and physical rehabilitation. The only muslim contributor, Rabiatu argues that although Islamic women suffer spiritual, social and legal discrimination in Islamic communities; this discrimination has no basis in the Koran.

In the first article of Part 2, Musimbi Kanyoro, a former Bible translator, argues that since the 'meaning of the text is dependent upon the values of the person reading it' more women should be involved in Bible translation. Nasimiyu-Wasike presents a critique of polygamy on the basis that in both the Jewish and African cultures its aim is to exploits women for the benefit of men. Branding polygyny a thing of the past and welcoming Christianity's stress on monogamy, Judith Mbula Bahemuka points out that due to socio-political factors, 'sequential polygyny' - a situation where a man is married to one woman but keeps a number of mistresses is on the increase. Lloyd Fanusie of Sierra Leone presents a most

passionate argument that most if not all ancient religions have gradually developed traditions of women oppression. In Africa, there are many cultural practices and taboos and (double) standards designed to subjugate women. In her essay, Bernadette Beya of Zaire discusses themes such as conjugal fidelity, virginity, singlehood and prostitution in the African context. Teresa Hinga begins the last section of the book by an essay that grapples with the implications of belief in Christ in the context of women's search for liberation. Anne Musopole of Malawi discusses the effect of Christianity on the matriarchal Chewa culture. Modupe Owanikin, tackles the thorny issue of women priesthood and ordination. Teresa Okure concludes with reflections on Luke 8:40-56 - the stories of the daughter of Jairus and the woman with a flow of blood.

Having broken with romantic and simplistic conceptions of (African) culture, a tendency that still exists among some African theologians; they present a fresh (re)-appropriation of African culture from a Christian perspective. However, while the bulk of the articles display an awareness of the social, and spiritual dimensions of (African) culture, they do not seem to clarify and debate the political and economic dimensions of culture with the same kind of vigour. Lastly while a healthy critical attitude towards African culture is held by most contributors, they seem to maintain an ahistorical almost monolithic concept of 'Christianity'.

The uniqueness of this anthology lies in the fact that, African women African are speaking out for themselves as theologians and as human beings rooted within the African reality. In that sense it would be inappropriate even imperialistic to think of this collection strictly as either an 'addition', or merely a 'contribution' to the world-wide Christian feminist project. They tackle fundamental, thoroughly African issues of (women's) survival and not the vogue 'fulfilment and equality issues' common in Western feminist circles. This book is a voice of the most powerless among the powerless of the world - African women. It is a voice which all committed theologians cannot ignore.

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Bredenkamp H.C., Flegg A.B.L., Plüddemann H.E.F.: The Genadendal Diaries - Diaries of the Herrnhut Missionaries H. Marsveld, D. Schwinn and J.C Kühnel Volume 1 (1792 - 1794). Bellville: University of the Western Cape Institute for Historical Research, 1992. 291 pp.

On the 24th of December 1792, three Moravian Missionaries; Hendrik Marsveld, Daniel Schwinn and Christian Kühnel arrived at Baviaanskloof, a KhoiKhoi settlement in South Africa with a view to reviving mission work which had been reluctantly abandoned fifty-five years earlier. The English translations of the diaries (1792 - 1994) of these missionaries are the contents of this book. The diaries are preceded by an introductory chapter containing background information on the Dutch East India Company's deliberations leading to the sending of the three, denominational rivalries in Germany and in the Cape, the United Brethren and the three missionaries.

The introductory chapter is both too brief and almost hagiographical in favour of the Herrnhuters. Perhaps the more serious shortcoming of this chapter is that while an attempt is made to introduce the context and background of the diarists, there is complete silence on the Khoi-Khoi. From my reading of this volume, the suggestion that the work of the Herrnhuters in the Cape was meant to, "transform (both) the religious mind and socio-economic life of the despised folk of the colonial world (emphasis mine)(pp. 23)", is at least debatable.

The diaries themselves make fascinating reading with well researched annotations and references. They are important for at least three reasons:

- (1) They give us a picture of the first concerted effort (notwithstanding the methodological and ideological inadequacies of the missionaries) to take the gospel to native South Africans,
- (2) They shed fresh light not only on, state-missionary relations, settler-native relations, and the relevance of socio-economic issues in evangelism even then, but on the impact of European imperial struggles on mission work among native South Africans.
- (3) they are, together with Georg Schmidt's diaries, the earliest primary documents vital in the construction of 'a history of Christianity among native South Africans', a history which in my

opinion, is yet to be constructed.

Reading of the enthusiasm with which the Khoikhoi embraced the gospel (pp. 75), their personal integrity and honesty (pp.79) it is a sad fact that these people, owing to the greed of the White European settlers, have almost been wiped off the face of the earth. However, their history and testimony cannot and should not be wiped off our collective memory as (black) historians, theologians and modern day missionaries. This volume is an excellent contribution to the sustainance of that collective memory. This memory must not merely be sustained but creatively utilised in the construction of contemporary mission, black and African theologies.

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